

CITY 3

CM: UNION BUDGET DEDICATED TO
OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY

OPINION 6

BUDGET BOOSTER FOR
TECH-ECONOMY

WORLD 10

US, PHILIPPINES AGREE ON LARGER
AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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11 SPORT

Demand for JPC on Adani rocks Houses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Both houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day on Thursday amid noisy scenes and ruckus with slogan-shouting Opposition members demanding a joint parliamentary committee probe into the fraud allegation against Adani group.

The stock prices of the Adani group witnessed another day of carnage on Thursday following charges made by a US-based research company against it. The rout in Adani group stocks has threatened the value of investments made by the Life Insurance Corporation and public sector banks.

The Congress, the Shiv Sena, the Left, the Aam Aadmi Party, and other Opposition parties tried to raise in both

Houses of Parliament the issue of allegations levelled by the Hindenburg Research firm against the Adani group.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm as members of almost all Opposition parties rushed to the Well of the House raising slogans on the tanking of Adani group scrips and sought a probe into the business practices of the corporate giant.

Birla asked members not to make unsubstantiated claims and said Question Hour was an important part of Parliamentary proceedings which should not be disrupted.

As the House resumed, Opposition MPs stormed the Well of the Lok Sabha raising slogans against the Narendra Modi Government and the

Adani group.

Amid the sloganeering, Rajendra Agarwal, who was in the Chair, allowed the laying of parliamentary papers in the House.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi appealed to the Opposition members to allow discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address to a joint sitting of both Houses.

"I plead with folded hands, please follow Parliamentary traditions and take up the debate on the Motion of Thanks," Joshi said.

In the Lok Sabha, MPs from almost all Opposition parties rushed to the Well of the House raising slogans and sought a probe into the business practices of the corporate giant.

As the protests and sloganeering continued, the presiding officer adjourned the proceedings of the House for the day.

Adani group stocks, where LIC is heavily invested, have lost over \$100 billion in value since a tiny New York short seller came out with a damning report alleging financial and accounting fraud by the ports-to-energy conglomerate. The Adani group has denied all charges and called the report malicious and full of lies.

In the Rajya Sabha, 9 MPs, including Leader of the Opposition and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi, and Aam Aadmi Party's Sanjay Singh, gave notices under rule 267.

They sought the suspension of regular business to discuss the Adani group stock route and its impact on millions of small investors as well as the hard-earned savings of crores of Indians being endangered in loss of value of investments of LIC.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected all the notices, saying they were not in order. This infuriated the Opposition MPs who rose in their places to protest.

Dhankhar called for order in the House but the MPs continued to raise their demands, which also included the Constitution of a JPC to probe the entire fiasco.

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Shilas from which idols of Lord Ram, Sita to be carved reach Ayodhya



PNS ■ AYODHYA

There was an upsurge of faith at the banks of river Saryu in Ayodhya when the Shaligram shilas (rocks), from which the idols of Lord Ram and Sita are to be carved out, were worshipped there.

These shilas have been brought from the river Kali Gandaki in Nepal. The Shaligram shilas are considered to be very sacred and have been gifted by Nepal to India.

Mahant Ram Tapeshwar Das of Janaki Temple in Janakpur, the capital of ancient Mithila in Nepal, worshipped the Shaligram shilas before they were handed over to the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth

Kshetra Trust general secretary Champata Rai.

Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal Vimalendra Nidhi was also present on this occasion.

Prior to this, 51 Vedic acharyas worshipped the rocks along with Mahant Girish Pati Tripathi of Ayodhya Teen Kalsa Tiwari Temple.

After the worship, a meeting was organised in which all the speakers explained the relationship between Ayodhya and Janakpur. Mahant Ram Tapeshwar Das of Janaki Mandir even raised the slogan 'Dulha-Dulhan Sarkar ki Jai'.

Mahant Ram Roshan Das, the successor of the Janaki temple, said that the Shaligram rock was considered an incarnation of Vishnu and therefore

pran pratishtha of Shaligram shila was not done.

According to Hindu mythology, a Shaligram, or Shaligram shilas are typically fossils of ammonite shells from the Devonian-Cretaceous period of 400 to 66 million years ago. The fossils are considered holy by Hindus because Madhvacharya received it from Vyasadeva, also called Astamurti, and also they resemble symbols associated with God Vishnu, mainly the shankha (conch shell).

It is considered that Lord Vishnu had taken the form of Shaligram shila to defeat the demon king Hayagriva. Since then, the stone has been worshipped as a symbol of Lord

Vishnu's power and is considered to have divine properties.

On this occasion, former deputy prime minister of Nepal said that earlier he wanted to present Dhanush to Ram Lalla in line with the legacy of Shri Ram associated with Janakpur, but after two years of dialogue with the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, it was decided that Nepal should present the Shaligram from which idol of Ram Lalla will be carved out.

Trust general secretary Champat Rai explained in detail the journey of the shila to Ayodhya and expressed his gratitude towards Janakpur temple, Government of Nepal and the people there.

Adani group shares slide again

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Adani Enterprises stumbled over 26 per cent on Thursday, a day after the firm said it has decided not to go ahead with its Rs 20,000-crore Follow-on Public Offer (FPO) and will return the proceeds to investors. The stock tanked 26.50 per cent to settle at Rs 1,564.70 on the BSE. During the day, it tumbled 28.88 per cent to Rs 1,513.90 — its 52-week low. Most of the other group firms also declined for the sixth day in a row.

The 10 listed Adani Group firms have faced a combined erosion of over Rs 8.76 lakh crore in 6 days.

Shares of Adani Transmission fell 10 per cent on Thursday, Adani Green Energy tanked 10 per cent, Adani Total Gas 10 per cent, Adani Ports 6.13 per cent, Adani Wilmar 5 per cent, NDTV 4.99 per cent and Adani Power lost 4.98 per cent.

Many of the group firms also hit their lower circuit limits during the morning trade. However, shares of Ambuja Cements jumped 5.33 per cent and ACC inched up 0.05 per

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

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

"The Board of Adani Enterprises Ltd., (AEL) decided not to go ahead with the fully subscribed FPO. Given the unprecedented situation and the current market volatility, the company aims to protect the interest of its investing community by returning the FPO proceeds and withdraws the completed transaction," the company said in a statement late on Wednesday.

As many as 4.62 crore shares were sought as against an offer of 4.55 crore.

Non-institutional investors put in bids for over three times the 96.16 lakh shares reserved for them, while the 1.28 crore shares reserved for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) were almost fully subscribed,

Continued on Page 9

RBI seeks details of banks' exposure to Adani group

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has sought details about lenders' exposures to the Adani Group, banking sources said, a day after the conglomerate withdrew the Rs 20,000-crore follow on public offer (FPO) of its flagship firm Adani Enterprises amid the steep fall in its stock prices.

On Wednesday, Swiss lender Credit Suisse stopped accepting bonds by Adani group companies as collaterals for margin lending.

The going has been tough for the diversified conglomerate over the past week ever since US-based short seller Hindenburg Research levelled a slew of allegations about the group's operations, calling it the biggest corporate con ever.

The Ahmedabad-headquartered group has denied all the allegations but failed to convince analysts and investors.

The RBI gets access to

banks' large corporate borrowers on a regular basis as part of the central repository of information on large credits (CRILC) data base, the banking sources said. Many a time bank lending happens against pledged securities and a massive fall in the price of the equity shares of the Adani group's 10 listed entities could have accordingly lowered the value of the pledged securities.

There has been selling pressure in banks' stocks since the Hindenburg Research's report released on January 24 as investors are concerned about the impact of the crisis on banks' books. Country's largest lender SBI had said its exposure to Adani group is fully secured by cash generating assets, in an attempt to assuage investor concerns.

Another public sector lender Bank of Baroda has said its total exposure to the embattled group stood at Rs 7,000 crore, which are also fully secured.

No call on putting on UCC in force, Rijiju informs RS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There has been no decision "as of now" on the implementation of a uniform civil code in the country, the government informed Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

In a written reply, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said the Government had requested the 21st Law Commission to undertake examination of various issues relating to uniform civil code and to make recommendations.

"The term of the 21st Law Commission ended on August 31, 2018. As per the information received from the Law Commission, the matter related to uniform civil code may be taken up by the 22nd Law Commission for its consideration," he said. "Therefore, no decision on implementation of uniform civil code has been taken as of now," he said.

The term of the present law panel ends later this month. Government sources have indicated that the panel's three-year term could be extended.

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MVA candidate wins Maha Council seat in Gadkari home turf

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an advantage for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a candidate supported by the Maharashtra Opposition alliance stormed to victory against its BJP rival in the Nagpur division teachers' seat of the Maharashtra Legislative Council on Thursday.

Nagpur, where the headquarters of RSS is located, is also the home district of Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.

MVA-supported Sudhakar Adbale defeated Nagorao Ganar, a BJP-backed independent and the sitting MLC from the seat. However, BJP candidate Dnyaneshwar Mhatre won the election to the Konkani division teachers constituency. Mhatre, the BJP candidate, also backed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Balasaheb Chaudhari Shiv Sena, won



MVA's candidate Sudhakar Adbale flashes the victory sign after winning from Nagpur teachers' seat in the Maharashtra Legislative Council polls in Nagpur on Thursday

PTI

the Konkani teachers constituency trouncing MVA-supported nominee Balam Patil.

Polling for biennial elections to five seats of the Upper House of the legislature was held on January 30. The counting of votes for three other seats — the Aurangabad division teachers constituency and Amravati and Nashik division graduates segments — was underway.

Continued on Page 9

Threat call to blow up Ram Janmabhoomi

PTI ■ AYODHYA

A phone call from an unidentified man, threatening to blow up the Ram Janmabhoomi complex here, was received by an Ayodhya resident, police said on Thursday.

The call was received by Manoj, who lives in the Ramkot area of this Uttar Pradesh district. He alerted police about the call received on his mobile phone.

According to police, the caller threatened to blow up the temple area at 10 am on Thursday.

As soon as the information was received, police issued an alert to all personnel deployed at various locations in the district. Station House Officer (SHO) of the Ram Janmabhoomi police station Sanjiv Kumar Singh said they have registered a case and are conducting an enquiry.

Efforts are on to ascertain the identity of the caller, he added.

BBC film: SC to hear petition today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court asked petitioners to mention again on Friday for urgent listing of their plea seeking a complete ban on the British Broadcasting Corporation in India for its controversial documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud told the lawyer appearing for the petitioner to mention the matter on Friday. The top court was hearing a plea filed by Vishnu Gupta, president of Hindu Sena, and Beerendra Kumar Singh, a farmer, which has also sought investigation against BBC and its employees.

Almora's 100-yr-old water reservoir gets monument national tag

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Famous for its masterpiece architectural features, 'Syunrakot ka Naula', a 100-year-old water reservoir at Syunrakot village in Uttarakhand's Almora has been declared as a monument of national importance.

This is for the first time that such an aquifer that is primarily used for drinking purposes has been brought by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) under its ambit.

A senior official from the ASI said naulas are part of the surface-water harvesting method typical to the hilly areas and they are small wells or ponds in which water is collected by making a stone wall across a stream. Intricately designed pillars

and carved steps around the water pond makes the Syunrakot ka Naula one of the most beautiful naulas dotting the region.

This most unique and elaborate water storage system with a roof and a porous floor which houses an aquifer was constructed in the 14th century during the Katyuri kingdom.

The locals had been demanding its conservation with experts asserting that the structure and design of naulas is the evidence of great ancient scientific knowledge of the ethnic people of Himalaya.

Structurally naula has a roof sloping on all four sides like a temple, and not on two sides like a house.

This was considered a sacred site as on the top of the roof, a round stone is always



placed which is considered to be the idol of lord Vishnu,

according to reports. Naula consists of a tank

that is closed on three sides and covered. The fourth side, which

is open, has steps that lead down to the tank. There is a pillared verandah around them with engravings.

As the construction of naulas was considered prestigious, these structures can be found in ancient towns, in and outside villages and on important roads. Some naulas are embellished with intricate architectural designs. At times they are massive in size with a raised platform for both bathing and washing.

For example the interior of the naulas was always designed like a series of layered steps which were built to narrow and deepen the naula which helped in minimising the water loss due to evaporation.

"Such traditional naulas are now dying due to lack of forest and tree cover, irregular

and unpredicted rainfall pattern, loss of traditional knowledge, modernisation and uncontrolled development.

"These naulas become the target of popular attention only when modern water pipelines stop working.

"Among the important reasons behind the negligence of these important naulas is modernisation, which has caused a loss of traditional knowledge systems among rural communities along with a lack of maintenance due to out-migration of villagers to nearby towns and cities for better job opportunities," said Suman Joshi Suman Joshi, research scholar from Kumaun University, Nainital in her article published in Researchgate.

Counting for Council polls begins, results today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The counting of votes for the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council polls is underway amid tight security and the results are expected to come by Friday morning. The election holds significance for the Samajwadi Party which needs to win just one seat to get the post of the opposition party in the UP Legislative Council. The party currently has nine seats in the 100-member council. The party with 10 seats to claim the position of opposition party.

The council polls in UP witnessed a heated contest as SP workers alleged that their polling agents were not allowed to reach the booths and that Bharatiya

Janata Party candidates tried to influence the election process. In Kanpur, during the counting of teachers block election, the agent created a ruckus when a different red colour ballot paper came out on table number 12. Seeing the uproar, the district magistrate reached the spot and after examining it the ballot was excluded from the counting.

The counting of votes for the election of Bareilly-Moradabad block graduates constituency started at 6 pm on Thursday. The results are expected by Friday morning. Although 10 candidates are in the fray, the fight is between Dr Jaipal Singh of BJP and Shiv Pratap Singh of SP. Dr Jaipal has won two consecutive elections and is claim-

ing a hat-trick, while SP's Shiv Pratap Singh claims that this time the SP will win the election. In the process of counting of votes which started at 8 am in Parsakhara, the ballot boxes were first taken out of the strong room amid tight security. District-wise ballot boxes were opened one by one on 14 tables set up at the counting venue. During this, an independent candidate was also present along with the BJP and SP candidates. The counting of ballots started at 6 pm.

Meanwhile, counting for five Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council seats -- three graduates and two teachers' constituencies -- began at 8 Am on Thursday. According to the chief electoral

officer, there are 63 candidates in the fray in the five seats, where elections were held on January 30. Forty-four candidates are for the three graduates' constituencies and 19 for the two teachers' constituencies. Counting is being held in Bareilly, Jhansi, Gorakhpur and Kanpur.

Earlier this week, the turnout was 43.19 per cent in Gorakhpur-Faizabad division graduates' constituency, 40.93 per cent in Kanpur division graduates' constituency, 53.72 per cent in Bareilly-Moradabad division graduates' constituency, 75.86 per cent in the Allahabad-Jhansi division teachers' constituency and 68.93 per cent in Kanpur division teachers' constituency.

In total, 6.32 lakh people -- 3.93 lakh men and 2.39 lakh women -- were eligible to vote in the three graduates' constituencies. Voting was held at 826 polling booths for this category. As many as 5,392 people -- 3,505 men and 1,887 women -- were eligible to cast their votes in two teachers' constituencies. Voting was held at 238 polling booths for this category.

The polling was held as the tenure of elected members of three graduate constituencies - Devendra Pratap Singh from Gorakhpur-Faizabad, Arun Pathak from Kanpur and Dr Jaipal Singh from Bareilly-Moradabad -- and two teachers' constituencies -- Suresh Kumar Tripathi from Jhansi and

Rajbahadur Singh Chandel from Kanpur -- will end on February 12.

In Jhansi block teachers' constituency, Dr Babulal Tiwari of the BJP was leading by a margin of 360 votes. He is facing a tough fight from Independent Suresh Kumar Tripathi. The SP was in third position.

In the teachers' MLC election in 10 districts of Prayagraj, Kaushambi, Fatehpur, Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Jalaun, Jhansi and Lalitpur, after two rounds of counting, BJP's Dr Babulal Tiwari was followed by Suresh Kumar Tripathi with 4,174 votes and SP's Dr SP Singh Patel with 2,763 votes.

1 killed in firing at wedding

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was shot dead following a heated exchange of words at a wedding ceremony in Antwada village of Muzaffarnagar, following which two people were arrested, police said on Thursday.

Two persons were also injured in the clash which took place after the firing.

Station House Officer of Khatauli police station, Sanjeev Kumar, said that the deceased was identified as 32-year-old Satish Kumar and the body was sent for autopsy.

The police officer said that some relatives of the groom reached the wedding and got into an argument with some people there over dancing to the song being played at the ceremony. When the dispute escalated, bullets were fired there, due to which Santosh died on the spot.

Police said that two people had been arrested in this regard. As a precautionary measure, a police force was deployed in the village.

Meanwhile in Gonda, a youth returning home after listening to the religious discourse at Shatchandi yajna being held in Khamrauni village in Umribegumganj was

shot dead on Wednesday night. The attackers fled after killing the youth.

The firing and murder spread panic in the entire area. Police reached the spot on getting information and sent the body for autopsy.

Reports said that Sunil Shukla (23), a resident of Bhoka Patisa village under Paraspur police station had come to his maternal grandfather in Salpur village in Umribegumganj police station area. He went to listen to the religious discourse at Shatchandi mahayajna organised in the adjacent Khamrauni village on Wednesday night. After the discourse, he was returning to his maternal grandfather's house in Salpur around 10 pm. When Sunil reached Sisai Methia village crossroads, unknown assailants shot him dead and fled. When people reached the spot on hearing the gunshot they saw the blood-soaked body of Sunil. The news of the murder created panic in the area. Station House Officer Kuber Tiwari inspected the spot with a police team.

Surya Kumar Shukla, the father of the deceased, filed a report against the unknown assailants at the Umribegumganj police station.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have Changed My Name From Saba Sahar To Saba Ahmad W/O Sri Sufian Ahmad for all future purpose, R/O 14/19 E, Civil Lines Kanpur.

NOTICE

I have to changed my name from Shanoor Fatima to Shahnoor Fatima W/o Mohd Faisal R/o 15/58-4, Civil Lines, Kanpur Nagar for all future purpose.

सूचना

सूचित करते हैं कि मेरे शैक्षिक प्रमाण पत्रों में मेरा नाम देवेन्द्र कुमार मंथान अंकित है जबकि आधार कार्ड, पैन कार्ड में मेरा नाम देवेन्द्र मंथान अंकित है ये दोनों नाम एक ही व्यक्ति अथवा मेरे ही हैं। देवेन्द्र मंथान S/o चुनीलाल मंथान R/o A-2/46 सी विजयखण्ड गोमतीनगर लखनऊ

NOTICE

I Sarita Kumari Rai W/o Brajeshkumar Rai R/o Aruhin, Post Panjar PS-Kargahar, Distt Rohtas, Bihar 802215 Presently Residing at Gautam Nagar Colony Mauza Susuwahi Post Chitaipur, Varanasi State that I had Changed my name from Sarita Kumari Brajeshkumar Rai to Sarita Kumari Rai.

NOTICE

I Akhilesh Yadav B/o Tuntun Yadav Rank Nk, No. 15626121H. I am a resident of Village Rampur Sheetal, Post Narayanpur, District Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh. My name is Akilesh Yadav mentioned in the Indian Army relation certificate which is mismatch with the name Akhilesh Yadav mentioned in my 10th matriculation

आवश्यकता है


आवश्यकता है
सोमदेव महाविद्यालय
इनायतपुर बर्ग औरास हसनगंज उन्नाव

स्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में गृह विज्ञान एवं राजनीति विज्ञान हेतु सहायक आचार्य। स्नातकस्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय में रसायन भौतिक जन्तु तथा वनस्पति विज्ञान एवं गणित हेतु सहायक आचार्य। योग्यता NET या पीएचडी नियमन के साथ। वेतन यूजीसीए एवं राजाजानुसार देय। इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी फोटो युक्त बायोडाटा विविधिकी की वेबसाइट पर आनलाइन करें तथा एक प्रति उपरोक्त कालेज पते पर 7 दिन में भेजें।

प्रबन्धक

OBITUARY

OBITUARY



HAVILDAR CHANDRA SHEKHAR SINGH
20 Jul 1980 - 19 Jan 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF HAVILDAR CHANDRA SHEKHAR SINGH WHO DIED WHILE SERVING WITH ADM Bn, (AMC C&C), LUCKNOW.

FROM: LT GEN V SABID SYED
AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

Owner of garments shop hangs self

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 45-year-old trader changed himself at his house in Noorbagh (Dhobighat) under Saadatganj police station area here on Wednesday night. He was identified as Sunil Rastogi, who owned a garments shop in Lekhranj Market in Indira Nagar. His wife Mona Rastogi lodged a complaint at the Saadatganj police station on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. She said her husband had been suffering from depression.

He had not been going to the shop for the past several days due to his illness and his wife was taking care of his business. Police said that the deceased had a verbal spat with his wife first in the morning and then in the evening.

He later went to his room and bolted the door from inside. His wife raised an alarm after there was no response from the room even as she repeatedly knocked on the door for hours. Neighbours responded to her calls and broke open the door only to find Sunil hanging from the window with a rope tied around his neck. He

is survived by his wife and two sons.

In another incident in Banthra, 30-year-old Sarvan, who was a resident of Kishunpur Kodiaja village, was found hanging from a tree near the pond.

However, no suicide note was recovered. His father Govind Prasad said Sarvan went missing from the house all of a sudden following a verbal spat with family members on Wednesday morning.

When he did not come back till late night, his family started searching for him, but to no avail. They later lodged a complaint in this regard. He was later found hanging around 6:30 am in Thursday.

Meanwhile, 40-year-old Maiku Lal, who was a native of Sitapur district, hanged himself to death in the basement of the godown in Naveen Galla Mandi under Aliganj police station.

Police said three labourers were sleeping in the basement after completing their work. One of them, Kamal, informed owner Gurpreet Singh early morning on Thursday that Maiku had ended his life.

Maurya says will continue campaign to amend text

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Digging in his heels in the controversy over his comments on Ramcharitmanas, Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya on Thursday said he will continue with his "campaign" unless the "objectionable" portions in the epic are banned or amended.

He accused the BJP of treating the Dalits and the backward as Hindus only for the sake of votes and said the "humiliation" of these communities should end. The Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council member had recently kicked up a row after commenting that portions of the Hindu text denigrated Dalits and women. "Swami Prasad Maurya is not afraid of any number of threats to cut off his head, tongue or nose. I have raised the issue of respect for the backward and the deprived," he told reporters. "This campaign will continue till the objectionable remarks are modified or banned," said the SP leader, recently appointed as one of the general secretaries in his party. The former UP minister said he was trying to stop Dalits and the backward from being abused. "We want to end the system of humiliation. So those who consider humiliation their religion,

RAMCHARITMANAS ROW

they are getting a stomachache," he said. "I believe in law and the Constitution," he said, claiming that he has made his point in a "peaceful manner" and will continue to do so. He claimed the BJP regards the Dalits and the OBC as Hindus only for votes. "But when it comes to giving respect, they become strangers. It means you consider them Hindu only to get votes. When it comes to giving Dalits and the backward respect, when it comes to their rights, you consider them enemies. Humiliating them in the garb of religion should stop." He urged all parties to give respect to the "Shudra community" and women, saying they constituted "97 per cent" of the country's population. "The tradition of humiliation in the name of religion should be stopped immediately."

