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NEW DELHI, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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STEVE SMITH
TO LEAD AUS
IN THIRD TEST
12 SPORTNo CWC poll, Kharge
to choose membersPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
RAIPUR/NEW DELHI

In a decision that is likely to bring resentment, particularly within the younger lot, the Congress on Friday decided not to conduct the Congress Working Committee (CWC) polls. Instead it authorised the newly-elected party president Mallikarjun Kharge to nominate its members.

A party MP, considered to be in the younger generation of the grand old party and once part of the rebel G-23 grouping formed against the party high command seeking organisational overhaul, exuded confidence that the decision will cause heartburns as the party's highest decision making body, the CWC, will be on nomination basis which will pave way for the sycophants and not the deserving ones.

"They have kept the cards close to their chest finally," summed up the Lok Sabha MP when sought comments by The Pioneer over the announcement made at the three day Congress plenary in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

Former party presidents Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi skipped the meeting. They arrived here in the afternoon and were welcomed by senior party leaders at the airport. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was also not present at the



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders during the 85th Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress in Raipur on Friday PTI

steering committee meeting and is expected to arrive later. Leaders said the absence of the Gandhis from the steering committee meeting was aimed at ensuring "free and fair" discussions.

The party proposed an amendment to its constitution to include the former Congress prime ministers and former AICC chiefs as permanent members of the CWC, a move that would ensure the automatic inclusion of Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the party's highest decision-making body.

The inclusion of the Lok

Sabha and Rajya Sabha members of the party in the CWC has also been proposed. The number of members of the CWC will rise from the current 25 once these amendments are approved.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the decision to authorise the party chief to nominate the CWC members was taken by a committee led by Kharge in view of the country's prevailing political situation and the proposed amendment to give a 50-per cent representation to women, SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and youngsters in the CWC.

"The Congress steering committee decided unanimously to empower the Congress president to nominate the members of the CWC," Ramesh informed the media at the venue after the Congress Steering Committee meeting.

"At its 85th plenary session, the Congress is also set to amend its constitution to provide a 50-per cent reservation to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), women, youngsters and minorities at all levels, including in the CWC," Ramesh said.

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Modi flags high debt
in developing nationsPM urges G20
to focus on the
most vulnerable

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged the threat of unsustainable debt facing some developing nations as he called upon the G20 nations to focus on the world's most vulnerable citizens. Trust in international financial institutions has eroded partly because they have been slow to reform themselves, he said in a video message at the start of the two-day meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and central bank Governors.

He referred to rising geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world but did not make any direct reference to the war in Ukraine.

"Financial viability of many countries is threatened by unsustainable debt levels," the PM said. "It is now up to you — the custodians of the leading economies and monetary systems of the world to bring back stability, confidence and growth to the global economy."

A combination of ravage caused by the pandemic and high debt has driven nations around India, including Sri Lanka and Pakistan to bankruptcy. They are now knocking on the doors of global lending institutions for loans. The PM

acknowledged "it's not an easy task" but urged the nations to work collectively to strengthen multilateral banks for meeting global challenges like climate change and high debt levels.

"Trust in international financial institutions has eroded. This is partly because they have been slow to reform themselves," he said, urging for discussion to "focus on the most vulnerable citizens of the world."

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FM seeks G20
members' views
on debt burden

Bengaluru: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday highlighted rising debt vulnerabilities in many developing countries and sought views from G20 member nations on 'multilateral coordination' for managing the burden.

Speaking at inaugural session of the G20 finance ministers and central bank Governors meeting, Sitharaman also sought views on how multilateral development banks, like the IMF and World Bank, can be strengthened to address shared global challenges of the 21st century, while maintaining a focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and poverty eradication.

PM hits back at Cong's
'kabar khudegi' barb

PTI ■ SHILLONG/TURA

Hitting out at the Congress members who had purportedly raised the 'Modi teri kabar khudegi' slogan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asserted that people across the country are, instead, chanting 'Modi tera kamal khilega'.

Addressing a public rally here, he exuded confidence that 'lotus', the BJP symbol, will bloom in the state, as the saffron party-led government has always prioritised the well-being of its people.

"Those who have been rejected by the country,

deemed unacceptable by people and find themselves immersed in hopelessness are now chanting 'Modi teri kabar khudegi' (Modi, your grave will be dug).

But, people in every nook and corner of India are saying 'Modi tera kamal khilega' (Modi, your lotus will bloom)," the PM said.

"People will give a befitting reply to those who use such offensive language," he said.

Congress members had on Thursday purportedly raised the controversial slogan after one of its leaders, Pawan Khera, was deplaned in Delhi from a Raipur-bound flight.

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Indian consulate in Australia
attacked, Khalistani flag raisedPNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/
MELBOURNE

Even as the alleged Khalistani supporters have vandalised some Hindu temples in Australia in the past few months, the Honourary Consulate of India in Australia's Brisbane city was targeted in the latest incident as the perpetrators raised the Khalistan flag at the office.

Incidentally, the incident, as reported by the local media, took place days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Sydney and flagged the issue of vandalism. He had emphasised the need for vigilance against "radical activities" targeting the Indian community in Australia. According to the Australia Today portal, the Honourary Consulate of India was targeted by Khalistan supporters on the night of February 21.

See Page 9

Khalistani leader's aide Tufan
freed day after violent protest

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after supporters of Khalistani sympathiser Amritpal Singh stormed into Ajnala police station demanding the release of his close aide Lovepreet Singh, alias Tufan, the Punjab Police on Friday released him from Amritsar jail.

The State police chief

claimed that the "violent" protesters had used the holy Guru Granth Sahib as a shield and attacked the police personnel, leaving six of them injured.

Under attack for bowing under pressure of the Khalistani protesters, the state Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said the police "exercised with utmost restraint" in respect.



AAP and BJP councillors clash with each other during the election of members of the MCD Standing Committee at the Civic Centre in New Delhi on Friday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Don't take
orders from
LG directly:
AAP Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh row has broken out between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Delhi Government and Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, as the former has asked officials to stop taking directives from Saxena and report any such orders from him to their respective ministers.

According to an official statement, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Government has warned any such orders received directly from the L-G are a violation of the Constitution and directives of the Supreme Court. He said the implementation of orders that are in violation of SC orders and the Constitution will be viewed seriously.

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CAPSULE

NAME CHANGE OF MAHA
CITIES GETS CENTRE'S NOD

Mumbai: The Centre has approved the renaming of Maharashtra's Aurangabad city as 'Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar' and that of Osmanabad city as 'Dharashiv'. Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis shared the news on Twitter.

APPSC LEAK: SUSPENDED
BABU FOUND HANGING

Itanagar: The body of a senior official of the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC), who was suspended in the paper leak case, was found hanging from a roadside tree in Itanagar on Friday evening, police said.

TRAI TO TELCOS: SUBMIT
REPORTS ON CALL DROPS

New Delhi: Taking a serious note of call drops complaints and service quality issues, regulator Trai on Friday directed telecom service providers to submit service quality reports for each State and UT. They will have to report more granular data that will help identify patchy networks and problem areas upfront.

P10

US visa breather: Students
can apply a year in advancePIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a major relief to Indian students aspiring to study in the US, it may allow the candidates to apply for a visa a year before their course begins. The announcement is a much-needed breather for Indian students with the wait time at several centres being as high as 300 days.

Bureau of Consular Affairs of US announced this week that student visas in the F and M category can now be issued 365 days before their academic term begins.

"F and M student visas can now be issued up to 365 days in advance of the I-20 programme start date, allowing more time for students to apply for a visa," the bureau said in a tweet.

But even the students who get their visa in advance will not be allowed to enter the US more than 30 days before their programme start date.

F and M student visas can



now be issued up to 365 days in advance of the I-20 programme start date, allowing more time for students to apply for a visa.

Students are still not allowed to enter the US on a student visa more than 30 days before their programme start date.

Students admitted to a US university could earlier schedule their visa interviews 120 days in advance.

The US embassy and consulates are expecting to receive a record number of visas from

Indian students this year, according to John Ballard, the consular chief at the US Consulate General in Mumbai.

The US is working on a multi-pronged approach to reduce the backlog of visa appointments. Earlier this month, the US announced that some visa applications from India will now be able to seek appointments in other countries. The embassy also plans to increase the strength of consular staff and organise special interviews for first-time applicants.

SC notice on
plea to ban
convicted
from polls

AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued notices to the Centre and the Election Commission of India on a petition that seeks to debar from elections those against whom charges have been framed in serious offences.

A bench of Justice KM Joseph and Justice Hrishikesh Roy of the Supreme Court issued notices to the Home Ministry, the Law Ministry, and the Election Commission of India.

The petition filed by Advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay has sought the apex court directions to the Union Government to take appropriate steps to debar from contesting elections for Parliament and state legislature, election those candidates against whom such charges have been framed.

India abstains from UN
vote on Ukraine peacePIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

As the Ukraine-Russia conflict marked one year, India has abstained from voting on a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) regarding restoring peace and questioned whether the world was "anywhere near a possible solution" acceptable to both Moscow and Kyiv.

The resolution tabled late on Thursday in the UN underscored the need to reach "comprehensive, just and lasting peace" in Ukraine.

India was among the 32 nations that abstained as the 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine" on Thursday, put forward by Ukraine and its supporters.

The non-binding resolu-



tion, which received 141 votes in favour and seven against, underscored the "need to reach, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations".

In the Explanation of Vote after the resolution was adopted, India's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said as the UNGA marks a year of the Ukrainian conflict it is important that we ask ourselves a few pertinent questions.

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FATF suspends Russia
over Ukraine war

New Delhi: The FATF on Friday suspended Russia's membership for its "illegal, unprovoked and unjustified" full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, an official statement said. Russia's actions were "unacceptably run" counter to FATF's core principles that aims to promote security, safety, and integrity of the global financial system, it said.

Agencies

Truss for relook at UNSC

Former UK PM says current structure not working, backs greater role for India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss on Friday stressed the need for a relook at the UN Security Council (UNSC) and supported a greater role for India in the world body. Speaking at the 'Ideas of India Summit' here, Truss also there was a need to fast-track Ukraine's NATO membership. Asked if the India should be extended permanent membership of the UNSC, Truss said, "I think we need to relook at the Security Council. We are now in a position where one of the five members of the Security Council is pursuing an illegal war (in Ukraine). That does beg the question about how this institution operates, and I do support a greater role for India. Absolutely. As a key player internationally."

Truss said the UNSC had no decisive impact on the war in Ukraine. "We need to send fighter jets (to Ukraine). We should have sent tanks sooner there. This war will only end when Ukraine prevails. I don't see an outcome where Russia wins. We will not let that hap-

pen. The question is how long it will take? The longer it takes the more Ukrainian lives are lost, more the country is destroyed, and more atrocities committed," she said.

She said India's voice is going to be "incredibly important" being the world's largest democracy. Truss said she is a great supporter of trading more with allies like India. "When I was trade secretary, I kicked off the free trade negotiations with India," she said. "I also want to see us work together with like-minded countries to create what I describe as an economic NATO," she said. India is going to play a crucial role in the next few years, she said. "I see in India new infrastructure being built, industries being developed, new investment going in and those high growth rates being achieved."

"We need close collaboration in areas like intelligence, defence and in defence production because what we know as a result of the war in Ukraine is that we need to build up our stockpiles. We need to be manufacturing more.

And of course, India is in



an ideal position to be doing more of that manufacturing of defence.

So, we have a real opportunity for that closer collaboration," Truss said.

The former UK PM said she believes that India has a very important role to play in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly known as Quad, a strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the United States.

"I fully support the grouping of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, I think that is going to be vitally important. I would like to see that develop into a more formal alliance, so that we make sure

democracy is protected because what we've learnt from the war in Ukraine is that if an authoritarian regime feels that there isn't going to be a reaction, then they will act.

"And we know that President Xi has said that he wants to create one China and that he wants to see Taiwan under Chinese control. I think that would be disastrous," she said.

Truss said, "We learned the hard way, what not preparing looks like with the war in Ukraine. Putin is responsible for that war; he is the perpetrator. But we all know in Western Europe that we should have done more earlier."

Farmer sheds tears over profit of just ₹2.49 on sale of 512 kg onions

Pune: A farmer from Maharashtra's Solapur was in for a rude shock when he got to know that he has earned a profit of merely Rs 2.49 against the sale of his 512 kg onions to a trader in the district.

The farmer, 63-year-old Rajendra Chavan who resides in Barshi tehsil of Solapur, said his onion yield fetched a price of Rs 1 per kg at the Solapur market yard and after all the deductions he received this paltry sum as his net profit last week. Talking to PTI, Chavan said, "I had sent 10 bags of onions weighing more than five quintals to an onion trader in Solapur for sale. But after deducting charges towards loading, transport, labour and others, I received a net profit of just Rs 2.49 from him." The rate the trader offered to me was Rs 100 per quintal. The overall weight of the crop was 512 kg and the total price he got for the produce was Rs 512, he said.

After deductions worth Rs 509.51 against labour, weighing, transportation and other



charges, I received a net profit of Rs 2.49. This is an insult to me and other onion-growers in the state. If we get such returns, how will we survive?" he asked. He said the onion farmers need to get a good price for the crop and the affected farmers get compensation.

He said the onion farmers need to get a good price for the crop and the affected farmers get compensation. While Chavan claimed that the produce was of good quality, the trader said it was low grade. "The farmer had brought only 10 bags and the

produce was also of low grade. That is why, he got Rs 100 per quintal rate. So after all the deductions, he got Rs 2 as net profit," the trader said. He added that the same farmer had received good returns in the recent past by selling more than 400 bags to me. "This time he brought the remaining produce that was hardly 10 bags and since the prices have gone down, he got this rate," he said. Speaking to PTI, farmers leader and former MP Raju Shetti said that the onion hitting the market now is a 'kharip' produce and cannot be stored for a long time and that is why the shelf life of the product is short.

"This onion needs to be sold in the market immediately and exported out. But due to glut, the prices of onions have nosedived in the market," he said. He added that this onion is not being purchased by NAFED, so the only option is that the government should make the market available for this 'kharif' onion. **PTI**

Jamia suspends Assistant Professor over sexual harassment allegations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) has suspended an Assistant Professor of the Department of Psychology over alleged sexual harassment charges and gross misconduct on the campus. The administration has also begun an inquiry into Professor Abid Husain's conduct by the Internal Complaints Committee of the university on the "complete facts" of the case.

Husain has rejected the allegations and accused the faculty members of plotting against him. This is the second time that a faculty member has been suspended over the alleged sexual misconduct on the campus in a month.

In the office memo, JMI Registrar Nazim Hussain Zafri said the action against Husain was taken over a written complaint filed by seven faculty members of the Department of Psychology.

In the complaint, the faculty members alleged that Husain was very aggressive and used abusive and unparliamentary language towards them, particularly towards the head of the department in the presence of the Dean of the faculty, during a meeting.

"He suddenly became aggressive as well as started accusing all the faculty members and was impudent, uncivilized, discourteous, disrespectful and uncouth in the meeting against all the faculty members. As stated in the



complaint, Dr. Abid had crossed all limits of decency and violated the Code of Conduct by not only verbally abusing her but also physically assaulted her in the presence of other faculty members," the memo mentioned.

"He went to the extent of physically assaulting as well as made physical contact and tried to sexually assault her by making advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures, and attacking the Head of the Department and levelled personal allegations on her as well as other colleagues," the memo further said.

The assistant professor also tried to assault and used criminal force against the head of the department in a public meeting, it said. "The Vice Chancellor, JMI, in terms of powers vested in her under the Statute 37(1) of the Statutes of the University, has placed Dr. Abid Husain, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Jamia Millia Islamia, under suspension with immediate effect pending disciplinary proceedings, separately an inquiry be conducted by the Internal Complaints Committee of the University on the complete facts of the case," the memo read.

Former President Pratibha Patil's husband Devisingh Shekhawat dead

PTI ■ PUNE

Former President Pratibha Patil's husband Devisingh Shekhawat passed away at the age of 89 at a hospital here Friday following a heart attack, sources close to the family said.

He was admitted to the hospital a few days back, they said. "He passed away at 9 AM today due to a heart attack," a source said. He is survived by wife Pratibha Patil and two children - a son and a daughter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered condolences. "My thoughts are with our former President Pratibha Patil and her family on the passing away of Dr. Devisingh Shekhawat. He made a mark on society through his various community service efforts. Om Shanti," he tweeted.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar also mourned Shekhawat's demise. "Deeply saddened by the demise of the senior Congress leader and renowned agriculturist Devisingh Ransingh Shekhawat. The veteran leader served as the first Mayor of Amaravati and was a strong support system for Pratibha tai as the First Gentleman of India," Pawar tweeted.

Former President Ram Nath Kovind said he was shocked to know about the demise. "My condolences with Pratibha Singh Patil and her family in this hour of grief," Kovind tweeted.

Congress never made tribal President of India, says Amit Shah

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Hitting hard at the Congress, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said that Congress never made a President of India from the tribal community in the last 70 years while Prime Minister Narendra Modi did during the BJP regime.

Union Minister Shah made the remark while addressing a program on the occasion of Shabari Jayanti in Madhya Pradesh's Satna district on Friday.

Addressing the program, he also said that the Congress government stopped all the welfare schemes initiated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Shivraj government during their short tenure in the state. It was good that the Shivraj government in Madhya Pradesh was formed again and he started all the schemes again.

"When Congress was in power at the Centre, they used to spend Rs 24,000 crores every year for the SC-ST category, whereas the PM Modi government has increased this amount to Rs 90,000 crores. Earlier, there used to be only 167 Eklayya Vidyalayas, but the Modi government has increased their number to 690. Similarly, earlier there was a provision of Rs 1000 crore for SC-ST category students, which has been increased to Rs 2,833 crore by the PM Modi government, Shah added.

Don't take orders from LG directly: AAP..

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The development comes amid the ongoing tussle between the LG office and the AAP Government over a host of issues, including the Government's proposal to send schoolteachers to Finland for training. The LG office and the Arvind Kejriwal Government has been engaged in a tussle over a host of issues, including the Government's proposal to send school teachers to Finland for training, appointment of Haj Committee members, nomination of Aldermen to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, appointment of

Presiding Officers in the MCD, and the issuance of prosecution sanction in cases of CrPC 196. According to the AAP Government, there are several cases where the LG has bypassed the elected Government violating the existing laws.

On several occasions in the past, AAP leaders have accused the LG of bypassing the elected Government of Delhi and issuing orders to officials. The vexatious Centre-Delhi Government row over control of services is being heard by the Supreme Court.

"The secretaries have been

directed to report any direct orders received from LG to the minister-in-charge," a source said.

The order states that, as per the Constitution of India and orders of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench dated July 4, 2018, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) has exclusive executive control over all subjects except for three: land, police, and public order. These three subjects are called "reserved" subjects. Those subjects over which GNCTD has executive control are called "transferred" subjects.

"In the case of transferred subjects, the proviso to Article 239AA (4) provides that the LG may differ with the decision of the Council of Ministers on any of the transferred subjects. However, this difference of opinion must be exercised through a process prescribed in rule 49, 50, 51, & 52 of the Transaction of Business Rules (TBR)," it said.

Sources claimed that the Lt Governor has been issuing orders to department secretaries while bypassing the elected government in violation of Rule 49 and 50 of TBR and the Supreme Court Judgment.

Modi flags high debt in...

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The meeting here is the first major event under India's G20 presidency and coincided with the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine that has killed thousands and forced millions of people out of their homes.

