

CITY 3

UP TO BENEFIT  
FROM PM-VIKAS

OPINION 6

A TALE OF TWO NATIONS  
POLES APART

WORLD 10

CHINESE SPY BALLOON SPOTTED  
OVER US AIRSPACE

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BEAT VALENCIA  
2-0 IN LA LIGA  
11 SPORT

## Parl stalled over Adani as Opp sticks to JPC guns

Govt urges Opp to allow Motion of Thanks to Prez Address

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The noisy row on the Adani Group stock rout continued in both the Houses of Parliament which were adjourned for the day on Friday amid an unrelenting Opposition demanding a probe by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).

The Government held on to its stand as articulated by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi that the Opposition should allow Motion of Thanks to the President's Address.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor accused the Modi dispensation of "stalling" the Opposition's demand for discussions on every issue which would embarrass it, while BJP MP Mahesh Jethmalani dismissed the Opposition's allegation that investments by LIC in the Adani Group were made at the Government's behest. Jethmalani, instead, said the SEBI and the RBI will look into it. "Let their reports come in," he said.

Prior to the ruckus in Parliament, leading to the adjournment of both Houses for the second day, Opposition



Opposition members in the Lok Sabha during Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

parties came together at a meeting convened by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to coordinated their strategy in Parliament and resolved to insist on a JPC probe or a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into the issue.

The TMC, which wants only a Supreme Court-monitored investigation, was not part of the Opposition meeting.

A number of Opposition members, including Rajya Sabha Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, DMK Rajya Sabha member Tiruchi

Siva, Congress MP Pramod Tiwari, BRS MP K Keshava Rao, Shiv Sena MP (Uddhav Thackeray faction) Priyanka Chaturvedi, Congress Rajya Sabha MP Dr Syed Naseer Hussain, and CPI(M) MP Elamaram Kareem gave suspension of Business notice to their respective Houses to hold a discussion on the allegations levelled by US-based Hindenburg Research against Adani Group.

Soon after the Lok Sabha met for the day, Opposition members were on their feet

shouting slogans and demanding a probe into the tanking of the Adani Group scrips and sought a probe into the business practices of the corporate giant.

Speaker Om Birla appealed to members to participate in the discussions during the Question Hour, which he termed as significant. He said the House will take up the Motion of Thanks to the president for her address at the beginning of the Budget Session.

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## SBI, LIC exposure to Adani within permitted limits: FM

'India's regulators very stringent, nation has well-regulated financial market'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the exposure of the State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation in the Adani Group companies is within permitted limits and asserted that India is a well-governed and well-regulated financial market wherein regulators are "very stringent" about certain governance practices.

When asked about the latest row concerning the Adani Group in an interview with CNN-News-18, the FM said, "India remains a well-governed, well-regulated financial market. Our regulators are very stringent about certain governance practices. So many lessons have been learnt over the decades."

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.

Citing the statement issued by the heads of both the SBI and the LIC on the Adani crisis, she said they are not overexposed.

"I want to recall the



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman leaves after addressing BJP members on Union Budget at Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Friday. Union Ministers of State Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, V Muraliedharan and Arjun Ram Meghwal are also seen

PTI

words...coming from the horse's mouth has more credibility. Both SBI and LIC have issued detailed statements. And I know the chairperson or the CMD... he has himself come out and explained how they are not overexposed or whatever they said.

"And also said, look, we are sitting over profits for the exposure that we have which is well within the limit. That's what I understood. I read it through the media," Sitharaman said.

The FM asserted that the Indian banking sector today is at a very comfortable level and their position is very sound, adding that she made the statement with a sense of responsibility.

"She pointed out that NPA was coming down and recov-

ery was improving and that is why banks got a good response when they went to raise money in the market.

The FM praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for guiding India tackle the crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the Russia-Ukraine war, adding that people of the country must also be credited with "absorbing" the Government's

strategies. Sitharaman said she had no precedent before her to handle the situation as she looked back on the pandemic.

"To capture the experiences, the 'anubhav' and look back at it now when you are probably slightly out of it is very difficult to describe in a short answer," the FM said. "There were no templates. There were no templates. There were no examples to follow. There were no theories that would have worked in such a context. Essentially, we were going by continuous conversation with all kinds of stakeholders. We had to engage in conversation with all people, take their view, and see which one works out and also have the courage to say one way may not work out for us," she added.

Hailing Modi for guiding the country through such a grim phase, Sitharaman said, "I would immensely recall the ways in which PM Modi led the conversation with us. He would never tire of meeting us, would never say not today. Following all necessary precautions for Covid-19, we would still meet and talk about things."

## Rating agencies help ease Adani pressure, French partner backs investment

But S&P Global revises outlook on Adani Ports and Adani Electricity to negative from stable

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After a tumultuous past few days that almost halved value of the Adani Group, embattled tycoon Gautam Adani-led conglomerate had some pressure eased on Friday as two global rating firms stuck with their calls on its credit profile and its French partner backed its investments in the group firms.