At least two FIRs have been registered against Maurya in Lucknow, one of them after photocopies of some portions of the sacred text were burned in a protest held by an OBC organisation. BJP leaders and some seers have criticised Maurya over the remarks, and there have been threats against him. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

has defended the legislator, saying he will ask Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath the meaning of the verse which Maurya says humiliates sections of society.

Earlier, Maurya said only women and "Shudras" can feel the pain of the "derogatory" remarks made against them in the guise of religion.

He compared the pain of women and "Shudras" with that of Mahatma Gandhi after he was thrown out of a train by Britishers. "The pain caused by the insult and misbehaviour the British had meted out to Gandhiji on a train by saying 'Indians are dogs' was only felt by him. Similarly, the pain caused by the derogatory comments made against women and Shudras in the guise of religion are only felt by them," Maurya said in a tweet in Hindi.

A cabinet minister in the previous BJP government in the state, Maurya had resigned and joined the SP before the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. He contested the election from the Fazilnagar Assembly seat in the Kushinagar district but lost. He was later sent to the legislative council by SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.



Two Kashmiri youths who sell dry goods in Lucknow claimed that unknown persons threw bags of goods worth thousands of rupees into the Gomti river. Momin, a resident of Srinagar, claimed that he sold dry fruits on Thursday just like he did every day. "First, some police officers arrived and ordered me to leave the area, which I did. In the meantime, a group of men arrived in a car and dumped four bags of dry fruits into the river. A box of Kesar and almonds worth Rs 55,000 was inside the bag," said Momin. Adil, another Kashmiri man, claimed that he has been selling dry fruits in Lucknow for the past two months in order to pay his BCom tuition back in Kashmir.

Pioneer

Minor sold, gang-raped in Agra

Lucknow (PNS): A 15-year-old, who ran away from her home to live with her alleged lover, was sold off by him and then 'auctioned' and gang-raped, in Agra.

The Agra police said they had arrested seven people, including three women, in connection with the case and were looking for another accused. The police action came after the Agra unit of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) got to know about the minor's ordeal and then took her to the area police station for lodging a first information report (FIR). Later, the girl's statement was recorded before the CWC members in the presence of the area police station officers on January 30.

The FIR was lodged under Section 376 DA (gang-rape of minors below 16 years) of the Indian Penal Code and provisions of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, and the

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

"We first arrested her alleged lover and then made all the other arrests. We formed three teams for the purpose and raids were being conducted to nab one who remains unidentified so far. All the arrested people were sent to jail late Wednesday," said the in-charge of the area police station. The police said the victim was employed in the packaging division of a meat unit in Agra along with her mother where she met the man, 22, and fell in love with him. On the evening of January 26, she fled home and went to the man's house, they added.

The police said the victim told the CWC members that the man was with her on the night of January 26. He then took her to a woman in another locality in Agra where he "sold her off" for an unspecified

amount of money. That woman and her accomplice then took the victim to another woman, who is involved in the flesh trade and had in her possession a number of rented flats in the town which were used as brothels.

The woman to whom the minor was finally sold assured her of helping her find a job and got her photographs clicked. She then showed these photos to prospective customers for an auction and one among them, who is also a resident of Agra, offered the maximum bid, according to the police. She was first raped by that man then assaulted by two others who offered lower 'prices,' they said.

The victim managed to escape and sought the help of a woman who took her to the nearest police station. Officials there then contacted the CWC. Efforts to contact the CWC unit in Agra failed.

Newlywed woman burns husband alive

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational incident in Etah, a woman who got married just eight days ago, allegedly burnt her husband alive after giving him and his children food laced with sedatives. The deceased, identified as Dushyant Singh, was the only son of Ravipal Singh. He was a driver attached with the Jawahar Thermal Project. He had returned from work on Wednesday night after which he had dinner and turned unconscious shortly afterwards. He was then burnt alive in a premeditated manner.

The incident took place in the Nigoh Hasanpur village of Thana Malavan area. The accused is said to be the second wife of the deceased. He had earlier married Mandvi of Kasganj in the year 2013.

Mandvi had poisoned herself to death over a family discord in May 2022. She was a resident of Sarawal village under Sidhpura police station area of Kasganj district. The couple had four children, including Saumya (9), Chhavi (7), Shaurya (5), and Veer (2).

Dushyant then married Sanjana, a resident of Kharsulia village, on January 23 last. She had come to Dushyant's house on Wednesday for the first time. The same night, she allegedly burnt her husband alive and later claimed he died in a fire incident caused by a short-circuit in the house.

Chhavi told police that on regaining consciousness, she saw a person, with the help of whom Sanjana burnt her father alive. Circle Officer Sunil Kumar Tyagi said investigation was underway.

CITYBRIEFS

FIRE & EARTHQUAKE EVACUATION DRILL

A fire and earthquake evacuation drill was organised in the premises of CMS, Jopling Road Campus. The students and teachers were trained to operate the fire-extinguishing tools, use fire escape and evacuate the building in an orderly manner in the event of an earthquake. Chief fire officer of CMS R Ghosh demonstrated the use of fire-extinguishing equipment and

evacuation technique to the students.

SYMPOSIUM

An international symposium on 'Drug discovery and development interface' was organised on the Lucknow Transit campus of NIPER, Rae Bareilly on February 1. Eminent pharma experts from across the globe showcased and shared their research and process experiences to over 500 participating academia and researchers.



Avadh Bonsai Association organising a two-day workshop with Saumik Das, a bonsai artist of international repute. The association regularly organises exhibitions, camps, lectures and workshops to popularise the art of bonsai.

Policeman injured in exchange of fire

Sambhal: A policeman and two miscreants were injured during an encounter in the Asmoli police station area of the district on Thursday, an official said. SP Chakresh Mishra said the police received information about the presence of miscreants near Saidpur Jaskoli village in Asmoli and when the police team laid siege on the spot, they opened fire.

**लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण**
(ISO 14001 : 2004, ISO 9001-2008 प्रमाणित संस्था)
प्राधिकरण भवन, विपिन चण्ड, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ (उप्र)
फोन नं : 0522-2302586, वेबसाइट : www.ldaonline.co.in

ऑफिस सूचना
लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण द्वारा 'ग्लोबल इन्वेस्टर्स मीट' में आवास विभाग को आवंटित होल में लेआउट के अनुसार ऑक्टोनों के स्टॉल, कॉन्फेंसिंग, विद्युत पॉइंट, ब्रॉडिंग तथा प्लागमा टी.वी. इत्यादि लगाने का कार्य कराया जाना है। इस कार्य में दक्ष संस्थानों जमानत धनराशि के रूप में रुपया 10,000/- का पे ऑर्डर अथवा बैंक ड्राफ्ट (जो सचिव, लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण के पक्ष में देय हो) संलग्न कर अपना सीलबंद ऑफर दिनांक 6 फरवरी, 2023 को सायं 3:00 बजे तक जन संपर्क कार्यालय में प्राप्त करा सकते हैं, जो कि उसी दिन उपस्थित ऑफिसर/टाइमों के मध्य (यदि वे उपस्थित हों) सायं 3:30 पर खोला जाएगा। **अपडेट सचिव**

ASIAN FERTILIZERS LIMITED
CIN: L99999UP1986PLC007621
Regd. office: Flat No. 202, Preet Nagar, 3A/172, Azad Nagar, Kanpur, 208002
Corporate office: P.W.D. officer's colony, Near Sahara Press, Park road, Gorakhpur-273001
E-mail: af@asianfertilizers.com, investor@asianfertilizers.com
Phone: (0551) 2203421, 2202436, Website: www.asianfertilizers.com

NOTICE
Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015 (Listing Regulation), Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Asian Fertilizers Limited is scheduled to be held on 11th February, 2023, interalia, to consider and approve the unaudited financial results of the Company for the quarter ended 31st December, 2022.
The said notice may also be accessed on the Bombay Stock Exchange website at www.bseindia.com and company's website at www.asianfertilizers.com
FOR ASIAN FERTILIZERS LIMITED
SD/- Ashok Kumar Matanhelia
Managing Director
Din: 01763776

Place: Gorakhpur
Date: 03/02/2023

CM: Union budget dedicated to overall development of country

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the first general budget of the Central government of Amrit Kaal was a public welfare budget which would empower and enable the people of villages, the poor, farmers, tribals, Dalits, backwards, exploited, deprived, disabled, economically weak and the middle class people.

He said the state's share in the central taxes for 2022-23 was proposed to be increased from Rs 1.46 lakh crore to Rs 1.83 lakh crore in 2023-24, which would prove useful in building the Uttar Pradesh of the New India.

"This budget is dedicated to the overall development of the country, including rural development, agricultural development, labour welfare, infrastructure development, digital infrastructure, North East and hilly areas. The dreams of the youth will come true through this budget," the chief minister said during his interaction with the Press here on Thursday.

The chief minister said that there were seven priorities of this budget, which have been called Saptarishi. These priorities are: (1) inclusive growth, (2) reaching the last person, (3) infrastructure and investment, (4) unleashing potential, (5) green development, (6) youth power and (7) financial sector.

"This first budget of India's Amrit Kaal will guide the country like Saptarishi and pave the way to fulfill the goals of aspirational India," Yogi said and added that this budget was not just a development agenda for the year 2023-24, but a blueprint for the country to lay the foundation of a developed economy for the next 25 to 50 years.

"Providing greater opportunities for citizens, providing a strong impetus to growth and job creation and strengthening macro-economic stability is the agenda of the general budget 2023-24. In this all-inclusive and all-welfare Central budget, full care has been taken of all sections in line with the Prime Minister's resolution of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas'," he said.

The chief minister said by extending the supply of free food grains to the poor for one year under the Antyodaya Yojana would provide great relief to 80 crore people



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and finance minister Suresh Khanna addressing a press conference in Lucknow on Thursday

ple of the country, including 15 crore needy people of Uttar Pradesh.

"In this year's Union Budget, there is a proposal to set up 157 new nursing colleges along with the existing 157 medical colleges established since 2014. This provision will prove helpful in realising the concept of 'one district, one medical college, one nursing college' and in strengthening the health infrastructure in the state," he said.

The chief minister further said India was consistently doing well on the front of growing coarse cereals. "India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of 'Shri Anna' (jowar, ragi, bajra, kuttu, ramdana, kangni, kutki, kodo, cheena and sama). We are determined to make India the global hub of Shri Anna. In order to promote the cultivation, processing and consumption of millets (jowar, bajra, kodo, sawan, ragi/maua etc.), the state government has decided to run the Uttar Pradesh Millets Revival Programme," he said.

With the Central government's proposal to increase the agricultural loan target to Rs 20 lakh crore with focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries, the agricultural ecosystem of the state will be strengthened.

"For the next three years, one crore farmers will be helped in natural farming. Natural farming has been encouraged by

the state government since before," he said and added that to give priority to startups related to agriculture and for this, Krishivardhak Fund has been set up for young entrepreneurs," he said.

The chief minister said this would increase diversification in the agriculture sector of Uttar Pradesh and create new opportunities for innovation and self-reliance for the talented youth of rural areas.

He said the new sub-scheme of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana with a fund of Rs 6,000 crore would further empower fishermen, fish vendors and micro and small entrepreneurs of this sector.

"Under the proposal of the Central government to issue Mahila Samman Vikas Patra, women will now get 7.5 per cent interest annually on savings of Rs 2 lakh. This will give impetus to the Mission Shakti run by our government," he added.

"This budget is in line with the prime minister's vision on green development. The country's economic growth rate is estimated to be 7 per cent in the current financial year. This growth rate is the highest among all the major economies of the world. Under the successful leadership and guidance of the prime minister, the Indian economy is on the right track and is marching towards a bright future," the chief minister said.

Sensitivity marks CM's style of working

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Personal sensitivity, combined with a commitment to resolving public issues, distinguishes Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's working style and this was evident when the chief minister not just listened to the plight of a woman from Kaushambi, along with that of others and gave assurances of getting it resolved at the earliest during the Janata Darshan on Thursday, but also arranged for her fare to go back home from the Gorakhpur temple office.

The woman, who had come to meet the chief minister for a land-related problem, told him that she had no fare to go back home and the chief minister immediately directed the officials concerned to arrange her fare.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath listened to the problems of about 300 people during the Janata Darshan held at Gorakhnath temple's Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Auditorium and directed the officials to resolve them as soon as possible.

Addressing the visitors, the chief minister said, "Whatever the problem is, there is absolutely no need for you to panic or worry while I am here. We are dedicated to finding a fair solution to everyone's problems. Nobody's treatment will be hampered for lack of money, nor will a mafia be able to grab anyone's land."

People came to the Janata Darshan with demands for financial assistance for treatment of serious diseases, as well as complaints related to land disputes, encroachments and fraudulent registration of lands. The chief minister categorically stated that no domineering person, or mafia figure, will be allowed to grab lands of others and stern action will be taken against such elements to teach them a lesson.

On issues of land disputes



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during Janata Darshan in Gorakhpur on Thursday

within family, the chief minister advised both parties to sit together and state their positions so that an amicable solution

resolved quickly, fairly and satisfactorily", the chief minister remarked.

Chief Minister Yogi

"WHATEVER THE PROBLEM IS, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO NEED FOR YOU TO PANIC OR WORRY WHILE I AM HERE. WE ARE DEDICATED TO FINDING A FAIR SOLUTION TO EVERYONE'S PROBLEMS. NOBODY'S TREATMENT WILL BE HAMPERED FOR LACK OF MONEY, NOR WILL A MAFIA BE ABLE TO GRAB ANYONE'S LAND"

tion could be found within the confines of the law. "Whatever the issue is, it should be

assured those who came to seek financial assistance for treatment of diseases that there

would be no shortage of funds. He directed officials to collect the estimated treatment cost from the hospital concerned and make it available to the chief minister's office so that the assistance amount could be released from the chief minister's discretionary fund immediately.

He directed the officers to complete the estimate process on priority.

Meanwhile, the chief minister showered his love and blessings on the children, who were accompanying their mothers at the Janata Darshan. The chief minister also enquired about the children's well-being, encouraged them to study and gave them chocolates.

Preparations in full swing for Global Investors' Summit

SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS BEING STRENGTHENED AT VENUE

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Efforts are being made on a war footing to fulfil the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to make Uttar Pradesh the growth engine of New India as Vrindavan Yojana, the venue for Uttar Pradesh Global Investors' Summit-2023 (UPGIS) is being prepared in a way to provide all the services to the guests and delegates.

In view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's arrival, security arrangements are being strengthened at the venue and it is also being equipped to deal with medical emergencies.

Vrindavan Yojana has been divided into seven blocks. The first block will be for the opening ceremony. In this block, seating arrangements have been made for about 10,000 people. Here, the PM will address industrialists from abroad and the country after inaugurating the event.

Adjacent to this block are VIP lounges, as well as those for the partner countries (the Netherlands, Denmark,

Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Italy and Mauritius), industry partners (CII, FICCI) and knowledge partners (R&Y), while a food court is also being set up. Adjacent to this, another block is underway where four hangars are being built.

Different sessions of different departments of the state will be held simultaneously in these hangars from morning till night where investors from India and abroad will participate. Seating arrangements are being made for about 250 people in each hangar.

According to the blueprint of the UPGIS-23, a media centre is being built in the third block from where live telecast of the programme will take place and news will be updated every moment. With this, the office of 'Invest UP' has been set up in the block.

Besides, a police control room has been set up from where senior police officers will strictly monitor every activity through CCTV and give necessary directions to their subordinates from time to time.

The fourth block is being established for the pre-function where various cultural activities will take place. The fifth block is being prepared for the drone show. Along with this, an audience gallery is also being built, where thousands of people will

Yogi may visit venue today

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath himself will review the preparations for the GIS in Vrindavan Yojana. The CM is likely to visit the venue on Friday to assess the progress of the ongoing construction projects. The UP Global Investors' Summit will draw major investors from around the nation and globe.

Additionally, a large number of cabinet members, including the president and the prime minister, will take part in it. As such, the CM will review the progress of the construction work of all the seven blocks and hangars being built here, and also give necessary guidelines. In addition to this, he will assess the preparations being made for the VVIP visitors..

be able to enjoy the drone show. The sixth block is being prepared for B2B meetings.

Along with this, fire, safety and medical zones are being set up so that any emergency situation can be dealt with immediately. After these three zones are ready, a reality check will also be done. The seventh and the last block is being prepared for the exhibition, which will have a total of 11 halls.

Kappan walks out of jail

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the sureties required for his bail were submitted in the court, Kerala-based journalist Siddique Kappan walked out of jail on Thursday morning.

He was arrested on charges of inciting violence and sedition after the Hathras incident in Uttar Pradesh.

Kappan was released at 9:45 am from jail after 27 months of his arrest and more than a month after he was granted conditional bail in the two cases, including Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

Two sureties of Rs 1 lakh each were submitted on Wednesday in the special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court here.

Interacting with reporters after coming out of jail, Kappan said, "I am out after a lot of fight. I am happy. I will continue my fight against unlawful laws."

Asked about the purpose of his visit to Hathras, Kappan said he had gone there for "reporting".

About those who had accompanied him, he said they were students. To questions about recoveries made from him, Kappan said, "Nothing... I had only a laptop and a mobile."

Asked about reports that some objectionable materials were also found from him, he said, "Two pens and a notepad."

The journalist and three others were arrested in October 2020 while on their way to Hathras where a Dalit woman died allegedly after being raped. They were accused of trying to instigate violence over the death of the Hathras woman.

Police had alleged that Kappan had links with the now-banned Popular Front of India and charged him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and sections of the Indian Penal Code.

On December 23 last, the High Court granted conditional bail to Siddique Kappan. After getting bail from the High Court, Special Judge of PMLA Court Sanjay Shankar Pandey ordered Kappan to be released on bail on furnishing two sureties of Rs 1 lakh each and a surety of the like amount.

Denmark technology to help promote ethanol production

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To promote ethanol production in an eco-friendly manner, the Uttar Pradesh government has been holding talks with Denmark, which is expected to aid the state in adopting new technology for making ethanol and methanol through the utilisation of agricultural waste.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, radical changes are being seen in every sector. The government is partnering with domestic and foreign companies to make life easier for the common man through new technologies. In this direction, recently Ambassador of Denmark Freddie Svane met Chief Secretary DS Mishra and discussed in depth the utility of technology related to the conversion of stubble straw into bio straw briquettes into ethanol or methanol.

The Svane said that bio-methanol and e-methanol were being produced from agricultural

waste, wheat and paddy straws.

The state government is keen on adopting a similar technology and there is a possibility that after setting up the first plant in Denmark, the Uttar Pradesh government may take steps in this direction by partnering with Denmark.

E-methanol is produced through hydrogen gas in the carbon dioxide produced by the fermentation process. Denmark is setting up the first project based on this patented technology. It is proposed to start production in the year 2025.

The proposed Danish patented technology is not operational anywhere in the world. The first plant based on this method is under construction and is expected to start production by 2025. It is proposed to produce 1.00 lakh tonnes of ethanol from 145 million normal cubic metres of biogas (1,10,200 tonnes of gas) collected from six briquette production plants of 450 tonnes capacity each.

The capex (capital expenditure) for setting up this plant has been shown as Rs 2,225 crore. It is proposed to produce 2.50 lakh tonnes of methanol from 145 million normal cubic metres of biogas gathered from six briquette production plants of 450 tonnes capacity each.

The capex for setting up this plant has been shown as Rs 3,034 crore. The prices of ethanol and methanol produced are about Rs 80.00 and Rs 64.00 per litre, respectively.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) is setting up a 2G ethanol plant on 50 acres of land in Gorakhpur.

An investment of about Rs 800 crore is proposed. The plant will use cellulose as a raw material, which includes sugarcane byproducts, agricultural residues, vegetable oils and sugar. The proposal to make bio-CNG from wet waste is also under consideration by the urban bodies in major cities of the state.

Threat call to blow up Ram Janmabhoomi complex

Ayodhya (PTI): A phone call from an unidentified man, threatening to blow up the Ram Janmabhoomi complex here, was received by an Ayodhya resident, police said on Thursday.

The call was received by Manoj, who lives in the Ramkot area of this Uttar Pradesh district. He alerted police about the call received on his mobile phone.

According to police, the caller threatened to blow up the temple area at 10 am on Thursday.

As soon as the information was received, police issued an alert to all personnel deployed at various locations in the district.

Station House Officer (SHO) of the Ram Janmabhoomi police station Sanjiv Kumar Singh said they have registered a case and are conducting an enquiry.

Efforts are on to ascertain the identity of the caller, he added.

Drone show to give viewers a glimpse of modern UP at GIS

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In order to make the Uttar Pradesh Global Investors Summit (UPGIS) a grand glitzy affair, the state administration is organising a number of cultural events, including a spectacular drone show, that will give viewers a glimpse of a modern UP. As many as 600 drones will illuminate the entire venue (Vrindavan Yojana) to greet the delegates.

As per instructions issued by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, elaborate preparations are being made to welcome and facilitate the guests at the tent city of Vrindavan Yojana and the drone show is part of it. A gallery will be available for seating the guests to watch the drone display/lighting show. The drone show will be one of the highlights of the events to be organised during the summit.

Over 600 drones will be used for this event, covering the venue's horizon with vibrant lights. In Uttar Pradesh, there have already been two occasions when drone displays have been held.

Recently, as part of the Kakori Balidan Diwas, a mega drone show was organised



OVER 600 DRONES WILL BE USED FOR THIS EVENT, COVERING THE VENUE'S HORIZON WITH VIBRANT LIGHTS. IN UTTAR PRADESH, THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN TWO OCCASIONS WHEN DRONE DISPLAYS HAVE BEEN HELD

in Gorakhpur by the administration to pay tributes to freedom fighters involved in the 1925 Kakori train action. As many as 750 drones formed different formations over a park here.

Earlier, 500 drones were used during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' programme organised in the Residency during the year 2021 in the state capital.

Inspired by the success of these two events, the state government is going to include the drone show as a signature blockbuster event in the GIS as well. For this, all the necessary works are being done by the administration.

It is anticipated that the testing process will begin soon on a fixed coordinate prior to the show. For the convenience of the participants, a separate audience gallery is being constructed at the venue from where everyone will be able to enjoy the show.


The CM has invited investors from the state, the country, and even the world for the GIS to achieve the ambitious goal of making the state a trillion-dollar economy in the next five years. Even before the main event, the UP government received investment

proposals worth more than Rs 20 lakh crore.

UPGIS 2023 will serve as a unique platform for business networking, knowledge sharing and strategic partnership by bringing together business leaders, political and economic dignitaries, entrepreneurs and industry partners from across the globe. This is the reason why the government is leaving no stone unturned to present this grand programme in a new format and create a distinct and modern identity of Uttar Pradesh among investors from India and abroad.

'ZERO EMISSION' GOLF CARTS TO BE PRESSED INTO SERVICE

'Zero emission' golf carts will be used for transportation at the venue. These golf carts are battery-powered and the venue has set up charging stations for them. This entire exercise will serve as a link in the effort to give the investors attending the event 'carbon-less travel' and 'environment-friendly premium class travel'. Ten golf carts are currently being used for transportation at the venue, and their number may be raised, if necessary, throughout the event.