"We are also witnessing rising geopolitical tensions in different parts of the world. There are disruptions in global supply chains. Many societies are suffering due to rising prices," Modi said. Stating that at a time when the world is facing serious economic difficulties, he said the Covid-19 pandemic has delivered a once-in-a-century blow to the global economy. Many countries, especially developing economies, are still coping with its after-effects.

"However, I hope that you

will draw inspiration from the vibrancy of the Indian economy. Indian consumers and producers are optimistic and confident about the future. We hope that you will be able to transmit the same positive spirit to the global economy," he said. "Only by creating an inclusive agenda will the global economic leadership win back the confidence of the world. The theme of our G20 Presidency also promotes this inclusive vision 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'." The Prime Minister said in the world of finance, technology is increasingly dominant. During the pandemic, digital payments enabled contactless and seamless transactions.

"However, some recent innovations in digital finance also pose risks of destabilisation

and misuse," he said.

"I hope that you will explore how the power of technology can be used for good, while developing standards to regulate its possible risks." India's own experience, he said, can be a model. "Over the past few years, we have created a highly secure, highly trusted, and highly efficient public digital infrastructure. Our digital payments ecosystem has been developed as a free public good. This has radically transformed governance, financial inclusion, and ease-of-living in India."

The meetings over two days are expected to touch on a wide range of issues, including digital currencies and payments, reform of institutions like the World Bank, climate change and financial inclusion.

No CWC poll, Kharge to choose...

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Another proposed amendment said 50 per cent of all the delegates and office-bearers in the mandal, block, city, district and pradesh Congress committees shall be reserved for SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities, and half of them shall be SCs and STs.

"Additionally, there shall be 50 per cent reservation for persons below 50 years of age as also women, both in the reserved categories as also in the unreserved category in the remaining 50 per cent," the proposed amendment says.

"There will be discussions on this during the plenary and we are confident that they will (be passed). Amendments are being made in 16 provisions and in 32 rules," Ramesh said. He said the committee

freely discussed the CWC polls and all the 45 members present unanimously decided to authorise the Congress president to nominate the working committee members. Several members expressed their views both in favour and against the polls, he said, adding that the final decision was unanimous. "We are fully confident that all AICC and PCC delegates will support this unanimous decision," Ramesh said.

Most leaders raised both hands in support of the decision on the CWC polls, he said, stressing that it showed the depth of the unanimity. Kharge urged the steering committee members to freely express themselves and take a collective call on the process of picking the CWC members.

PM hits back at Cong's 'kabar...

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Khara was arrested in connection with an FIR over alleged remarks against Modi, and later released on bail on the same day. At the Shillong rally, Modi asserted that India is scaling new heights of success and Meghalaya is making strong contributions to it.

"Lack of road, rail, and air connectivity had in the past obstructed development in Meghalaya. During the last nine years, however, the BJP Government at the Centre has brought about positive changes in the state and the northeastern region.

"Be it youth, women, traders, or Government servants, everyone wants the BJP to be in power in Meghalaya," the PM said. At another public meeting in Tura, Modi said the BJP considers northeast as the growth engine of the coun-

try and the party has always been dedicated to tribal development. "We have allocated five times more budget than what the Congress Governments used to keep for tribals. Tribal villages in interior areas of Meghalaya got electricity for the first time since Independence, in the last nine years.

"We have also strengthened air connectivity for Meghalaya and are installing hundreds of 4G towers in tribal villages of the state," he said.

Modi said under the BJP Government, neighbouring states of Meghalaya have also achieved development at a rapid speed.

"The BJP Government for Meghalaya means fast-paced development, the end of blockades and violence, pucca houses for all and employment opportunities for the youth," he said. The Prime

Minister also underscored that Meghalaya needs to be freed from dynasty politics.

"Not only in Delhi but also in Meghalaya, family-run parties had converted the State into an ATM to fill their coffers. People have rejected them. Meghalaya now wants a Government that puts people first and not family," he said. The PM, who had earlier taken part in a road show here, said he was overwhelmed by the love and support shown by people during the programme.

"This love, this blessing of yours... I will definitely return this love and blessings by initiating more development work in Meghalaya, speeding up welfare projects," he added. Assembly elections will be held in Meghalaya on February 27, and votes will be counted on March 2.

India abstains from UN vote on Ukraine...

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"Are we anywhere near a possible solution acceptable to

both sides? Can any process that does not involve either of the two sides, ever lead to a

credible and meaningful solution? Has the UN system, and particularly its principal organ, the UN Security Council, based on a 1945-world construct, not been rendered ineffective to address contemporary challenges to global peace and security?" Kamboj said.

She stressed that India continues to remain concerned over the situation in Ukraine, noting that the conflict has resulted in the loss of countless lives and misery, particularly for women, children, and the elderly, with millions becoming homeless and forced to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. Reports of attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are also deeply concerning, she added.

The resolution called upon

member states and international organisations to redouble support for diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, consistent with the Charter.

Kamboj termed as "understandable" the overall objective of the resolution seeking lasting peace in line with the UN Charter.

"We also note the emphasis on increasing support by member states for diplomatic efforts to achieve peace, as well as support for the Secretary General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine. However, reports from the ground portray a complex scenario, with the conflict intensifying on several fronts,"

she said.

Reiterating that India remains steadfastly committed to multilateralism and upholds the principles of the UN Charter, Kamboj stressed, "We will always call for dialogue and diplomacy as the only viable way out. While we take note of the stated objectives of today's resolution, given its inherent limitations in reaching our desired goal of securing a lasting peace, we are constrained to abstain."

General Assembly resolutions are not binding unlike the Security Council resolutions and carry mainly symbolic weight at the United Nations.

Since Russia's February 24, 2022 invasion of Ukraine, several UN resolutions -- in the General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council--have condemned the invasion and

underlined the commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The General Assembly has met in this Emergency Special Session on Ukraine six times in the past year.

India, so far, has abstained from the UN resolutions on Ukraine and consistently underlined the need to respect the UN Charter, international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. New Delhi has also urged that all efforts be made for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an urgent return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy. Kamboj said New Delhi has consistently advocated that no solution can ever be found at the cost of human lives. She said in this context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that this cannot be an era of

war bears "repetition" and underlined that escalation of hostilities and violence is in no one's interest.

"Instead an urgent return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy is the way forward," the Indian envoy said. "India's approach to the Ukraine conflict will continue to be people-centric. We are providing both humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and economic support to some of our neighbours in the Global South under economic distress, even as they stare at the escalating costs of food, fuel, and fertilisers, which has been a consequential fallout of the ongoing conflict," she said.

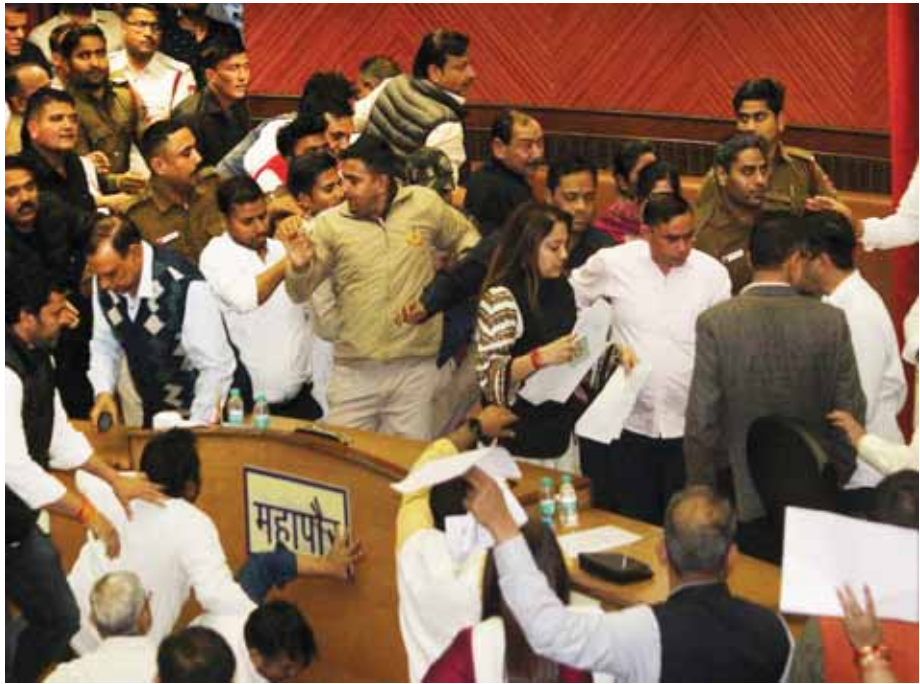
India stressed that it is unfortunate that as the trajectory of the Ukrainian conflict unfolds, the entire Global South has suffered its unintended consequences.

Kyiv counts on India's support, says Ukrainian charge d'affairs

Ukrainian chargé d'affaires Ivan Kononov on Friday that India's abstention from voting at the UN General Assembly on a resolution calling for an end to the war in Ukraine was a "sensitive issue" for them as Kyiv counts on New Delhi's support. Speaking to news agency ANI, Kononov said the two countries have a trustworthy relations, hoping that India will "help us in the future."

"The resolution was adopted and the position of India of abstention is definitely for us a sensitive issue," he said.

Kicks, punches fly during Standing Committee poll



Councillors raise slogans and manhandle each other during the election of members of the Standing Committee at the Civic Centre in New Delhi on Friday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Chaos reigns in MCD House; AAP, BJP blame each other

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP and the BJP councillors jostled, manhandled and threw punches at each other again after Delhi's newly elected Mayor Shelly Oberoi said there will not be a recounting of votes to elect the six-member Standing Committee of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), after a vote was declared as invalid.

This led to a ruckus in the House with BJP shouting slogans against the Mayor.

AAP councillor Ashok Kumar Maanu, who collapsed at the House, later appeared before the media with other councillors of his party. BJP councillors, Meenakshi Sharma alleged that she was beaten with a sharp object. "They also touched my neck. It was done by a male Councillor. They haven't allowed a single House sustain. Don't know if she's Delhi's Mayor or AAP's. She acts on orders by Kejriwal and other masters," she said.

In a video, AAP and BJP councillors are seen hurling water bottles and apples at each other inside the House. In



another video, women councillors are seen hitting each other on the floor of the House. In a video, a few councillors were seen with their kurtas torn.

AAP MLA Atishi claimed that the BJP members got agitated and attacked the Delhi mayor when they sensed their party would lose the polls. BJP leader Kapil Mishra also shred a video, alleging that AAP MLA Atishi provoked her councillor for ruckus in the House.

"What behaviour is this? This is shameful and condemnable. The country is seeing this. BJP should accept their defeat. I request BJP to stop their goondaism. Those who have attacked the Mayor will be sent behind bars," Atishi said.

The election process for the six members of the Standing

Committee began at around 11 am and concluded at 2:30 pm. The counting began 10 minutes later. The counting process went on for more than two hours. Mayor Shelly Oberoi asked members that result will be declared without the invalid vote, a move that was opposed by BJP members. The mayor's decision led to the House descending into a chaos as councillors from the BJP and the AAP started pushing one another amid shouting.

BJP councillor Pankaj Luthra alleged that it was AAP's fault that led to the chaos. He is one of the candidates for the standing committee election. Earlier the Standing Committee polls began on Wednesday evening, hours after AAP's Shelly Oberoi was elected the new Mayor of Delhi.

The House descended into complete pandemonium, as AAP and BJP councillors exchanged blows, and at one point even resorted to flinging water bottles, fruit and ballot boxes at one another — giving way to over a dozen adjournments.

A BJP councillor, however,

claimed, "We are unofficially informed that the BJP has won three seats in the standing committee. Still, the Delhi mayor is not accepting the technical team's decision." BJP MLA Vijender Gupta alleged that election results are being tampered with and wrong announcements are being made. "Several of our Councillors were injured. FIR is being lodged. The manner in which they've been beaten up, AAP has shown that they are a party of goons," he added.

The municipal House was reconvened on Friday to continue the election process for the six standing committee members of the civic body. The counting of votes concluded in the evening after 242 of the 250 councillors exercised their franchise. Eight members of the Congress did not participate in the voting while one AAP member switched to the BJP just hours before the voting.

During the voting, one councillor drew the mirth of other members and reporters as he stood next to the ballot box after casting his vote and posed for pictures.

AAP councillor Pawan joins BJP hrs before voting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the crucial Standing Committee election in Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Aam Aadmi Party's newly elected councillor Pawan Sehrawat from Bawana joined BJP on Friday-just hours before voting. The MCD House reverberated Friday with chants of 'gaddar', or 'traitor', from Aam Aadmi Party councillors as Sehrawat cast his vote to elect members of a standing committee.

A video of the voting showed Sehrawat greeted with jeers and angry shouts from the AAP lawmakers as he walked down from his seat to the Well of the House to collect his ballot. As he moved from the aisle to the Well of the House to collect his ballot paper, he was greeted by jeers and chants of



"gaddar (traitor)" from AAP members. An unperturbed Sehrawat walked with a swagger, tapped his thigh, raised his hand and twirled his finger as he made his way to the booth area.

As the MCD House reconvened around 11 am to make another bid to elect members of the municipal corporation's standing committee, a day after it was adjourned following a protracted pandemonium triggered by clashes between AAP and BJP councillors. Many BJP councillors greeted Sehrawat in the chamber of the House and

chanted "Pawan Sehrawat ka swagat hai (We welcome Pawan Sehrawat)" and flashed victory signs to welcome him into their camp. Sehrawat also wore the BJP's party colours and flashed victory signs inside the chamber. Earlier in the day, the AAP councillor from Bawana was welcomed to the BJP fold at the party's Delhi unit office by Working President Virendra Sachdeva and General Secretary Harsh Malhotra.

Many other leaders of the BJP's Delhi unit were also present. Sehrawat joined the BJP alleging that he felt "suffocated" due to "corruption" in the party led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

He also alleged that he was distressed as AAP councillors were instructed to create a ruckus during the MCD House meeting.

BJP councillor approaches HC over use of mobile phones in voting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP councillor Sharad Kapoor approached the Delhi High Court on Friday, alleging that city Mayor Shelly Oberoi defied established norms and propriety by allowing the use of mobile phones and pens during the polls to elect the MCD standing committee members earlier this week.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav listed the matter for hearing on Monday at the request of the petitioner's counsel. The petitioner, who was represented by senior advocate Kirti Uppal, sought to declare the February 22 polls as null and void.

Fresh polls are being conducted on the mayor's order to elect all the six members of the MCD's highest decision-making body. The BJP had demanded the fresh polls. In his petition, Kapoor said the mayor "defied every constitutional and statutory norm".

Kejriwal to tour 4 poll-bound States to expand base

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following its elevation to the status of a national party, AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will go on a tour to expand the party's electoral prospects across four poll-bound States next month.

AAP sources said Kejriwal would tour Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan over four days in March.

While he will visit Karnataka on March 4, Kejriwal will be in Chhattisgarh on March 5, Rajasthan on March 13 and Madhya Pradesh on March 14. Karnataka is the first state to go to the polls this year in May, followed by Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in November, and Rajasthan in December.

"Kejriwal will visit Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh on March 4, March 5, March 13 and March 14 respectively and sound the poll bugle in these states," AAP said. The Assembly polls



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann wave at supporters upon their arrival at the Mumbai airport, Friday PTI Photo

in these four states may turn out to be an interesting affair with the AAP gearing up to join the fray, riding high on its electoral successes in Punjab, Gujarat and Goa last year.

Rajya Sabha MP Dr Sandeep Pathak said that the party will contest elections with full force in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and all other states. "Our goal is to take CM Arvind Kejriwal's politics of

honesty and truth to every home and every person across the country," he said. Securing close to 13 per cent of the vote share in the Gujarat Assembly elections in December, translating to five Assembly seats, the AAP became the ninth national party in the country following the results. A political party in India requires 6 per cent of the vote share in four states to be recognised as a national party. AAP has

secured this in Delhi, Punjab, Goa and Gujarat. A national party has the right to a reserved symbol for its candidates contesting from across the country. The party is also entitled to land or a building for its national headquarters.

While the Kejriwal-led party stormed to power in Punjab in March last year, it also managed to breach the BJP bastion of Gujarat by winning five seats in the state with a nearly 13 per cent vote share in the polls held in December. The AAP also gained a foothold in Goa, winning two Assembly seats in the coastal state last year.

The electoral gains in these three states also paved the way for the AAP to get recognised by the Election Commission (EC) as a national party.

The AAP has announced that it will contest all the seats in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh this time even though it had failed to open its account in the last Assembly polls held in these states. In 2018, the party had contested 28 of the 224 Assembly seats in

Karnataka, 85 of the 90 seats in Chhattisgarh, 142 of the 200 seats in Rajasthan and 208 of the 230 seats in Madhya Pradesh but failed to win a single one.

The party now boasts 161 MLAs across the country, with 62 MLAs in Delhi, 92 MLAs in Punjab, 2 MLAs in Goa, and 5 MLAs in Gujarat. In addition, it has 10 Rajya Sabha members.

The AAP's success story continued with the formation of its government in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, winning 134 out of 250 wards.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann will call on former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray at his Mumbai residence on Friday.

"Thackeray has invited Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann for tea at his residence," a source in the AAP said.

"The meeting will be held at Thackeray's residence at 7.30 pm today," the source said. Kejriwal, the AAP's National Convener, and Mann have already reached Mumbai, the source added.

LG Secretariat writes to CM over DU fund cut

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Acting upon representations made by National Democratic Teachers Front (NDTF) and Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA), with regards to deliberate fund cuts by the AAP Government to 12 Delhi University Colleges, the Lieutenant Governor Secretariat has written to the Chief Minister's Office to address these concerns.

Highlighting that non-disbursal of funds due to these 12 colleges, has led to their physical infrastructure becoming unsafe owing to non/disrepair, the L-G Secretariat has also written to the Chief Secretary to get the premises of these colleges inspected in terms of safety and report to the Lt. Governor.

NDTF an association of Delhi University Teachers, submitted a representation to the Lt. Governor on February 07, regarding non-payment of salaries and curtailing the funds of 12 Delhi University

Colleges that are fully funded by the Delhi Government.

The NDTF said that the funds of these 12 colleges were unduly cut and delayed by the Delhi Government which has resulted in an inordinate delay in the disbursal of salaries to the staff for the last five years. It said that on many occasions, salaries were not paid to the teachers and staff for two to four consecutive months.

The NDTF informed the LG that, non-disbursal of funds due to them, has also resulted in hampering of repair and maintenance works, pending since long, which had led to the physical infrastructure in these colleges becoming unsafe. This posed a danger to the staff and students, the association appraised the LG.

The NDTF, in its representation, has underlined that even in the revised estimates (RE) passed recently by Delhi Govt, there was a fund cut to the tune of nearly Rs 113 crores. They also alleged harassment by the members/chairpersons of these colleges appointed by the Delhi Government. It requested the LG to issue directions to the Delhi Government to release the full funds to these colleges that have been pending for the last 5 years.

Further on February 15, another representation was made by the Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA) regarding the same financial crisis being faced by these 12 colleges.

The DUPA said that these colleges were not even in a position to pay the salary for the 3rd and 4th Quarter of the FY 2022-23, and the funds released by the Delhi Government were inadequate to meet the expenditure already due in respect of Retirement Benefits, Medical Reimbursements, 7th CPC Arrears, Promotion Arrears, etc. Taking note of the issues flagged by these colleges, the Lt. Governor Secretariat wrote to the Chief Minister's Office vide U.O. dated 17.02.2023, requesting issue to be brought to notice of Chief Minister.

Panel to frame guidelines for child births before 24-week pregnancy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital has constituted a panel for framing guidelines for child births that take place before the completion of 24-weeks of pregnancy.

The move comes in the wake of the recent incident in which a newborn baby, who was "declared dead" soon after birth, but was later found alive. The premature baby, born when her mother was 23-weeks pregnant and weighing only 490 grams, was found alive on Sunday when the family was making plans for her burial.

She was brought back to the state-run hospital and was put on ventilator support and she died on Wednesday. Doctors had earlier said, such babies in medical terms are considered "non-viable" and their chances of survival are slim.

"We are making guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on how to handle such babies. The guidelines will be submitted to the government," said LNJP medical director Dr Suresh Kumar. Another official from the hospital said there are no norms for government hospitals in such cases. A panel constitut-

ed by the hospital had recommended setting up a committee to form guidelines on the issue.

It was a fact-finding committee that ascertained the sequence of events, right from the time the woman was admitted till the time the baby was on ventilator and her subsequent death, he added.

Kumar said following the incident, a doctor and two nurses who were on duty that day have been suspended. "We will also be writing to the Delhi Medical Council to conduct an inquiry into the matter," he added.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday handed over appointment letters to about 1,200 newly selected appointees in various departments/local bodies/autonomous bodies of Delhi Government by the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) in a function organized by the Services Department at Vigyan Bhawan.

Addressing the audience on the occasion, the Lt. Governor informed that committed efforts towards filling up long pending permanent government vacancies, had start-



ed showing results. "In Education department itself, 9369 fresh recruitments have been made during the last 08

months only and including these, more than 12,000 fresh recruitments have been made in different departments/agen-

cies. This is more than double the average per year recruitment made during the last five years between 2017-21, which stood at 5880 only", Saxena informed.

He reiterated his commitment to remove hurdles in the way of filling all permanent vacancies in the government at the earliest and informed that, he was personally monitoring the exercise of recruitments. While Secretary (Services) delivered the welcome address, Chief Secretary, Delhi, Heads of various departments / local bodies / autonomous bodies of Govt. of NCT of Delhi and other dignitaries were present

on the occasion. A total of 1200 successful appointees selected for various posts through examinations conducted by DSSSB were invited to collect their appointment letters. Directorate of Education alone accounted for as many as 600 new recruitments, whereas in Delhi Transport Corporation 360 fresh appointments have been made.

A number of selected candidates are female, Divyangs and from other reserved categories. DSSSB has conducted examinations for recruitment against more than 18000 vacant posts in various departments of Delhi.

Amid Ukraine war, India gives Bapu’s message of peace at UNGA

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

As conflict rages in Ukraine for the last one year, India has highlighted Mahatma Gandhi's message of peace and trusteeship and that "the world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed."

India hosted a special event in the United Nations(UN) where Gandhi's doctrine was underlined. India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in partnership with the University for Peace organised a high-level panel discussion on 'Gandhian Trusteeship: Mission LiFE and Human Flourishing' at the UN headquarters late Thursday.

The event highlighted and deliberated on Gandhi's doctrine of Trusteeship and its relevance in today's world with a focus on the concept of Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) and Human Flourishing to promote sus-



General Assembly votes in favor of a resolution upholding Ukraine's territorial integrity and calling for a cessation of hostilities after Russia's invasion, on Thursday at United Nations headquarters. AP/PTI

tainable lifestyles and enduring peace. "Today's event is very unique. What I find very, very powerful is that we are talking about peace, about non-violence when even in the General Assembly we have a vote ...on the crisis in Ukraine," India's Permanent Representative to

the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said at the panel discussion. The UN General Assembly adopted a nonbinding resolution, put forward by Ukraine and its supporters, titled 'Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just

and lasting peace in Ukraine'.

In the context of human flourishing, Kamboj said Prime Minister Narendra Modi feels very strongly that the world is one large interconnected family and "his model is one of a human-centric global development approach, not a self-centered model."

She cited the example of India sending COVID-19 vaccines to more than 100 countries during the pandemic. "And may I remind all of you that we did not commercialize this moment," she said.

Kamboj further said India has always been there as a "first responder" and during the recent devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, India was among the first countries to dispatch emergency relief material and assistance within 24 hours.

"I do want to say in future too we will always be there in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of the world being one large interconnected family." The event was attend-

ed by the representatives of the United Nations member States, UN officials, academic institutions and civil society organisations.

The panel discussion was organised as a part of the 'India Roundtables' at the United Nations. The roundtables, being organised to commemorate India@75, will showcase India's achievements in various areas of development, including financial inclusion, social development, climate action and many more, a press release from the Indian mission said.

According to the concept note for the event, Gandhi, the "Father of modern India", had taught the world the doctrine of Trusteeship and continuing the idea of Gandhian Trusteeship, India embarks upon the role of the Chair of G20 this year.

The motto of the G20 Presidency is 'One world, One family, One future', inspired by India's ancient cultural ethos of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".

The panel aimed to discuss examples of how sustainable lifestyles can be promoted to combat the adverse effects of climate and environmental degradation and how the fundamental values of pluralism, democracy, and rule of law can be strengthened to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Gandhi had said "the world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed."

The underlying meaning is that every member of society should utilise his mental, moral, physical, and material resources for the common interest and welfare of society and not only for his self-interest, the concept note said.

Panelists included Permanent Representative of South Africa Mathu Joyini, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway Trine Heimerback, Vice Rector, University for Peace Dr Juan Carlos Sainz-Borgo and President of Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs Dr Joel H Rosenthal.

India slams Pak for raking up Kashmir

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

Taking exception to it raising the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during a special session on Ukraine in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), India slammed Pakistan and termed it as "regrettable and misplaced." New Delhi also underlined Islamabad's track record of harbouring and providing safe haven to terrorists with impunity.

"I'm taking the floor today to say that India chooses this time not to respond to Pakistan's mischievous provocations. Our advice to

the delegate of Pakistan is to refer to our numerous Rights of Reply that we have exercised in the past," Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Pratik Mathur said late Thursday.

Mathur exercised India's Right of Reply after Pakistan's envoy at the UN Munir Akram referred to Jammu and Kashmir while delivering the explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on Ukraine during the Emergency Special Session.

"Pakistan has only to look at itself and its own track record as a state that harbours and provides safe havens to terrorists and does so with impunity.

SC nixes plea to gag media on issue of Adani-Hindenburg

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI / CHENNAI

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea seeking to gag the media from reporting on the Adani-Hindenburg issue till the court pronounces its order. The apex court had reserved its order on February 20 on a batch of PILs on the recent Adani Group shares crash triggered by the Hindenburg Research's fraud allegations.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud declined the plea of advocate ML Sharma who mentioned the matter. "We are not going to issue any injunction to the media", the bench also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala said. The top court on Monday had refused to take on record the suggestion of one of the petitioners and a report published by Forbes in a batch of PILs.

The top court on February 17 had refused to accept in a sealed cover the Centre's suggestion on a proposed panel of experts for strengthening regulatory measures for the stock market. Observing that it wants to maintain full transparency in the interests of investors, it said



it would rather not accept the Centre's suggestion in a sealed cover. "We will not accept the sealed cover suggestion by you because we want to maintain full transparency," the bench had said.

Till now, four PILs have been filed in the top court on the issue by lawyers M L Sharma and Vishal Tiwari, Congress leader Jaya Thakur and activist Mukesh Kumar.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after the Hindenburg Research made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share price manipulation, against the business conglomerate.

WHO orders global recall of eye drug produced in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the recall of an eye drug—manufactured by Indian pharma Galentica Pharma Pvt Ltd — administered on children from global markets.

The Maharashtra based drug company manufactures the tetracycline hydrochloride ophthalmic ointment USP 1% drug. However, there is currently no established evidence of any adverse events from the affected batches of the product. Redness and swollen eyes are common reactions to general use of tetracycline eye ointment.

"There is currently no indication that the above-mentioned quality issues may give rise to adverse events that are not listed in the product labelling," it said. This is the third instance in the last six months, where the WHO has issued medical product alerts on products manufactured by an Indian company.

In a statement on its website on Wednesday, the WHO said though the batches were yet to expire, they showed some unusual features when sampled in different countries. The WHO said that at least 55

countries received the affected batches and the manufacturer has initiated voluntary recall for several batches. The manufacturer has indicated that other batches may be included in the voluntary recall.

Five international procurers of the product independently conducted visual examination of random stock samples on hand. They detected a range of quality issues with the random samples of the product batches. "They observed particles ranging in colour, size and shape on the nozzle, in the cap and the ointment inside each tube, black spots and brown splotches on the inner foil layer of the tube, and phase separation.

"These issues were not uniform and varied from batch to batch and as reported by procurer to procurer." The product is used in bacterial blepharitis (red, swollen, irritated, and itchy eyelids), bacterial conjunctivitis (eye discharge, redness, and itching), bacterial keratitis (inflammation of the cornea), and trachoma (caused by Chlamydia trachomatis). It is given as a treatment for infants and older children.

If not recalled, risks of using the product include redness and swollen eyes, the WHO noted.

Blinken to take part in G20 meet in March



PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/WASHINGTON

As India is all set to host the important G-20 foreign ministers' conclave in New Delhi in the first week of March, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will participate in the meet and hold parleys with senior Indian officials to reaffirm America's strong partnership with the country.

India took over the Presidency of the G20 on December 1, last year. Foreign Ministers of Russia and China will also be present in the G-20 Foreign Ministers' meet besides others. On the sidelines of the conclave from March 1-2, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is also likely to hold a breakfast meeting of the Quad foreign ministers on March three.

The Quad combine comprise India, US, Japan and Australia. China has all along criticized the Quad claiming it will lead to militarization of the strategically important Indo-Pacific region.

India, Germany to discuss bilateral ties, Ukraine conflict

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and Germany will discuss the entire gamut of their bilateral ties and global events including the Ukraine conflict and Indo-Pacific during the summit here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Saturday.

Scholz is scheduled to arrive in Delhi on Saturday morning on a two-day state visit, his first to India after he became German Chancellor in December 2021 following Angela Merkel's historic 16-year tenure at the top post. He is travelling to India a day after the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We see Russia and Ukraine (conflict) very high on the agenda in the meeting between German Chancellor Scholz and Prime Minister Modi. It will be a very important part of the agenda," German Ambassador Philipp Ackermann said on Wednesday.

People familiar with the broad agenda of the Modi-Scholz talks said the consequences of the conflict, especially on food and energy security, are expected to figure prominently during the deliberations. They said the talks

will also focus on expanding cooperation in areas of trade, defence, clean energy, climate change and new technologies.

The two leaders will also delve into the overall situation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has witnessed growing Chinese assertiveness in the last few years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chancellor Scholz held bilateral talks in the Indonesian resort city of Bali on November 16 on the sidelines of the G-20 summit.

The first meeting between the two leaders took place during Modi's visit to Berlin on May 2 for the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC).

It was followed by Modi's visit to the Alpine castle of Schloss Elmau in southern Germany on June 26 and 27 to attend the annual summit of G7 grouping. Scholz invited Modi for the G7 summit under the German presidency. The ties between India and Germany have been on an upswing in a range of key areas in the last few years.

According to the official schedule, Scholz will arrive at around 9:15 am. He will be accorded a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhawan at 10 am. After his talks with Modi, Scholz will attend a business meeting.

5 envoys present their credentials to Prez Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Ambassadors of five nations on Friday presented their credentials to President Droupadi Murmu here. She said it was heartening to see some experienced women diplomats taking such important responsibilities.

Those who presented their credentials were Victoria Samuel Aru, Ambassador of the Republic of South Sudan, Issa Saleh Abdullah Saleh Al Shibani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman, Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru, Lalatiana Accouche, High Commissioner of the Republic of Seychelles and Koy Kuong, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

While receiving credentials from Ambassador Victoria Aru of South Sudan and High Commissioner Lalatiana Accouche of Seychelles, President Murmu said it was heartening to see experienced women diplomats take on such important responsibilities.

"A special day for women in diplomacy as President Murmu received credentials from Ambassador Victoria Aru of South Sudan and High Commissioner Lalatiana Accouche of Seychelles.

Centre repatriates 2 officers from CBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has repatriated two officers from the CBI before completion of their tenure and barred them from central deputation until they complete their extended cooling-off period.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved premature repatriation of Vishal Chawre, a 2010 batch officer of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS) and Rajeev Mishra, a 2010 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Bihar cadre, according to an official order. Both the officers were posted as superintendents of police in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).



Chawre would be eligible for another Central deputation only after August 26, 2028 -- three years after the completion of his normal deputation tenure to this post which is up to August 26, 2025, reads the order.

Mishra would be eligible for another Central deputation only after January 14, 2028 -- three years after the completion of his normal deputation tenure to this post which is up to January 14, 2025.

CBI seizes ₹49 cr assets of real estate company

New Delhi: The CBI has recovered assets worth Rs 48.85 crore including cash of Rs 80.30 lakh, fixed deposits worth Rs 8.84 crore, gold bars and coins worth Rs 35 lakh, documents related to several properties worth Rs38.86 crore and gold and diamond jewellery during searches conducted in a case against Delhi-based real estate major Gardenia India Ltd related to bank fraud of Rs 109.17 crore.

The agency also recovered three luxury vehicles and 13 premium watches during

searches on Thursday and Friday. On Friday, the CBI conducted searches at two locations in Bangalore and Ghaziabad. The agency had conducted searches at six locations including at Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurugram. "The large number of immovable assets was allegedly bought in New Delhi, Ghaziabad, Gurugram, Bangalore, Hajipur (Bihar). Of these, the accused allegedly purchased properties worth Rs 36.50 crore in last four years," the CBI said in a statement. PNS

Assam's Borthechera good for human heart: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Garcinia pedunculata, a medicinal plant commonly known as 'Borthechera' in Assam, has been found to be friendly to the human heart!

According to scientists from Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), administration of the dried pulp of the ripe fruit of the medicinal plant reduced cardiac hypertrophy indicators and oxidative stress and heart inflammation.

The sun-dried slices of the ripe fruit are used for culinary and medicinal purposes and are known to have therapeutic



properties like anti-inflammatory, anthelmintic, antibacterial, antifungal, antidiabetic, hypolipidemic, nephroprotective, and even neuroprotective activity.

With scientific interventions seeking proof of these claims, multiple studies have been reported that G. pedunculata is a rich source of antioxidants. However, the cardioprotective potential has been explored now. A double dosage of bioactive chloroform fraction (GC) of the herb was fed to Wistar rats at 24-hour inter-

vals for 28 days. To assess the therapeutic effect, this was followed by injection of isoproterenol following the isoproterenol-induced myocardial infarction model.

All the animals were analyzed, revealing that the disease group had significant ST wave (ST is the segment representing the interval between depolarization and repolarization of the heart's ventricles) elevation, indicating myocardial infarction, which was normalized with Atenolol and GC treatment.

Cardiac hypertrophy, cardiac troponin I, tissue lipid peroxidation, and serum inflammatory markers were all significantly elevated in the disease group, which were maintained at near-normal levels in

the GC pretreated groups. The endogenous antioxidants were also revamped in the GC-treated groups. Swarnali Bhattacharjee, SRF, under the supervision of her senior Dr. Rajlakshmi Devi, attributed these improvements to the excellent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory potential of GC that helped protect the heart against isoproterenol-induced injury.

Moreover, the chemical characterization of the chloroform fraction revealed the presence of active phytochemicals like hydroxycitric acid, hydroxycitric acid lactone, and parvifoliquinone along with compounds like GB-1a, Garcinone A, 9-Hydroxycalabaxanthone, Chlorogenic acid, and Garcinol as well, said the researchers.

ACTION AGAINST PAWAN KHERA IN MODI SLUR CASE

Cops will follow case to logical end: Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that the State police will follow the case against senior Congress leader Pawan Khera for allegedly using "uncivilised language" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi to its "logical end".

Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, however, did not elaborate on the next course of action by the Assam police to bring the case to a logical end.

"We hope that keeping sanctity of public spaces, no one will use uncivilised language in political discourse hereafter. @assam-police will follow the matter to its logical end", the Chief Minister tweeted.

A police case was registered against Khera at Haflong police station in Assam's Dima Hasao district of Assam for his alleged remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The majesty of law shall always prevail. The accused has tendered an unconditional apology (para 7)," he further posted on the micro-blogging site quoting the Supreme Court. He also attached the apex court order granting interim bail to Khera.

Para seven of the SC order, as mentioned by Sarma in his tweet, stated that the petitioner (Khera) would not press the prayer for quashing the FIRs



against him since he was advised to pursue the remedies available to him in accordance with the law before the appropriate High Court. Khera was arrested on Thursday by Assam Police at the IGI Airport in Delhi after being deplaned from a Delhi-Raipur flight in connection with his alleged remarks against Modi. He was on his way to Raipur for the Congress plenary session.

The case against Khera was registered under various Sections of the IPC, including 153 B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national interest), 500 (punishment for defamation) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace).

FIRs were also filed against him in Lucknow and Varanasi on similar allegations.

He was released on interim bail by Supreme Court on Thursday.

The apex court order said that the petition by Khera pressed for clubbing the FIRs in one jurisdiction since it has been urged that the 'gravamen' of all FIRs against him lodged in Lucknow, Varanasi and Dima Hasao is one and the same - namely the press conference at which certain objectionable words were stated.

This is the second incident when a case was filed against a Congress leader by Assam Police. The first was that of Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani who was arrested by Assam Police on April 19 2022 from Palanpur in Gujarat and brought to Kokrajhar in the northeastern state for tweeting against Modi.

SC ruling backing EPS not setback: OPS

We will go to court of the people, says Panneerselvam



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Deposed AIADMK leader O Panneerselvam (OPS) on Friday said the Supreme Court judgment that allowed Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) to continue as party interim chief is not a setback and asserted that he would go to the people and seek justice.

In his first official reaction to the top court's ruling, OPS said no verdict is a setback for them. "Only after this judgment, our party workers are enthused more," he told reporters.

Asserting that the 'Dharma Yudham' is on, OPS said he and his followers would go to the people to seek justice. The campaign to reach out to the people would begin soon and it would be held district-wise across the State.

"We will seek justice by standing on the side of dharma." So far the concentration of his camp was on court matters and

from now on they would work on going to the people.

"We fought it out in the apex court. Our battalion has started. We will go to the people's court," he said and added that they would get a good verdict from the people.

Answering a question on accusations hurled against him and his followers that they are the ruling DMK's 'B' team, OPS said 'they (EPS camp) are the A to Z team' of DMK.

"Can they accuse us over a single thing? There are a thousand things, these will come out one after the other," he said. They were patient so far considering party discipline and to ensure that the party does not 'break-up,' OPS added.

R Vaithilingam, a staunch loyalist of OPS demanded to know the outcome of several cases including graft cases against followers of OPS. A former Minister, Vaithilingam also referred to the Kodanadu murder and heist case.



Workers clear snow from Kedarnath Valley in Rudraprayag district on Friday. The gates of the Kedarnath temple will open to devotees on April 25

PTI

Infighting takes shine off CPM yatra

Jayarajan skips march from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram led by party secretary Govindan



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

An internal war has broken out in the CPI-M, the ruling party of Kerala which launched its campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls on Monday. Sounding the poll bugle party secretary MV Govindan is leading a yatra from Kasaragod in the north to

Thiruvananthapuram in the south which was flagged off by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Govindan would be accompanied in the yatra by CS Sujatha, the former MP and glamour girl of the party as well as some of the second rung leaders.

What stood out in the yatra, which covered the two districts of Kasaragod and Kannur, was the absence of EP Jayarajan, the

Kannur strongman of the CPI-M and former Industries Minister of the State. Jayarajan, who was denied a ticket in the last Assembly election held in 2021 is hurt over the appointment of Govindan as the party's State Secretary and member of the polit bureau bypassing him. Though Jayarajan has been accommodated as the convenor of the Left Democratic Front

(LDF), he does not figure anywhere in the party's power hierarchy. Jayarajan is hurt because Govindan is much junior to him in the party as well as in the central committee.