<div><div>लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण (ISO 14001 : 2004, ISO 9001-2008 प्रमाणित संस्था) प्राधिकरण भवन, विपिन खण्ड, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ (उ०प्र०)। फोन नं० : 0522-2302586, वेबसाइट : www.ldaonline.co.in</div></div>				
संख्या: 142 / ई-निविदा / मु०अ० / 2022-23			दिनांक : 02 / 02 / 2023	
:- निविदा सूचना :-				
लखनऊ विकास क्षेत्र में निम्नलिखित कार्यो हेतु लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण या अन्य विकास प्राधिकरणों में पंजीकृत अथवा आवास एवं विकास परिषद में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। कार्य से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत निविदा-नोटिस तथा निविदा-प्रपत्र लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट " http://www.ldaonline.co.in " पर देखा जा सकता है तथा अपलोड किया जा सकता है, जिसमें धरोहर धनराशि, निविदा डालने की तिथि, श्रेणी, कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि एवं निविदा लागत तथा अन्य नियम व शर्तों का उल्लेख है।				
क्र.	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत (रु० लाख)	अभियंत्रण जॉन/मोबाइल नम्बर	ई-निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि
1.	जनेश्वर मिश्र पार्क से समतामूलक चौक की ओर जाने वाले मार्ग के बायें ओर रिक्त स्थल पर प्लेस मेकिंग का कार्य।	8.45	उद्यान 9918001695	06-02-2023
2.	सी.जी. सिटी परियोजना में स्थापित स्ट्रीट लाइट की क्षतिग्रस्त हुई केबिल के स्थान पर नयी केबिल स्थापना करने का कार्य।	8.10	विद्युत/यांत्रिक 9918001535	09-02-2023
3.	जी-20 शिखर सम्मेलन के दृष्टिगत विभिन्न अण्डरपास पर प्रकाश व्यवस्था का कार्य।	7.57	विद्युत/यांत्रिक 9918001535	09-02-2023
निविदाओं के सम्बन्ध में कोई बदलाव अथवा अतिरिक्त सूचना मात्र उपरोक्त वेबसाइट पर ही उपलब्ध कराई जायेगी, अतः इच्छुक निविदादाता नियमित रूप से उक्त वेबसाइट देखते रहें। उपरोक्त समस्त कार्य हेतु सामान्य निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं, जिनके निविदा प्रपत्र वेबसाइट " http://www.ldaonline.co.in " से डाउनलोड किये जा सकेंगे।				
मुख्य अभियन्ता				

Property worth ₹1.25 cr gutted

PNS ■ KANPUR

A paint shop on Mati Road in Akbarpur Kotwali police station area of Kanpur Dehat caught fire on Wednesday evening. Five fire tenders took over two hours to control the flames. Shop owner estimated the loss of goods and property worth around Rs 1.25 crore. At the time of the incident goods were being unloaded from a vehicle. Rahmat Ali of Kaliganj, Akbarpur (Kanpur dehat) owns a paint shop on Mati Road which caught fire due to a short circuit around 5.30 pm and soon spread to other parts of the establishment. On seeing the devastating fire a passerby informed the fire brigade. Firefighters from Mati fire station rushed to the spot and saw the fire assuming an alarming proportion. In a bid to control the fire with the help of residents, shop owner Rahmat suffered burns in his limb.

On seeing the devastating fire, Chief Fire Officer Surendra Singh and fire officer Krishna Kumar called additional fire tankers from Bhognipur, Sikandra and Rasoolabad fire stations. As the shop was surrounded by a busy market and residential colony behind it, firefighters were alerted to start quick rescue operation. With the help of four big fire tankers and one small one it took over two hours to control the flames. Due to huge crowd on Mati Road massive jam prevailed there. Sadar CO Prabhat Kumar and SDM



A fire broke out in a paint shop on Mati Road, Akbarpur (Kanpur Dehat).

Bhumika Yadav got the traffic restored with the help of police. On getting information District Magistrate Neha Jain, Superintendent of Police BBGTS Murthy and SDM Keshav Nath also reached the spot. The injured shop owner was sent to the district hospital. Chief fire officer said estimate of loss will be sought by serving a notice on the shop owner. He said electric short circuit is stated to be the cause of the incident. **MISHAP:** A tannery worker was fatally knocked down by a speeding DCM in Chakeri police station area on

Wednesday night. Udaybhan (38) of Bhalla Estate, Jajmau, was employed in a tannery. His brother Chandrabhan said when Udaybhan was crossing the road to reach near the check post on Wednesday night a speeding DCM knocked him down. On information of residents, police rushed to the spot and got him admitted to LLR (Hallet) Hospital in a critical condition where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. Chandrabhan said on coming to know about the incident, Udaybhan's wife Sunita and children, Sahil and Ansh, wept inconsolably.

'Budget focuses on food security for poor'

PNS ■ KANPUR

The Merchants Chamber of Uttar Pradesh has welcomed the budget. President Atul Kanodia said it was a successful effort to take the economic growth rate to seven per cent. He said the budget focused on food security for poor and carbon emission and special emphasis had been given on growth and development for all. He said this budget will reduce economic losses and push it down to 4.5 per cent. In a nut shell it was in fact a farsighted and long term budget. Meanwhile Managing Director of Goldiee Masale Som Goenka said this budget in no way benefit the corporate world and added that if the government had provided enough relief to entrepreneurs it would have strengthened the economy of the country and boosted exports as well.

He said entrepreneurs had great hopes for relief in the current budget but this did not happen. However, the government was more focused on poor welfare and middle class people, he added.

'ROZGAR MELA TO BE HELD

Kanpur Nagar District Magistrate Visakh G Iyer, addressing a meeting at Collectorate informed that 'Rozgar Mela' will be held between February 25 and 28, 2023 under Deendayal Antodaya Yojana Rashtriya Shehri Aajivika Mission at Government Industrial Training Institute, Pandu Nagar. He said Project Director, DUDA had been directed that all registered job seekers, those applying for loans under MSME and those who want to establish their own business will be listed and loans be provided to them on priority.

He said self-help groups (SHGs) be listed and details be provided to banks for bank linkages. He said successful trainees under Skill Development Programmes and those who have still not got placement till date such youths should be listed and ensure that loans were provided to them on priority basis. He also directed the lead bank managers to coordinate with their banks and ensure that their applications for

loans are accepted. The DM said efforts also should be made in the Swarozgar Mela for personal and group loan distribution by banks to beneficiaries at the earliest. He said National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) also supported micro-enterprises in development and their credit enablement. Under the Scheme of Shelter for Urban Homeless, Day-NULM provided financial support to state governments and urban local bodies for construction as well as operation and management of permanent shelter for urban homeless.

LITERARY FEST FROM TODAY

Dr Vishal Sharma of the Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), Kanpur said the literary festival of the varsity will start from February 3 and continue till February 8. Its objective was to bring to the fore the latent talents of the youth. He said this festival will feature a variety of presentations and readings by authors as well as other events, delivered over a period of six days with primary objective of

promoting books and fostering a liking of literature and writing. He said good literary festivals to which really eminent literary personalities were invited to read their works, spoke and advised the young and how it benefitted. He said book festivals offered opportunities to connect with other readers but also the chance to connect with authors and their words and ideas in singular and sometimes surprising ways. He said in order to bring students closer to literature and its universal appeal, CSJMU had organised this literary festival. Dr Sharma said the event helped students build their confidence in Hindi and English speaking and enhanced their motivation to learn the language. He said the university will also organise literary quiz, book reviews, ad mania, poster making and webinar for students to showcase their talents and skills in the festival. He said literature has been the most interesting subject of any language and this can be further promoted by holding literary festivals.

e-bus mobile app to be launched on February 14

PNS ■ KANPUR

Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar said in order to make the e-bus service more feasible and punctual it had been decided in principle to introduce a time tracking device named 'e-bus Kanpur' app soon which was currently in the process of being finalised. He said it had also been decided to make all the 247 bus stops proper and fully functional. He said the e-bus mobile app will be launched on February 14. He said Kanpur City Transport Services Limited and Kanpur Smart City were jointly making efforts to finalise the special app. This app will help people to track the bus time and the destination the bus will reach. He said thus with the help of real time GPS map the position of buses can be located so that the desired bus can be boarded on time and on the

desired route. He said this app will also show the speed of bus and scheduled time at particular stops so that one can know when and from where to board an e-bus and on which route. The DC in a bid to take a feedback for making the e-bus travel easier, convenient, punctual and smooth travelled between commissioner camp office via Hallet Hospital then Motiheel to Benajhabar to Gol Chauraha to Rawatpur and finally ended at the commissioner camp office. During this trip he got the time, speed route and other issues written down so as to make it punctual and properly monitored. He said during the trip the live tracking of buses was carried out through the app and also checked live location of all e-buses. He directed the officials concerned that in next six months all bus stops should be properly set up, in the next 15

days proper signages need to be put up and seating arrangements be made at bus stops with joint efforts of Kanpur Nagar Nigam, KCTSL and PWD. He said given targets had to be accomplished within the scheduled timeframe. Dr Shekhar said it had been decided in principle that payment of city bus drivers, conductors and private operators will be done only on verification of monthly report provided by the GPS. He directed managing director, KCTSL to ensure strict monitoring and to set up the system so that e-bus service could be made more feasible and punctual. He said for this a special committee needs to be set up soon and all efforts made to improve number of commuters. He said if this service can save time of commuters it will become the most popular mode of transport in Kanpur.



Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar inspecting the e-bus stop.

'Scale of NTD infections in India very high'

PNS ■ KANPUR

Chief Medical Officer Dr Alok Ranjan while addressing a seminar as part of the week-long awareness drive on World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) said this year the theme was 'Act Now. Act Together'. He said the Centre for Advocacy and Research had strongly mooted eradication of neglected diseases. He added this mission can be successful only if doctors and people become sensitive to neglected diseases. He said this can be done provided there was increased awareness as well. He said ironically out of the total diseases neglected diseases were over 16 and mainly comprised lymphatic filariasis, leprosy, chikungunya, snakebite and rabies. He said majority of diseases were caused by mosquitoes and thus efforts need to be made to not allow mosquito breeding around houses and keep the surrounding clean. He said the scale of NTD infections in India was very high. He added that 12 to 17 per cent of all intestinal worm infections globally occurred in India and were often associated with hookworm, whipworm and the ascaris worm. He said with more than half of the major NTDs attaining endemic proportions in India economic loss attributed to these diseases was quite significant.

Dr Ranjan said India had also already demonstrated its capacity to create vaccines and mass drug administration programmes for lymphatic filariasis, worms and leprosy could help completely eliminate these NTDs in India. He said India ought to focus on developing the next generation of drugs, diagnostics and vaccines for NTDs. He also emphasised on the need for enhancing the clean water supply and sanitation coverage, delivering veterinary public health and vector-control interventions and increasing access to vaccines and antisera for all vulnerable and affected populations in the region. He said a number of NTDs had neither an 'eradication' nor an 'elimination' target, instead they had a target of 'elimination as a public health problem'. He said the closeness of terms 'elimination as a public health problem' and 'elimination' risks creating confusion in the minds of policymakers for whom the terms may appear to be comparable. He said this risk was compounded by absence of a standard definition for 'elimination as a public health problem'. Among those who took part were Dr SK Singh, Praseon Bajpai and a large number of team members.

Birth anniv of Sant Ravidas on Feb 5

PNS ■ VARANASI

Seer Goverdhanpur, the birthplace of Sant Ravidas, has nowadays been flooded with Ravidassia to celebrate the 646th birth anniversary of this great religious leader of the medieval period. The entire area has turned into a spiritual one with the recital of Amritbani Paath. Sant Niranjan Das, the chairman of Ravidas Trust, will reach the city on Friday to take part in the celebration. The birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas is to be celebrated on February 5. Besides the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the CMs of Punjab and Delhi Bhagwant Maan and Arvind Kejriwal respectively are likely to attend the birth celebration. The devotees of Sant Ravidas not only from Punjab and other parts of the country but also from various nations of the world have been reaching Seer Goverdhanpur for the last a few days to celebrate the birth anniversary of their spiritual Guru. And now, the birthplace of Sant Ravidas has flooded with Ravidassia in thousands. Though, the Chairman of Ravidas Trust Sant Niranjan Das will reach the city on Friday from Jalandhar, Punjab by a special train with his followers in thousands. This year, the Amritbani Paath is being recited at the birthplace on the request of devotees living abroad and it will continue till February 5. The religious programmes will be held at a grand level on the day of birth anniversary this time and the singers from Punjab have been invited to sing devotional songs for the first time this year. There is preparation to shower flowers on the devotees on the celebration day. The district administration has also made preparations and the basic amenities have been developed at Seer Goverdhanpur for

the convenience of the devotees of Sant Ravidas. The temporary tents have been erected at the birthplace and a grand waterproof pandal has been erected keeping the weather in view so that the devotees could face no inconvenience in case of rain on the celebration day. The road approaching to Sant Ravidas Temple has been repaired and the facilities of drinking water and others have been made there to facilitate the devotees who also came from abroad. The temple of Sant Ravidas has been decorated with lighting. The DCP, Kashi Zone RS Gautam held a meeting with the organisers of tableau to be taken out in the shobha yatra on the occasion of birth anniversary and police officers at his office in Kotwali police stations premises here late Wednesday afternoon and directed that there should not be any political tableau and only the tableau, relating to the birth of Sant Ravidas should be taken out. Only the hymns should be played in the shobha yatra and no obscene song should be played, he directed, adding that no procession or shobha yatra will be taken out without the permission from the competent authority. No person participating in the shobha yatra should be in an inebriated state and none will consume any intoxicating product during it, the DCP directed and asked the police officers to ensure that no incident of eve-teasing with women or girls take place during it. The loud speaker should be used at low volume, he directed and appealed to the people to refrain from rumour and apprise the concerned police officers and SHO in case anyone is found indulging in such illegal act. Action would be ascertained in case anyone is found to create disturbance having belief on the rumour, he directed.

Annual training camp at SIET

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A total of 8 students of the Indian Institute of Information Technology Allahabad, were represented in Combined Annual Training Camp 78 at Shambhunath Institute (SIET) Prayagraj recently. Dr. Pragya Singh, Asst.

Prof. & Associate NCC officer (ANO), IITA said that these students performed very well and received the medals in different events earning the Camp training certificates for all 08 cadets along with receiving 'B' Certificates for 02 cadets at the NCC camp. Maloth Sridhar Varma,

Yuvraj Singh, Ujjwal Kesarwani, received Gold Medal in basketball match (boys), Banothu Udayasree-Silver medal drawing competition (girls), Gadde Jahnvi, Ritu Kiran Murmu-Tug of war (girls), Lokesh Mehta and Dr Pragya said this year our 30 NCC Cadets partic-

ipated in the republic day parade of the institution at Jhalwa campus. Prof RS Verma, Director (acting) inspected the parade. She expressed her thanks to NCC officer Havaladar Ravi Kumar for his training and added that all the cadets will do their best in the future.

Mass 'yagyopavit' & marriage ceremony on Feb 27

PNS ■ KANPUR

The Kanyakubj Brahmin Samaj, Uttar Pradesh, will organise its 29th annual programme of mass 'yagyopavit' and marriage ceremony here on February 27. Addressing mediapersons, general secretary Yagyakant Shukla said that following the growing ignorance of people towards their culture and values, active participation of women was necessary for national security. Samaj had set up the 'Matrashakti Prakostha' under the leadership of Dr Sulochana Dixit last year. On February 27 a grand 'yagyopavit' and mass marriage ceremony will be organised at Shivaji Park in Shivaji Nagar where newlywed couples will be gifted household articles worth Rs.1

lakh each. Ramesh Pandey, Ramakant Shukla, Sudhir Mishra, Shashi Shukla and Dr Sulochana Dixit were also present at the press conference. **DEMANDED:** The mmembers of Jan Sangh Party's local unit have demanded the arrest of Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya on charges of 'sedition'. At a meeting held under the chairmanship of Rakesh Dixit on Thursday, members resolved that Maurya had committed a crime by making comments on the holy epic 'Ramcharitmanas'. Tej Bahadur Singh said the ideals established by saints and seers of different religions in India are still recalled by one and all. Raj Kumar Tripathi, Rajat Mishra, Deepak Verma, JN Mishra and Rashul Kashyap were also present at the meeting.

SPSEC ORGANISES FAREWELL FUNCTION

The Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) organised 'Despedia', a farewell function for the outgoing batch of class-XII on the school premises. It commenced with the traditional welcome of class-XII students. They were welcomed by the students of class XI who applied 'tilak' and escorted them to their respective seats. The welcome speech was read by Aditree Bajpai and Vaibhav Mishra of class XI and was followed by 'shloka' recitation as part of the customary ritual. Shambhavi and group presented a melodious song for their seniors. It was followed by events like 'Fumble Trouble'. A group dance titled 'Sazz' was per-

formed by six girls. Later Sanchi Arora and Suhani Kapoor made each one present their nostalgic moments in the school. Contestants for Mr and Ms Padampat exhibited their talents by 'Dancing with Props' in the second round of competition. Vaibhavi Singh stole the limelight with her solo musical melody. Ditiya Lamba, Tavishi Agarwal and Anandita Vishnoi went down the memory lane. The excitement of final questionnaire round for the 'Crowning Glory' held everyone enthused until the entrants appeared on the deciding floor. The celebration got spiced up by Bollywood Dhamaka. Siddharth Singh also shared his feeling and his bond with the institution.

Principal Bhawna Gupta honoured the winners in the award ceremony 'Crowning Glory' and Siddharth Singh was crowned as Mr Padampat and Suhani Kapoor received the title of Ms Padampat on the basis of their confidence, communication skills, intellect and overall presentation. The principal spoke a few words and wished them success in their future endeavours. The vote of thanks was proposed by cultural joint secretary Manika Jain. Chairperson Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, Vice-Chairman, Abhishek Singhania, Vice-Chairperson, Varsha Singhania and Vice-Chairman and Director Partho P Kar conveyed their love and blessings for the outgoing 'batch'.

Youth's murder worked out

Varanasi (PNS): The police claimed to have worked out the murder case of a youth whose body was found on the second floor of a building in Kamalgadaha, under the Jaipura police station and arrested the accused. Producing the accused before the media persons on Thursday, the DCP, Kashi Zone RS Gautam informed that a body was found on the second floor of a building in Kamalgadaha area on January 27 last and the body was identified as of Mohammad Ekram, resident of Dulhipur, Mugalsarai. The brother of the deceased suspected the killing of the deceased and lodged a complaint of murder at Jaipura police station.

After collecting evidence, the Jaipura police arrested Nurul Hasan alias Babu Quraishi in the morning on Thursday from his home in Kamalgadaha and claimed that he had killed the deceased late at night on January 26. During the interrogation, the accused confessed his crime and informed that on the fateful day, he went to consume paan at a betel shop and returned home late night around 11.30 pm. But he saw the deceased talking to his wife and when raised an objection, the latter said that he had an illicit relationship with her. Listening to this, he lost his temper and pushed the deceased and when he fell on the ground he strangled him to death by using lungi worn by the deceased.

BHU experts edit book on gallbladder cancer

PNS ■ VARANASI

Leading experts of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in the field of surgery and cancer have edited a book on gallbladder cancer highlighting the treatment options available for the disease. The book titled 'Gallbladder Cancer: Current Treatment Options' has been edited by Prof VK Shukla, Rector, BHU, and an eminent surgeon, Prof Manoj Pandey, gallbladder cancer expert and Dr Ruhi Dixit, researcher at the Department of General Surgery, Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS), BHU. The book has been published by Springer Nature, Singapore. Gallbladder cancer is one of the common neoplasms of the biliary tract, repre-

senting 80-95 per cent of biliary tract cancers worldwide. Within India, the incidence is high in north, north-east, central and eastern India, and less common in south and west India. The Indo-Gangetic belt in Northern India is one of the highest affected regions and is the commonest gastrointestinal cancer in women. The book has contributions from global authorities on the subject and encompasses pertinent discussions on the recent scientific advances enhancing the understanding of therapeutic targets for gallbladder cancer to provide opportunities for developing innovative strategies that may enhance the benefit of conventional chemotherapy.

BHU V-C PRAISES UNION BUDGET

Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain has said that the Union Budget 2023-24 will help realise the objectives defined in the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020. "The NEP lays a greater focus on skilling the youth of the country and linking education with industry and professional spheres, so as to enable students to be ready for future challenges and opportunities. The budget announcements have come as a boost to materialise these ideas," said Prof Jain. Hailing the increase in the allocation for the education sector, the V-C said that the move will give a further impetus to quality research and education.

CRS conducts safety inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) of North-East (NE) Circle Mohd Latief Khan conducted a safety inspection after completion of the final phase of the Aunrihar-Jaunpur (59 km) rail section of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) on Thursday. He made an inspection on the Muftiganj-Jaunpur (14.6 km) rail section where electrification work was done and under the doubling of the track project, a second line was laid between Jaunpur-Muftiganj.

Accompanying by Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) SC Srivastava, Divisional Railway Manager (Varanasi Division) Ramashray Pandey and other senior officers, Khan first inspected the Muftiganj railway station and found full block working of the station as per the standard of doubled section. He also inspected standard interlocking of signals, colour light signalling, station panel system, route setting, yard plan, power substation, foot over bridge, platform clearance, point crossing, height of overhead traction, block overlap, fouling mark, sand hump, feeder power supply etc.

Then the CRS left for inspection of the Muftiganj-Jaunpur block section by motor trolley. During this, he also inspected the safety of a switch extension and level



CRS Mohd Latief Khan conducting a safety inspection in Varanasi Division of NER area on Thursday.

Pioneer

crossing gate. He asked the gate man about the precautions and methodology to be taken on the doubled-cum-electrified section and asked the security questions appropriately. Satisfied with the reply, he also inspected the newly constructed low-height subway. After this, he made a thorough inspection of curve number-9 and measured the height of the signals falling on the curvature and the standard distance from the track. In the same sequence, the CRS also carried out safety

inspections of a minor bridge and reserved level crossing. Thereafter, he made a safety inspection of Yadvendra Nagar Halt station. Later, he reached Jaunpur after examining the safety of a level crossing.

Chief Engineer (Construction) Ashutosh Mishra, Chief Signal and Telecom Engineer (Planning) RK Singh, Chief Electrical Design Engineer (Construction) OP Singh, Deputy Railway Safety Commissioner Balbir Yadav,

Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infra) Rahul Srivastava, Senior Divisional Operations Manager AP Singh, Senior Divisional Engineer- III Anuj Verma, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Ashutosh Shukla, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) Pankaj Kesharwani and senior officers of BG Nirman Sangathan and Varanasi Division were also present during the inspection of CRS.

Cleanliness drive held at Pukhkar Talab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, the activists of Namami Gange along with the personnel of 39-GTC, 137-CETF Bn (TA) troops of 39 GR Ganga Task Force, undertook a cleanliness drive at mythological Pushkar Talab (pond), which holds greatness in ancient religious texts, here on Thursday. The campaign was launched as the theme of this year of the day is 'it is time for wetlands restoration'.

In the beginning, Aarti was performed at Pushkar Talab to maintain awareness of pure water. The volunteers of these organisations cleaned the garbage polythene lying on the banks of the pond. Taking the national flag in the event organised under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, everyone took a pledge for the protection of wetlands. An appeal was made to the people of the surrounding areas to maintain the cleanliness of the Pushkar Talab filled with Jalkumbhi (water hyacinth).