"I had invited him to join the inaugural function at Kasaragod. But he said since the Chief Minister was present for the function, there was no need for him to take the trouble of travelling to Kasaragod," Govindan told media persons on Thursday at Kannur. What brought things to a point of no return was Jayarajan evading the yatra in Kannur, his hometown.

Govindan said that there was nothing unusual in the absence of Jayarajan because being the LDF convener he has many other things to attend to. "He is an important leader of the

party and can join the yatra at any time," said the party secretary.

The running battle between Govindan and Jayarajan was drawn out on the streets as the former kept away from the All India Kisan Sabha meet held at Thrissur in December 2022. The four-day event turned out to be a Jayarajan show as he was the main organiser as well as the mastermind behind the farmers' meet. Govindan was not allowed anywhere near the event.

There is a widespread allegation that Vijayan is making the pathway clear for elevation of his trusted son-in-law Mohammed Riyas as Chief Minister. Jayarajan suspects that the recent allegations of corruption against him raised in the party's State Committee meeting was done at the behest of Govindan.

School teacher suspended for anti-Govt posts in Ramban

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A Government school teacher posted in a primary school in Chanderkote, Ramban has been placed under suspension after he violated the guidelines and criticised Government policies on social media.

The suspension order dated February 22, has been issued by District Magistrate Ramban, Mussarat Islam.

"Pending enquiry and for violations of directions passed by the Government regarding criticism of policies of the Government by its employees on social media platforms, Joginder Singh, teacher GPS Chanderkote, is hereby placed under suspension with immediate effect," the order read. The teacher shall remain attached to the office of the Chief Education Officer, (CEO)

Ramban. The District Magistrate has also ordered for the constitution of an enquiry committee headed by Additional District Development Commissioner, Ramban to probe the matter. The other members of the committee include Chief Education Officer, Ramban, Zonal Education Officer, Batote and Headmaster HS Chanderkote.

"The enquiry committee so constituted shall initiate an in-depth enquiry and submit a detailed/comprehensive report in the matter, along with specific recommendations, by or before March 25 of 2023," the order read.

Last week, the J&K Chief Secretary directed all Administrative Secretaries to monitor social media networks on a regular basis and identify Government employees criticising or commenting adversely on

Government policies and achievements on various social media platforms.

"Some Facebook posts were found making rounds on social media networks on which the policies and achievements of the Government were criticised and after scrutinising the said Facebook page(s), it has been found that the Facebook account is in the name of person Joginder Singh, who happens to be a teacher in School Education Department, Ramban, presently posted at GPS Chanderkote, Education Zone Batote," the order said.

Official sources said his pay was withheld for misuse of social media in the year 2020 also by the Chief Education Officer, Ramban and the same was released after submission of written apology by Joginder Singh.

'59% Long Covid patients suffered organ damage'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

More than 59 per cent of Long Covid patients reported organ impairment for up to one year while at least 29 per cent of such patients suffered multi-organ impairment and reduced function at six and 12 months, according to a study published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine.

The researchers focused on 536 Long Covid patients who reported extreme breathlessness, cognitive dysfunction and poor health-related quality of life.

Thirteen per cent were hospitalised when first diagnosed with Covid-19, while 32 per cent of people taking part in the study were healthcare workers. Of the 536 patients, 331 (62 per cent) were identified with organ impairment six months after their initial diagnosis, the



researchers said.

These patients were followed up six months later with a 40-minute multi-organ MRI scan (Perspectrum's CoverScan), analysed in Oxford, they said. The findings confirmed that 29 per cent of patients with Long Covid had multi-organ impairment, with persistent symptoms and reduced function at six and 12 months and 59 per cent had single organ impairment 12 months after initial diagnosis.

"Symptoms were common at six and 12 months and associated with female gender, younger age and single organ impairment," said senior study author Professor Amitava Banerjee from University College London, UK.

Son of martyred cop injured in terrorist firing in Anantnag

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR

Unidentified terrorists late on Friday evening targeted a civilian by opening fire outside a mosque in Hasanpora Tavela area of Bijbehara in Anantnag district of Kashmir Valley.

The injured civilian has been identified by the police as Asif Ganai son of martyred Head Constable Ali Mohammad Ganai who was killed by terrorists on January 30, 2022.

After the killing of Puran Krishan Bhat in Chowdhary Gund area of South Kashmir's Shopian district on October 15, 2022 no other incident of targeted killing was reported in the region.

Kashmir Zone police while

confirming the firing incident tweeted, "Terrorists fired upon and injured one Asif Ganai S/O martyred Head Constable Ali Mohd Ganai, outside a mosque in Hasanpora Tavela area of Bijbehara, Anantnag. He was immediately shifted to hospital for treatment. Area cordoned off. Further details shall follow."

At the time of filing of this report Asif Ali Ganai was undergoing treatment at a local hospital. During the current winter season, Kashmir Valley witnessed record tourist footfall. The third edition of the Khelo India National Winter Games was organised in the ski resort of Gulmarg. Several other adventure sport events are lined up ahead of the Tulip Festival in the first week of April 2023.

ED attaches ₹305.84-cr assets of Joy Alukkas chairman under FEMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth Rs 305.84 crore of Joy Alukkas Verghese, chairman of Joy Alukkas India Pvt Ltd under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The case relates to a huge amount of cash transferred to Dubai from India through Hawala channels and subsequently invested in Joy Alukkas Jewellery LLC, Dubai which is 100 per cent owned company of Verghese, the agency said.

The attached assets include 33 immovable properties (value at Rs 81.54 crore) consisting of

land and residential building in Shobha City, Thrissur, three bank accounts (with Rs 91.22 lakh deposits), three Fixed Deposits (value Rs 5.58 crore) and shares of Joy Alukkas India Pvt Ltd (value Rs 217.81 crore), the ED said in a statement.

The ED had earlier conducted searches on February 22 at five premises of Joy Alukkas Group including their office and residential premises of the director of the company.

The evidence was gathered during searches from their official documents, mails and staff which clearly proved active involvement of Joy Alukkas in Hawala transactions, it said.



Nawazuddin's estranged wife lodges rape plaint against actor

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a fresh allegation made against her husband, Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui's estranged wife Aaliya has charged him with rape in a complaint lodged against him with the Versova Police Station in north-west Mumbai.

Less than a month after she went to town accusing her mother-in-law of harassing her and her children, Aaliya said that she had filed a complaint against Nawazuddin on Thursday.

In a video-post that she shared on her Instagram account, Aaliya — who had served a divorce notice to Nawazuddin in 2021 — said: "A rape complaint (with proof) has been filed against him at Versova Police Station yesterday. Whatever may happen, I will not allow my innocent kids go in their heartless hands."

Aaliya and Nawazuddin, who were married in 2009 and have a daughter Shora and son Yaani from their marriage, have been making allegations against each other over various domestic and personal issues for the past few weeks.

Last month, Nawazuddin's mother had lodged a police complaint against Aaliya for allegedly trespassing into the actor's home.

Later, sharing a video featuring herself and her children on Instagram, Aaliya had written last month: "I have been forced to live, sleep and utilise only the hall, at my own husband's house, since the past 7 days."

"My children who have just arrived from Dubai are sleeping with me by joining two sofa sets in the Hall. I somehow managed to take bath in a small toilet meant for guests. No food, no sleep and on top of that security guards are put all around me."

"Now, even cameras are installed and every move is monitored....No peace and no privacy."

"All seven bedrooms are locked by my in-laws, and my husband Nawazuddin Siddiqui is not traceable to protect me or even stand up for me," She had written. In the fresh set of allegations made in her latest Instagram post, Aaliya dubbed her mother-in-law as 'heartless.' "She called my innocent child illegitimate even as my husband (Nawazuddin) remained silent," she said.

Kolkata's pride: Asia's oldest tram service turns 150

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Once referred to as a "prehistoric reptile" by a famous Bengali novelist, Kolkata's Tram service on Friday completed 150 years of existence. Introduced to the countrymen by the then British Raj, on February 24, 1873, as Asia's first car on railway tracks for intra-city transportation, the Tram, apart from its historicity, continues to be the cheapest and most environment friendly mode of transport.

The first generation single-car-horse-drawn trams ferried goods between Armenian Ghat on the Hooghly and Sealdah,

which incidentally used to be the busiest railway Station in the continent. However, on account of its low utilisation compared to other means of transport the tram service was temporarily discontinued within ten months of its launch.

Subsequently the Calcutta Tramway Company was formed and registered in London on December 22, 1880 even as meter-gauge tram tracks were laid from Sealdah to Armenian Ghat via Bowbazar Street, Dalhousie Square, and Strand Road. The then Viceroy Lord Rippon inaugurated the route on November 1, 1880. The next two decades tram was powered by

steam engines.

Twenty-two years later the Tram services emerged in its electric avatar with electric tram cars being introduced in March 1902. The trams then ran between Esplanade and Kidderpore. Tradition has it that famous hunter Jim Corbett was fond of trams and he rode them whenever he came from Kaladhungi to Kolkata.

Though the faster bus and taxi service got the better of trams post Independence, a moribund tramways got a fresh lease in 1976 when it was nationalised.

Since then the successive (read indecisive) Governments



had been vacillating between purpose of preserving the country's only surviving tram service and the advantages of its discontinuation on account of low revenue earnings, says AK Dey a former top official of the Calcutta Tram Company.

Presently a large section of Kolkata not excluding the thousands of workers associated with the CTC demand its revival and restoration.

"Consider travelling around the city for just Rs 6 ... Tram is not only the cheapest but also the most environment friendly means of transport as it entails zero emission," says Bikash Sarkar a senior citizen.

Says former Bengal Transport Minister Madan Mitra how during his tenure he had taken initiatives to revive trams by introducing innovative ideas like creating restaurants on trams.

Meanwhile, the CPI(M) and its students' arm Students Federation of India on Friday staged protests at various parts of Kolkata demanding revival of tram services. Kolkata CPI(M) district secretary Kallol Majumdar on Friday said that his party would step up the movement seeking more investment on tram as "it takes less and gives more ... it is the cheapest, and environmentally the best mode of service."

FIRST COLUMN

B2B COMMERCE MUST GO DIGITAL

Digital approach could be the key to success for small businesses



SANDIP CHHETTRI

Big or small, the transition of businesses online has been gathering pace in the past two years. Earlier, while focus was on B2C (business-to-consumer) e-commerce, B2B (business-to-business) deals are now gaining prominence. As per a report from Bain & Company and Accel, online marketplaces are anticipated to touch \$350 billion in GMV (gross merchandise value) by 2027 from their present size of \$55 billion. The report notes that India's online marketplaces are being driven by its burgeoning online shoppers' base and the growing community of increasingly-digitised MSMEs. Propelled by this growth, these marketplaces are slated to contribute around 4-5% of the country's GDP during the study period, from the current 2-3%. Simultaneously, online marketplaces will enable 15 million-plus MSMEs to expand their operations online while creating more than seven million jobs by 2027.



Significantly, be it B2C, B2B or D2C (direct to consumer), their rising growth is being steered by the use of digital tools. In turn, this has triggered a major change in the buying behaviour of consumer cohorts, who were previously reluctant to undertake digital transactions. But the pandemic outbreak in 2020 dramatically transformed the scenario because of nationwide lockdown restrictions. During this time, both legacy sellers and buyers in India experienced the seamless convenience of online orders in facilitating safe and secure digital transactions. Considering the above, it is apparent that e-commerce is indispensable in today's hypercompetitive market scenario – even for small enterprises. Moreover, robust e-commerce growth in recent years has amplified the need for small enterprises to shift their attention online. To deliver exciting shopping experiences to clients, small B2B enterprises should prioritise their digital transformation in 2023. Outlined below are five key measures:

- 1. End legacy operations:** A few small enterprises may already be using some form of digital while others could be poised to make the transition. Instead, a complete digital transformation is necessary based on the enterprise's overall business goals, not just basic technology requirements.
- 2. Personalise online shopping experiences:** Research shows that 50% of B2B buyers want more personalisation when seeking online suppliers for building business relationships. Multiple personalisation options using AI and machine learning are available to build customer cohorts and allow marketers to undertake prompt action.
- 3. Promote product discovery and information:** One of the biggest barriers B2B buyers face during online shopping is finding products. While there are several ways to solve this problem, an easy means is via PIM (product information management) software. PIMs can collect, manage, augment and distribute product information across diverse channels such as online storefronts, mobile apps, etc.
- 4. Sell via third-party online marketplaces:** One of the big benefits of third-party marketplaces is that they can attract new customers. Generating additional sales apart, this is an opportunity to test new products and reach out to global markets.
- 5. Explore social media channels:** Conventionally, B2C entities have ruled social media commerce. But B2Bs should also venture into social media because, among other reasons, their buyers are using such channels too. Apart from the above, B2B e-commerce allows enterprises to generate first-party customer data. In a data-driven digital world, captive data that can generate deep insights about customer habits, trends and behaviour is the biggest benefit for small enterprises deploying tech tools to turbocharge business operations.

(The author is CEO TradeIndia)

Taking care of elderly is a booming market



SARITA BRARA

Rapid disintegration of joint families and more people migrating abroad have increased the demand for caregivers

All three daughters of Meera, an octogenarian, work abroad. Meera's daughters have hired caregivers to look after their frail mother, who currently stays in a pay-and-stay home for senior citizens in South-West Delhi. With a camera installed in her room, the daughters can monitor the wellbeing of their mother from their homes thousands of miles away in a foreign land.

Meera is not the only one in this pay-and-stay home; several other senior citizens are acquiring the services of the caregivers to cope with their growing age. The rapid disintegration of joint families and increasing number of people migrating abroad has led elderly people in India to take refuge in old age homes. In Delhi alone, there are nearly two dozen such institutes and many of them run on commercial lines.

However, whether staying in senior citizen homes or in their own homes, the elderly are increasingly becoming dependent on caregivers. This rapid increase in demand for elderly caregivers has given rise to a new class of workers known as geriatric care givers.

They are not just attendants looking after patients in hospitals, but they take care of the elderly in pay-and-stay homes for senior citizens or catering to the elderly living alone in their homes. Although the current unemployment rate is at its highest level, this is one area where the demand far exceeds supply.

Nidhi Chauhan, who works as a caretaker for Meera, and is a resident of Gonda Basti in Uttar Pradesh, believes that there cannot be a better job than this for someone like her who was not able to complete education after class 10. "Even though I was not able to complete my studies, I am able to earn enough to send money to my sister for her education and save some money for myself as well," said Nidhi.

Hundreds of young men and women, like Nidhi, earn Rs 500 to Rs 700 per day for a 12-hour shift as caregivers for the elderly.

Under the backdrop of the rising demand and with the intent to equip the caregivers with the requisite knowledge and practical experience, the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), started a three-month course in 'Geriatric Care Givers/Bed and Bedside Assistants'. To participate in this course, one needs to have completed Class 10 education. The institute charges no fee and placement is certain at the end of the course.

According to NISD Deputy Director HC Sridhara Reddy, who looks after the department for senior citizens, there has been 100 per cent placement of their students ever since the inception of the certificate course. The course includes two months of theory and one month of practical training in hospitals.

The course trains the students in cater-



MANY OLD PEOPLE SUFFER FROM ALZHEIMER'S, PARKINSON'S AND OTHER CHRONIC DISEASES AND THEY NEED ATTENTION ROUND THE CLOCK. MOST OF THESE EMPLOYING COMPANIES ARE NOW EQUIPPING THEMSELVES TO PROVIDE CAREGIVERS AND NURSING STAFF

(The author is a senior independent development journalist: Charkha Features)



ing to bed-ridden elderlies, with responsibilities including checking their vitals, sugar levels, changing diapers, transferring them from bed to a wheelchair or stretcher as needed, feeding them, and all other activities aimed at providing care and support for a relatively easy, relaxed, and healthy lifestyle.

At the same time, they are also trained to give palliative care and manage crisis situations. The NISD also provides a two-month online course in 'Geriatric Care and Care and Management of Dementia'.

Like all the previous batches, the two dozen students of the latest batch were recently shortlisted for jobs by four companies. Both Anil Kumar and Surya Prakash Yadav, who have been selected, were already working as caregivers, but with this new training and qualification, they can expect better placement and higher payment. "There is now a great scope to rise in this profession of caregiving by upgrading one's skills," said Anil Kumar and Surya Prakash.

However, Surya believes that if one wants a career in caregiving, giving services 24 hours a day or working daily for 12 hours daily may not be possible. "Once I complete my course, I will be able to get an eight-hour shift in homes for senior citizens who need the nursing staff to take care of the elderly or in other such entities," he explained.

The NISD also offers a one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Integrated Geriatric Care in collaboration with the Tata Institute of

Social Sciences. Manoj, who did a year-long diploma course with NISD, has started his own non-profit called Shri Sewa Foundation. It employs both trained and untrained caregivers. He says that there is more demand than the availability of the caregivers, particularly those trained in geriatric care.

Currently, with the ever-increasing demand, the number of companies involved in providing geriatric care, health and nursing related services is also expanding. Para Home Care Pvt Ltd employs 200 caregivers across 11 cities. This company that has been taking students from NISD provides services to the elderly both at institutes and in homes. Apart from normal geriatric care, they also provide nursing, physiotherapy, and doctor's visits.

Similarly, Life Circle Health Services provides care givers, as well as nursing services for the elderly in five cities. They also provide oxygen concentrators and physiotherapist services. Many of the clients, who live abroad, want caregivers who can take the elderly to the doctor and report to them.

Many old people suffer from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other chronic diseases and they need attention round the clock. Most of these employing companies are now equipping themselves to provide caregivers and nursing staff who will be able to go beyond elderly care and offer post-operative services, care of terminal patients, managing ICU set up at home or taking care of the patients

suffering from other ailments.

The CEO and Co-Promoter of '365 Care' feels that the care standards in India need improvement and claims that his company is working towards this goal. Most of the companies, including them, provide their services to anyone who needs caregivers and can afford it, not just the elderly. For instance, this company is already working in the area of palliative care with the Tata Memorial Centre in Mumbai. The employing companies are upskilling the caretakers to suit the requirements of their clientele.

The payment varies depending on the hours the care providers work for. A day long shift gets a salary varying from Rs 15,000 or more and Rs 30,000 or more for 24x7 services per month.

Sunita Kumari, a young woman from Jharkhand, who has been shortlisted as a caregiver by one of the interviewing companies, says that for the time being, she would prefer to work in a senior citizens home or an institutional setting for her own safety.

But eventually she would like to start her own non-profit organization or company. She is also open to the idea of working abroad. The current life expectancy in India is 70.42 years, and with 12.5 per cent of India's population expected to cross 60 years of age in the next seven years, the demand for caregivers in geriatric care is bound to go up. The challenge, as mentioned by one of the employing companies, is not the demand but quality of the services.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THEY ARE THE BIGGER ECONOMY WHAT I AM GOING TO DO? I AM A SMALLER ECONOMY. AM I GOING TO SORT OF PICK UP A FIGHT WITH A BIGGER ECONOMY?
— EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER
S JAISHANKAR



EVEN AN UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER IS BETTER WORDED IF NOT ARTICULATED WITH GREATER DIGNITY. NO WONDER THEY HAVE BEEN DUCKING A DISCUSSION.
— CONGRESS LEADER
MANISH TEWARI

Rise of Nadda in BJP and the tests ahead for him

He faces the challenges of making inroads into southern states, winning nine state polls in 2023, and general election in 2024

It has been a long journey of struggle as a grassroots RSS worker and students' leader for 62-year-old Jagat Prakash Nadda. He ascended to the post of the national president of the Bharatiya Janata Party. His term has been extended up to 2024. He heads the BJP at a time when the party has touched new heights, while controlling the majority of states in the country. The BJP has also decimated the Opposition in the 2019 Parliamentary polls.

But now Nadda faces a horde of challenges—of making inroads into southern states and retaining the most crucial state of Karnataka, winning the other eight states that go to the polls in 2023, and the final showdown in the 2024 Parliamentary polls in the

KS TOMAR

(The author is a political analyst and senior journalist)

country. Nadda also faces tough challenges, including forging new alliances after a number of allies snapped ties with the BJP in the recent years.

Nadda's electoral successes continued uninterrupted in the states and the BJP became the single largest party in Haryana in 2019 and formed the government with Jannayak Janta Party and won 74 seats in Bihar where the party contested the elections as an alliance partner with Janata Dal (United) of Nitish Kumar. It attained a distinction of having highest strike rate in Bihar and victories came after the pandemic in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Gujarat.

Analysts opine that Nadda will have to pass a litmus test

in Karnataka where the party is already poised to opt for any extreme measure like 'Love Jihad' over governance to retain power in the state. Similarly, the BJP will fight for creating a space as opposition in Telangana in a few months which will be followed by a huge challenge in the other seven states going to polls this year.

Second, Nadda officially took charge of the BJP on January 20, 2020, prior to the outbreak of the pandemic and he is expected to steer his party to victory in the 2024 poll, which is of utmost importance for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to test his popularity amid the heavy odds of highest dose of unemployment, skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, dismal economic scenario, fallout of Ukraine

War, etc.

Third, the Rajasthan Rashtriya Loktantrik Party of Hanuman Beniwal was the 19th ally of the National Democratic Alliance which quit due to farmers' agitation between 2014 and 2020. The NDA has lost 15 allies between 2014 and 2019 but it did not affect the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls owing to several reasons.

But now Nadda's party is facing a different scenario as major allies like the JD (U) in Bihar, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab, Mehbooba Mufti-led Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and N Chandrababu Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party (TDP) have parted ways.

The BJP had a pre-poll alliance with several partners

in 11 states out of 29 in 2019 which will change in 2024 polls. Some of sub-regional parties like Sudesh Mahto-led All Jharkhand Students Union, OP Rajbhar-led Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party, Hanuman Beniwal-led Rashtriya Loktantrik Party, Bodo People's Front (BPF), Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, Goa Forward Party, MDMK and DMDK have also moved out of the ruling alliance.

Fourth, Nadda and his party will be searching for nationalistic issues like 2019 and Amit Shah's hint about completion of Ram Temple by the beginning of 2024 may provide the answer. Nadda is optimistic that Hindutva, besides the charisma of Modi, will ensure a third term to NDA though scenario is com-

plex now in the country as compared to the 2109 elections.

Nadda's personality symbolises dynamism, indefatigable energy, sobriety and maturity. But the faith the RSS and Modi reposed in his leadership has also contributed in his extension, thereby putting him to test to ensure victory in state assemblies and parliamentary polls in 2024.

One harsh and bitter fact comes to everyone's mind which pertains to Nadda's exit from state politics in May 2010 due to his stark and unambiguous differences with former chief minister Prem Kumar Dhumal. This eventually became a blessing in disguise, because it gave him an opportunity to work in the organisation. He was appoint-

ed general secretary by ex-BJP chief Nitin Gadkari which proved a stepping stone to attain height in his political career.

While sharing his personal views with this writer, Nadda gave the credit to his rise to 'Almighty God', besides profusely feeling grateful to PM Modi and Shah who have expressed their faith in his capabilities and hard work to carry on the legacy of master strategist, Shah.

Nadda grew under the influence of stalwarts like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Bhairon LK Advani, and Singh Shekhawat who guided him at every step of his political career. Nadda is known for being moderate who can easily engage with hardliners; this endears him to his higher-ups.

ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE



AP ■ KYIV

Zelensky pledges push for victory

toll growing all the time as fighting rages in eastern Ukraine in particular.

There were concerns that Russia might unleash another barrage of missiles against Ukraine to pile yet more sadness on the day.

Mercurially, air raid alarms did not sound overnight in the capital, Kyiv, and the sad morning started quietly.

Still, the government recommended that schools move classes online, and office employees were asked to work from home.

Tributes to Ukraine's resilience flowed from overseas. The Eiffel Tower in Paris was among monuments illuminated in Ukraine's colours — yellow and blue.

Zelenskyy got an early start on the day, firing off a tweet that promised: "We know that 2023 will be the year of our victory!"

He followed that up with his video address in which he pledged not to abandon Ukrainians living under Russian occupation.

Ukraine "has not forgotten about you, has not given up on you. One way or another, we will liberate all our lands," he said.

A year on, casualty figures are horrific on both sides, with Western estimates suggesting hundreds of thousands of killed and wounded.

Economic repercussions have rippled across the globe. Diplomatic repercussions, too. Western nations are supporting Ukraine militarily, financially and politically.

But China, India and countries in the global south have proven ambivalent about Western arguments that Ukraine is the front line of a fight for freedom and democracy.

Ukraine's president pledged to push for victory in 2023 as he and other Ukrainians on Friday marked the sombre first anniversary of the Russian invasion that he called "the longest day of our lives."

As morning broke on a day of commemorations and reflection, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy struck a tone of grim defiance and used the anniversary to congratulate Ukrainians on their resilience in the face of Europe's biggest and deadliest war since World War II.

He said they had proven themselves to be invincible in what he called "a year of pain, sorrow, faith and unity."

"We survived the first day of the full-scale war. We didn't know what tomorrow would bring, but we clearly understood that for each tomorrow, you need to fight. And we fought," he said in an early morning video address.

It was "the longest day of our lives. The hardest day of our modern history. We woke up early and haven't fallen asleep since," he said.

Ukrainians planned memorials, candle vigils and other remembrances for their tens of thousands of dead — a

China calls for truce, opposes use of N-weapons

PTI ■ BEIJING

China, a close Russian ally, on Friday called for a ceasefire to end the Ukraine war and open peace talks, even as it struck a nuanced stand of respecting Ukraine's sovereignty and Moscow's legitimate security concerns while expressing its firm opposition to the use of nuclear and biological weapons.

China — which along with India abstained from a vote on Thursday on the UN General Assembly resolution underscoring the need to reach, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine — issued a 12-point position paper here outlining its stand on the Ukraine war amid its efforts to continue to maintain close ties with Moscow.

The paper was released shortly after the visit of top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi's visit to Moscow on February 22 during which he met Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirming that the "China-Russia relationship has stood the test of the drastic changes in the world landscape and become mature and tenacious, standing as firm as Mount Tai", a sacred mountain in China.

Beijing so far has not condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and continues to maintain close political, trade and military ties with Moscow.

Significant points of China's stand in its position paper were a call for "ceasing hostilities" and global support for the resumption of direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine to end the war, respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and Moscow's legitimate security concerns and Beijing opposition for threat or use of nuclear and biological weapons.

"Ceasing hostilities. Conflict and war benefit no one. All parties must stay rational and exercise restraint, avoid fanning the flames and aggravating tensions, and prevent the crisis from deteriorating further or even spiralling out of control," the paper released by the Foreign Ministry here said.

It called for direct dialogue between Russia and Ukraine "as quickly as possible".

The 12-point document is part of Beijing's latest efforts to present itself as a neutral peace broker, as it struggles to balance its "no-limits" friendship with Moscow and fraying relations with the West as the war drags on.

Without directly mentioning Ukraine, it called for effectively upholding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries but at the same time reiterated that the security of all countries should be respected in an apparent reference to Russia's concerns over US and NATO's growing political and military influence over Ukraine endangering its security.

"The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries must be effectively upheld," it said.

At the same time, "the security of a country should not be pursued at the expense of others. The security of a region should not be achieved by strengthening or expanding military blocs," China's paper said.

Significantly, China has explicitly opposed the use of nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war.

Frequent references to Russia's nuclear arsenal by Putin in his speeches were seen as a threat by the US and NATO in the Ukraine war.

"Nuclear weapons must not be used and nuclear wars must not be fought. The threat or use of nuclear weapons should be opposed", the Chinese paper said.

At the UNGA emergency special session on Ukraine where China was among the 32 countries which abstained, its envoy Dai Bing said facilitation of a ceasefire is a top priority and the door to a political solution cannot be closed.

"The lessons of history tell us that crises, however deep, can ultimately be resolved peacefully. No matter how difficult it is, the door to a political solution cannot be closed," said Dai, charge d'affaires of China's permanent mission was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency.

"We support Russia and Ukraine in moving towards each other, resuming direct dialogue as soon as possible, bringing their legitimate concerns into the negotiation, setting out feasible options, and giving a chance to an early end of the crisis and the rebuilding of peace," he said.

US commits \$ 2 billion in drones, ammunition

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Pentagon announced a new package of long-term security assistance for Ukraine on Friday, marking the first anniversary of Russia's invasion with a USD 2 billion commitment to send more rounds of ammunition and a variety of small, high-tech drones into the fight.

The announcement comes just days after President Joe Biden made an unannounced visit to Kyiv and pledged America's continuing commitment to Ukraine.

Biden told President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his people that "Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you."

In a statement on Friday, the Pentagon said the aid includes weapons to counter Russia's unmanned systems and several types of drones, including the upgraded Switchblade 600 Kamikaze drone, as well as electronic warfare detection equipment.

The package names more than 30 people and firms allegedly connected to Russia's sanctions evasion efforts. Among them: Swiss-Italian businessman Walter Moretti and his businesses; Nurmurad Kurbanov, a Russian-Turkmen arms dealer who is alleged to have represented Russian and Belarusian defense firms abroad; and Russian businessman Aleksandr Yevgenyevich Udodov, the former brother-in-law of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.



A Ukrainian national places flowers to pay tribute to people killed in Russia's war against Ukraine to mark the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, at Ukraine consulate in Bali, Indonesia on Friday

'People's court' indicts Putin for aggression

AP ■ THE HAGUE

A "people's court" without legal powers has confirmed an indictment against Russian President Vladimir Putin for the crime of aggression in Ukraine and called for his arrest.

The symbolic decision on Friday came on the anniversary of Russia's illegal invasion of its neighbour that triggered Europe's biggest and deadliest conflict since World War II.

After a week of hearings in The Hague, a panel of three international legal experts issued the order and called on the international community "to take every step necessary to ensure that a court with legal powers issues an indictment against President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and takes appropriate measures to arrest the perpetrator and put him on trial in an official Ukraine tribunal as soon as possible".

The judges, including Stephen Rapp, a US prosecutor who once headed the successful effort to bring former Liberian President Charles Taylor to justice for crimes in Sierra Leone, heard testimony from survivors of Russian attacks in Ukraine and from military experts before issuing their order.

The ruling comes amid international efforts to establish a tribunal that could prosecute Putin and other Russian leaders for the crime of aggression. The International Criminal Court has opened an investigation in Ukraine, but doesn't have jurisdiction to prosecute the crime of aggression. The presiding judge at the court, South African Zak Jacob, said that he hoped the hearings would add to the pressure for a special court.

"Hopefully this is a step to prosecution. As I said, we have no legal authority or force, but hopefully we have the authority of moral force and moral persuasion, which would take us somewhere," he told reporters.

US announces new sanctions on Russia

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US announced a new round of sanctions on Russian firms, banks, manufacturers and people Friday, aiming them at entities that helped Russia evade sanctions earlier in the year-old war against Ukraine.

Russia's metals and mining sector is among those targeted in one of the US. Treasury Department's "most significant sanctions actions to date," according to the agency.

The action, taken in coordination with Group of Seven allies, seeks to punish 250 people and firms, puts financial blocks on banks, arms dealers and technology companies tied to weapons production, and goes after alleged sanctions evaders in countries from the United Arab Emirates to Switzerland.

"Our sanctions have had both short-term and long-term impact, seen acutely in Russia's struggle to replenish its weapons and in its isolated economy," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a written statement.

"Our actions today with our G7 partners show that we will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes."

Yellen is attending the G-20 finance ministers' meetings in Bengaluru, India, this week.

On Friday morning she told senior Russian officials attending meetings that "their continued work for the Kremlin makes them complicit in Putin's atrocities."

"They bear responsibility for the lives and livelihoods being taken in Ukraine and the harm caused globally," she said.

The State and Commerce departments and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative will also issue plans Friday to increase pressure on Russia.

These steps increase tariffs on Russian products and add nearly 90 Russian and third-country companies, including from China, to a list of identified sanctions evaders.

Named in Friday's sanctions package are a dozen financial institutions, including

Russia's largest non-state public bank, importers of micro-electronics and producers of carbon fiber, a key material for defense systems.

The package names more than 30 people and firms allegedly connected to Russia's sanctions evasion efforts. Among them: Swiss-Italian businessman Walter Moretti and his businesses; Nurmurad Kurbanov, a Russian-Turkmen arms dealer who is alleged to have represented Russian and Belarusian defense firms abroad; and Russian businessman Aleksandr Yevgenyevich Udodov, the former brother-in-law of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

EU pledges more support for refugees

AP ■ VOULIAGMENI (GREECE)

European Union officials on Friday pledged continued support to millions of Ukrainian refugees, as they marked the anniversary of the Russian invasion.

"Ukraine can win this war, but we will be with Ukraine as long as it takes," EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson told The Associated Press on the sidelines of a conference on migration near Athens.

Johansson urged members to conclude long-running negotiations to adopt new EU-wide migration rules and to assist Ukrainians who wished to return home but maintain their temporary residence status in the EU.

More than 8 million people have fled Ukraine since the start of the war, according to the United Nations refugee agency, and nearly 5 million have registered for EU temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe.

Bartosz Grodecki, the Polish deputy interior minister, whose country has taken in the most refugees traveling westward since the start of the war, said his government was prepared to receive more people who could be displaced by a widely anticipated spring offensive by Russian forces in Ukraine.

"We have this contingency planning," Grodecki told the AP.

"I hope that it will not be necessary (but) ... we've been trained, planned properly, and we know how to be prepared."

Margaritis Schinas, the EU Commission vice president, said Russian President Vladimir Putin had failed in an effort to divide EU countries by applying pressure through high energy prices and migration.

"This is a sad anniversary, but it's also an opportunity to draw some lessons from these horrible 12 months we're leaving behind," Schinas told the AP.

"And as far as (refugees from) Ukraine are concerned, the figures are stable," he said.

Schinas added that he didn't think it was "automatic" that refugee numbers would increase in the coming months.

"If it happens, we are ready, but it doesn't seem to be the case for the time being."

The migration conference on Friday was organised by Greece, Austria, Poland and Lithuania to discuss issues that include border management problems, including border wall construction.

Officials attending the conference observed a minute of silence for the victims of the war in Ukraine.

India slams Pakistan for raising K-issue during UNGA meet

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

India slammed Pakistan after it referred to Jammu and Kashmir during a special session on Ukraine in the UN General Assembly, terming the provocation as "regrettable and misplaced" and calling out Islamabad's track record of harbouring and providing safe havens to terrorists with impunity.

"I'm taking the floor today to say that India chooses this time not to respond to Pakistan's mischievous provocations. Our advice to the delegate of Pakistan is to refer to our numerous Rights of Reply that we have exercised in the past," Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Pratik Mathur said. Mathur exercised India's Right of Reply on Thursday after Pakistan's envoy at the UN Munir Akram referred to Jammu and Kashmir while delivering the explanation of vote on the UN General Assembly resolution on Ukraine during the Emergency Special Session.

"Pakistan has only to look at itself and its own track record as a state that harbours and provides safe havens to terrorists and does so with impunity. Such uncalled for provocation is particularly regrettable and certainly misplaced at a time when after two days of intense discussions, we have all agreed that the path of peace can be the only path forward to resolve conflict and discord," Mathur said.

Russia launches rescue ship to space station after leaks

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia launched a rescue ship on Friday for two cosmonauts and a NASA astronaut whose original ride home sprang a dangerous leak while parked at the International Space Station.

The new, empty Soyuz capsule should arrive at the orbiting lab on Sunday.

The capsule leak in December was blamed on a micrometeorite that punctured an external radiator, draining it of coolant. The same thing appeared to happen again earlier this month, this time on a docked Russian cargo ship. Camera views showed a small hole in each spacecraft.

The Russian Space Agency delayed the launch of the replacement Soyuz, looking for any manufacturing defects. No issues were found, and the agency proceeded with Friday's predawn launch from Kazakhstan of the capsule with bundles of supplies strapped into the three seats.

Given the urgent need for this capsule, two top NASA officials travelled from the US to observe the launch in person. To everyone's relief, the capsule safely reached orbit nine minutes after liftoff - "a perfect ride to orbit," NASA Mission Control's Rob Navias reported from Houston.

Officials had determined it was too risky to bring NASA's Frank Rubio and Russia's Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin back in their damaged Soyuz next month as originally planned. With no coolant, the cabin temperature would spike



during the trip back to Earth, potentially damaging computers and other equipment, and exposing the suited-up crew to excessive heat.

Until the new Soyuz pulls up, emergency plans call for Rubio to switch to a SpaceX crew capsule that's docked at the space station. Prokopyev and Petelin remain assigned to their damaged Soyuz in the unlikely need for a fast getaway. Having one less person on board would keep the temperature down to a hopefully manageable level, Russian engineers concluded.

3 contenders in fray for top SNP post

AP ■ LONDON

Three members of the Scottish parliament will battle to become leader of the governing Scottish National Party, officials said Friday after the deadline for nominations closed.

Scottish Finance Secretary Kate Forbes, Health Secretary Humza Yousaf and lawmaker Ash Regan are running to replace First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. She announced her resignation last week after eight years as leader of Scotland and the pro-independence SNP. The party said the three passed the threshold of at least 100 nominations from 20 or more local party branches.

Voting by party members for the new leader, who will also become first minister, will open March 13, with a winner announced on March 27.

Forbes was considered the frontrunner, but dented her chances when she said this week that her faith would have prevented her from voting in favor of allowing same-sex couples to wed. Forbes, who belongs to the evangelical Free Church of Scotland, was not yet a lawmaker when the Scottish Parliament legalised same-sex unions in 2014.

Penguin to publish 'classic' Roald Dahl books after backlash

AP ■ LONDON -

Publisher Penguin Random House announced Friday it will publish "classic" unexpurgated versions of Roald Dahl's children's novels after it received criticism for cuts and rewrites that were intended to make the books suitable for modern readers.

Along with the new editions, the company said 17 of Dahl's books would be published in their original form later this year as "The Roald Dahl Classic Collection" so "readers will be free to choose which version of Dahl's stories they prefer."

The move comes after criticism of scores of changes made to "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and other much-loved classics for recent editions published under the company's Puffin children's label, in which passages relating to weight, mental health, gender and race were altered.

Augustus Gloop, Charlie's gluttonous antagonist in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" - originally published in 1964 - became "enormous" rather than "enormously fat." In "Witches," an "old hag" became an "old crow," and a supernat-

ural female posing as an ordinary woman may be a "top scientist or running a business" instead of a "cashier in a supermarket or typing letters for a businessman."

In "Fantastic Mr. Fox," the word "black" was removed from a description of the "murderous, brutal-looking" tractors.

The Roald Dahl Story Company, which controls the rights to the books, said it had worked with Puffin to review and revise the texts because it wanted to ensure that "Dahl's wonderful stories and characters continue to be enjoyed by all children today."

While tweaking old books for modern sensibilities is not a new phenomenon in publishing, the scale of the edits drew strong criticism from free-speech groups such as writers' organization PEN America, and from authors including Salman Rushdie.