They also urged the administration to save the existence of this mythological pond and demanded to take necessary steps for the renovation and beautification of the pond. Convenor of Namami Gange



Namami Gange activists launching a cleanliness drive at Pushkar Talab in Varanasi on Thursday.

Pioneer

(Kashi region) Rajesh Shukla said that wetlands are the biggest source of clean water use in the world, both directly and indirectly and in such a situation, conservation of wetland has become very important in today's time.

"There are more than seven lakh wetlands in India and these wetlands are an important part of our natural environment, through which the we can control floods, pro-

tect coastal areas and provide protection to the community from disasters, reduce the effects of floods apart from absorbing pollutants and improving water quality," he said, adding that more than a billion people depend on wetlands for their livelihoods and 40 per cent of the world's species nest and breed in wetlands and they can also play an important role in wetland transportation, tourism, and

the cultural and spiritual well-being of the people.

Colonel Sandeep Sharma of 39-GTC said that cleanliness work would be done continuously at Pushkar Talab. Hundreds of citizens including Col Hemant Gambhir of Ganga Task Force, Subedar Shivendra Singh and his team, batuks (Sanskrit students) of Brahma Ved Vidyalaya located in Pushkar Talab area were also present in the drive.

Adopt all active TB patients: CDO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal has directed the Health department officers to ensure adopting of all active tuberculosis (TB) patients and increase private notification and complete 100 per cent achievement of direct benefit transfer (DBT) under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme (NTEP) and PM TB-free India campaign. He was presiding over a meeting of the District TB Forum under the NTEP at Vikas Bhawan here on Wednesday.

In the meeting, he also discussed the efforts being made to make the district free from TB by 2025. The CDO reviewed all the indicators related to TB. Discussion was also held on sputum examination of five per cent of the patients being seen in the OPD in the district's government hospitals Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital Pandeypur, Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) Hospital Ramnagar and Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and community and primary health centres (CHCs/PHCs), Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs) so that the patient can be identified and diagnosed and their treatment can be started as soon as possible in order to bring the TB under control. "Took informa-



CDO Himanshu Nagpal reviewing progress of NTEP in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Pioneer

tion on Integrated Defense Day celebrated every 15th of the month," the CDO instructed the officers. Along with this, TB Preventive Therapy (TPT) was discussed in detail for all family members along with TB patients. He said that the Union Health Minister is keeping a close eye on the TB-free India campaign.

Nagpal further said that all the hospitals, whether government or private, should ensure 100 per cent referral of all TB patients to the nearest sputum testing centre, so that their treatment can be carried out

completely. He directed to increase the notification in the private sector and 100 per cent payment of DBT. Along with this, motivate every department and voluntary organisation to adopt all active TB patients.

The nutrition packets they get should be provided regularly every month. All senior TB supervisors (STS) should also adopt TB patients and all their work should be monitored regularly, he said, adding that strict action should be taken against whoever is negligent in STS work and

asked the Health officers to withhold the salary of such supervisors.

Statistics were also discussed in which it was told that the result of the outcome in the year 2021 was 89 per cent against the target. Presently there are 6,208 active patients in which 4,545 patients have given consent for treatment, nutrition and emotional support for adoption. District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai informed about the work progress of the entire TB-free India campaign through a presentation.

Dhirendra Shastri urges saints to unite for Hindu Rashtra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Acharya Dhirendra Krishna Shastri who has become a second name of controversy these days, reached Prayagraj on Thursday morning. He took a holy bath in the Sangam there.

Peethadhiswar Acharya Dhirendra Krishna Shastri of Shri Bageshwar Dham raised the voice for Hindu nation from Sangam. After Sangam Snan, he met the saints in a Mahamandaleshwar Santoshdas Satua Baba's camp and also had a discussion with other Mahatmas like Mahant Damodar Das, Mahant Jairam Das, Mahamandaleshwar Hitler Baba, Mahant Shashikant Das etc. Dhirendra Shastri said that it is necessary for the Hindu nation to unite the saints of every sect and tradition.

If Saints and Sanatanis unite then no one can stop India from becoming a Hindu nation. Acharya Dhirendra Shastri, a katha vachak (narrator of Hindu religious tales) said that the glory of Sanatan Dharma will increase by becoming a Hindu nation. At the same time, injustice will end. On this, Santoshdas assured him of full support. He said that the work of Acharya Dhirendra is in the interest of religion and the nation. Mahatma associated with Khachok will give full support to him.

After this, while addressing the crowd of thousands, he said that every Sanatani should unite and work in the interest of the nation.

On the controversial statement given by Swami Prasad



Acharya Dhirendra Krishna Shastri at a camp in Magh Mela in Prayagraj

Pioneer

Maurya on RamcharitManas, Dhirendra Shastri of Bageshwar Dham said – such people have cancer. They have no right to live in India. Actually, after bathing in the Ganga, he answered some questions from the media.

When he was asked whether he will also be meeting CM Yogi Adityanath? He smiled and said - I am not on a political journey. After Dhirendra Shastri reached Prayagraj, his supporters were seen in large numbers. People were present around the beach since morning to have a glimpse of him. Due to security, the police force was also deployed. Dhirendra Shastri reached the Sangam ghat in his special vehicle. Here he took a

holy dip in the Ganges amidst the security circle. During this he was continuously reciting some mantras.

After coming out of the Ganga, he was seen in yellow colored clothes. He went to Satua Baba's pandal built on the bank itself. A large number of sages and saints were already present here. He had a discussion with them for about 45 minutes. After this, he reached Meja's Maa Sheetla Kripa Mahotsav in his car and held a court (darbar) over there. Seating arrangements for about 1.5 lakh people were made in a pandal. Earlier, he was seen greeting his supporters from the roof of the car.

A lot of secrecy has been maintained regarding the pro-

gram of Pandit Dhirendra Shastri. There was a lot of enthusiasm among saints and seers to meet Shastri. Many saints approached him and expressed their desire to meet Dhirendra Shastri.

A section has accused Acharya Dhirendra of spreading hypocrisy. After this, voices are being raised in his favor and against. Due to this, he has been in constant headlines.

DCP Yamunanagar Deepak Bhupar, DCP Crime, SDM Vinod Kumar Pandey, ACP Meja Vimal Kishore Mishra, Kotwal Meja Gyaneshwar Mishra and all the officers were busy in the arrangements throughout the day regarding security arrangements.

Budget will pave way for sustainable growth: Nandi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Minister for Industrial Development, Export Promotion, NRI and Investment Promotion of UP, Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' has said that the General budget 2023 presented by the Union finance minister in the Parliament is all-inclusive and dedicated to the all-round welfare of the people. He added, "This budget is the budget of 130 crore people of the country."

Gupta, meanwhile, said a strong blueprint of everyday needs and secure future is present in this budget and special care has been taken of the middle class and taxpayers. Nandi also claimed that this budget will pave the way for sustainable growth in the field of industrial development, safe investment and infrastructure of the country.

A clear glimpse of employment generation for youth, concern of farmers, empower-

ment of women is included in this budget. This budget will give power to the poor, strength to the farmers and dreams of the middle class. Meanwhile, leaders of Samajwadi Party criticized budget and claimed "it was Bhajpai budget not government budget" They claimed that this budget will increase inflation and unemployment.

SP spokesman Daan Bahadur "Madhur" said, "There was nothing new for farmers, youths, women, labourers, salarized class and traders." Bahadur said, "Budget was meant for capitalists and no concrete steps were taken to eradicate poverty. Government, instead of providing relief packages, had not taken any initiative to start closed or sick government cooperative units."

CA HAILS NEW BUDGET: Expressing happiness over the Budget 2023 presented by Union Finance Minister, a noted Chartered Accountant CA (Dr.) Navin C. Agrawal said

that it is highly appreciable as its fruits will reach to each and every class of the nation. Certainly, foundation has been laid in earlier Budgets.

Besides praise worthy beneficial schemes for the farmers, Agriculture Accelerator Fund will be set up to encourage agricultural startups by young entrepreneurs. The scheme to supply foodgrain for priority households for the next year certainly takes care of the poor. For ST under PMPVTG Vikas Mission 15,000 cr will be spent in 3 years. Establishment of the National Digital Library will bring tremendous change in providing information. Eklavya Schools will be provided with 38,800 Teachers. Railways will have an investment of 2.40 lac crores. 3 AI centers of Excellence will be opened for its larger use. 42 Central Acts will be amended for ease of business. Contractual disputes between the Government and its organizations will be settled through a new mechanism.

Relief to MSME affected by calamity will be provided. Allocation of 7,000 crores for E-Court schemes. PM Pranam Yojana will be launched for alternate fertilizers. 30 Skill India International Centres will be established. The National Financial Information Registry will be established. Investment limit for senior citizen Savings Scheme has been doubled.

The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 will be amended for better Bank Governance and Investors Protection. Changes in Direct taxes will reduce compliance burden. ITR processing period has become 16 days from 93 days. Lower Tax rate @ 15% provided for new manufacturing company units. Small Appeals will be decided by Addl./Joint Commissioners of Income Tax. Tax slabs changed and higher exemption at 7 lacs provided besides Standard Deduction under New Tax Regime to popularize it.

Construction work of multi-purpose cultural complex begins

PRAYAGRAJ (PNS): The construction of a multi-purpose cultural complex (auditorium) of Allahabad University, being built under the Smart City Project, has started at a new site on the varsity campus. Last year, defence authorities had stopped the work for lack of NOC for building the auditorium behind the NCC building, Chaitham Lines. Now, the auditorium with the seating capacity of 1500 individuals would

be constructed at the place besides the department of earth and planetary sciences of the science faculty of AU at an estimated cost of Rs 47 crore. The project is being constructed by the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA). Prior to using this land for the construction of this auditorium, it housed the gymnasium and squash court, both being not in use for several years. The fully centralised air-conditioned

auditorium will have seating arrangement spread over two floors. The ground floor will have around 900 seats while the first floor (balcony) will have 600 seats. Besides, the basement will have the facility of parking for over 250 vehicles along with an open parking for the VVIP. It will also have an open theatre with the seating capacity of around 300 individuals. Along with this, there will be two conference halls, each

having a seating capacity of 250 individuals. The complex will also have two exhibition halls. The main stage will be of around 200 sqm and digitally equipped. The lighting system too will be matched for normal conferences to theatre and drama performances. The sound system, side screens, displays, overhead projectors etc will also be in place in concurrent to other state-of-the-art facilities in the complex.

Awareness van flagged off

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Divya Mittal flagged off the awareness van under the first phase of the 15-day sanitation drive at Collectorate on Wednesday. As per the direction of the government the drive has been launched throughout the state which will continue till February 16. Regarding the drive EO A Gupta said people will be made aware to separate wet and dry waste. For this separate containers will be available in the van. He said an appeal will be made to the people to not to

throw garbage on roads and give it to the sanitation workers who had to collect from the doorstep. The decorated van reached Ghantaghar after passing through the localities. The drive started from Bariaghat locality. At Collectorate ADM (F&R) Shiv Pratap Shukla, city magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh, SLAO Bharat Lal Saroj and others were also present.

INAUGURATED: DM Divya Mittal said uninterrupted power supply was the first need of any industry and setting up of independent power feeder for industrial estate will boost industrial growth in the

district. These views were expressed by her while inaugurating the new power substation of 33/11 KV at industrial estate on Wednesday. She congratulated the entrepreneurs that their long-awaited demand was fulfilled with the effort of the officials of the Electricity department.

She appealed to entrepreneurs to increase the production so that the independent feeder proves to be a milestone in the industrial journey of the district.

Amar Nath Pandey, Mohan Das Agrawal, Manoj Khandelwal, Naresh Singh, AK

Singh and others were present.

GIRL DIES: A girl died after falling from a tractor at a stone mine under Madihan police station on Wednesday. CO Madihan Anil Kumar Pandey said in the morning on being informed about the death of a girl at the stone mine in Deori village after falling from a tractor the police reached the spot, took the tractor in possession and registered a case.

SDM Madihan, police authorities and mines officer inspected the spot. The deceased was identified as Chameli (8) of Singrauli.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Time to act

The Government and regulators must ensure the meltdown of Adani stocks doesn't cause more pain

Amid the war in Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin was: "Today's era must not be of war." With bloodbath on Dalal Street unabated, his Government must send a similar message across the political parties. The facts are horrifying. After the publication of the Hindenburg Research report, the market-cap of seven listed Adani Group companies has declined by about \$100 billion. The Adani Group had to call off its Rs 20,000-crore follow-on public offering (FPO), the largest in the country, to shield its investors from potential losses. Group chairman Gautam Adani said in a statement that "it would not be morally correct" to proceed with the FPO. In fact, the entire stock market, especially banking scrips, has suffered because of the meltdown of Adani shares. Even the excellent Budget, which has been widely hailed as pro-growth, could not lift the investors' spirits. It must be noted here that the free fall of Adani shares should not be seen as something that only its promoters and investors (institutional or retail) should be worried about; this also affects banks which have lent to the group. Furthermore, this also affects the public exchequer, for most banks in our country are in the public sector; and losses to them necessitate recapitalisation, which the taxpayer has to bear. Consider this fact: public sector banks had to be paid Rs 310,997 crore of taxpayer money for their recapitalisation in just four years, between 2016-17 and 2020-21.



Against this backdrop, the response of the political class to the crisis occasioned by the US short-seller Hindenburg's report is anything but responsible; instead of taking on the crisis head on, our politicians are trying to score brownie points. In Parliament, Opposition parties demanded a discussion on the risks Indian investors face because of the unrelenting decline of Adani shares. They also demanded an investigation by a parliamentary committee or one appointed by the Supreme Court. Both Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected these demands, leading to pandemonium in the Houses. The Government's silence over the mayhem in the capital market is not helping anyone. The Adani Group has also failed to convince the investors. Calling Hindenburg as the "Madoffs of Manhattan" which has "no credibility or ethics" doesn't do any good to the conglomerate. Its invocation of nationalism — labeling Hindenburg's allegations as not "merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India" and its growth story — also cut no ice. Not with the investors anyway; the Hindenburg report seems to have woken them up, for it was not secret that Adani stocks were majorly overvalued. Hindenburg's allegations of fraud and market manipulation are new though. Even if the allegations are wrong, one wonders why didn't the regulators never warned and took against overvaluation. It is time for action.

PICTALK



Sand artist Ajay Rawat creates a sand art for the upcoming Jaisalmer Desert Festival 2023, in Pushkar PTI

Don't Weaken MNREGA

Allocation for MNREGA has been slashed in the Budget which would hit hard the downtrodden

While the tax slabs hogged the limelight of the Budget 2023 presented by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, one thing that has been overlooked by most is that the budget for the MNREGA has been slashed along with other social security schemes. The impact of weakening MNREGA could be really bad for the rural poor. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is the lifeline for poor village women workers who work in the vicinity of their homes to earn their subsistence. The Finance Minister has reduced the allocation to MNREGA to Rs 60,000 crore, the lowest in the last four budgets. This year's budget allocation for the scheme has declined by 29000 crores. The scheme was introduced in 2005 by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance and is aimed at ensuring the livelihood security of households in rural areas. The demand-driven scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work annually for every rural household and covers all districts in the country. In fact, it has been so popular that even the World Bank took note of it and praised it. MNREGA has been ranked as the world's largest public works program by the World Bank, providing social security net to almost 15 percent of the country's population.



Besides MNREGS, the government has cut down the National Social Assistance Program to Rs 9,636.32 crore from the 2022-23 revised estimate of Rs 9,652 crore. The program provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions. The budget for Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2, aimed at welfare of children and women, has been brought down to Rs 20,263 from the 2022-'23 revised estimate of Rs 20,554. It is rather sad that the Central Government is reducing the subsidies and also weakening the social security net which is the need of the hour, especially after the pandemic as many people who suffered have not recovered fully. MNREGA is an excellent scheme for it provides work and does not give freebies and that too in the vicinity of the beneficiaries so is convenient for the women. In 2022-23 6.49 crore households demanded work under the Scheme. Out of this, 6.48 crore households were offered employment by the government. The budget allocation to MNREGA as for other social schemes must not be cut, it would hit the poorest of the poor. The Govt must revise its budget allocation to strengthen the social security.

Budget booster for tech-economy

The Finance Minister has done well to give a fillip to the tech-based skills in the budget to give a leg up to the economy



NIDHI BHASSIN

This 'techade' (decade of technology) will serve as an important period to close the gaps in digitization and accelerate growth in the nation's technology sector. 2023 has been identified as a crucial year for the elimination of the digital divide, as stated in The NITI Aayog 'India @ 75' report, and aggressively strengthening digital literacy, specifically among rural demographics and marginalized communities, is of the essence. The Union Budget 2023-24, steered by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, by placing emphasis on both inclusive development and youth empowerment among its key economic priorities, sets a positive tone for the way forward.

Several progressive initiatives were announced during the Budget presentation, including the expansion of the Skill India Digital platform and its linking with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 to skill lakhs of youth in modern technologies like AI, robotics, and soft skills would enable future-ready talent, especially from Tier 2 and 3 cities at scale and foster greater employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship has been given a major fillip through the introduction of collectives formed to support entrepreneurs with product design, branding, product marketing, and market expansion. The efforts of mobilizing resources and enabling entrepreneurship opportunities for rural women will be instrumental in facilitating better livelihoods for marginalized communities. As the technology and skilling ecosystem joins the nation in formulating its vision for 'India @ 100', considering current systemic realities and strategizing solutions to bridge crucial gaps is the need of the hour. The NITI Aayog, in its 'India @ 75' report, identifies a few of these challenges that need to be overcome in order to support the empowerment of marginalized demographics: a) limited industry knowledge and immersion among graduates, b)



little to no integration of the informal sector into the skill economy, c) limited provisions to align skilling certifications with international parameters, d) limited avenues for an apprenticeship, e) little to no inclusion of vocational training as a part of the educational curriculum. Achieving inclusive digitization, catalyzing rural women's empowerment, and accelerating the pace of skilling would call for a comprehensive strategy rooted in an understanding of the complex issues facing each priority area.

Social stigma prevalent in sections of rural society prevents women from gaining access to mobile devices, let alone having access to the internet. Research conducted by J-PAL in Niger reveals that families with women members having access to mobile devices and the internet contributed greatly to their agency in family decisions. Empowering women through access to technology and quality entrepreneurship opportunities has a ripple effect on the local community and the economy at large. Lessons from grassroots initiatives also reveal that connecting digitization and skilling initiatives to a strong objective had a higher degree of success among women beneficiaries. Rural women, for instance, had a greater chance of acquainting

SEVERAL PROGRESSIVE INITIATIVES WERE ANNOUNCED DURING THE BUDGET PRESENTATION, INCLUDING THE EXPANSION OF THE SKILL INDIA DIGITAL PLATFORM

themselves with the internet in order to support their children's education. Encouraging the use of mobile technology among women and sustaining a well-knit entrepreneurial ecosystem with provisions for knowledge sharing can help counter social stigma and restrictive gender ideas.

The Budget announcements tailored to increase the knowledge base of the rural youth can be further complemented by incentives for apprenticeship and mentorship programs. The Union Budget for the previous financial year laid the foundation for digital skilling through initiatives such as the DESH Stack e-portal and the launch of several online courses aimed at increasing employability among the youth and equipping them with the tools to build a stable livelihood. Aligning the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) with the evolving requirements of multiple industries was also a priority. Apprenticeship programs incentivize rural youth to gain employment experience in close proximity to their place of stay and subsequently enrich their community's skill base. Mentorship programs can help them be aware of the career opportunities awaiting them and give them access to hands-on training that will enhance their growth prospects. More

rural youth can be included in the skilled talent pool of India by way of these initiatives.

Acknowledging and understanding the heterogeneity of rural demographics is the first step toward designing, strategizing, and deploying solutions. Placing the user at the center of any intervention and facilitating its seamless integration into their routines are crucial to their success. In a similar vein, programs such as Aspirational Districts and the newly announced Aspirational Blocks Programme can efficiently close the key infrastructure and knowledge gaps in rural regions. Maintaining the momentum of digital skilling drives and expanding its ambit to demographics that have little to no access to the internet or cell phones will remain a key priority for 2023 and the years to come. With the appropriate Budgetary push both at and Union and State levels, many of the challenges that hamper the expansion of upskilling programs can be effectively addressed. All round-stakeholder participation will be required to support the budgetary initiatives and make inclusive digitization a reality.

(The writer is CEO NASSCOM Foundation, a social development sector professional. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DON'T FORGET THE DOWNTRODDEN

Sir — A much popular veteran Bollywood superstar had tweeted with much pleasure that the "whole country" will go to sleep "peacefully" at night from now (following the attainment of that statistical jugglery named "Century of Centuries" by a certain cricketer "God")! That means the poorest of poor dominating the landscape of India were possessing only one aspiration in life — "When that elusive 100th ton would come"! Now that it has come, we can afford to "enjoy" a "sound sleep" or "sweet dreams" every night! What a naked display of inhuman indifference to the plight of millions of Indians who have to go to bed with deadly pangs of hunger in their stomachs night after night! Or might be in the eyes of class-conscious Indians, the marginalised poor simply don't exist or just do not matter at all! After all the country is the "zamindari" of privileged class only; no wonder why "subsidies" to poor are so frowned upon, but tax breaks concessions free medical/travel facilities for the industrialists corporate honchos and high salaried class are always welcomed with open arms in the name of "incentives"! In this pathetic inhumanitarian perspective, it is natural that the trumpet of "Each and every Indian today stands at the summit of self-confidence" would be blown in regular intervals!

When millions are at their wits' end how to survive the day, procure health care with uncountable children getting brutally exploited in labour market (not to speak of bonded labours) and adults compelled to leave for civil war-torn Middle East or Africa to toil in slave-like conditions; how heartlessly can an image of an exclusive well-fed much-nourished India being blatantly projected either to sweep the scars of the society under "patriotic" carpet or to simply convey that non-privileged Indians do not matter at all in "national consciousness"! Nothing can be more heartless than such a mindset!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

India on top of the world



India is on top of the world, won the 3rd T20 versus New Zealand by a big margin of 168 runs. It won the series hands down 2-1. It fell short of just 5 runs to equal the world record

margin of Romania. The highest T20 cricket's victory margin records are: 173 runs margin of Romania (on 29th Aug 2019) and 172 runs margin of Sri Lanka (vs Kenya in Sept 2007). India scored a big score of 234 for 4 in the 3rd T20. Indian bowlers demolished NZ to a paltry 66 off 12.1 overs. All cricket fans are waiting for the Australian team's visit to India, for 4 test matches series (9th Feb to 13th Mar 2023) and 3 ODIs series (17th, 19th and 22nd Mar 2023). So long test series of 4 matches, after a long time for India and cricket fans.

PV Srinivas Nivriti | Secunderabad

SAVE TREES, SAVE LIFE

Sir — The Tree is a big creature of nature, it is very beneficial thing for entire world, it purifies the earth from pollution and gives fresh air, most important thing is it gives shade, fruits and food for Animals, its wood have many benefits too, people make different furniture. In India the government forbids people to cut down the tree, but many people do cut down and take their wood for burning and making food, as a result the air has been polluted. If the air is polluted how can we survive?