Rushdie, who lived under threat of death from Iran's Islamic regime for years because of the alleged blasphemy of his novel "The Satanic Verses," called the revisions "absurd censorship."

Rushdie, who was attacked and seriously injured last year at an event in New York state, tweeted news of Penguin's change of heart on Friday with the words "Penguin Books back down after Roald Dahl backlash!"

PEN America chief executive Suzanne Nossel wrote on Twitter: "I applaud Penguin for hearing out critics, taking the time to rethink this, and coming to the right place."

Camilla, Britain's queen consort, appeared to offer her view at a literary reception on Thursday. She urged writers to "remain true to your calling, unimpeded by those who may wish to curb the freedom of your expression or impose limits on your imagination."

Dahl's books, with their mischievous children, strange beasts and often beastly adults, have sold more than 300 million copies and continue to be read by children around the world. Their multiple stage and screen adaptations include "Matilda the Musical" and two "Willy Wonka" films based on "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," with a third in the works.

But Dahl, who died in 1990, is also a controversial figure because of antisemitic comments made throughout his life. His family apologized in 2020.

Khalistani supporters attack Indian Consulate in Brisbane

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

The Honorary Consulate of India in Australia's Brisbane city was targeted by Khalistani supporters who raised the Khalistan flag at the office, the latest in a series of radical activities against the Indian community in the country, according to a media report on Friday.

The incident came days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited the country and emphasised the need for vigilance against "radical activities" targeting the Indian community in Australia.

According to The Australia Today portal, the Honorary Consulate of India located on Swann Road in the Taringa suburb of Brisbane was targeted by Khalistani supporters on the night of February 21.

Honorary Consul of India in Brisbane Archana Singh found the Khalistan flag attached to the office when she arrived on February 22, the report said. Singh immediately notified the Queensland Police, which on arrival confiscated the flag and swept the Honorary Consulate of India to



clear of any immediate threat.

"Police are surveilling the area to keep us safe. We have Strong faith in police authority," Singh told The Australia Today. The incident comes following the vandalism of three Hindu temples in Australia by Khalistani supporters.

On January 23, the management of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple also known as the Hare Krishna Temple in Melbourne's Albert Park found the walls of

the revered temple vandalised with graffiti "Hindustan Murdabad".

On January 16, the historic Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs, Victoria, was vandalised in a similar manner.

On January 12, the Swaminarayan temple in Melbourne was defaced by 'anti-social elements' with anti-India graffiti. Jaishankar and his deputy V Muraleedharan during their visit on February 18 to Sydney and Melbourne respectively have raised India's

concerns over the issue.

Jaishankar during his meeting with his Australian counterpart Penny Wong discussed the issue.

"Noted the forward movement on our bilateral agenda. Emphasised the need for vigilance against radical activities targeting the Indian community," Jaishankar tweeted after the meeting.

However, on the same day, Khalistani supporters threatened two Hindu Temples while they were celebrating Mahashivratri, the report said.

India has already asked the Australian government to curb the anti-India activities of the Khalistani separatists and also attacks on the Hindu temples in the country.

"Signals that pro-Khalistan elements are stepping up their activities in Australia, actively aided and abetted by members of proscribed terrorist organisations such as the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) and other inimical agencies from outside Australia, have been evident for some time," the Indian High Commission in Canberra said in a strongly-worded statement on January 26.

Arrest warrant against Pak min Rana Sanaullah

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court issued a bailable arrest warrant against interior minister Rana Sanaullah on Friday for allegedly threatening the judiciary and preventing government officials from "fulfilling their lawful responsibilities" during his public speeches, media reports said.

The case against Sanaullah, 68, was registered in August 2022.

During his public speeches last year and in 2021, the minister, a senior member of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), threatened to stop the judiciary from doing its job and kill the children of Punjab police officials, the Dawn newspaper reported, quoting the FIR.

The case was taken up by an anti-terrorism court on Friday in Gujrat city in Punjab province.

The FIR also produced the footage of the minister's remarks, which were aired by a private news channel last year.

The ATC court directed law enforcement officials to arrest Sanaullah and present him before the court on March 7, the Dawn report said.

Maryam accuses SC judges of bias

PTI ■ LAHORE

In an unprecedented move, Pakistan's deposed premier Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz has launched a frontal attack on three serving judges of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice of Pakistan, and vowed to wage a war against them for being biased against her party's leadership.

She made the hard-hitting speech against the judiciary in Sargodha city, some 200 kms from Lahore, while addressing a worker's convention on Thursday evening.

Maryam Nawaz, the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president and chief organiser, openly named and shamed the serving judges of the apex court and declared that she is ready to face consequences for what she is doing but said she will not stop from exposing them.

During the rally, she also displayed the pictures of two SC judges, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Mazahir Ali Naqvi, former chief justices Saqib Nisar and Asif Saeed Khosa and former ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and said: "The people should see these faces as they were behind the conspiracy against Nawaz Sharif's ouster from power (in 2017).

What you see on the screen is the cabal of five... those visible on the screen are responsible for Pakistan's crisis."

Not sparing incumbent Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Maryam Nawaz said: "CJP Bandial... instead of looking into bench fixing you have sat down to figure out the responsibility of the government, Election Commission and governor. You are not paying attention to your basic responsibility — responsibility to make non-controversial benches but you are doing something else."

Taking a suo motu notice on the Election Commission's reluctance to announce elections for Punjab and Kyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces assemblies in 90 days after their dissolution, CJP Bandial on Wednesday had constituted a nine-member bench to take up the matter.

On Thursday the bench issued notices to all concerned.

Maryam Nawaz also asked CJP Bandial as why he was so keen to take up the election matter in two provinces.

Addressing the CJP, she taunted: "Instead of holding these two judges accountable, you have included them in the nine-member bench."

She also said after the current military establishment has disowned Imran Khan, he is

looking up to the judiciary to pave way for him to return to power.

"And this is what these judges are doing," she lambasted.

Reacting on Maryam's fiery speech against the Supreme Court, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan said the PML-N led by Maryam launched scathing attack on the judiciary only to run away from elections.

He urged the superior judiciary to take notice of Maryam's tirade against top SC judges.

Khan said before Maryam her father Nawaz Sharif used to target honest judges for vested interests.

Nawaz has been in London since November 2019 on medical grounds. Before leaving for the United Kingdom, he was serving a seven-year imprisonment in Al-Azizia corruption case.

Maryam sought action against former ISI chief.

Urging her uncle Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to take action against former ISI chief Gen Faiz Hameed for his actions against PML-N leadership and corruption.

"Gen Faiz Hameed who had appointed himself the chief of army staff made billions of rupees and stashed them in Dubai and other Gulf countries," she alleged.

Blinken to visit India on March 1 for G20 meeting

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to India next week to attend the meeting of G20 foreign ministers and meet senior Indian officials to reaffirm America's strong partnership with the country.

India has taken over the Presidency of the G20 on December 1, last year.

On March 1, Blinken will travel to New Delhi to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which will focus on strengthening multilateralism and deepening cooperation on food and energy security, sustainable development, counter-narcotics, global health, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and gender equality and women's empowerment, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"He (Blinken) will meet with Indian government officials and civil society to reaffirm our strong partnership," Price said. The US Secretary of State would be in India till March 3.

Blinken will reach India after his trip to two Central Asian nations – Kazakhstan

and Uzbekistan – beginning February 28.

On February 28, he will visit Astana, Kazakhstan, where he will meet with senior Kazakh officials to deepen bilateral cooperation.

He then will participate in a C5+1 Ministerial with representatives of each of the five Central Asian states, to reaffirm the United States' commitment to the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Central Asian countries, and to collaborate with the region on solutions to shared global challenges, he said.

The C5+1 Ministerial will focus on enhancing economic, energy and environmental, and security cooperation among the United States, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Secretary will meet separately on the margins of the C5+1 ministerial with senior government officials from the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to discuss opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and advance our shared goal of a prosperous, secure, and democratic region.

Australia reportedly expels major Russian spy ring

AP ■ CANBERRA

A Russian spy ring posing as diplomats had been quietly expelled from Australia in recent months, a newspaper reported Friday after an Australian security agency revealed a major counter-espionage success.

The spy ring comprised purported embassy and consular staff as well as other operatives using deep-cover identities, The Sydney Morning Herald reported, citing unnamed sources with knowledge of the operation. The Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency, revealed on Tuesday it had "detected and disrupted a major spy network" ASIO has not named the country responsible.

ASIO's secretary-general of security Mike Burgess described the network as a "hive" of spies because it was bigger and more dangerous than a "nest" of spies previously disrupted. Precise numbers have not been reported.

"Proxies and agents were recruited as part of a wider network. Among other malicious activities, they wanted to steal sensitive information," Burgess said in ASIO's annual report on threats posed to Australia.

Pak reopens Torkham border for pedestrians

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

The Pakistani government on Friday reopened for pedestrians the Pakistan-Afghanistan Torkham border, but the crossing is still inaccessible for over 7,000 trucks laden with goods, including perishable items like vegetables, poultry, and eggs, stranded for the last five days due to the closure of the crossing point.

The movement of cargo vehicles is still restricted, security sources said. Afghan and Pakistani citizens can cross the border by foot to their respective countries after the Pakistan government on Friday afternoon opened the crossing point for pedestrians.

The sources said the Pakistani government will likely open the border for vehicular traffic on Saturday afternoon.

Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, said the closure of the border would inflict enormous losses to exporters and businessmen if the Pakistan government did not open the gate.

The Torkham border crossing -- a vital commercial artery and a trade route for



Pakistan to Central Asian countries -- was shut by the Afghan Taliban on Sunday after Islamabad accused Kabul of providing safe havens to the Pakistan Taliban militants whose cross-border attacks have led to a spike in violence in the country.

The Afghan government opened its gate at the border crossing point on Thursday.

The stoppage of containers on the way to Afghanistan is inflicting demurrage charges to exporters in thousands of rupees on a daily basis besides the concern of the rotting up of perishable items.

Every container of sugar is being charged a demurrage of Rs 45,000 daily while the container filled with transit goods is charged USD 160 per day as detention charges.

Similarly, every truck is fined Rs 6,000 on daily basis as a holding charge. Zia also said that the export quota of sugar to Afghanistan would expire in 45 days, with only twenty days left, and the business community would face huge losses if urgent measures were not taken.

The Afghan side on Thursday opened the gate but it remained closed from the Pakistani side, causing concern among businessmen and other stakeholders of the Pak-Afghan trade.

Closure of the border is not only inflicting losses in millions of rupees to the national exchequer but also creating a lot of problems for ailing Afghans who want to come here for treatment.

Zia demanded that Pakistan authorities open the border at the earliest so that stuck-up goods-laden trucks could proceed to their destination besides providing opportunities for thousands of people to cross the border on both sides.

Search continues for missing miners

AP ■ ALXA LEAGUE(CHINA)

Work crews trying to find 47 people missing after a collapse at an open-pit mine in northern China have had to change their excavation methods to avoid causing more landslides, state media reported Friday.

Six people have been confirmed dead and six injured people have been rescued at the mine in Inner Mongolia's Alxa League as of Thursday night, broadcaster CCTV said.

With a large collapsed area at the mine, the digging done by backhoes and bulldozers can risk more collapses.

The crews are excavating by layers and making trapezoid-shaped descents to carry on their search from both sides of the mountain in an adjustment of their rescue plans, the report said.

"It is very challenging to conduct rescue work," Li Zhongzeng, head of Alshaa League in Inner Mongolia, told CCTV. "Rescue efforts from everywhere, including those in neighbouring regions, are



In this photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency, rescuers work at the site of a collapsed open pit coal mine in Alxa Banner in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on Friday

rushing to the site."

The initial cave-in of one of the pit's walls occurred at about 1 pm Wednesday, burying people and mining trucks below in tons of rocks and sand. A brief video of the collapse posted on the website of the Beijing Times showed a massive wall of reddish dirt or sand rushing down a slope onto mining vehicles moving below.

A subsequent landslide about five hours later halted rescue efforts before they resumed Thursday.

The official Xinhua News Agency said about 900 rescuers with heavy equipment were on the scene. They were seen using heavy machines, shovels, and rescue dogs in their search for miners. Chinese President Xi Jinping had called for an "all-out" search-and-rescue effort.

On Friday, security remained tight at a checkpoint between Inner Mongolia and the neighboring region of Ningxia, with two police officers in yellow vests checking vehicles that were trying to get

past what one of them called a "restricted" area.

Some trucks were turned away from proceeding further, but others including one emergency services vehicle driving very fast with a siren blaring and a truck carrying rescue supplies were let in. The checkpoint appeared quieter compared to a day ago.

The company running the mine, Inner Mongolia Xinjing Coal Industry Co. Ltd., was fined last year for multiple safety violations including insecure routes, unsafe storage of volatile materials and a lack of safety training, according to the news website The Paper.

Inner Mongolia is a key region for mining of coal, minerals and rare earths that critics say has ravaged the region's landscape of mountains, grassy steppes and deserts.

China overwhelmingly relies on coal for power generation but has tried to cut the number of deadly mine accidents through a greater emphasis on safety and the closure of smaller operations that lacked necessary equipment.

Chinese diplomat warns US envoy in Hong Kong

AP ■ HONG KONG

A Chinese diplomat met with the US consul general in Hong Kong and warned him not to cross "red lines" to protest what China called his "inappropriate" interference in the territory's affairs, the foreign ministry's Hong Kong office said on Friday.

Consul General Gregory May gave a video address last month in which he expressed concern over diminished freedoms in Hong Kong and said its reputation as a business centre depended on adherence to international standards and the rule of law.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office in Hong Kong said its commissioner Liu Guangyuan met with May recently to express objections to his words and deeds.

"Liu also drew three red lines for US consul general and US consulate general in Hong Kong, which is not to endanger China's national security, not to engage in political infiltration in Hong Kong, and not to slander or damage Hong Kong's development prospect, his office said in reply to inquiries from The Associated Press.

Liu also urged May to abide by diplomatic ethics, the office added.

The US consulate in Hong Kong did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

May, in his address to the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies, also cited a decision by China's legislature that lets Hong Kong's executive branch decide whether foreign lawyers can be involved in national security cases in the city.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mrs. Sharmila is the owner of Built up area measuring 150 Sq. Yds., part of Property bearing No. 20/21, area measuring 350 Sq. Yds. out of Khassa No. 514, Situated in the area of Village Nasirpur, in the colony known as Gali No. 20, Near Pal Factory, Sadh Nagar, Palam Colony, New Delhi, vide GPA, A/S & Will dated 21.07.1993. All persons are hereby informed that the mentioned owner want to sell the said property to a person who intends to obtain loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection/s upon the ownership of above owner over the said floor, its sale/mortgage/litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 1Ind Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph: 011-4111252-728 kumarassociatesadvocate@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Vivek Ranjan Shrivastava is the owner of Entire First Floor, without Roof/Terrace Rights (hereinafter referred to as the "Said Floor") built on Property bearing No. 82, area measuring 25.90 Sq. Mtrs., in Block-B, Pocket-7, Sector-17, situated at Rohini, Delhi vide a Relinquishment Deed dated 22.12.2002, Doc. No. 15016. All persons are here by informed that above owner wants to mortgage the said property and intend to obtain a loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection/s upon the ownership of above owner over the said property, its mortgage/litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 1Ind Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph: 011-4111252-728 kumarassociatesadvocate@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General public that Mr. Ahmad Gafoor is the owner of A Residential Plot Admeasuring Area 200 SQYDS, Out of Khassa No. 10787, Situated in the Area of Village Kairana halika No 03 Out of limit Nagar Palika Parishad Kairana, Pargana & Tehsil Kairana District Shamli, U.P. vide registered Sale deed dated 20.08.2014 Document No 10442 Vol No 3751 & will dated 28.09.2017 Document No 407 Vol No 111. All persons are hereby informed that Mr. Furkan & Mr. Ahmad Gafoor are taking Loan Against property From Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. If anybody has any charge interest/litigation in the said property or kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Mrs. Praseon Lata, Advocate SG Associates (Law Firm)
Unit No 7, Basement, Plot No C 78, Sector 2, Noida UP 201301, E-MAIL: sgassociatespl@gmail.com Ph: 701117254, 813200653

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE to Appear/Attend Proceedings of DLM&SFC-LDH
Through this Publication This is for Constructive Notice for respondent **M/S HENNA TECHNOLOGIES** having registered office at **B-59 C, SECTOR-60, NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH-201301** to appear in person or through authorized representative before the District Level Micro & Small facilitation Council Ludhiana, District Industries Centre, Ludhiana on Dated **18-04-2023** regarding claim reference petition submitted by claimant **M/S BEDI STEEL ROLLING MILLS PVT. LTD.** U/s 18(1) of MSMED Act 2006 bearing reference: **MSFC/DIC/09/21/1649**. If respondent still fails or omits to appear as above then arbitration proceedings shall be conducted as per section 23 & 25 of Arbitration and Conciliation Act and award shall also be passed on the basis of evidence before it.
Member Secretary cum General Manager District Industries Centre Industrial Estates, Ludhiana Ph No:- 0161-2540695
Email id:- dcludhianaes@gmail.com, Ludhiana.msfc@gmail.com

Public Notice
This is to inform General Public that a matter was published on 19.02.2023 regarding mortgage of the Entire Ground Floor (Without Roof Rights), "Said Floor", Built on Property No. A-219, area measuring 193.33 Sq. yds., i.e. 160.09 Sq. mtrs. Situated in the Layout plan of The CPED Co-Operative House Building Society Ltd, known as Lok Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi through Mrs. Kusum Agarwal whereas inadvertently mentioned as "Property No. A-2/9" instead of "Property No. B-219". Now, Mrs. Kusum Agarwal is mortgaging the above said property with HDFC Bank Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneeb Dhewani Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Vertas North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, G-5-TL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/Feb/02/2023
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:

Sr. No.	Item	Quantity
2.	Stationery, Crockery and Misc Items	52 items

Closing Date & Time : 16-03-2023 at 5.00 p.m.
For details log on to **www.eproc.punjab.gov.in**
Note : Any corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.
Assistant Registrar (General)
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
NA/12/14668/2022/21536 DT/2/23/2023

INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)
E-TENDER No. 2023RS18742TC
Director, Railways Stores (W), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, Government of India invites e-tender for procurement of **6,73,340 Nos. Grease Seal to RD50 Specification No. WD-50-Misc-2007** of Oct 2007 or latest amendments, if any for AAR Standard Class 'E' (6" x 11") bearings used on CASNUB bogies of freight stock.
2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website **http://ireps.gov.in** for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.
3.0 No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.
4.0 Tender will be closed at 15:00 hours on 29.03.2023.
Director, Railway Stores (W), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, New Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India. 615/2023

MOULIN COMMERCIAL LIMITED
CIN: L74899DL1982PLC067811
Regd. Off.: 1, Anand Gram, Aya Nagar, Mehrauli, Gurgaon Road, New Delhi-110047
E-Mail: info@vinylgroup.com Telephone No.: 91-124-4301035 Website: www.moulin.co.in
Notice is hereby given that the Extra Ordinary General meeting ("EGM") of the members of **MOULIN COMMERCIAL LIMITED** ("the Company") will be held on Monday, 20th Day of March, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. (IST) at the Registered Office of the Company at 1, ANAND GRAM, AYA NAGAR, MEHRAULI, GURGAON ROAD, NEW DELHI-110047 to transact the business mentioned in the Notice of said EGM which has been dispatched to the Members on 24th February, 2023.
The notice of EGM has been sent to those members whose names are entered in the Register of Members as on cut-off date i.e. 20th February, 2023 and the same is also available on the website of the Company at **www.moulin.co.in**.
Further, Pursuant to Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 the register of members and transfer book will remain closed from **Monday, 13th March, 2023 to Sunday, 19th March, 2023** (both days inclusive) for the purpose of the EGM.
1. The cut-off date to determine eligibility to cast votes is Monday, 20th February, 2023.
2. Facility for voting through ballot paper shall also be made available at the EGM.
3. Notice of EGM is available on company's website **www.moulin.co.in**.
4. A person, whose name recorded in the register of members maintained by the depositories as on Monday, 20th February, 2022, shall be entitled to vote.
5. In case you have any queries or issues regarding EGM, kindly contact Mr. Ashish Gupta, Managing Director of the Company at **info@vinylgroup.com**, 91-124-4301035.
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD FOR MOULIN COMMERCIAL LIMITED
SD/-
ASHISH GUPTA
(Managing Director)
DIN: 00115090
PLACE: NEW DELHI
DATE: 24.02.2023

Investors' wealth plunges by ₹8.30L cr in 6 trading sessions

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stock market investors became poorer by Rs 8.30 lakh crore as equities continued their slide for the sixth consecutive day on Friday.