That is why many of the campaigns to save trees are launched. Your planet needs you, unite to combat, climate change, Pure air is nothing but life. Save forest Save wildlife. Save trees!

Sufyan Nazeer Al Qasmi | Bijnor

THE MALES DOMINATE THE JOBS

Sir — The overall job scenario both in terms of nature and duration of contracts is strongly tilted in favour of males as females often tend to lose job on account of family compulsions, night shifts and other economic constraints that several surveys and studies have clearly demonstrated. Enrollment must increase in S.T. E.M.Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics for women folk so as to make it more representative and economically viable. The All India

Survey on Higher Education report (A.I.S.H.E.) 2020 21 report too shows some worrisome trends, like more men opting for sciences and less women folk taking science stream which must change for the better irrespective of the fact that women enrolment has increased manifold from 18.8 million in 2019 .20 to 20.1 million in 2020.21.

However, women are under represented in engineering and management courses i.e. less than 30% and 40% respectively. The U.G.C. has come up with a plan to conduct Social outreach programmes by involving parents special interactive sessions. So, harnessing the true potential of skilled female labour force will not just launch the country on the path of development but also reduce gender disparity apart from making them economically secure. An enabling environment in work places by providing women mentors can be encouraging. The educationalists and policymakers have their task cut out. Let us not forget women are fifty percent of humanity and they deserve a better deal. Give them a better deal and the world would become a better place.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Almor

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Today's budget is against the poor people. It's anti-people. That's why I condemn this budget. There is no light in this budget, it's only darkness. It contains lies, bluff. It's to show people something and misinformation because of upcoming elections.

West Bengal chief minister — Mamata Banerjee

The activists who carried out the demonstrations act as "useful idiots" for foreign powers who want to inflict harm on the Scandinavian country as it seeks to join NATO.

Swedish Prime Minister — Ulf Kristersson

I love my wife. I love my family. I'm in love with life. I think that is what reaches the audience.

Actor — Vicky Kaushal

It's a slap on our cricket system that we are not able to find a high-profile full-time coach.

Former Pakistan captain — Misbah-ul-Haq/Misbah

MitrKaal' Budget has: No vision to create Jobs No plan to tackle Mehngai No intent to stem Inequality. This Budget proves Govt has No roadmap to build India's future.

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

ECO-POLITICAL SURVEY HAS EYES ON '24 POLLS


It highlights the reforms regime brought in by current Govt



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Economic Survey is a policy document that gives a diagnostic report regarding the state of the economy and growth prospects. The survey for 2022-23 (based on nearly nine months of economic data for the fiscal) is far more insightful on the tone of the eco-political narrative, which is going to play out in the run up to the mother of all democratic processes, the national general elections of 2024.

In a somewhat break from past Economic Surveys, this year's economic survey seems more of a political document, highlighting through charts, graphs and illustrations, the economic welfare agenda of the current government starting from 2014. It was expected to be in the budget, but with the economic survey grabbing many of those, easy to grasp charts, suggests that the Modi government is really gearing up for pushing India to be the third largest world economy in about a decade's time (caveat that is two new governments, one or both of which is unlikely to have Mr Modi leading the country from the front).



The Economic Survey highlights the reforms regime brought in by the current government immediately after it came to power, which were aimed at enhancing the overall structural efficiency and fundamentals of the economy. The finance ministry's press statement read: "With an underlying emphasis on improving the ease of living and doing business, the reforms after 2014 were based on the broad principles of creating public goods, adopting trust-based governance, co-partnering with the private sector for development, and improving agricultural productivity."

Some examples of those reforms included improved fiscal transparency and realistic revenue assumptions in the budget bringing down extra budgetary borrowings for the government to nearly nil for fiscal year 2023. The major reforms from previous budget documents highlighted in the economic survey included reduction in non-plan expenditure in the budget, thereby, efficiently streamlining government's expenditures towards targeted sectors, while sticking to a fiscal discipline.

The merger of the railways budget with the main budget since fiscal year 2018 helped the government have better management of finances and allowed the finance ministry to focus more money on the integrated infrastructure divisions of railways, roads and ports more efficiently. The Economic Survey did not mention that this smart move brought an efficiency in railways governance, which prior 2014, has been used as a separate vote bank, since some of the most visible and sought after government jobs are in the railways. Finally, the Economic survey does highlight that advancing the general budget to February 1 gives an additional month for all departments of the government for better planning and implementation of the budget schemes.

It is important to understand that the Economic survey presents a macro narrative for the political economy. This document has tons of easily digestible data. The Survey for the first time includes chapters on social sector and climate change and environment, two themes very close to the Prime Minister's inclusive sustainable economic growth agenda. The preface reads, "These chapters highlight how the use of technology has enhanced the quality of life for citizens to ensure the reach of social sector schemes to intended beneficiaries, especially during the pandemic. The transformations in the lives of the citizens happening through the Aspirational Districts Programme, Direct Benefit Transfers, use of Aadhaar and various initiatives in the education, health and basic infrastructure availability are highlights of the chapter."

Clearly the economic report card of Modi government's two consecutive terms is out, and much to the innovative thinking of the current bunch of policy makers, who have pushed it out even before the opposition parties have asked for it. This sets the agenda and helps the political class to take the lead in the perception game. It is up to the various political players within the ruling dispensation to take advantage.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

Bringing back OPS may be catastrophic



UTTAM GUPTA

The new pension scheme or NPS has addressed the inequity issue by providing a platform to the private sector

Even as the finances of states were beginning to look better as reflected in decline in the ratio of state government debt to GDP from 31.2 per cent during 2021-22 to 29.5 per cent during 2022-23—as per the budgetary estimate (BE)—the political brass in different states have made populist announcements which don't augur well for the future. One of these relates to the revival of the old pension scheme (OPS).

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad said, "The state governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand have informed the Central government about their decisions to restart OPS for their respective employees."

The Congress government in Himachal Pradesh has also announced restoration of OPS. In view of impending elections in nine state assemblies during 2023 and almost all non-BJP parties more than willing to please voters, more and more states are expected to join the bandwagon. As for the central government employees, although for now, Karad informed Parliament that the Centre has no proposal to resurrect the OPS.

At the outset, let us understand pension. A pension provides a person with monthly income when he is old and hence not productive enough to be able to earn. The increase in life expectancy and rise in the cost of living further reinforces the need for assured monthly income for a decent and dignified life in old age.

Under the OPS, retired employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as monthly pension. As on date, the minimum pension paid by the government is Rs 9,000 a month, and the maximum is Rs 62,500 (50 per cent of the highest pay in the Central government, which is Rs 125,000 a month).

Just as the government offers its employees an adjustment in dearness allowance or DA - calculated as a percentage of the basic salary - to offset increase in the cost of living, the monthly payouts of pensioners also increases. Since, the DA hikes are announced twice a year, generally in January and July, a retiree also gets hikes in pension. For instance, with a 4 per cent increase in DA, a pensioner eligible for Rs 62,500 would get a monthly pension of Rs 65,000.

A government employee under OPS could not have gotten anything better. He was entitled to a decent 'pre-determined' monthly amount; the pension was fully protected against inflation and got it as long as he lived. After death, his wife gets the same amount for seven years and thereafter the family pension being around 60 per cent of this till she is alive.

However, from the perspective of the government, the arrangement could not have been worse. Given the architecture of the scheme, there was an inherent tendency of pension liabilities to balloon due

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AS ON OCTOBER 31, 2022, APART FROM AROUND 8,200,000 NPS SUBSCRIBERS IN THE GOVERNMENT (STATES 5,900,000 AND CENTRE 2,300,000), THE CORPORATE SECTOR HAD ABOUT 1,600,000 SUBSCRIBERS, AND THE UNORGANISED SECTOR 2,550,000

(The author is a policy analyst)



to addition to the pensioners' club every year, higher salaries of those joining, inflation indexation, increased longevity and so on. The proof of pudding is in the eating.

In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore. By 2020-21, it had jumped 58 times to Rs 190,886 crore. The outgo for all states put together shot up 125 times from Rs 3,131 crore in 1990-91 to Rs 386,001 crore in 2020-21. Overall, pension payments by states accounted for a quarter of their own tax revenues.

For some states, pension payments took away a much higher share of their own tax revenue. For Himachal Pradesh, it was 80 per cent whereas for Punjab and Rajasthan, it was 35 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

After payment of wages and salaries to the serving employees and other routine expenses, hardly any money was left with these states for meeting development and welfare expenses.

Prudent financial management required that every year, the government set aside capital which together with return accruing thereon would create a growing corpus sufficient to pay for the pension liabilities. This would have provided for a sustainable basis for discharging these liabilities without causing any stress on the budget. In short, there was a need for funding the pension liability. That was never done.

Instead, both the Centre and states have followed 'pay-as-you-go' impacting their budgets in a totally uncontrolled manner, besides making the present generation of taxpayers to bear the continuously rising burden of pensioners. Moreover, given the persistent shortfall in tax revenue, they

were forced to borrow more and more thereby passing on the burden to future generations of taxpayers as well.

According to an expert committee (2000) under S A Dave, a former chairman of SEBI, on Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS), just 3.4 crore people, or less than 11 per cent of the estimated total working population of 31.4 crore (as per 1991 census), had some post-retirement income security such as government pension, Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), or the Employee Pension Scheme (EPS).

The rest of the workforce had no means of post-retirement economic security. In this backdrop, using a disproportionate share of state resources for benefiting a tiny section of the working population was iniquitous and unconscionable.

To address the above concerns, a new pension scheme (NPS) was introduced for government employees joining service from January 1, 2004. NPS is a contributory pension scheme under which employees contribute 10 per cent of their salary (Basic + Dearness Allowance). The government contributes 14 per cent towards the employees' NPS accounts.

NPS is free from all the malaises afflicting OPS. It offers a self-financing and fully funded arrangement for discharging pension liabilities in which the state knows for certain 'how much it has to contribute'. There won't be any major stress on the budget even as the employee gets a good pension depending on the amount of contribution made, the age of joining, type of investment, and the income accruing from that investment.

Under this scheme, the pensioner enjoys a lot of flexibility; he

can increase the pension amount by asking his fund manager to invest in say a 'growth fund' wherein 50 per cent of the corpus can be put in equity which is capable of generating better returns than investment in corporate bonds or government securities.

The government has made NPS more attractive by offering fiscal incentives such as deduction up to 10 per cent of salary (basic+ DA) within overall ceiling of Rs.150,000/- u/s 80C in respect of employee contribution; deduction up to Rs.50,000 u/s 80 CCD(1B) for additional (albeit voluntary) contribution and deduction up to 10 per cent of salary u/s 80 CCD(2) towards employer contribution (this is over and above the limits u/s 80C).

The NPS has also addressed the inequity issue by providing a platform to the private sector, including the unorganised sector to secure pension post-retirement.

As on October 31, 2022, apart from around 8,200,000 subscribers in the government (states 5,900,000 and Centre 2,300,000), the corporate sector had about 1,600,000 subscribers, and the unorganised sector 2,550,000. In addition, there were around 4,200,000 subscribers under the NPS Swavalamban scheme—designed especially for the poor and the under-privileged citizens.

Having made good progress in providing a sustainable basis for financing pension liabilities under NPS, for states now to go back to OPS is a retrograde move. This must be avoided or else India could plunge into fiscal catastrophe, come 2034 when they will have to start paying pension to the first lot of those who came under NPS in 2004 and now being shifted to OPS.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE INDIAN RAILWAYS CAPITAL OUTLAY HAS BEEN SET AT 2.40 LAKH CRORE, HIGHEST EVER; 9X OF WHAT WAS IN 2013. — FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



IS THIS FOR THE EMPLOYEES OR FOR NEW RECRUITMENTS OR IS IT JUST FOR THE MODERNISATION OF RAILWAYS BEFORE SELLING IT TO PRIVATE COMPANIES. — CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER BHUPESH BAGHEL

Cyber security, technical education on the horizon

The Indian education sector will see a surge in courses such as risk assessment, financial fraud protection, and system auditing

The government has been at the forefront of driving technology-led initiatives through flagship programmes like Startup India and Digital India to foster a favorable business environment for existing and new businesses to become global unicorns. Therefore, it is now the best time to encourage Indian students to choose cyber security as a career option to introduce young talent at the gates of Indian cyber security.

The education sector in India is sprouting with both elaborate masterclasses and crash courses to facilitate technical education among the youth and cope with its trend simultaneously. Cyber security employment will be in a great demand in future if the



ABHISHEK MITRA

(The author is CEO and Founder of Indian Cyber Security Solutions)

current trend continues.

India's cyber security colleges have been offering a variety of courses that are relevant to the shifting conditions. Given India's massive demand for cyber security specialists, anyone interested in studying a cyber-security education will benefit in the long run. Technical education promotes manpower development and equips persons with skills that will enable them to create, develop and establish industries in various areas.

There are several reasons contributing to the buzz across the education sector pertaining to cyber security and technical education. One of the major factors that are causing Indian students to be more inclined towards cyber security and technical education-based

courses is a global wave of demand for skilled resources in these disciplines. This upsurge in demand has come with the advent of the technology-based revolution which positively impacted all sectors from government to banking. This trend is also evergreen by design, as the new frontier of industries will require a knowledge and tech-skill-based workforce. Owing to this, students are demanding more related courses. Also, there is a demand for a sustainable career, which is future shock proof. We are all familiar with the buzz of how growing advancements in the field of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation is causing the eradication of the human labour force.

However, this threat is not

there in the domain of cyber security and other technical-based jobs because it requires constant human intervention and check-ups along with building new frameworks and firewalls; this as of today is not efficiently possible by AI or ML alone. As a result, high schools, community colleges, policymakers, and families are trying to prepare children for a rapidly changing future, and stakeholders across the Indian education ecosystem are competing to provide them with better technical education.

The enormous demand for a competent cyber security savvy and technically sound workforce have arisen across a variety of different sectors as a result of how internet and software integration has affected all industries, sectors, and

sub-sectors, bringing about a fundamental change in the way things are done. Financial institutions, law businesses, real estate companies, stock brokerage firms, insurance companies, and many more are examples of the range and amount of demand from which students can choose.

The government realised the significance of technical courses and how they can contribute to the nation's society and economy. Multi-disciplinarity and a holistic education across the technical studies to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge forms is a salient feature of the New Education Policy-2020. The government endeavoured for the promotion of technical education across the country by estab-

lishing various Institutes of National Importance that include 23 Indian Institutes of Technology, Scheme for promotion of Research and Academic Collaboration (SPARC), National Initiative for Design Innovation (NIDI), Scheme for Transformational and Advanced Research in Sciences (STARS), etc., are implemented in the Ministry of Education for the promotion of technical education and research ecosystem in Higher Education Institutes.

Auxiliary factors responsible for the rapid growth of the hype in cybersecurity-related courses and other technical courses is the scarcity of efficient talent in the tech-first labor market coupled with the huge and diver-

sified demand by organizations across sectors, the monetary remunerations are quite lucrative. Small-duration certification programs directed toward a specific discipline or sub-arena of cyber security are gaining quick momentum and vivid popularity among both young students and professionals. These are acting as a quick guide and gateway into these detailed studies.

In the coming times, the Indian education sector will observe dynamic demand surges concerning technical studies, vocational studies, and cyber security courses such as risk assessment, financial fraud protection, and system auditing among others in both long and short formats across both institutions and ed-tech companies.

India eyes USA's predator drones to man borders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

In an effort to enhance surveillance along the borders with China and Pakistan besides the strategically important Indian Ocean region, India is likely to ink with the USA a deal for 30 MQ- 9B Predator armed drones worth over three billion dollars.

"The two sides are negotiating the proposed contract for the last five years for the US-made drones and the ball is now in India's court," officials said late Wednesday in Washington. These remarks came in the backdrop of National Security Adviser

(NSA) Ajit Doval holding talks over the last two days with top US policy makers besides his counterpart Jake Sullivan.

It was believed the Predator issue also came up for discussion between the two NSAs. Doval also met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken late Wednesday and exchanged views on a wide range of global and regional issues and discussed deepening the bilateral strategic partnership.

Blinken had just arrived from a trip to the Middle East, including Israel and Egypt.

"The United States is expanding cooperation with India to address global challenges," Blinken said in a

tweet after the meeting.

"I had a good meeting with Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval today to discuss deepening our strategic partnership," Blinken tweeted.

"Both sides exchanged views on a wide range of global and regional issues of mutual interest and how to further strengthen the #India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the Indian Embassy here said in a tweet. Doval is leading a high-powered delegation to the US.

During the meeting between the two NSA, India and the US elevated their strategic partnership with the launch of the initiative on



Critical and Emerging Technology or iCET.

As regards the drones, the Indian Army, IAF and Navy will get ten Predators each if the deal is firmed up. The Predator is seen to be a key part of India's national security and defense needs. Officials did not elaborate

further but ruled out that there was any bureaucratic hurdle or regulatory issues involved.

"I have to take that back and check on that," Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Jessica Lewis told reporters here when asked for the delay in the pro-

posed deal, which was announced in the summer of 2017.

During the meetings, it is believed that both sides expressed their eagerness to see that the drone deal is fast tracked. India is eager that an early decision would help it get an early delivery of MQ-98 predator armed drones that would strengthen its national security and surveillance not only in the Indian Ocean, but also along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Early in the day, Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Lewis told reporters that the India-US defense relationship has gained pace.

"When we look at the

relationship with India and our security cooperation with India and the defense relationship with India over the past 10 years or even a little bit longer, we've really seen that grow and evolve and change...in very positive ways," Lewis said in response to a question.

"I think all the discussions (during this week's iCET dialogue) are in that context," she said, a day after the two countries embarked upon the ambitious initiative in critical and emerging technologies.

Responding to a question, the State Department official said the US is ready to help India diversify its defence needs.

Meanwhile, India and the

United States signed an agreement that would streamline the selection and funding process of research projects between scientists and engineers from the two countries.

The opportunities under the arrangement are broad and can nimbly adjust to strategic priorities and researcher interests in computer science and engineering, geosciences, math and physical sciences, engineering, and emerging technologies, the National Science Foundation (NSF), an independent agency of the US that supports fundamental research and education in all the non-medical fields of science and engineering, said on Wednesday.

BJP lists 60 candidates for Meghalaya Assembly polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday announced the name of all 60 candidates for the State Assembly elections in Meghalaya.

The BJP will contest all the 60 seats in the Meghalaya Assembly for the upcoming elections in the state.

The ruling national party BJP is confident of winning the Assembly polls in Meghalaya. BJP has titled its poll campaign as M-Power Meghalaya.

In a joint press conference held here at the BJP headquarters, BJP National Secretary Rituraj Sinha stated that the people of Meghalaya are fed up with corruption and the slow pace of development in their state.

"The people are suffering due to poor rural roads, power



cuts for long hours and lack of basic facilities", added Rituraj Sinha. Sinha further added, "The central schemes are not being implemented in the state. People trust that PM Modi can give corruption-free, fast-track development".

Nominations for the elections in the state have started on 31st January and the papers can be submitted till 7th of

February.

TMC, Congress and NPP all have declared a list of all 60 candidates while UDP has announced a total number of 45 candidates including 15 from Garo Hills. Meanwhile BJP got a shot in the arm when 5 times MLA and NPP candidate from Ranikor constituency, Martin M Dango yesterday joined the party.

India condemns attack on temples in Canada, Australia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has condemned the recent acts of vandalism against some Hindu temples in Canada and Australia and urged the authorities there to bring the perpetrators to justice. While the Canada issue figured in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, an Indian origin Member of Parliament in Canada Chandra Arya raised the matter of "hate crime" in parliament there late Wednesday.

Minister of State for external affairs V Muraleedharan said in the Upper House, the safety and well-being of Indian nationals in Canada is a priority for the government. His remarks came in response to a question in the house on instances of increasing hate crime and sectarian violence against Indians in Canada.

Muraleedharan said India regularly takes up with Canada untoward incidents affecting

the Indian community and requests it to bring the perpetrators to justice after carrying out proper investigation.

"The safety and well-being of Indian nationals in Canada is a priority for the government. The Indian Mission/Consulates in Canada are constantly engaged with the Indian community, including on measures to ensure their safety and well-being," he said.

"The ministry and our Mission/Consulates in Canada regularly take up any untoward incidents related to the Indian community, with the concerned Canadian authorities and request them to ensure proper investigation, identify the perpetrators and impart justice," he said.

Muraleedharan said the ministry as well as the Indian mission and consulates in Canada have issued advisories from time to time, asking Indian nationals residing in that country to exercise due caution and remain vigilant.

Meanwhile, the condemnation regarding Canadian incidents came two days after Gouri Shankar Mandir in Brampton was vandalised with anti-India graffiti. "Hindu Canadians are deeply pained by the rising Hinduphobia in Canada," Arya said in the Canadian parliament. Calling it an "alarming trend," he called upon Canada to stop rising hate-crimes against Hindus.

Quoting a study, the MP said Hinduphobia turns into physical attack. Earlier on Tuesday, he had said, "the attack on Gouri Shankar Mandir in Brampton is the latest in attacks on Hindu temples in Canada by anti-Hindu and anti-India groups."

The Indian Consulate General in Toronto also condemned the act of vandalism at Gauri Shankar Mandir on Tuesday and said the defacing of the temple has deeply "hurt the sentiments" of the Indian community in Canada.

"We strongly condemn the



defacing of Gauri Shankar Mandir in Brampton, a symbol of Indian heritage, with anti-India graffiti. The hateful act of vandalism has deeply hurt the sentiments of the Indian community in Canada. We have raised our concerns on the matter with Canadian authorities," the Indian mission wrote in its tweet.

As regards the recent vandalism incidents by so-called Khalistani supporters in Australia, ministry of external affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday, "we conveyed our firm rejection of

so called Khalistan referendum and politically motivated exercises. We've requested Australia to ensure safety of Indian community and do not allow use of Australian territory that'll be detrimental to integrity of India, its national security."

He also said "we strongly condemn such attacks by extremist elements and urge local authorities to punish perpetrators. We have been repeatedly taking up our concern with Australian authorities about action by elements including proscribed terrorist organisations."

Modi's 21 trips abroad since 2019 incurred ₹22.76 crore, RS told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday informed the Rajya Sabha that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has undertaken 21 trips abroad since 2019 and over Rs 22.76 crore was spent on these visits.

The President undertook eight trips abroad and an amount of over Rs 6.24 crore has been spent on these trips since 2019, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha.

The government incurred an amount of Rs 6,24,31,424 for President's visits, an amount of Rs 22,76,76,934 for prime minister's visits and an amount of Rs 20,87,01,475 for External Affairs Minister's visits since 2019, according to the minis-



ter.

While the President undertook eight visits abroad, the Prime Minister undertook 21 trips since 2019. During this period, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar undertook 86 visits abroad.

Since 2019, the prime minister has visited Japan thrice, and the US and the UAE twice.

Among the president's visits, seven out of the eight trips were undertaken by Ram Nath Kovind, while current president Droupadi Murmu visited the UK last September.

Left Front, Cong finalise seat-sharing in Tripura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/AGARTALA

The CPI(M) led Left Front and Congress on Thursday finalised their seat sharing agreement for the February 16 Assembly election in Tripura. The seat sharing was arrived at on Thursday, the last day for withdrawal of nomination papers.

Party sources said the poll understanding was deadlocked after the Left Front on January 25 announced candidates for 47 seats out of the total 60, leaving only 13 for Congress. The Congress had reacted by fielding candidates in 17 constituencies.

The deadlock was resolved on Thursday after central leaders of the two parties agreed to accept the formula of 47 seats to LF and 13 to the Congress to defeat BJP. Following it the Congress withdrew three of the 17 candidates it had declared. Another Congress candidate



had not filed his nomination papers.

"The seat sharing deal between CPI(M) and Congress for the upcoming election was finalised on Thursday, the last day of withdrawal of nominations. All the three Congress leaders, who had submitted nomination papers have withdrawn their papers according to the agreement," Pradesh Congress president Birajit Sinha told a news agency.

The CPI(M) candidates who had submitted nominations in 13 constituencies before the seat sharing agreement too withdrew their

papers, he said.

Senior CPI(M) leader Pabitra Kar said the impasse over the seat adjustment with the Congress has been "neutralised finally" through discussion. "Now we will fight the election jointly to defeat the BJP which has befooled the people and won the last elections", Sinha said both parties will campaign jointly to ensure the defeat of the BJP, which has "throttled democracy during the past five years in the state".

Asked, Kar, a CPI(M) state committee member, said it is yet to be decided whether the LF and Cong will campaign jointly but the parties' leaders and workers will help each other locally during canvassing for votes. To questions about Tipra Motha's decision to go solo, Sinha said it has not fielded any candidate against him in Kailashahar seat and CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Choudhury, who is contesting from Sabroom.

Disabled neglected in Union Budget, says rights group

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Disability rights groups have expressed disappointment over differently-abled people being "neglected" in the Union Budget 2023-24 presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday.

The National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) in a statement here said that this year's budget has been no different as far as the disabled community is concerned. "In comparison to the previous year, there is merely a 1% increase. However, it needs to be underlined that the amount allotted for 2022-2023 was underutilized by Rs. 196 crore.

"It is disturbing that the allocations for the Scheme for Implementation of the (Rights of) Persons with Disabilities Act has been severely reduced by 90 crores, from Rs. 240.39 (BE) last



year to Rs. 150 crore this year, despite the mandates of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which the government has miserably failed to implement.

"It is the woefully inadequate allocation that is in the main responsible for the failure in implementing the provisions of accessibility within a span of five years as mandated by the RPD Act," said Muralidharan, General Secretary of the NPRD.

Sadly, even support for important autonomous bodies established by Acts of

Parliament that cater to persons with disabilities, like the National Trust and the Rehabilitation Council of India, remains the same, he noted.

Despite the devastating effects of the pandemic, the government has refused to heed the demand for free and universal health coverage for all disabled; removing the income criteria in the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana for persons with disabilities as also making a substantial increase in allocations towards mental health programmes.

Cong seeks JPC, SC-monitored probe against Adani Group

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Thursday demanded an impartial investigation under the supervision of the Supreme Court or a joint parliamentary committee to probe the charges raised in the Hindenburg report against the Adani Group. The party has also decided to protest outside the offices of LIC and SBI in all districts across the country on February 6.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge termed it as a "scam" and said the opposition parties have also called for day-to-day reporting of the joint parliamentary committee (JPC) or the SC-monitored probe into the issue concerning public money.

"Keeping public interest in mind, we want a thorough probe into the Adani issue either by a joint parliamentary committee or a Supreme Court-monitored probe. There should also be day-to-day reporting of the investigation on the issue," he told reporters.

Kharge said on behalf of like-minded opposition parties,

he demands either a JPC or an SC-monitored investigation in the manner in which government owned companies "are forced to invest in firms that have been exposed by the Hindenburg report".

He said along with him eight other opposition MPs had given notices in the Rajya Sabha for a discussion on the Adani Group crisis and investment of PSUs like Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and State Bank of India (SBI) in the group.

"Whenever we have given a notice, it has not been accepted by the chair", the Congress leader said, noting that this is the reason all opposition parties jointly decided to raise the issue in the Upper House. That is why, we decided to raise the (Adani) issue in one voice in the House as crores of money of common people is invested in LIC, and public money in banks is being given to such companies against whom foreign agencies have come out with charges of irregularities," he said.

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said responding to the "public sentiments and



outrage against the moves of the government", the Congress Party has decided to hold a nationwide district level protest on Monday, February 6, 2023, in front of LIC offices and SBI offices. "The government can't jeopardize the hard earned money of the people of India to profit the crony friends of the Prime Minister," Venugopal said.

He also said all the PCCs (Pradesh Congress Committees) have been requested to issue necessary instructions to the District Congress Committees (DCCs),

so that apart from senior leaders, party functionaries and workers' mobilisation from Block Congress Committees, panchayat and booth level is ensured in full measure.

"The Modi government is protecting its best friend by repeatedly adjourning Parliament and scuttling the opposition's voice. We demand a JPC and a Supreme Court-monitored probe to investigate the entire matter and the government's involvement in this massive scam," Venugopal said on Twitter.

He claimed that the LIC

has "invested a total of Rs 36,474.78 crore" in Adani Group, whereas Indian banks together have "invested nearly Rs 80,000 crore" in the same and they continue to do so even when there is allegations of stock manipulation, accounting fraud and other malfeasance.

AICC head of media and publicity department, Pawan Khara, said the Congress has raised three important demands from the Narendra Modi government.

"An impartial investigation under the Chief Justice of Supreme Court, with day-to-day reports, should be carried out, or a JPC should be formed to investigate the Hindenburg Research report in detail," he said at a press conference.

"Risky investments" by LIC, SBI and other nationalised banks in Adani Group should be discussed in Parliament and appropriate steps be taken to protect the investors, he said.

Congress leader and whip in Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore, who had given an adjournment notice in the Lower House to discuss the row, also said that the party wants a JPC probe into the

entire matter along with a discussion on the issue.

Congress MP Manish Tewari tweeted "JPC on Adani Saga" and said the party will demand that a JPC be constituted to investigate the allegations.

"It is not a question about one promoter, but about the efficacy of the entire regulatory system," he said, adding that the Congress and other political parties demand JPC on "a-la-affaire Adani".

Earlier, the Congress was supported by several other opposition parties, including DMK, TMC, SP, JD(U), Shiv Sena, CPI(M), CPI, BRS, NCP, IUML, NC, AAP, Kerala Congress and RJD in demanding the JPC probe or SC-monitored investigation into the row.

Khara said the Congress strongly underlines that when Rahul Gandhi talks about "Suit Boot Ki Sarkar", "Hum Do, Hamare Do" and now "Mitra Kaal", he is not talking about any particular industrialist, "he is talking about the murky system that Modi ji has set up for his selected friends to loot the country".

CRPF's base reopens Tamarind trade route after 17 years



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF on Thursday said it has created a forward operating base (FOB), housing armed troops in one of the remotest and high-Maoist violence-affected districts of Chhattisgarh that has led to the re-opening of a Tamarind trade route after 17 years.

The strategic FOB has been created at Bedre in the Sukma district of Bastar region on the southernmost tip of the Central Indian state, along the tri-junction of Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Odisha bor-

ders. The base has been established by the joint efforts of the 165th battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Chhattisgarh Police.

"This FOB will effectively help in the re-opening of the old trade route connecting the Tamarind market at Jagagunda with the nearby districts of Bijapur and Dantewada and will also choke the transit corridor that Maoists used for movement between west Bastar and south Bastar," a CRPF spokesperson said.

Lawyers flag Gowri's elevation as HC judge

TN lawyers write to Murmu against collegium recommendation

■ CHENNAI

A group of 21 lawyers from Tamil Nadu has written a petition to the President Draupadi Murmu requesting her to reconsider the Supreme Court collegium recommendation of elevating advocate Victoria Gowri as Madras High Court judge.

The advocates which include seniors like R Vaigai, V Suresh and NGR Prasad have, in their petition dated January 17, stated that Victoria Gowri in her capacity as a BJP leader had made several hate speeches against minorities. The advocates said these hate speeches are available on YouTube as also in publications associated with the RSS.

The lawyers also attached a screenshot of Gowri's tweet-



Secretary of Mahila Morcha'. Advocates, in the petition, said the screenshot was taken a few days back and that she had recently deleted her Twitter account.

The petitioners said she had made extreme comments about love-jihad and religious conversions and had accused the Roman Catholics of nefarious activities. They also said she had even said in public that Bharathanatyam should not be played during Christian songs. In the petition, the advocates said she was unfit to be made a High Court judge

er account where she claimed herself as the 'National General Secretary of Mahila Morcha'. Advocates, in the petition, said the screenshot was taken a few days back and that she had recently deleted her Twitter account.

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Novel of Tamil's master storyteller getting translated into English

CHENNAI: Sivakami's Vow, a Tamil classic novel, is getting translated into English and will hit bookstores across the nation on February 6. Authored by Kalki, Tamil's master storyteller, Sivakami's Vow is an action packed historical work that would keep the reader on tenterhooks once he/she begins reading the book.

Though there are many novelists and novels in Tamil, no one has risen to the level of Kalki (pen name of Ramaswamy Krishnamurthy 1899-1954), according to Jayashanthi, a celebrated writer of the modern genre.

The novel was first published during 1944-46 as a serial in the magazine Kalki founded by Krishnamurthy, himself a freedom fighter. Sivakamiyin Sapatham (Sivakami's Vow), published as

a book in 1948 was the gamechanger in Tamil literature, according to Jayashanthi, a former professor of Tamil in a leading college in Chennai.

Set in the 7th century Tamil social and political life, the novel has the Pallava emperor Mahendravarman and his son Narasimhavarman as the protagonists. Sivakami's Vow narrates the storyline of different characters across generations, appealing to readers who like history and adventure.

It captures a young man, who trudged from a tiny Chola village to Kanchi, the great city of art and learning, hoping to discover his destiny; a bhikshu, who wandered around the Pallava empire, befriending lonely souls; spies, who lurked in the shadows, and even statues of the Lord Buddha conceal secrets.

Teachers' scam: Judge agrees that Partha 'privileged'

■ KOLKATA

A judge of the special court of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday, during a hearing on the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam in West Bengal, observed that former West Bengal Education Minister and ex-Trinamool Congress secretary general Partha Chatterjee was a "privileged" person.

During the hearing in the matter, judge Arpan Kumar Chattopadhyay observed that of the seven accused in the scam presented at the court on Thursday was sitting on a bench, while two others were standing.

Besides Chatterjee, the four others sitting were former president of West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSSE) Kalyanmoy Ganguly, former chairman of West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) Subir Bhatnagar, former WBSSC secretary Ashok Saha and former head of the commission's screening committee SP Sinha. However, two mid-



dlemen arrested in connection with the scam, namely Prasanna Kumar Roy and Pradip Singh were standing in court. "Why are they standing? I understand that Partha Chatterjee is privileged. It is all right that he is sitting. But if others get an opportunity to sit, then why are the remaining two standing? This does not look good. Everyone should have equal rights," he said.

In fact, every time while objecting to Partha Chatterjee's bail plea, the CBI counsel had given the argument of "privileged" and "influential" theory against him. On Thursday, the bail application of Chatterjee and six others were rejected and all of them were remanded to judicial custody till February 16.

51 IEDs recovered in Singhbhum after blast injures three jawans

■ CHAIBASA

Fifty-one IEDs were found in a search operation in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Thursday after three para-military jawans were injured, police said.

The IEDs, planted by banned Maoists, were recovered at a forest near Meralgada village in Gailkera police station area, Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Shekhar said.

A bomb disposal squad defused the explosives at the spot, he said, adding that the search operation was still underway. Three CRPF jawans of the 60th battalion were injured when Maoists triggered an IED blast at the forest around 11 am. Acting on a



tip-off that Maoist leaders have assembled at the forest, a search operation was launched by the security forces and during that time, the IED exploded. Three jawans, identified as Rakesh Pathak, BD Anal and Pankaj Yadav, were injured in the explosion, Shekhar said.

They were airlifted to a hospital in Ranchi where they were undergoing treatment, he said. The conditions of the three jawans were stated to be stable, he added.

'Perfume' IED found from J&K teacher-turned terrorist

■ JAMMU

Jammu & Kashmir Police claimed to have recovered a perfume IED for the first time from the custody of a government school teacher-turned-terrorist allegedly involved in a series of IED blasts including a bus blast near Katra and the recent twin blasts at Narwal.

The school teacher turned terrorist has been identified as Mohd Arif, hailing from Reasi. According to police, he was enrolled as a teacher in the Rehbar-e-Taleem scheme and was regularised in 2016.

Addressing a press conference in Jammu, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Dilbag Singh



said Arif, who was working at the behest of his Pakistan based handlers since 2019, was arrested following the investigation into the recent twin blast in Jammu's Narwal that left nine people injured on January 21, 2023. "So far we had seen IED with explosive materials, sticky bombs and timer fitted IEDs but a new type of IED was recovered from Arif which is Perfume IED. This IED is in a

bottle form and seems like a perfume bottle but contains explosive material," the DGP said, adding that "since the IED is new to us, experts will see how harmful and how powerful it can be. We have not touched it so far", DGP explained.

The Police Chief also claimed that Arif had admitted to his role in the attack on a bus carrying Vaishno Devi pilgrims in which four people were killed in May last year. He said the accused was working under the influence of a Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist named Qasim and his uncle Qamardin, also a Reasi resident, presently operating from Pakistan.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister being greeted by Naruvi Hospitals chairman

Didi terms Budget disastrous

■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee continued to slam the Centre for preparing a "disastrous Budget" that nearly brought the Narendra Government down on Wednesday.

Picking up from where she left on Wednesday, Mamata on Thursday claimed that the BJP government was on the verge of collapse in the wake of post-budget crash in the share market.

"I have information that this Government had almost collapsed" but for some timely management and pumping in of several thousand crores into the money market at the behest of some influential people," Banerjee told a meeting at East Burdwan.

She said how "desperate calls were made to some people to provide funds to that person whose share prices were going down fast," adding she knew all the players in the game but would not name anyone in particular.

"I know who approached whom for funds but I will not take names as this will put those people in problem," she said adding about half-a-dozen people were contacted for funds.

"I have information that at least six to seven people were called up. Some were asked to pay Rs 10,000 or others were told to give Rs 20,000 or and yet others were asked to pay Rs 30,000 crore to the person whose companies' share prices fell," Banerjee said wondering how a government with no plans could function.

Slamming the Centre for producing high-sounding nothing in the name of income tax relief Banerjee said how the Government provided relief on one hand and took it away from the other.

FROM PAGE 1

ADANI GROUP SHARES TANK, ENTERPRISES DOWN BY 26%

according to BSE data. There was, however, a muted response from retail investors and company employees.

Retail investors, for whom roughly half of the issue was reserved, bid for just 11 per cent of the 2.29 crore shares earmarked for them. Employees sought 52 per cent of the 1.6 lakh shares reserved for them. Adani Enterprises, the flagship company of the Adani Group, had a lacklustre start to its FPO, with only a 1 per cent subscription on the first day of the share sale.

The offer was opened for public subscription from January 27-31.

Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said the rout in Adani Group stocks continued to play havoc on domestic markets as benchmark indices gyrated sharply intra-day before recouping lost ground. In volatile trade, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex ended 224.16 points or 0.38 per cent higher at 59,932.24.

"Participants were anticipating some respite after the dovish tone from the US Fed, however continuous decline in Adani group counters combined with the scheduled weekly expiry kept the tone negative for most of the session," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

MVA CANDIDATE WINS MAHA COUNCIL SEAT IN GADKARI HOME TURF

The six-year term of five Council members - three from teachers and two from graduate constituencies - is expiring on February 7.

Returning officer and divisional commissioner Mahendra Kalyankar, who announced the results of the Konknan teachers constituency, informed Mhatre polled 20,683 votes while Patil bagged 10,997. The Konknan teachers constituency covers Thane, Raigad, Palghar, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. This segment recorded the highest voter turnout at 91.02 per cent.

DEMAND FOR JPC ON ADANI ROCKS HOUSES

Others who gave notices include CPI's Binoy Viswam and P Santhosh

Kumar, BRS MP K Keshava Rao, CPM's Elamaram Kareem and V Sivadasan, and DMK's Tiruchi Siva.

Dhankhar said he had on December 8, 2022, and thereafter indicated the requirements for accepting a 267 notice.

"I have carefully gone through all the notices received. I find they are not in order as none of the notices fulfills the requirement that is expressly mandated in rule 267. In such a helpless situation, I am unable to accede to the same. They are declined."

With the MPs not relenting, he adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. Soon after the afternoon session resumed, Opposition members continued their demand and Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar announced adjournment of the proceedings of the Upper House for the day.

Outside the House, Kharge said the Opposition parties want day-to-day reporting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) or the SC-monitored probe into the issue which concerns public mind. "Keeping public interest in mind, we want a thorough probe into the Adani issue either by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) or a Supreme Court-monitored panel. There should also be day-to-day reporting of the investigation on the issue," he told reporters.

Earlier in the day, leaders of several Opposition parties met to evolve a joint strategy to take on the government during the Budget Session. At that meeting, they decided to press for a JPC on the issue as well as a discussion in both houses.

Leaders of like-minded parties met in the chamber of Kharge. Leaders of Congress, DMK, TMC, SP, JD(U), Shiv Sena, CPI(M), CPI, NCP, IUML, NC, AAP, and the Kerala Congress were present at the meeting.

NO CALL ON PUTTING ON UCC IN FORCE, RIJITU INFORMS RS

The current law panel was constituted on February 21, 2020, but its chairperson and members were appointed in November last year, months before the end of the panel's term. The 21st Law Commission undertook the examination of various issues relating to uniform civil code and uploaded a consultation paper, titled "Reform of Family Law", on its website for wider discussions. The implementation of a uniform civil code was a poll promise made by the ruling BJP in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Monthly GST revenue at ₹1.50 L Cr new normal in FY 24: CBIC chief

■ NEW DELHI

Monthly GST collection is expected to average around Rs 1.50 lakh crore and it will be the 'new normal' in FY24 in view of concerted efforts to check evasion and bring new businesses within the GST net, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) chief Vivek Johri said on Thursday. In an interview to PTI,

Johri said the GST and Customs revenue collection numbers as given in Budget 2023-24 are realistic based on nominal GDP growth and import trends, respectively and the indirect tax collection target set for next fiscal will be achieved.

Johri said CBIC has drawn up a strategy to augment GST mop-up by way of stricter audit and scrutiny of tax returns, enforce-

ment action against fake billing and input tax credit claims. "We will focus on increasing the taxpayer base. Even though the growth in taxpayer base has been quite good, we have more than doubled the number of taxpayers from the time we started GST, we feel there are some sectors which have much more potential to increase the taxpayer population. "So I feel we have not reached the

saturation level and there is scope for increasing the revenue," Johri said. GST collection in current fiscal year is likely to average around Rs 1.45 lakh crore.

The mop-up in January came in as the second highest ever at around Rs 1.56 lakh crore, the highest being Rs 1.68 lakh crore in April 2022. Asked if in next fiscal year, Rs 1.50 lakh crore could be the new normal for monthly

GST collection, Johri said "Yes, that I'm confident of".

"There is further scope for growth in GST revenues." The 2023-24 Budget has projected 12 per cent growth in GST revenue at Rs 9.56 lakh crore. The revised estimate for current fiscal pegs GST mop-up at Rs 8.54 lakh crore, up from Rs 7.80 lakh crore originally estimated in the Budget last year.

Tea sector unhappy over total neglect in Union Budget

■ KOLKATA

As the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman remained totally silent over the tea industry in her Budget speech, the sector operators are frustrated and the observers of the industry surprised.

According to the Darjeeling Tea Association (DTA)'s principal advisor S. Mukherjee, the tea sector was probably the only industrial segment which was not spared even a word as regards to any industry stimulation package or subsidy.

He pointed out that even the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Commerce & Industry for a one-time package for the revival of the tea sector in Darjeeling was also ignored.

According to the director (operations & plantations) of Chamong Tea, Indranil Ghosh, to his surprise the long-standing demand of the planters, especially those from the Darjeeling, Terai and Doorga region, was that the Union government should impose a very high important duty on tea from Nepal in order to protect the planters in the region. "A number of bought-leaf factories are importing tea

from Nepal and selling them in the market.

This is possible because the production cost of tea in Nepal is one-third of that in India. However, this issue was not at all addressed in the Budget speech on Wednesday," said Ghosh.

According to veteran tea industry observer Nandini Goswami, another long-standing demand from the sector was that the Union government should implement an effective police mechanism to restrict circulation of spurious Darjeeling tea in the market. "However, to my surprise the Budget speech was totally silent on this issue," she said.

She also pointed out the ultimate effect of the ailing nature of the Indian tea sector on the plantation workers, especially those associated with the smaller tea gardens.

"There had been a long-standing demand for giving the small planters the status of agricultural farmers and the status of agricultural workers for the workers employed in smaller tea gardens. Unfortunately, this issue also found no mention in the Budget speech," said Goswami.

Satyam scam: SAT sets aside Sebi's orders; asks it to pass new directive within 4 mths

■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal SAT on Thursday set aside Sebi's orders that had barred Satyam Computer's B Ramalinga Raju, B Rama Raju and others from the securities markets for up to 14 years and asked the markets regulator to pass a fresh order in the 14-year old case.

The ruling came after two separate orders of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) passed in 2018 were challenged by the six applicants. The case relates to Ramalinga Raju and Rama Raju -- who were promoters and directors of Satyam Computer Services -- falsifying the company's financial statements and making illegal gains by way of insider trading.

Besides, B Suryanarayana Raju and SRSR Holdings had allegedly dealt with shares of Satyam Computer on the basis of unpublished price sensitive information. The scam came to



light on January 7, 2009, when Ramalinga Raju -- then Chairman of Satyam Computer -- admitted to manipulating the company's accounts.

In its order passed on October 16, 2018, Sebi had prohibited V Srinivas and G Ramakrishna from the securities markets for 7 years. Further, Srinivas and Ramakrishna were directed to disgorge wrongful gains of Rs 15.65 crore and Rs 11.5 crore, respectively.

In another ruling passed on November 2, 2018, the regulator had restrained Ramalinga Raju, Rama Raju, B Suryanarayana Raju and SRSR Holdings from the securities markets for 14 years. Also, they were asked to disgorge Rs

813 crore of unlawful gains with interest. In these two orders, the regulator had directed them to disgorge the amount along with 12 per cent interest per annum from January 7, 2009. Dismissing Sebi's two orders, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) said the approach of the regulator is patently erroneous and cannot be sustained as "no reason has been given as to why the magic figure of 14 years of restraint was appropriate".

While setting aside the orders passed by Sebi, SAT asked it to pass a fresh order within four months. Also, it asked the regulator to consider the intrinsic value while calculating the unlawful gain. Moreover, the unlawful gain would be calculated individually for all the appellants.

Further, the tribunal directed Sebi to consider the issue of interest and reconsider the period of restraint afresh for all the appellants.

TRAI dials telecom firms to discuss service quality issues on Feb 17

■ NEW DELHI

Telecom regulator TRAI has called a meeting with telcos on February 17 to discuss measures and action plan for improving service quality, review of norms, benchmarks for 5G services, and unsolicited commercial communications.

The meeting assumes significance as improvement in telecom service quality is bound to cheer mobile customers, irked by call drops and patchy networks. It also comes at a time when ultra high speed 5G services are rolling out across the country.