The BSE Sensex has tumbled 1,855.58 points or 3 per cent since February 16.

During this period, the combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms has reached Rs 8,30,322.61 crore to reach Rs 2,60,00,662.99 crore.

"The domestic market is broadly demonstrating a lack of confidence, registering its sixth consecutive day of losses despite global markets turning green.

Continued selling in the domestic market by FIIs is acting as an overhang in sustaining the early gains. Crude oil prices rallied as the



prospect of lower Russian exports outweighed rising US inventory," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. On Friday, the BSE benchmark fell 141.87 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 59,463.93 points.

"The downward spiral continued amid a sharp bout of intra-day volatility as uncertainty surrounding the weak global economic sce-

nario coupled with the probability of the US Fed maintaining a hawkish stance going ahead weighed on the sentiment," Amol Athawale, Deputy Vice President - Technical Research at Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 1,417.24 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

On Friday, in the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.17 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.15 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, metals tanked 2.39 per cent, commodities fell 1.17 per cent, auto (0.99 per cent), realty (0.70 per cent), FMCG (0.40 per cent), power (0.38 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.37 per cent).

Energy, healthcare, consumer durables and oil & gas indices were the gainers.

In the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Maruti, HDFC Bank, HDFC, Tech Mahindra and Bharti Airtel were the major laggards.

Among the gainers were Asian Paints, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, NTPC and UltraTech Cement.

Majority of Adani Group firms continue to fall

Some firms hit lower circuit limits in intra-day trade

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Most of the Adani Group firms continued to remain weak on Friday amid an overall bearish trend in the equity market.

The stock of Adani Transmission fell 5 per cent, Adani Green Energy slipped 5 per cent, Adani Total Gas (5 per cent) and Adani Enterprises (4.98 per cent) on the BSE.

Shares of Adani Power dipped 4.98 per cent, NDTV dropped 4.05 per cent and Adani Wilmar went lower by 3.35 per cent.

However, Ambuja Cements advanced 2.45 per cent, Adani Ports climbed 1.24 per cent and ACC (0.03 per cent).

Shares of eight Adani Group firms out of the ten listed entities had ended in the negative territory on Thursday. Adani Group firms had fallen sharply on Wednesday, with all



the listed firms ending in the red.

On Friday, the BSE Sensex fell 141.87 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 59,463.93. In a bearish trend, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 1,855.58 points or 3 per cent since February 16.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the exchanges after US-based short seller Hindenburg Research last month made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share-price manipulation, against it.

The group has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.

India's forex reserves drop by \$5.68 billion to \$561.26 billion

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 5.681 billion to USD 561.267 billion for the week ended February 17, the RBI said on Friday.

This is the third consecutive week of a drop in the reserves after the USD 8.319 billion decrease in the previous reporting week to USD 566.948 billion.

In October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended February 17, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 4.515 billion to USD



496.072 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased for the third week running and were USD 1.045 billion down to USD 41.817 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were also down by USD 87 million to USD 18.267 billion, the apex bank said.

Call drop issue: Trai directs telcos to submit service quality reports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sector regulator Trai on Friday issued directions to telecom service providers to submit service quality reports for each state and Union Territory too.

Trai said submission of state and Union Territory wise report for QoS (quality of service) parameters is essential for optimum analysis of service quality being provided by telcos.

"This will also help respective state/UT governments in facilitating service providers in improving QoS in the State /UT as and when required," TRAI said in a statement.

Accordingly, the telecom operators have been directed to submit state and Union Territory-wise reports, in respect of QoS parameters on quarterly basis starting from March 2023 quarter.



"LSA (Licensed Service Area) wise data, as currently being submitted through various performance monitoring reports, shall continue to be submitted as per schedule defined in the regulation," it said.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai), last week at a review meeting, had made it clear that it will ask telecom operators to report

call drop data at state level too, amid rising instances of service quality issues and consumer complaints.

Earlier this week, mobile operators' body COAI said that reporting call drop data even state-wise entails several administrative and execution "difficulties" on ground, and that reporting should continue at LSA (Licensed Service Area) level.

India scores on innovation, harnessing internet benefits but modest progress on cybersecurity rail guards: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India fares well on parameters such as innovation and harnessing benefits of internet, but still has ground to cover when it comes to protection against cybercrime and invasion of privacy, according to a latest report.

Without an exclusive cybersecurity law, Indians have to rely on "anachronistic" and sectoral regulations, making "protect" the weakest link in India's otherwise remarkable digital transformation, said the State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) report.

The report traces digital transformation through four stages of connect, harness, innovate and protect framework.

The report by ICRIER Prosus Centre for Internet and the Digital Economy (IPCIDE) gives a thumbs up to India's performance on "innovation"



and harnessing the power of digital services. The 'harness' pillar measures how India is using the internet to generate growth, create jobs and improve governance.

"Despite being a lower-middle income country compared to its G20 peers, India's performance is significantly superior on the 'innovation' pillar. The next strongest suit is harness, where Indians are adopting digital services at a quick pace," says the report.

There are mixed results for the connect pillar, found the report.

"The weakest link in India's digital transition is the fourth pillar, protection against cybercrime and invasion of privacy. This requires urgent attention," the report pointed out.

It noted that the government is working to address this through legislations such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill and new guidelines notified by CERT-In.

Govt to approve up to 2 chip making units this year, says Chandrasekhar

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The government expects to approve up to two applications this year to start building electronic chip manufacturing plants in the country, minister of state for electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Friday.

While speaking on the sidelines of the SemiconIndia Future Design Conference, the minister told PTI that the current situation of slowdown in the electronic chip business will not have any impact on India's semiconductor programme as the impact is cyclical in nature but the programme has been conceived with long-term vision.

"The year 2023 will be an important milestone. We will cross Rs 1 lakh crore in mobile phone exports this year. We will be certainly announcing one to two fabs in India to be commencing construction," Chandrasekhar said.

The government has



received proposals from five companies for setting up electronic chip and display manufacturing plants with investments of Rs 1.53 lakh crore a year ago.

Vedanta Foxconn JV, IGSS Ventures and ISMC propose to set up electronic chip manufacturing plants with USD 13.6 billion investment and have sought support of USD 5.6 billion from the Centre under the Rs 76,000 crore Semicon India Programme.

A joint venture of Indian conglomerate Vedanta and electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn has finalised

the Dholera Special Investment Region near Ahmedabad city of Gujarat for setting up their semiconductor and display manufacturing facility.

In the biggest ever corporate investment in the history of independent India, a joint venture of Vedanta and Foxconn in September last year signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Gujarat government to invest Rs 1,54,000 crore to set up the plant in the state. It is slated to be the first manufacturing facility for semiconductors in India. The minister at the event facilitated the first

three startups — Vervese Microelectronics, Fermionic Design and DV2JS Innovation, selected under the Design Linked Incentive scheme in the semiconductor space.

"We will expand the semiconductor design ecosystem which was only 2-3 companies a few years ago to a 100 start-up by the end of the year. This is in my opinion our goal for 2023," Chandrasekhar said.

He announced that a private industry-led research centre, "India Semiconductor Research Centre" (ISRC), will soon be launched and the semiconductor laboratory is being modernised and pivoted into a research fab and will be co-located with the ISRC.

The minister also announced the launch of the ChipIN Centre at C-DAC India, Bangalore which will act as one-stop centre to provide semiconductor design tools, fab access, virtual prototyping Hw lab access to fabless chip designers of the country.

Air India to hire 5,100 cabin crew, pilots in 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India plans to hire more than 4,200 cabin crew and 900 pilots this year as the Tata Group-owned airline expands its fleet and operations.

The announcement comes close on the heels of the carrier placing an order to buy 470 aircraft from Boeing and Airbus, including 70 wide-body planes.

The airline, which was taken over by the Tata Group in January 2022, also plans to lease 36 aircraft and out of them, two B 777-200 LR have already been inducted.

In a release on Friday, Air India said it "plans to hire over 4,200 cabin crew trainees and 900 pilots in 2023 as the airline adds new aircraft and rapidly expands its domestic and international operations".

Between May 2022-February 2023, the airline hired more than 1,900 cabin crew. "Over 1,100 cabin crew have been trained in the last seven months (between July 2022-January 2023), and in the past



three months, approximately 500 cabin crew have been released for flying by the airline," the release said.

Sandeep Verma, Head - Inflight Services at Air India, said the addition of fresh talent will accelerate the pace of cultural transformation at the airline and added that it is also looking to step up hiring of more pilots and maintenance engineers.

The cabin crew will undergo a 15-week programme to impart safety and service skills, and will be coached to exemplify the best of Indian hospitality and Tata group culture. The training programme will include extensive classroom and in-flight training at the airline's training facility in Mumbai as well as familiarisation flights, the release said.

Coal production rises 16% to 698.25 MT during Apr-Jan this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's domestic coal production has shown impressive growth during the past few years and this rise in output has helped the nation to check the import of fossil fuel considerably, the government said on Friday.

In the current financial year, the country's total coal production recorded a more than 16 per cent rise to 698.25 MT during the period from April 2022 to January 2023, as compared to 601.97 MT during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

In this period, Coal India Limited (CIL) production has also gone up by about 15.23 per cent to 550.93 MT from 478.12 MT, the coal ministry said in a statement.

The increase in domestic coal production has helped the country curb import to a large extent in face of sharp increase in coal demand arising due to continuous rise in power consumption.

The country's total coal production has increased from



730.87 MT (Million Ton) in 2019-20 to 778.19 MT in 2021-22, achieving a growth of 6.47 per cent.

The Coal Ministry has fixed the target of 1.31 BT (Billion Ton) for FY 25 and the same is likely to go up to 1.5 BT by FY 30.

The Ministry has been actively engaging with various state governments and central government agencies both for starting new coal mines and also for increasing coal production in the currently operational mines.

As a result of such initiatives, production from captive and commercial coal mines has increased to 93.22 MT in April 2022 to January 2023 period of FY 22-23 from 71.31 MT in the same period of FY 21-22, showing a growth of more than 30 per cent, the statement said.

Auto component replacement demand estimated to grow 6-8% in FY24: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Auto component replacement demand is estimated to grow 6-8 per cent in the next fiscal driven by factors such as the increase in mobility and healthy freight movement, among others, a report stated on Friday. The improvement in demand has resulted in a positive impact on cash flows for aftermarket dealers and garages while the liquidity remains comfortable, credit ratings agency Icara said in the report.

Also, there have been relatively minimal issues in the collection of receivables, as per the report.

Icara also said that while the medium-term demand prospects are favourable, EV adoption, implementation of



scrappage policy, component lifetime elongation, and possible increased use of public transport vis-à-vis private vehicles could impact the growth.

The aftermarket segment constitutes around a fifth of the overall demand and remains a vital cog in the Indian auto component industry, it said.

The average age of medium and heavy commercial vehicles had increased to almost 10

years, while the average age of passenger vehicles had risen to 7.3 years in FY22, the highest in the past two decades, according to Icara.

"Icara projects replacement demand growth at 6-8 per cent in FY2024, supported by underlying demand drivers, including the increase in mobility, improving economic activity, and healthy freight movement," it said.

NCLAT stays insolvency proceedings against Zee Entertainment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief to media major Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL), the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Friday stayed the insolvency proceedings initiated against it earlier this week.

Admitting a petition filed by ZEEL Managing Director and chief executive Punit Goenka, the appellate tribunal issued notices to private sector lender IndusInd bank and the interim resolution professional directing them to file a reply in two weeks.

NCLAT said the submissions made by both sides need a detailed hearing.

"List the appeal for final disposal on March 29. In the meantime, the order passed by the adjudicating authority on February 22, 2023 remains stayed," said the NCLAT bench



comprising Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan and Barun Mitra.

Commenting on the development, Goenka in a statement said: "We respect the decision taken by NCLAT and remain committed towards protecting the interests of all stakeholders. Our focus continues to be on the timely completion of the proposed merger (Culver Max Entertainment)." On Wednesday, the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal

(NCLT) had admitted a plea filed by IndusInd Bank to initiate insolvency proceedings and had appointed Sanjeev Kumar Jalan as the interim resolution professional in the matter.

The matter pertains to a default of Rs 89 crore by Essel Group's multisystem operator arm Siti Networks claimed by IndusInd Bank, for which ZEEL was a guarantor.

The NCLAT order is a major reprieve for ZEEL, which is merging with rival

Culver Max Entertainment, formerly known as Sony Pictures Networks India, creating India's biggest media empire.

The company has received necessary approvals from shareholders, creditors, bourses and CCI and a final go-ahead from NCLT is awaited.

During the proceedings, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi representing ZEEL submitted that insolvency was initiated against the media firm for being a corporate guarantor for a loan provided to Siti Networks.

Terming it a "comedy of errors", Rohatgi told NCLAT that ZEEL was "not a regular guarantor" of the loan under which a comfort amount was to be maintained in the Debt Service Reserve Account (DSRA) for payment of the interest.

According to him, ZEEL

had not given a special guarantee for the debt. The guarantee was given only if Siti Networks doesn't maintain one tranche of interest comfortably.

He also submitted that ZEEL is going through an amalgamation with Culver Max and has all the approvals but the merger will get stuck because of this order.

While senior advocate Rajiv Nayar, representing IndusInd Bank said ZEEL was a "principal debtor" as per the agreement. A cash buffer was to be maintained but instead ZEEL was going from one court to another, taking their chance.

IndusInd had approached NCLT claiming a financial debt of around Rs 92 crore. However, this was challenged by ZEEL by filing another appeal against the maintainability of the petition by the bank.

Red Devils kick Barca OUT

United into Europa League last 16 as Juventus, AS Roma move on

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United edged out Barcelona to reach the Europa League last 16 on Thursday where they were joined by fellow heavyweights Juventus and Roma.

After the first leg of their play-off ended 2-2 in Spain, United got the better of Barcelona at Old Trafford to progress 4-3 on aggregate with Antony securing the winner.

Robert Lewandowski's early penalty had given Barca the perfect start but La Liga leaders were again undone with the step up to the European stage as Fred levelled early in the second period.

Antony then delivered his biggest moment since arriving in Manchester from Ajax.

United are riding the crest of a wave in Erik ten Hag's first season in charge as the Red Devils remain in the hunt for trophies on four fronts.

United could end a six-year wait for silverware when they face Newcastle in the League Cup final on Sunday.

But they left nothing in reserve to secure their biggest European scalp since dumping Paris Saint-Germain out of the Champions League last 16 in dramatic fashion in 2019.

United are now unbeaten at Old Trafford in 18 games dating back to September.

"Very good to hear my name from the fans but it was a good game we played today,"



said Fred.

"We need to keep going. We have a final on Sunday and now we have to change our mind to go to the final."

Former United star Angel

di Maria scored a hat-trick as Juventus reached the next stage with a 3-0 second leg win over Nantes.

The result allowed the Italian giants to progress 4-1 on

aggregate.

Argentine World Cup winner Di Maria opened the scoring after five minutes and then added a 20th-minute penalty.

Di Maria completed his

hat-trick in the 78th minute, in a game where the French side had been reduced to 10 men after just a quarter of an hour when Nicolas Pallois was red-carded for handball.

"After we were knocked out of the Champions League, some people might have thought the Europa League would be a walk in the park for Juventus, but it is not that simple," said Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri.

"This was an important match, but it was not perfect. We still have work to do. There were things I was not happy with this evening."

Jose Mourinho's Roma also made it to Friday's last 16 draw as a 2-0 win overturned a one-goal deficit from the first leg against Salzburg.

Andrea Belotti and Paulo Dybala scored in a seven-minute first-half spell to secure the win.

Six-time champions Sevilla went down to a 2-0 defeat to PSV Eindhoven in the Netherlands but progressed 3-2 on aggregate.

Luuk de Jong and Fabio Silva hit late goals for the Dutch team who had Mauro Junior sent off in stoppage time.

Sporting Lisbon were also amongst the winners, a 4-0 victory at Midtjylland in Denmark sealing a 5-1 victory.

Union Berlin, who are riding high in the Bundesliga, defeated Ajax 3-1 after the first leg had ended goalless last week.

Robin Knoche, Josip Juranovic and Danilho Doekhi scored the goals which gave Union a first ever win in the Europa League knockout stages.



‘We won for Ukraine’: Shakhtar celebrates Europa League victory

AP ■ RENNES

Shakhtar Donetsk qualified for the knockout stages of the Europa League on Thursday with coach Igor Jovicevic hailing the win at French side Rennes as a "victory for Ukraine."

Shakhtar defeated Rennes 5-4 in a penalty shootout after their play-off had ended 3-3 on aggregate and then went to extra-time.

The win comes on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"It was very important. This match was for you, Ukraine, it was for our country, for Ukraine," said Croatian national Jovicevic who has worked in Ukraine for more than 20 years.

"I can't find the words at the moment, we were in the game until the end," he added.

"You could almost say that we died on the pitch, that we left our arms and legs there. This victory is a reward

for our work."

The Ukrainian club has not played games in their home city since 2014 and have to stage 'home' league matches in Lviv.

European matches are played on neutral ground in Warsaw where families of some of the players now live.

"Respect to my players. I'm proud of them," added Jovicevic who praised the "magnificent atmosphere" of Rennes' Roazhon Park stadium.

"It's my dream that my team can one day play in a home stadium full of fans," said the coach.

"The next round now gives us the opportunity to see them again, they give us strength."

"Without European competition, we wouldn't go to Warsaw. Personally speaking, if we had been eliminated tonight, I would not have seen my family until at least June."



Rashford a doubt for League Cup final

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag said on Friday he does not know whether inform Marcus Rashford will be available for the League Cup final against Newcastle this weekend.

The 25-year-old forward has been in sparkling form this season and helped the Red Devils beat Barcelona in the Europa League knockout.

Rashford was substituted in the 88th minute and appeared to hint on Instagram he had picked up a knock, posting an image of himself walking down the touchline looking in discomfort accompanied with a bandaged emoji.

Asked if the forward would be available for the match at Wembley on Sunday, Ten Hag said: "I don't know. So, players now are coming in. We have to do investigations, medical of course."

"Yesterday we did but so straight after the game most of the time you can't say. We have to wait for a 100 percent diagnosis, so we have to wait."

Ten Hag confirmed Anthony Martial, who has not played since February 1, will not be available for the match as United attempt to end their six-year trophy drought.

Saka used to getting ‘kicked and fouled’: Arteta

AP ■ LONDON

Mikel Arteta has backed Bukayo Saka to cope with the rough treatment meted out by opponents but says the Arsenal winger can also learn ways to cope better with being targeted.

The 21-year-old England international has been under the spotlight in recent weeks over a perceived lack of protection from officials and was on the end of some robust challenges in last week's 4-2 win against Aston Villa.