So far, as many as 200 cities in

India have seen launch of 5G services, the next generation of technology that promises turbocharged speeds (about 10 times faster than 4G) and low latency connectivity.

Issues around service quality have been in the spotlight over the last few months. The Telecom Department back in December met operators to discuss rising instances of call drops and service quality-related issues, as it deliberated on policy measures that can be considered for improving call quality.

In a statement on Thursday, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said that quality of service (QoS) improvement "is an ongoing

exercise, it requires close assessment and monitoring especially with the fast-paced network expansion and introduction of latest technology like 5G."

Accordingly, TRAI has called a meeting with telecom service providers on February 17, 2023, "to discuss measures and action plan for improvement in QoS, review of QoS standards, QoS of 5G services and unsolicited commercial communications". India, the world's second largest smartphone market, had over 114 crore mobile subscribers as of November 2022. Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea are the key players.

TRAI monitors performance of various connectivity services provided by telecom operators by collecting Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) on quarterly basis.

The PMRs are published on the TRAI website, and the regulator also conducts audits and assessments to gauge the performance of the service providers in respect of the prescribed QoS benchmark.

"Regular interactions are held with concerned stakeholders through meetings, consultation papers and open house discussion to review the status of QoS and measures to further improve the consumer experience," the TRAI statement said.

On December 28, the Department of Telecom had held discussions with telcos to identify policy and operational measures that can help improve the quality of telecom services in the country. That meeting was chaired by Telecom Secretary K Rajaraman and attended by telecom service providers, including Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea. The issue of interference from illegal boosters and Right of Way (RoW) challenges had come up for discussion then, and operators had made a detailed presentation to the government on current levels of service quality against stipulated benchmarks.

US, Philippines agree on larger American military presence

AP ■ MANILA

The United States (US) and the Philippines announced an agreement Thursday to expand America's military presence in the Southeast Asian country, with US forces granted access to four more Philippine military camps, effectively giving Washington new ground to ramp up deterrence against China.

The agreement under the longtime treaty allies under a 2014 Defence pact was made public during the visit of US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, who has led efforts to strengthen America's security alliances in Asia amid China's increasing assertiveness toward Taiwan and in the disputed South China Sea.

The allies also said in a joint statement that "substantial" progress has been made in projects at five Philippine military bases, where US military personnel were earlier granted access by Filipino officials under the Enhanced Defence Coopera-

tion Agreement, or EDCA. Construction of American facilities in the camps has been underway for years but has been hampered by unspecified local issues.

Austin thanked President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, whom he briefly met in Manila, for allowing the US military to broaden its presence in the Philippines.

In a televised news conference later with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr, Austin gave assurances of US military support and said the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty, which obligates the US and the Philippines to help defend one another in major conflicts, "applies to armed attacks on either of our armed forces, public vessels or aircraft anywhere in the South China Sea."

"We discussed concrete actions to address destabilizing activities in the waters," Austin said without elaborating. "This is part of our effort to modernize our alliance and these efforts are especially important as the People's Republic of China con-



tinues to advance its illegitimate claims in the West Philippine Sea."

Austin and Galvez declined to provide more details on the agreement. The US defense

chief said it did not mean the re-establishment of permanent American bases but noted that "it's a big deal."

Galvez said there was a need for more consultations,

including with local officials in provinces where visiting US forces would establish a presence in Philippine military camps.

China claims the self-ruled island of Taiwan as its own ter-

ritory, to be taken by force if necessary, and Beijing has sent warships, bombers, fighter jets and support aircraft into airspace near Taiwan on a near-daily basis, sparking concerns of a potential blockade or military action. Philippine military and defence officials said in November the US had sought access to five more local military camps mostly in the northern Philippine region of Luzon.

Two of the additional camps where the US wanted to gain access are in Cagayan province near Luzon island's northern tip, across a sea border from Taiwan, the Taiwan Strait and southern China. Other camps that would host American forces are along the country's western coast, including in the provinces of Palawan and Zambales, which face the disputed South China Sea. China and the Philippines, along with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have been locked in increasingly tense territorial disputes over the busy and resource-rich South China Sea.



Reps ask Blinken to hold China liable for abuses, India, Taiwan aggression

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Several influential Republican lawmakers have urged Secretary of State Antony Blinken to hold China accountable for its egregious human rights abuses, unfair trade practices and aggression towards the US and its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and beyond, including its unacceptable and provocative behaviour against India and Taiwan.

The lawmakers wrote a letter to Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, ahead of their upcoming trips to Beijing. Blinken heads to China on Sunday. Yellen is expected to travel there later in February.

"The CCP (Chinese Communist Party) has stepped up its aggression in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond," the Republican Senators led by Marco Rubio from Florida wrote in the letter on Wednesday.

They urged them to avoid giving the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) a propaganda win and hold the CCP accountable for its egregious human rights abuses, unfair trade practices, leading role in the fentanyl crisis, and aggression towards allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.

Signatories to the letter in addition to Rubio are Senators Chuck Grassley, Bill Cassidy, Eric Schmitt, Dan Sullivan, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Rick Scott, Marsha Blackburn, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Pete Ricketts, John Hoeven, and Bill Hagerty.

According to the Biden administration's National Security Strategy, China is "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it."

Chinese President Xi Jinping stated in his 20th Party Congress report that the CCP has "shown a fighting spirit and

a firm determination to never yield to coercive power."

"As we have seen recently, General Secretary Xi has engaged in unacceptable and provocative behaviour in the Taiwan Strait and along the Himalayan border with India," the letter said.

"Beyond the Indo-Pacific, the CCP has...Intelligence collection outposts in the United States, Japan, and throughout Europe to suppress dissidents and keep tabs on those who Beijing deems a threat. It is evident that General Secretary Xi is determined to use coercion and aggression against the US and our allies and partners to achieve his geopolitical goals. Deterring the CCP from achieving these goals, therefore, must be our top priority," the Senators wrote.

India, the US and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's rising military manoeuvring in the resource-rich region.

China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea. China also has territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea. According to the Senators, the CCP is the worst offender of human rights.

Both the Biden and Trump administrations have determined that Beijing's actions against Uyghurs, and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) - including its system of mass surveillance and internment, denial of individuals' rights to peacefully practice their religion, and use of forced labour, sexual violence, forced abortion, and forced sterilisation of women - constitute genocide and crimes against humanity.

Imran's ally arrested for accusing Zardari of plotting to kill ex-Premier

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistani police on Thursday arrested former Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed from his home for accusing ex-President Asif Ali Zardari of plotting to kill former Prime Minister Imran Khan, according to media reports.

An ally of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, Ahmed is the chief of Awami Muslim League (AML).

Confirming the incident, his nephew Sheikh Rashid Shafique told *Geo News* that the AML chief was arrested from his home in a private housing society in Islamabad. He was arrested by Islamabad police in the early hours of Thursday in connection with remarks he allegedly made against former President Zardari, accusing him of hatching a "murder plot to eliminate PTI chief Imran Khan".

He was arrested on a police complaint filed by Raja Inayat-ur-Rehman, a vice-president of PPP Rawalpindi Division, where in he said that the AML chief, in a television interview on January 27, alleged that Pakistan People's Party co-chairman Zardari got the assistance of some terrorist to kill Khan.

Khan also in a television address on January 27 had alleged that Zardari was



behind a fresh assassination plot — a "plan C" — and a terror group had been engaged for the purpose. He offered no evidence to back up his accusation.

In remarks quoted by BBC Urdu, Ahmed claimed that around 300 to 400 policemen barged into his house, thrashed staffers, and forcibly took him away.

He alleged that some (personnel) used ladders to enter his house. He went on to say that he had been arrested despite getting relief from the Islamabad High Court.

The AML leader vowed to challenge his arrest in court.

In a video message shared by the PTI on its official Twitter account, Ahmed told

journalists that police ransacked his house and beat up domestic staffers while attempting to arrest him.

He claimed that lawyer Mian Tahir had secured his bail and went on to allege that Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah was behind the incident.

Reacting to the arrest, Khan said: "Never in our history have we had such a biased, vindictive caretaker government appointed by totally discredited the ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan). The question is: can Pak afford a street movement which we are being pushed towards at a time when we have been bankrupted by imported government?"

Pak court axes Khan's petition against EC in prohibited funding case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In a setback to former Pakistan Premier Imran Khan, a High Court on Thursday dismissed his petition against the country's top election body's verdict in the prohibited funding case.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in a long-awaited case filed in November 2014, issued its verdict on August 2 last year, holding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party of Khan responsible for hiding its funding.

It ruled that the political party led by the cricket-turned-prime minister received millions of dollars in prohibited funds from 351 foreign companies and 34 foreign nationals, including a US-Indian businesswoman, and ordered that notice be issued, seeking an explanation from the PTI as to why the prohibited funds it received should not be forfeited.

The party then challenged the decision in the Islamabad



High Court (IHC), where a three-member larger bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Babar Sattar concluded the hearing last month but reserved the judgment.

The court issued a short verdict on Thursday and dismissed the petitions by endorsing the ECP's fact-finding report on PTI funding and the decision to issue a show-cause notice to the party. The PTI leaders can challenge the verdict in the Supreme Court, or the party would have to contest the case in the ECP, where the funds can be confiscated, and its leader Khan penalised for providing wrong statements about the financial affairs of the party.

Iran blames Israel for drone attack, threatens retaliation

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran on Thursday formally blamed Israel for a drone attack that targeted a military workshop in its central city of Isfahan over the weekend, warning it "reserves its legitimate and inherent right" to retaliate.

Iran's mission to the United Nations, in a letter it published on its website, attributed the attack late Saturday to Israel.

"Early investigations suggest that the Israeli regime was responsible for this attempted act of aggression," the letter signed by Iranian ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani said.

Israeli officials declined to comment. However, Israel has carried out a series of attacks targeting Iran's nuclear programme and other sites since the collapse of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Details on the Isfahan



attack, which happened around 11:30 p.m. Saturday, still remain scarce days after the assault. A Defence Ministry statement described three drones being launched at the facility, with two of them successfully shot down. A third apparently made it through to strike the building, causing "minor damage" to its roof and wounding no one, the ministry said.

The state-run IRNA news

agency later described the drones as "quadcopters equipped with bomblets." Quadcopters, which get their name from having four rotors, typically operate from short ranges by remote control. Iranian state television later aired footage of debris from the drones, which resembled commercially available quadcopters.

It remains unclear what the workshop produced.

Iravani's letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council warned Tehran could respond to the attack.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right...To defend its national security and respond resolutely to any threats or wrongful actions by the Israeli regime, wherever and whenever deemed necessary," the letter read.

4 Indian-American lawmakers appointed members of key US House committees

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Four prominent Indian-American lawmakers — Pramila Jayapal, Ami Bera, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Ro Khanna — have been appointed members of three key House panels, reflecting the growing influence of the community in US politics.

Congresswoman Jayapal has been named Ranking Member of the powerful House Judiciary Committee's panel on Immigration, making her the first immigrant to serve in a leadership role for the subcommittee.

Jayapal, 57, representing the 7th Congressional District of Washington State succeeds Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren to serve on the Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement, a media

release said.

"As the first South Asian woman elected to the US House of Representatives and one of only two dozen naturalised citizens in Congress, I am honoured and humbled to serve as the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement," said Jayapal.

Bera, 57, has been appointed as a member of a powerful US House committee handling intelligence-related matters.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence is charged with providing oversight of the country's intelligence activities, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), National Security Agency (NSA), as well as military intel-



ligence programmes.

Krishnamoorthi has been made Ranking Member of a newly created House committee on China that will look into various aspects of Chinese behaviour, its threat being posed to the US and the world.

US House of Representatives Minority Leader Jeffries on Wednesday announced the appointment of Krishnamoorthi

as Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Another Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna has also been made a member of this new committee, formed in the 118th Congress by Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy for the specific purpose of investigating and developing policy to address the United States' economic, technological and security competition with the Chinese Communist Party.

Krishnamoorthi, 49, is the four-term Congressman representing the eight Congressional districts of Illinois, while Khanna, 46, is the four-term lawmaker representing the 17th Congressional district of California.



Taiwan's Tsai welcomes retired US Admiral for China talks

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen on Thursday welcomed the former head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, who had warned the island could face an invasion from China this decade, as the mainland ramps up pressure on the self-governing island.

Retired Admiral Phil Davidson, along with a group including colleagues from the US think tank the National Bureau of Asian Research, arrived Monday in the capital Taipei following a string of delegate visits to Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory, since tensions with the mainland spiked in August with the visit of then-US Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"I'm here to listen and learn from our hosts; thus far, I've done both," he said. "I'm looking forward to continuing our discussions with President Tsai today and hearing her perspectives on the security environment and her outlook on US-Taiwan relations."

China's People's Liberation Army has stepped up its pressure on Taiwan in the past few years, sending navy vessels and fighter planes near the island.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said Tuesday that 20 Chinese aircraft crossed the central line in the Taiwan Strait — a long-time unofficial buffer zone between the sides, which separated during a civil war in 1949. It sent 14 other planes in nearby airspace.

NASA, IBM team up to spur new discoveries about Earth

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

NASA and IBM have collaborated to develop artificial intelligence (AI) based models that will make it easier to mine vast datasets to advance scientific knowledge about Earth, and help the world to adapt to a changing environment.

The joint work will apply AI foundation model technology to NASA's Earth-observing satellite data for the first time, NASA said in a statement.

Foundation models are types of AI models that are trained on a broad set of unlabelled data, can be used for different tasks, and can apply information about one situation to another.

"The beauty of foundation models is they can potentially be



used for many downstream applications," said Rahul Ramachandran, a senior research scientist at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

"Building these foundation models cannot be tackled by small teams; you need teams

across different organisations to bring their different perspectives, resources, and skill sets," Ramachandran said in a statement.

One project will train an IBM geospatial intelligence foundation model on NASA's

Harmonized Landsat Sentinel-2 (HLS) dataset, a record of land cover and land use changes captured by Earth-orbiting satellites, the statement said.

By analysing satellite data to identify changes in the geographic footprint of phenome-

na such as natural disasters, cyclical crop yields, and wildlife habitats, this model technology will help researchers provide critical analysis of our planet's environmental systems.

Another output from this collaboration is expected to be an easily searchable corpus of Earth science literature.

IBM has developed a natural language processing (NLP) model trained on nearly 300,000 Earth science journal articles to organise the literature and make it easier to discover new knowledge, the company said.

Beyond providing a resource to researchers, the new language model for Earth science could be infused into NASA's scientific data management and stewardship processes.

Israeli jets hit Gaza rocket workshop in reply to strike

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Hours after Palestinian militants fired a rocket toward Tel Aviv, Israeli aircraft struck a rocket production workshop in the Gaza Strip early on Thursday, the Israeli military said.

The exchange further raised tensions during a particularly violent period in the long-running conflict.

The Israeli military said the workshop contained chemicals and was run by the militant Hamas group, which controls Gaza. Late Wednesday, Israeli air defenses intercepted a rocket from Gaza, the army said.

There were no reports of casualties from the rocket or the airstrike. Last week, Gaza mili-

itants and Israel broke months of cross-border calm by exchanging rockets and airstrikes after Israel killed 10 Palestinians, most of them militants, in a military operation in the West Bank refugee camp of Jenin.

The latest friction point appeared to be over Palestinian prisoners held by Israel on security charges. Israel's National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, an ultra-nationalist and a senior member of the most right-wing government in Israel's history, has pledged even tougher treatment of the prisoners in recent days.

Ben-Gvir said rockets from Gaza won't stop him from implementing punitive policies against the prisoners.

MESSI SCRIPTS PSG's WIN

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain extended their lead at the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-1 win at Montpellier on Wednesday but their evening was overshadowed by an injury to Kylian Mbappe, who had earlier missed a penalty.

The France superstar had an eighth-minute spot-kick saved by Montpellier's Benjamin Lecomte and then remarkably saw his second attempt turned onto the post by the goalkeeper after the referee ordered a retake.

Mbappe then limped off with what looked like a hamstring injury midway through the first half, raising the alarm for PSG with the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich now less than two weeks away.

Speaking after the game, coach Christophe Galtier suggested the injury was down to a knock rather than a muscle problem. "He took a knock to the back of the knee or the back of the thigh, so we'll see," said Galtier.

"I'm not too worried," he added. "It's a bruise or a contusion, we don't know yet."

"With the run of matches we don't want to take risks with a very busy fixture list, but it doesn't appear that serious."

PSG host Bayern in Paris on February 14, with the second leg in Germany on March 8. They are desperate to avoid a repeat of last season when they were knocked out at the same stage of the Champions League by Real Madrid.

After winning just one of their last four league games, Wednesday's awkward trip for PSG saw them also lose Sergio



Ramos to injury and have two goals disallowed before Fabian Ruiz put them ahead 10 minutes into the second half.

MESSI ON TARGET

Ruiz then set up Lionel Messi to make it 2-0 with a deft finish in the 72nd minute, the Argentine scoring his 14th club goal of the season.

Sixteen-year-old midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery made sure of the win in stoppage time after Arnaud Nordin — a friend of Mbappe's from their time together at France's national training academy — had pulled

one back.

PSG, who were without the rested Neymar, extended their lead at the top of the table from three to five points after Lens lost 1-0 at home to Nice.

"It was a good performance in general," Galtier said.

"There was an incredible scenario in the first half with the retaken penalty, we hit the post, had goals disallowed and two injuries because Sergio Ramos was involved in a collision and on falling he hurt his adductor, but apparently it is nothing serious."

The win for PSG came after

a frustrating end to the January transfer window on Tuesday as they failed to process the paperwork to complete the loan signing of Hakim Ziyech from Chelsea after the Moroccan winger had passed a medical.

Gaetan Laborde scored the only goal of the game for Nice as Lens dropped points at home for the first time this season after winning all 10 previous matches there.

Marseille climbed above Lens into second place thanks to a 2-0 victory at Nantes earlier, secured by an own goal from Joao Victor and then a late

strike by Azzedine Ounahi, the Moroccan World Cup star making his debut after signing in the January window.

Monaco in fourth beat Auxerre 3-2, while fifth-placed Rennes eased to a 3-0 win against struggling Strasbourg.

On-loan Arsenal striker Folarin Balogun followed up his last-gasp equaliser against PSG at the weekend by netting a hat-trick as Reims came from two goals down to beat Lorient 4-2 and extend their unbeaten run to 15 games.

Bottom side Angers suffered a new French top-flight record

PSG LOSE INJURED MBAPPE FOR FIRST LEG OF BAYERN CL TIE

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappe faces three weeks out with a thigh injury and will miss the first leg of Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich on February 14, his club announced on Thursday.

"After undergoing tests, Kylian Mbappe suffered an injury to the left thigh at the level of the femoral biceps," said a club statement.

If he misses three weeks as expected, Mbappe can also expect to sit out next mid-week's French Cup last-16 tie against Marseille and faces a race against time to return for a potentially pivotal Ligue 1 game away to the same opponents at the end of this month.

However, PSG will hope that Mbappe, who has scored 25 goals in 26 appearances for his club this season, will be fit for the second leg against Bayern in Germany on March 8.

The news is a bitter blow for the French giants, who are desperate to avoid a repeat of what happened last season when they were knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Real Madrid.

13th consecutive defeat as they conceded in stoppage time to lose 2-1 at home to Ajaccio.

That result leaves them 11 points from safety.

Man Utd in League Cup final

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said winning trophies is the standard that should be demanded at Old Trafford after beating Nottingham Forest 2-0 on Wednesday and 5-0 on aggregate to reach the League Cup final.

Anthony Martial and Fred scored the goals for Ten Hag's men in the final 17 minutes of the semi-final, second leg as United set up a meeting with Newcastle at Wembley on February 26.

Three managers have left the club since United last won a trophy under Jose Mourinho in 2017.

But Ten Hag is now just one game away from ending that drought in his first season in charge.

"I think we have a good squad so we have to demand and control the high standards," said the Dutchman. "You have to bring that every game."



"We are Manchester United. When you are a United player you have to match the standards."

The damage was done for the Red Devils in last week's 3-0 win at the City Ground in the first leg as Ten Hag was able to rotate his squad with United still

involved in four competitions. "We have had to make lots of compromises in the season so far so hopefully now they are all available," added Ten Hag. "If you want to win trophies, you need them all to be available. You saw tonight you can bring a new dynamic off the bench."

Martial slotted home after Rashford's initial effort was blocked to open the scoring.

Three minutes later it was 2-0 as this time Rashford teed up Fred for the simplest of finishes into an empty net.

A much tougher test awaits in high-flying Newcastle, but defender Luke Shaw believes United are on the march towards silverware under Ten Hag.

Cancelo helps Bayern find form

AP ■ MUNICH

New Bayern Munich signing Joao Cancelo set up a goal to help his side secure a first win of 2023 with a 4-0 triumph at 10-man Mainz in the German Cup on Wednesday.

Cancelo, who joined the German champions on loan from Man City on Tuesday, made an immediate impact, floating in a lofted cross to Cameroon striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, who hammered home from close range.

Without in their first three league games of 2023, Bayern entered the game under significant pressure to advance to the German Cup quarter-finals for the first time in three seasons.

Choupo-Moting's 17th-minute strike settled the visitors' nerves and they had a second on the 30-minute mark when Bayern veteran Thomas Mueller found teenage forward Jamal Musiala, who slammed the ball across the face of goal to make it 2-0.

Winger Leroy Sane scored the third with one minute of the first half remaining, sliding in a looped assist from former Mainz forward Choupo-Moting.

Canadian wing-back Alphonso Davies, who came on for Cancelo with 20 minutes to go, added a fourth late in the



game, heading in a floated assist from Dutch centre-back Matthijs de Ligt.

Mainz had a number of half chances in an increasingly fiery second half which saw centre-back Alexander Hack sent off for a second yellow card, along with Bo Svensson, who was shown a straight red for arguing with the assistant referee moments before Davies' goal. Svensson complained that the German champions got better treatment from the officials in the lead up to his red card.

"I saw a clear difference in the way Bayern's bench were handled and the way we were handled (by the referees). It's not the first time."

Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann praised his side, saying they were "much more aggressive" than they have been so far this year.

"I'm glad we won again. I think the style and manner in which we played was very,

very good."

Former Chelsea striker Timo Werner scored late to help holders RB Leipzig beat Hoffenheim 3-1. Werner, who returned to Leipzig from a two-year stint at Stamford Bridge in August, had endured a difficult night and was caught offside on multiple occasions.

He got his timing right however in the 83rd minute, latching onto a pass from Danish striker Yussuf Poulsen and driving the ball past Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann to seal his side's win. Leipzig, who are unbeaten at home in the league this season, struck after just eight minutes, with Swedish forward Emil Forsberg catching Baumann napping to squeeze in a long-range shot at the near post.

Leipzig doubled their lead before half-time, with Austrian midfielder Konrad Laimer collecting the ball on the turn before unleashing a fierce left-foot shot into the far corner of the net. Kasper Dolberg headed in a sublime cross from former Leipzig wing-back Angelino in the 77th minute to cause some nerves for the home side in the closing stages.

However, Werner scored his fourth goal of the cup campaign with just over five minutes remaining.

Attempted rape charge against Greenwood dropped

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Charges of attempted rape and assault against Manchester United forward Mason Greenwood have been dropped by prosecutors, British police said on Thursday.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said the withdrawal of key witnesses and new material coming to light were factors in their decision to stop the case against the 21-year-old.