Shortly before half-time his frustration boiled over after he was fouled by Philippe Coutinho and he shoved the Brazilian in the chest.

Arsenal boss Arteta admitted after the win at Villa Park that opposition teams set out to stop his star man, who leads Arsenal in goals and assists.

Despite the crunching tackles, Saka has not missed any of Arsenal's past 65 league games, the longest run in the division, as the league leaders prepare to travel to Leicester on Saturday.

"There is a lot of focus now on Bukayo, and we need to keep that in mind as a team with the plans that we put together,



understanding what the opponents are doing, but for sure referees have their responsibilities and they have to do their jobs," Arteta said on Friday.

"If you ask him how it used to be when he was 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 -- it isn't very different. Wingers and talented players get kicked and fouled and get the

demand to win games and that is the chance he has, that is his role in the team.

"But we have to train that and he needs to learn when to take certain balls, what to do with that ball, how to use his body, when to jump."

Reports suggest Saka is close to signing a new, long-

term deal at the Emirates Stadium but Arteta was tight-lipped when questioned on the issue.

"We want to keep our best players, the players that we are developing," he said. "We want to create a long-term project here and we need our best players at the club."

Pickford signs new Everton deal



AP ■ LIVERPOOL

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford has signed a new long-term contract with Everton, committing his future to the Premier League club until June 2027.

The 28-year-old, who had been approaching the final 12 months of his contract, was linked with a move to Tottenham among other clubs but has now signed a four-and-a-half year deal.

Pickford, a £30 million

(\$36 million) signing from Sunderland in 2017, has made more than 200 appearances.

The club, who appointed former Burnley boss Sean Dyche as their new manager in late January, are languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, one point above the relegation zone.

"It's massive to sign this new contract at such a special club for me," Pickford told Everton TV. "The support I've had from everyone at the club since I joined... has been so important to my family and me. I'm happy here and so are my family. We love it at Everton."

"Everton is a massive club. The past few seasons have not been what we wanted but we now have a manager who I believe will point us in the right direction and get us up the table. It's definitely my aim to be successful at this club."

Conte ‘close’ to Spurs return

AP ■ LONDON

Tottenham assistant manager Cristian Stellini said on Friday that boss Antonio Conte is "very close" to fully returning to work, but is not expected to be at this weekend's match against his former club Chelsea.

Conte is recovering from gallbladder surgery in Italy after doctors told him to rest again and is unlikely to be present for Sunday's game.

The 53-year-old returned to oversee Tottenham's defeats at Leicester and AC Milan before deciding he had come back to the bench too soon.

Stellini led the team for last week's win over West Ham and has been in regular contact with Conte.

"I don't think so (for Chelsea)," Stellini told reporters when questioned about the manager's return.

"It is not the moment, but he is very close because I feel also his energy. We have a call three times a day, also in the evenings, so absolutely I feel Antonio like he is here."

"We speak a lot and, if we compare when Antonio had the surgery three weeks ago to now, it is completely different. He is completely involved. We transfer to him our feeling, this sensation we have on the players."



Alcaraz advances to Rio Open quarter-finals

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

World number two Carlos Alcaraz beat 86th-ranked Fabio Fognini of Italy in a thriller on Thursday to advance to the quarterfinals of the ATP Rio Open.

The 19-year-old Spanish phenom battled back after losing the first set, going on to win 6-7 (5-7), 6-2, 6-4.

"It's a challenge facing a player like Fabio. He's a great player with a lot of talent," Alcaraz said after the dramatic clay court duel.

"You never know what he might have in store for you."

Fognini, a 35-year-old veteran with nine singles titles, went down 3-0 to the defending champion in the opening set,

before battling back with a string of masterful rallies.

He broke Alcaraz's serve to equalize at 5-5, then won the set in a tie-breaker.

But Alcaraz roared back in the second, going up 4-0, and carried his momentum through the final set to take the match.

The dramatic display had the crowd at stadium court fired up.

"You energized both Fabio and me from the start, thank you so much," Alcaraz told the fans. "We played a great match. I'm very happy I managed to win."

Alcaraz will face Dusan Lajovic in the quarterfinals on Friday. The 80th-ranked Lajovic beat 57th-ranked Laslo Djere 6-2, 6-4 in an all-Serbian showdown.

Klopp signed new contract to oversee ‘tricky’ Liverpool rebuild

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jurgen Klopp admitted on Friday his struggling Liverpool squad need a rebuild, saying he signed a new contract last season to oversee the repair job at Anfield.

Liverpool's current campaign is in danger of unravelling after this week's chastening 5-2 Champions League defeat by Real Madrid in the first leg of their last-16 tie.

Last season, Liverpool came agonisingly close to winning an unprecedented quadruple but are now already out of both domestic club competitions and lag 19 points behind Premier League leaders Arsenal.

Klopp has been blamed for failing to refresh the squad, particularly his ageing midfield, but the German said "splashing the money" was not a solution at Anfield.

Instead the club appears to have taken a more strategic approach. Midfielders James Milner, Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Naby Keita, forward Roberto Firmino and third-choice goalkeeper Adrian are all out of contract in June, suggesting there could be significant transfer activity.



Last April, Klopp extended his contract until 2026, knowing major changes were necessary.

"We know we have to change things and we will," said the Reds boss, whose side are away to Crystal Palace on Saturday. "We cannot do that now but it is already clear we have to do something in the summer."

"The way this club is led is not by splashing the money and having a look to see if it works out or not. Our transfers always have to be on point."

"We cannot make four transfers before we know who will leave the club. I knew it would be tricky, that is one of the main reasons I signed a new contract."

Klopp said he understood the frustrations of some fans but was adamant that "last season was not a season for big change".

Liverpool were pipped to the Premier League title by Manchester City and lost the Champions League final to Real Madrid but ended up winning the FA Cup and the League Cup.

"We played until the last

Saints appoint Ruben Selles as manager

AP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Premier League strugglers Southampton on Friday named Ruben Selles as their manager until the end of the season.

The appointment of the 39-year-old Spaniard follows the sacking earlier this month of Nathan Jones, who was in charge for just three months.

Southampton are bottom of the English top flight, with five wins in their 23 league games so far this season. The club issued a brief statement saying: "Southampton Football Club can today confirm that Ruben Selles has been appointed as men's first team manager until the end of the 2022/23 season."

moment and if you want to change at this club you cannot just bring in new players and realise 'Oh, no one wants to leave'," said Klopp. "It doesn't work like that."

"It is not possible to start it (transfer planning) early because we had final after final after final, played the season until the last minute, played the Champions League final and then we had a short break, then we had a lot of injuries and the World Cup."

Despite their struggles,

Liverpool are still only seven points adrift of fourth-placed Tottenham with two matches in hand and Klopp said not all was doom and gloom.

"I don't say everything everyone says around us is wrong, not at all, but most of the things are not right as well," said Klopp. "We know we have to improve."

"You can lose against Real Madrid but I don't think a lot of teams can cause them the problems we did in the first 20 minutes. That is a sign of quality."

SA reach Women's T20 WC final

AP ■ CAPE TOWN

Pacers Shabnim Ismail and Ayabonga Khaka shared seven wickets between them as South Africa staged a spectacular fight-back to stun England by six runs and enter their maiden Women's T20 World Cup final here on Friday.

Openers Laura Wolvaardt (53) and Tazmin Britz (68) struck entertaining half-centuries to take South Africa to 164 for four in the second semifinal at Newlands.

The game went down to the wire thanks to the efforts of Ismail (3/27) and Khaka (4/29), who both came up with momentum changing overs.

The 2009 champions England ended with 158 for eight in 20 overs.

Danielle Wyatt (34) and Sophia Dunkley (28) made a flying start to take England to 53 for no loss in five overs.

Star pacer Ismail brought back South Africa in the game with a double strike in the sixth over. Both Dunkley and incoming batter Alice Capsey (0) were caught at midwicket by Britz. The one-handed catch to dismiss Capsey off a short ball stood out among the four catches she took in the game.

With 81 needed off last 60 balls and eight wickets in hand, England were expected to complete the task before South Africa made a roaring comeback, egged on by a loud home crowd.

Medium pacer Khaka turned the game on its head by striking thrice in the 18th over, sending back Amy Jones, Sophie Ecclestone and Katherine Sciver-Brunt.

With 13 needed off the last over and England still had hope with skipper Heather Knight in the middle. Ismail got rid of her to seal a special result for South Africa.

Earlier, the hosts' star batter Wolvaardt and Britz shared a 96-run stand to lay the groundwork for a competitive total.



England's lead spinner Sophie Ecclestone was the pick of the bowlers taking three wickets for 22 runs in four overs.

It was a second successive fifty from the 23-year-old Wolvaardt whose innings comprised five fours and a glorious off-drive than went all the way for a six.

Ecclestone was the one to provide the breakthrough for England as

THE GAME WENT DOWN TO THE WIRE THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF ISMAIL (3/27) AND KHAKA (4/29), WHO BOTH CAME UP WITH MOMENTUM CHANGING OVERS

Wolvaardt, trying to play on the on side, got a leading edge and was caught by Charlotte Dean.

Britz changed gears following her opening partner's dismissal. Her back to straight sixes off leggie Sarah Glenn was the highlight of her innings.

Ecclestone pulled things back in the death overs with wickets of Chloe Tyrone and Nadine de Klerk in

a three run over before Marizanne Kapp got a much needed 23 not out off 13 balls to take the total beyond 160.

Katherine Sciver-Brunt's last over went for 18 runs and included a boundary off a waist high full toss.

Kapp ended the innings on a high with back to back fours.

South Africa were able to collect 66 runs off the last six overs.



Smith to lead Australia in Cummins' absence

PTI ■ INDORE

Steve Smith will lead the Australian Test team against India in the third Test match in Indore starting March 1 as Pat Cummins will not return next week from Australia due to family reasons.

Cummins had to fly back home to Sydney after losing the second Test match, explaining in a statement that his mother 'is ill and in palliative care'. He was supposed to return back from home because there was a nine-day break between the second Test match in New Delhi to the third Test match in Indore. "I have decided against returning to India at this time. I feel I am best being here with my family. I appreciate the overwhelming support I have received from Cricket Australia and my teammates. Thanks for your understanding," said Australian captain Pat Cummins as per cricket.com.au.

Cummins as per cricket.com.au.

The 29-year-old pacer's absence is the latest blow to Aussies' hopes in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series. Earlier, pacer Josh Hazlewood and opener David Warner returned home due to injuries. Left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc will likely be the replacement of his captain and will lead the pace attack.

Smith has captained Australia in 34 Tests between 2014 and 2018, including Australia's most recent Test tour of India in 2017, a controversy-marred campaign in which Smith dominated with the bat, scoring three centuries. In the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy series he has scored 71 runs in four innings at an average of 23.66.

India have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the ongoing four-match Test series and Captain Pat Cummins' absence will make things more difficult for the visitors.

Brook puts England in charge of NZ Test



AP ■ WELLINGTON

Red-hot Harry Brook made a majestic 184 not out to put England firmly in control against New Zealand in the second Test in Wellington on Friday.

Joe Root was also unbeaten on a classy 101 as the tourists blazed their way to 315-3 before rain ended the opening day of the series decider early.

Brook's breathtaking display at the Basin Reserve made

him the first player to score 800 or more runs in his first nine Test innings.

The 24-year-old came to the crease with England wobbling at 21-3 inside the first seven overs.

It then became the Brook show as he took his Test average to just over 100 in only his sixth match. He has four tons already.

Brook rated his Wellington knock as the best of his fledgling Test career given England's precarious situation when he

came in to bat. "We lost three early wickets, which isn't ideal, but then I came out and tried to counter-punch a bit and be as positive as we could be. Thankfully it came off," said Brook.

New Zealand won the toss and elected to bowl on a green wicket.

That decision paid instant reward as the hosts quickly tore through England's top order of Zak Crawley (two), Ben Duckett (nine) and Ollie Pope (10).

Matt Henry and skipper Tim Southee did the early damage for the hosts under blue skies.

Henry, back after missing the first Test with the birth of his child, forced Crawley into being caught behind as the opener's sticky run continued.

All-rounder Michael Bracewell then made two superb catches in the slips to first dismiss Pope, then Duckett.

The removal of Duckett following Bracewell's diving catch gave Southee a 700th international wicket in all formats, becoming the first New Zealander to reach the milestone.

Brook was player of the match in the first Test with back-to-back half-centuries to help England to a 267-run win.

He continued the remarkable start to his Test career with a magnificent unbeaten knock laced with 24 fours and five sixes. His 184 came off 169 balls.



side in contention to chase down Australia's 172/4.

But a bizarre moment sent Kaur back to the dugout when her bat jammed in the wicket as she ran it in, leaving her

SL announce 17-member Test squad for NZ tour

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Dimuth Karunaratne will lead Sri Lanka in a two-Test series in New Zealand which is all set to begin on March 9.

The series carries all important World Test Championship points. Apart from Australia and India, Sri Lanka is the only other team with a chance of reaching the World Test Championship final. "The Sri Lanka Cricket Selection Committee selected the following 17-member test squad to take part in the two-match test series of the upcoming Sri Lanka Tour of New Zealand 2023," Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said in an official statement.

They presently have 53.33% of the potential points, and to go to the final, Sri Lanka would need to beat New Zealand 2-0 while also praying for other results to go their way.

Sri Lanka has had a poor record in New Zealand, winning only twice in 19 prior efforts. Yet, the team's Test form has been strong under coach Chris Silverwood. Lahiru Kumara, Chamika Karunaratne, Kasun Rajitha, Asitha Fernando, Milan Rathnayake, and Vishwa Fernando are among the pace possibilities in Sri Lanka's squad for the tour.

Sri Lanka will tour New Zealand from March 9 to April 8. They are set to play two Tests,

three ODIs and three T20Is on this tour.

The first Test will be played from March 9-13 at Christchurch. The second Test will be contested from March 17-21 at Wellington.

TEST SQUAD

Dimuth Karunaratne (c), Oshada Fernando, Kasal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Dhananjaya de Silva, Dinesh Chandimal, Kamindu Mendis, Niroshan Dickwella, Nishan Madushka, Ramesh Mendis, Prabath Jayasuriya, Chamika Karunaratne, Kasun Rajitha, Lahiru Kumara, Asitha Fernando, Vishwa Fernando and Milan Rathnayake.



Sindhu parts ways with coach Park Tae-Sang

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu and her coach Park Tae-Sang have parted ways, the South Korean confirmed on his social media account on Friday.

Sindhu won three BWF World Tour titles under Park Tae-Sang, including the Syed Modi International, the Swiss Open, and the Singapore Open. Park on his Instagram handle said, "I came back to Hyderabad a few days ago. And I want to say thank you to everyone who worried about my father. To be honest, my father's condition is not good yet. So I felt heavy walking back to India."

"I'd like to talk about my relationship with PV Sindhu, which many people have asked about. She has made disappointing moves in all recent



matches, and as a coach, I feel responsible. So she wanted a change and said she would find a new coach. I decided to respect and follow her decision. I'm sorry that I can't be with her until the next Olympics, but now

I'm going to support her from afar. I will remember every moment with her. I would like to thank everyone who has been supporting and encouraging me," he further added. Park Tae-Sang was the

South Korean national team's coach from 2013 until 2018. In 2019, he joined the India national team and began coaching men's singles players. PV Sindhu was coached by the South Korean throughout the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, where she earned bronze and gold medals.

Sindhu damaged her ankle during her gold medal run in Birmingham, causing her to miss the 2022 BWF World Tour Finals.

Sindhu lost in the first round of the Malaysia Open and the India Open upon her return to the sport in January 2023. The qualification period for the 2024 Paris Olympics begins on May 1, 2023, and ends on April 28, 2024. She is currently at number nine in the women's singles.

Authorities unhappy with wrestlers' behaviour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wrestling authorities in India are unhappy with ace wrestlers' behaviour and said that the report submission was delayed due to the grapplers' last-minute demand of adding a member of their choice to the 'Oversight Committee' formed to investigate allegations against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

The Ministry Of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) on Thursday extended the submission report deadline for the Wrestling Oversight Committee formed to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct, harassment/intimidation, financial irregularities and administrative lapses of the WFI by two weeks. "The report submission was also delayed due to wrestlers' last-minute demand of asking for adding a member of their choice in the oversight committee," according to sources.

The committee will now have until March 9 to submit the report. The competent authorities approved the extension after a request letter was sent by members of the Oversight Committee for the submission of the report. The extension also applies to other functioning of the committee, including day-to-day administration of WFI, during the inquiry.

Top Indian wrestlers including Olympic medalists Bajrang Punia, Ravi Kumar Dahiya, Sakshi Malik and others had opted out of the first two ranking series tournaments of the year in Zagreb and Cairo, respectively.

Harmanpreet's runout was turning point: VVS Laxman

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Following Team India's five-run loss to Australia in the semi-final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, former India cricketer VVS Laxman called Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's run out a "turning point" of the game.

"Tough luck Team India. #HarmanpreetKaur & #JemimahRodrigues looked like taking the game away but the Aussies fought back brilliantly & in the end India have fallen short. Harmanpreet's runout was the turning point & India will be disappointed to miss out on the finals. #INDWvAUSW," tweeted for-

mer India cricketer VVS Laxman. India's wait for a world title continued as they succumbed to a heartbreaking five-run loss to Australia in the semifinal of the ongoing ICC Women's T20 World Cup on Thursday, where nerves of Aussies prevailed over top knocks from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues.

Harmanpreet Kaur suffered a freak dismissal during the semi-final against Australia at a crucial juncture in the game. The India captain, who made it out into the middle despite suffering from illness, was playing beautifully to reach her half-century and put her



side in contention to chase down Australia's 172/4.

But a bizarre moment sent Kaur back to the dugout when her bat jammed in the wicket as she ran it in, leaving her

short of her ground as she was run out for 52.

Coming to the match, Australia put up 172/4 in their 20 overs after electing to bat first. Beth Mooney scored a fine half-century, 54 off 37 balls. Skipper Meg Lanning (49*) and Ashleigh Gardner (31*) played fine knocks to support Mooney.

Chasing 173, India was reduced to 28/3. A 69-run stand between Jemimah Rodrigues (43) and Harmanpreet helped swing momentum in favour of India. Harmanpreet scored a fine fifty. However, Australia held their nerves to deny India a place in the final.

Cricket law-makers call for calm as 'Mankad' debate heats up

AP ■ LONDON

Cricket's law-makers have issued a "call for calm" as controversy swirls over the legitimacy of the "Mankad" dismissal -- when the non-striking batsman is run out by a bowler.

For some cricket followers the dismissal, named after India all-rounder Vinoo Mankad, has always been unsporting, even though officials have repeatedly stressed it remains legal.

There have been dire warnings over the use of the dismissal at amateur level, with former England batsman Mark Butcher predicting "absolute carnage".

But the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) -- which still has



global responsibility for cricket's laws -- stepped in on Thursday to defuse tensions, issuing a statement on the issue. "The WCC... (MCC's) World Cricket committee is now calling for calm across all levels of the game, from the grassroots level of recreational cricket to the elite level, given that the act of running out a

non-striker who opts to steal ground is within the laws of the game," it said.

Committee chairman Mike Gatting, the former England captain, said the fundamental position was unchanged and that bowlers deserved protection from batters backing up too far.

"Our stance on this is simple -- batters must not steal ground if they do not wish to be given out in this manner," he said.

"Nor should they be expecting to be given a warning if they do."

Sri Lanka great Kumar Sangakkara said: "The bowler is not the villain here. Every batter has a choice; to stay in their ground, or risk being given out if they try to steal ground."