Greater Manchester Police said it was "only fair" that they announce that Greenwood, who was arrested in January last year, would no longer face criminal proceedings "given the significant media coverage of this case".

The striker originally faced one count of attempted rape, one count of controlling and coercive behaviour and one count of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, all against the same complainant.

"In this case a combination of the withdrawal of key witnesses and new material that came to light meant there was no longer a realistic prospect of conviction," the CPS said in a statement.

"In these circumstances, we are under a duty to stop the case." Greenwood, who has played 129 times for United, scoring 35 goals, last played for United against West Ham in January last year.

"Given the significant media coverage of this case, it

is only fair that we share the news that the 21-year-old man, who had been arrested and charged in connection with an investigation opened in January 2022, no longer faces criminal proceedings in relation to this," said chief superintendent Michaela Kerr.

"The investigation team has remained in regular contact with the legal team, providing any updates of note, and so understand the rationale for the discontinuation of proceedings at this stage, and that this decision has not been taken lightly."

"Despite the media and public's interest in this case, we have decided not to comment on it in any further detail."

Greenwood, a product of United's academy, and once considered one of English football's brightest prospects, made his senior debut for the Red Devils in a Champions League victory at Paris Saint-Germain in March 2019.

He signed a new contract at United in February 2021 that runs until at least 2025.

The forward made his England debut against Iceland in September 2020, but he and Manchester City midfielder Phil Foden were sent home after breaching the team's coronavirus guidelines.

Nike suspended and later terminated its sponsorship deal with the player, while Electronic Arts confirmed his removal from active squads on its FIFA 22 game following his arrest.

Indian women's team opens campaign against Bhutan



PTI ■ DHAKA

Powerhouse India face Bhutan in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship here on Friday, with the team, mainly made up of players from the FIFA U-17 World Cup campaign last year, hoping to clinch the title in the inaugural edition.

Hosts Bangladesh and Nepal are the other teams in the tournament. All the matches will be played at the Bir Sherestha

Shaheed Shipahi Mostafa Kamal Stadium here.

After a four-team round robin, the top two teams will play the final on February 9.

India take on Bangladesh on February 5 and Nepal on February 7.

India head coach Maymol Rocky stressed the importance of having a mix of experienced and young players in the squad, including those who have played in the senior national team already.

"We have a mixture of youth and experience in our team, players that have played at the senior level as well, so I am sure the girls will give their 100 per cent and the results will follow," Maymol said at the pre-match press conference.

When asked about the opposition teams in the tournament, she said, "Bhutan are a good side, as are Nepal. Bangladesh have been doing brilliantly in the last few years, and they are definitely the team to watch out for." But if we give it our best shot, we can overcome all obstacles."

India captain Martina Thokchom, one of the players to have played in the senior national team, spoke about the advantages of being in the same camp with the senior side in the build-up to the championship.

"Yes, we are a junior team, but we were in the same camp as the seniors, and that has really helped us. We all stayed in the same hotel and even played a match together. It was a good learning experience, especially for the new girls in this team."

Barca earn tense win to extend lead

AP ■ SEVILLE

Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski's strikes helped Barcelona move eight points clear at the top of La Liga with a 2-1 win at Real Betis on Wednesday.

The Catalans put pressure on second-placed Real Madrid, who host Valencia on Thursday, by scraping a narrow win from an intense clash at the Benito Villamarin.

With French winger Ousmane Dembele out injured for the next few weeks, Raphinha grabbed his chance to prove himself.

Dembele's superb form had limited the Brazilian's minutes since his move from Leeds United last summer.

Raphinha put Barcelona ahead in the 65th minute and Lewandowski, back after a three-match league ban, netted the second with 10 minutes to go.

Jules Kounde scored an unfortunate own goal to give Betis a fighting chance of a point in the final stages but Barcelona held out for the win.

"I think we had a good

LOCAL EVENTS

ASHISH SLAMS TON AS APS LIFTS TROPHY



Ashish Siwach slams a ton to help Ammenity Public School win the 6th International School Cricket League, beating Bal Bhavan International by 60 runs at CMS Kanpur Road ground on Thursday.

Opting to bat, APS posted a massive total of 214 runs for the loss of six wickets in the allotted 20 overs. Ashish slammed 100 runs in just 42 balls with the help of seven boundaries and 10 sixes. In reply, BBI could manage 154 runs for the loss of nine wickets in their quota of overs.

Ashish was adjudged man of the series while Aditya Chowdhary and Prince rana walked away with best batsman and best bowler trophy respectively. CMS principal Vineeta Kamran gave away the prizes.

KARAN SCRIPTS AKHIL INFRA WIN

Karan Singh's allround show (48 runs and 4 wickets) helped UP Timber crush Akhil Infra Cricket Club by eight wickets in G20 BBD Senior Cricket League at Chowk Stadium on Thursday.

Batting first, Akhil Infra piled up 156 runs in 31/4 overs with Naman Singh (55) being the top scorer. In reply, UP Timber achieved the target in 20.4 overs for the loss of two wickets.

BRIEF SCORES:

AICC: 156 (Naman 55, Priyam 29, Ajeet 22; Karan 4/44, Atif 2/25) UPCC: 160 (Vipraj 68, Karan 48, Vishwajeet 26; Shubhan 1/22)

KAUSTUBH, BHAVYA EMERGE WINNERS



Kaustubh and Bhavya bagged the under-14 boy's and girl's title respectively in the 2nd Inter-school Tennis Tournament at Delhi Public School, Eldeco on Thursday. Sports minister Girish Chandra Yadav gave away the prizes to the winners. Principal Manisha Anthwal and headmistress Rashmi Rafi were also present.

OTHER RESULTS: (U-10) Boy's- Harshvardhan, Girl's- Shubhi Ranjan; (U-12) Boy's- Satvik, Girl's- Kshita Ranjan; (Beginner) Boy's- Advik, Girl's- Advika.



ENGINEERING DAREDEVILS ENTER FINAL

Rohit's six-wicket haul gave Engineering Daredevils a six-run win over Commercial Challengers in the semi-final of NER Inter-departmental T20 Cricket League at NER ground on Wednesday. Batting first, Engineering Daredevils scored 108 runs in 17.5 overs. In reply, Commercial Challengers were bundled out for 102 runs in 19.3 overs.

BRIEF SCORES:

ED: 108 (Dharm Singh 25, Manish 14, Sumit 14; Ajay, Gurmeet and Imran 2 wickets each) CC: 102 (Amber Pratap 18, Imran 20; Rohit 6/7)

HARSHVARDHAN HITS TON

Harshvardhan Pratap Singh cracked 101 runs to help Avadh Red beat Avadh Sky Cricket Academy by seven wickets in the opening match of the 1st Nageshwar Prasad Yadav Memorial Cricket Tournament at UK Cricket Academy ground on Thursday. Earlier, Jagjivan Yadav, Salman Mohsin and Ubaid Kamal inaugurated the tournament.

BRIEF SCORES:

AS: 187 (Kamil gupta 98, Avnish 26; Junail 3/27, V Yadav 2/12) AR: 190 (Harshvardhan 101, V Yadav 46).

Raphael Varane announces int'l retirement

AP ■ PARIS

France centre-back Raphael Varane, a World Cup winner in 2018 and runner-up last year, announced on Thursday his retirement from international duty at the age of 29.

"I've been thinking about it for several months and I decided it was the right time for me to retire from international football," Varane wrote on Instagram.

The Manchester United defender made his France debut in 2013 and won 93 caps for Les Bleus. He had been in the running to take over as captain following the retirement of Hugo Lloris last month.

"To represent our magnificent country for a decade has been one of the greatest honours of my life. Each time I wore this special blue shirt I felt immense pride," said Varane.

Varane's decision to call time on his France career leaves Kylian Mbappe as the frontrunner for the captaincy, with Didier Deschamps' side set to begin Euro 2024 qualifying.

TACKLING SLIDE SPIN WILL BE KEY TO OZ'S SUCCESS IN INDIA, SAYS McDONALD

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Australia head coach Andrew McDonald believes the biggest challenge for his side in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Test Trophy will be to tackle "slide spin" from the Indian tweakers in the early overs.

As the tourists got down to the business of preparing for the gruelling four-Test series beginning in Nagpur on February 9, McDonald also warned his batters that they will have to come up with individual methods and techniques to counter the sliding deliveries.

The Australians have chosen to train all by themselves instead of playing tour games as they feel practice matches serve little purpose.

Both McDonald and Steve Smith have said that serving green tops for tour games and spinning tracks for actual games defeat the very purpose of playing practice matches.

"I think the new ball is the one that creates more of that slide and when the batters do get done on the inside ... we're preparing for that (during the preparatory camp in Bengaluru)," McDonald had said before the team's departure for Bengaluru on Wednesday.

On Thursday, cricket.Com. Au re-tweeted images of the squad training at Alur, clicked by its journalist, which showed the touring party batters going about their paces in the nets.

"That slide spin, we'll expect the spinners to bowl early against our opening batters as well with the new ball so all that is taken care of in the training environment and (batting co-



ach) Diva (Michael Di Venuto) does a fantastic job in preparing.

"The key to success there is to have a clear method and that will be individually based and depending on the conditions we're confronted with," McDonald was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald on Thursday.

With prolific Usman Khawaja scheduled to arrive later on Thursday after his visa approval got delayed, he will join the touring party on Friday to prepare for the spin challenge in the right

earnest.

McDonald said that despite the squad training on their own, there will still be variation in the track offered at Alur and the ones on which Test matches will be played, and here batters will have to use their judgement while playing shots.

"We'll be trying to make sure the batters are clear on their method," said McDonald, adding, "You're never going to get exactly the same as you're going to get in a game, and that's one of the real complexities

around preparing for a cricket tour."

The coach, who took over from Justin Langer, said another reason for not playing a tour game in India was to keep players fresh at the back end of the month-long tour.

"We haven't played a tour game, for three years. It's probably not something new to us, put it that way," McDonald said.

"We value freshness at the back end of the tour. Something we've seen teams go there before and expend a lot of energy at the

front end. We feel with the profile of this group, quite an experienced group, quite an experienced batting unit as well, who have been there before, I think 11 out of the squad has been there before.

"A significant chunk of the squad that's been there before, so we feel that better places them leading in and then you never get guarantees over those practice game surfaces you get. Often, there's no real connection

between that practice game into the first Test match. We feel as though we can control the surfaces here," he added. He said the strategy would be to prepare a blueprint while training in Bengaluru and replicate it in Nagpur during the first Test.

"(We'll) get a bit more control in Bengaluru to replicate what we're going to come up against and then we go into Nagpur fresh and hopefully it pays dividends at the back end."

Australia will win on 'fair Indian wickets': Healy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Hosts India will have the upper hand if the tracks are rank turners in the upcoming Test series but Australia will win on "fair" pitches, feels former wicketkeeper Ian Healy.

"I think if they produce fair Indian wickets, that are good batting wickets, to start with, (that) probably spin and spin pretty consistently but spin a long way, late in the match ... we (Australia) win," Healy said on 'SENQ Breakfast'.

"I'm worried about (Mitchell) Starc and (Nathan) Lyon in the first Test ... if they're unfair wickets which I've seen in the last series, where balls were jumping ridiculously and sliding down low from day one, I think India play those conditions better than us," he added.

Healy advised the less-experienced Australian players to soak in the pressure and not commit any fielding lapses.

"I want the players to be very aware if they are escaping that pressure (from the locals) if you're escaping that pressure and hiding in your room using the golf simulator... I think you've got to do something else," he said.

"That's an escape, you shouldn't be doing it, you're dodging, just be very aware of what you are feeling at any given time. Immerse yourself before you really get to deploy your technique... don't drop catches, fielding can be difficult over there.

"What happens in India, to get ten wickets, you'll only get ten chances, whereas in Australia with bounce, carry and speed you can create 13 chances and you can waste a couple... but they don't come along as easy in India. "I just think they have to live and breathe that pressure and have a philosophy over there."

Australia haven't won a Test series in India since 2004.

Technically & tactically, it was a near-perfect game for me: Shubman



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Young opener Shubman Gill said his unbeaten 63-ball 126 was "tactically and technically" a near-perfect game as it set up India's massive series-clinching 168-run win in the third T20I against New Zealand.

Gill smashed 12 boundaries and seven maximums in his scintillating maiden century in the shortest format to power India to a mammoth 234 for 4 in the final T20I.

The hosts then bundled out New Zealand for 66 in 12.1 overs to not only win the match but

also secure a 2-1 series win.

"To be able to play how I play, I have to be mentally clear," Gill said during an interaction with skipper Hardik Pandya, a video of which was posted on BCCI.Tv.

"This is what you (Hardik) told me. Every time I hit a six, he came and told me -- hold your shape in the next ball, you don't have to do anything extra, just do what you are doing and don't try to go too hard. Every ball he kept reminding me and that helped.

"In the last over of (Mitchell) Santner, I was in the zone and I was hitting. So, I thought I will go after him but you asked me to hold myself back and target other bowlers because he (Santner) is bowling well in the entire T20 series. So, tactically and technically it was a near-perfect game for me."

'Player of the series' Pandya snapped four wickets as he bowled with the new ball to dismiss Finn Allen and Glenn Phillips. He later returned to take two more wickets to demolish the Kiwis.

"Four wickets, to be honest, are just part and parcel of the sport but I think I bowled at 145 (kmph) if I am not wrong and that kind of gave me the happiness and the smile you can see. So, I told him (Gill) today that it is my last game and I am going on a break," said Hardik, who will play his next game in about two months' time.

"So, today (Wednesday) gonna be full all guns blazing and I am going to bowl as fast as possible and, to be honest, the kind of start we got, it made our life very easy."

Malan, Buttler and Archer earn consolation win for England

AP ■ KIMBERLEY

Dawid Malan and captain Jos Buttler hit centuries to set up a 59-run win for England in the third and final ODI against South Africa at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley on Wednesday.

Malan made 118 and Buttler scored 131 in an England total of 346 for seven. South Africa were bowled out for 287 with fast bowler Jofra Archer taking a career-best six for 40.

South Africa had already clinched the series by winning the first two matches but England captain Jos Buttler said Wednesday's win was a reward for the hard work his players had put in during the short series.

"There's been some really good stuff. Guys getting hundreds and Jofra Archer was brilliant. We've got a good thing going. We're building nicely," said Buttler, who was named player of the match and player of the series.

South African captain Temba Bavuma said the series win was important. "We came in under a lot of pressure. We've done ourselves justice and come closer to automatic qualification for the World Cup."

South Africa need one win in their remaining two matches against the Netherlands to move ahead of West Indies into one of the eight qualifying places in the World Cup Super



Ahmed gets Eng white-ball call-up for B'desh tour

AP ■ LONDON

England picked teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in their white-ball squads for the first time on Thursday ahead of next month's tour of Bangladesh.

The 18-year-old Leicestershire bowler became England's youngest men's Test cricketer against Pakistan in Karachi in December and marked his debut in style with a five-wicket haul.

Ahmed had played just three first-class matches before making his Test bow, but has more experience in white-ball cricket, having appeared regularly for his county side.

Saqib Mahmood has been

included in the ODI squad for the first time since suffering a stress fracture of the back in May last year.

But there was no place for Alex Hales, with the big-hitting batsman set to honour his contract to play in the Pakistan Super League after only returning to England duty last year.

Hales was a key figure in England's T20 World Cup triumph in Australia in November after a positive test for recreational drug use came to light on the eve of the 2019 50-over World Cup led to more than three years of international exile.

England will play three ODIs and three T20s in Bangladesh from March 1 to 14.

League, although Sri Lanka could still move ahead of them in a forthcoming series against New Zealand.

The left-handed Malan and his right-handed captain shared a fourth wicket partnership of 232 off 211 balls after coming together with their team in trouble at 14 for three in the sixth over.

A slow start to the partnership became a torrent of runs as they took command on a slow pitch.

England scored 217 runs in the last 20 overs of their innings, scoring rapidly even after the two centuries were dismissed.

The T20 fixtures are their first in the format since Jos Buttler's men became world champions, adding to their 50-over global title.

SQUADS

ODI squad: Jos Buttler (capt/wkt), Tom Abell, Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Saqib Mahmood, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, James Vince, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood
T20 squad: Buttler, Tom Abell, Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood

Hardik doesn't mind playing Dhoni's role for Team India

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya feels he has developed the ability to absorb pressure and doesn't mind playing the anchor role that the great Mahendra Singh Dhoni played for the team.

The 29-year-old has always been known for his batting pyrotechnics but says he has now learnt to take the back seat and anchor the innings, something which master chaser Dhoni did in the fog end of his international career.

"See, to be honest, I've always enjoyed hitting sixes, but I have to evolve and that is life," the stand-in T20 skipper said during the press conference after India sealed the T20 series against New Zealand 2-1.

"I have to take the other part where I've always believed in partnerships. I want to give my team and the other person more calmness and the assurance that at least I'm there.

"I've played more games than any of those guys out there. So, I've known the experience and more than the experience part, it's where I've batted, and I've learnt how to accept pressure and I've learnt how to kind of swallow the pressure and kind of make sure the team and everything is calm," Hardik added.

Dhoni is known for his calm demeanour and Hardik feels now it is his responsibility to step into the legendary wicketkeeper's shoes as a batter and he is ready to sacrifice his strike-



rate to play that role.

"In that way, maybe I have to get my strike rate down or... Taking new opportunities or taking new roles is (something) I've always looked forward to. I don't mind coming in and playing the role which somewhere down the line Maahi (Dhoni) used to play," he said.

Hardik has scored 1271 runs at a strike-rate of 142.17 in 87 T20Is.

"I think at that time, I was young, and I was hitting all around the park, but now since he has gone, all of a sudden that responsibility... It has just naturally come to me, and I don't mind (doing it). We're getting the result we want and it's okay."

During the third T20I against New Zealand, Hardik did just that, allowing the in-form Shubman Gill (126) to take

the attack to the opposition as India posted a massive 234 for 4 and then bowled out NZ for 66 for a 168-run win.

With pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah nursing an injury, Hardik has backed himself to bowl more with the new ball, having bowled 12 overs in the powerplay, conceding 86 runs for two wickets this home season.

"I had to bowl with the new ball (in T20Is) because Arshdeep (Singh)... I don't want any new guy to come and have that difficult role of (bowling first up with the new ball) because if they're put under pressure, then we're chasing the game," Hardik said.

"So, I've always been (like) leading from the front and I've been working on my new-ball skills, which is helping me."

Sai Praneeth enters Thailand Open quarters

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's B Sai Praneeth defeated Korean qualifier Hyeok Jin Jeon in a tough three-game contest to enter the quarter-finals of the Thailand Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Praneeth beat his Korean opponent 24-22, 7-21, 22-20 in the men's singles second-round match.

He will next face sixth seed Li Shi Feng of China in the last-eight round.

Earlier in the day, Kiran George and Ashmita Chaliha put up gallant fights before going down in three games in the second round of their respective events.

While George, the Odisha Open champion, went down 22-20, 15-21, 20-22 to third seed Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong in men's singles, Ashmita lost 21-19, 13-21, 27-29 to sixth-seeded Den Hojmark Kjaersfeldt of Denmark in a gruelling women's singles round-of-16 match.

Eighth seeds Tanisha Crasto and Ishaan Bhatnagar suffered a 19-21, 16-21 loss to Indonesia's Akbar Bintang Cahyono and Marshailla Gischa Islami in mixed doubles.

N Sikki Reddy and Rohan Kapoor also couldn't cross the second round, losing 11-21, 10-21 to sixth seeded Chinese Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping.

Gopal's career-best 161 puts K'taka on cusp of Ranji semis

PTI ■ BENGALURU

All-rounder Shreyas Gopal stood tall with a career-best 161 not out as Karnataka piled more misery on Uttarakhand with a massive first innings lead of 490 runs in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Thursday.

At close on day three, Uttarakhand were 106/3, still 384 runs in arrears with Dikshanshu Negi and Swapnil Singh remaining unbeaten on identical scores of 27 in an unbroken 46-run partnership.

Vidwath Kaverappa (2/22) claimed the Uttarakhand opening duo of Avneesh Sudha (4) and Jivanjot Singh (24), while debutant M Venkatesh dismissed former Delhi batter Kunal Chandel, who had played in their 2016-17 final against Vidarbha.

Uttarakhand also have wicket-keeper-batter Aditya Tare, the Ranji

Trophy-winning former Mumbai skipper in waiting but it seems a lost battle against the eight-time champions Karnataka who are eyeing their first semi-final appearance since 2020.

Resuming on 474/5, Karnataka had their strategy clear as they battled along with no declaration in sight.

Overnight centurion Gopal, who on Wednesday slammed his first Ranji Trophy century since 2017-18, continued from where he left and in the process completed 3000 runs in first-class cricket.

BENGAL IN COMMAND

Kolkata: Bengal are on course to their third successive Ranji Trophy semi-final appearance after Shahbaz Ahmed produced yet another sparkling all-round show to put them in the driver's seat on the third day of their quarterfinal match against Jharkhand.

Batting at No. 6, left-hander Ahmed top-scored with a gritty 81 off 120 balls (9x4, 2x6) as Bengal posted 328 in their first innings to secure a healthy first innings lead of 155 runs.

At stumps on Day 3, Jharkhand were ahead by just seven runs, with their second innings in disarray at 162 for 7. A total of 11 wickets tumbled on day three.

The lower order Jharkhand batters are now left battling to delay the inevitable with two more days left in the game.

Ahmed, the left-arm spin bowling all-rounder, also made an impact with the ball, dismissing Anukul Roy (40) and Jharkhand skipper Virat Singh (29) in their second innings.

Opener Aryaman Sen waged a lone battle for Jharkhand with a fighting half century (64 off 132 balls) but Ishan Porel brilliantly set him up with



a bouncer and dismissed him at the fag-end of the day.

It was a total batting failure for Jharkhand as only three batters managed double digit figures with Aryaman stitching two fifty-plus stands with Anukul Roy and then with Singh.

BOWLERS PUT MP BACK

Indore: Defending champions Madhya Pradesh bounced back in contention on the third day of their quarterfinal against Andhra, despite conceding a huge first innings lead, thanks to pacer Avesh Khan's exploits.

Set a winning target of 245, MP ended day three at 58 for no loss after bundling out the opponents for 93 in their second innings.

Andhra skipper Hanuma Vihari, like in the first innings when he returned to bat braving a wrist injury, batted left-handed to score 15 coming in at No.11.

He swatted three fours, including a reverse sweep but could not do much as the team collapsed to 93 all out in 32.3 overs.

Earlier, resuming at the overnight score of 144 for 4, MP was bowled out for 228 with left-arm medium-pacer Prithvi Raj Yarra picking up five wickets.

Prithvi Raj added the scalps of Harsh Gawli (1), Saransh Jain (8), Avesh Khan (15) and Kumar Kartikeya (24, 4 fours) to finish with superb figures of 5 for 26.

The home team looked in danger of being dismissed below 200 before Kartikeya and Avesh stitched a 48-run stand for the ninth wicket to stretch the score to 228.

With a big lead of 151, Andhra was expected to bat well in the second innings to put MP out of contention. However, the MP bowlers ran through the visiting team's batting unit in just 32.3 overs.