Also for the first time since January 24, shares of the group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises ended in positive territory after erasing an intraday loss of 35 per cent. Adani Ports and SEZ also ended 8 per cent higher.

This is after an over USD 100-billion rout in value of group stock since the US short seller Hindenburg Research accused Adani Group of stock manipulation and accounting fraud. Adani Group has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and has threatened to sue Hindenburg.

Six other group stocks however finished lower.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a statement that did not name Adani but said as

a regulator and supervisor, the central bank maintains a constant vigil on the banking sector and on individual banks with a view to maintain financial stability.

"The banking sector remains resilient and stable. Various parameters relating to capital adequacy, asset quality, liquidity, provision coverage and profitability are healthy," it said.

In an interview to PTI, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan said the stock market turmoil created by rout in Adani group shares is a "storm in a teacup" from a macroeconomic point of view and that India's public financial system is robust.

Separately, Fitch Ratings said there's no immediate impact on the credit profile of the Adani companies it rates following the Hindenburg report and that it doesn't expect material changes to the forecast cash flow.

Its peer Moody's Investors Service warned that the rout in Adani Group shares could hurt the conglomerate's ability to raise capital to fund committed capex or refinance maturing debt over the next 1-2 years.

S&P Global Ratings, however, revised outlook on Adani Ports and Adani Electricity to negative from stable while affirming the rating.

Continued on Page 9

## SC notice to Govt on BBC docu ban, but no interim relief offered

Hearing in April

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Government to produce original records relating to its decision to block a BBC documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots. A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and MM Sundresh issued notices to the Government and others on pleas filed by veteran journalist N Ram, TMC MP Mahua Moitra and activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan.

The matter is listed for next hearing in April. "We are issuing notices. Counter affidavit will be filed within three weeks. Rejoinder within two weeks after that. The respondents will also produce original records before this court on the next date of hearing," the bench said.

The bench asked the petitioners why they did not



approach the High Court in the matter. Senior advocate CU Singh, appearing for Ram and the others, submitted that the Government has invoked the emergency powers under the Information Technology (IT) Rules to block the documentary. He said he was seeking a direction to the Centre to place all the original records.

The Supreme Court said it is also a fact that people have been accessing the documentary. Ram and others, in their pleas, have sought a direction to restrain the Government

from curbing their right to "receive and disseminate information" on the documentary.

"All citizens, including the press, have the fundamental right to view, form an informed opinion, critique, report on, and lawfully circulate the contents of the documentary as the right to freedom of speech and expression incorporates the right to receive and disseminate information..." the plea said and referred to several apex court orders on freedom of speech and expression.

Continued on Page 9

## Will soon clear collegium picks, Centre informs SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Facing displeasure and some tough questions from the Supreme Court, the Centre on Friday gave an assurance that the Collegium's pending recommendations for the elevation of five High Court judges to the apex court will be cleared soon and the warrant of their appointments may be issued by Sunday.

A bench of Justices SK Kaul and AS Oka also expressed displeasure over the delay in clearing recommendations for transfer of High Court judges, calling it a "very serious issue", and warned that any delay in this matter may result in both administrative and judicial actions which might not be palatable.

"When, is the next question? We are not saying about date. Two days, three days or four days, when will the warrants be issued?" the bench asked, responding to Attorney General R Venkataramani, who first said that expected issue



warrant soon. "I was given to understand that by Sunday, it may be issued," said the AG.

The apex court while referring to the issue of delay in clearing recommendations for transfer of High Court judges also observed, "Don't make us take a stand which will be very uncomfortable."

"You will make us take some very difficult decisions," said the bench.

"The top court, which has a sanctioned strength of 34 judges, including the CJ, is functioning with 27 judges presently.

The court, which was hearing two petitions including one related to the Centre's alleged delay in clearing names recommended by the Collegium for appointment as judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts, observed

that five names for elevation to the apex court were recommended in December last year and now it is February.

When Venkataramani said warrants of appointment of these five names is expected to be issued soon, the bench said, "Should we record that for those five, warrants are being issued?"

The bench noted that the AG has submitted that so far five recommendations made by the Collegium for appointment to the apex court is concerned, the warrants will be issued within five days.

The Attorney General requested that the number of days may not be recorded. "You are saying it is happening. When I ask, you say Sunday. That is why I gave a longer period of time," Justice Kaul observed.

"When you are saying it is happening, I gave the longer leeway when I said five days... We gave longer leeway because sometimes, there are unexpected delays," he said.

Continued on Page 9

## CAPSULE

### 6 CHARGESHEETED FOR DEAF KIDS CONVERSION

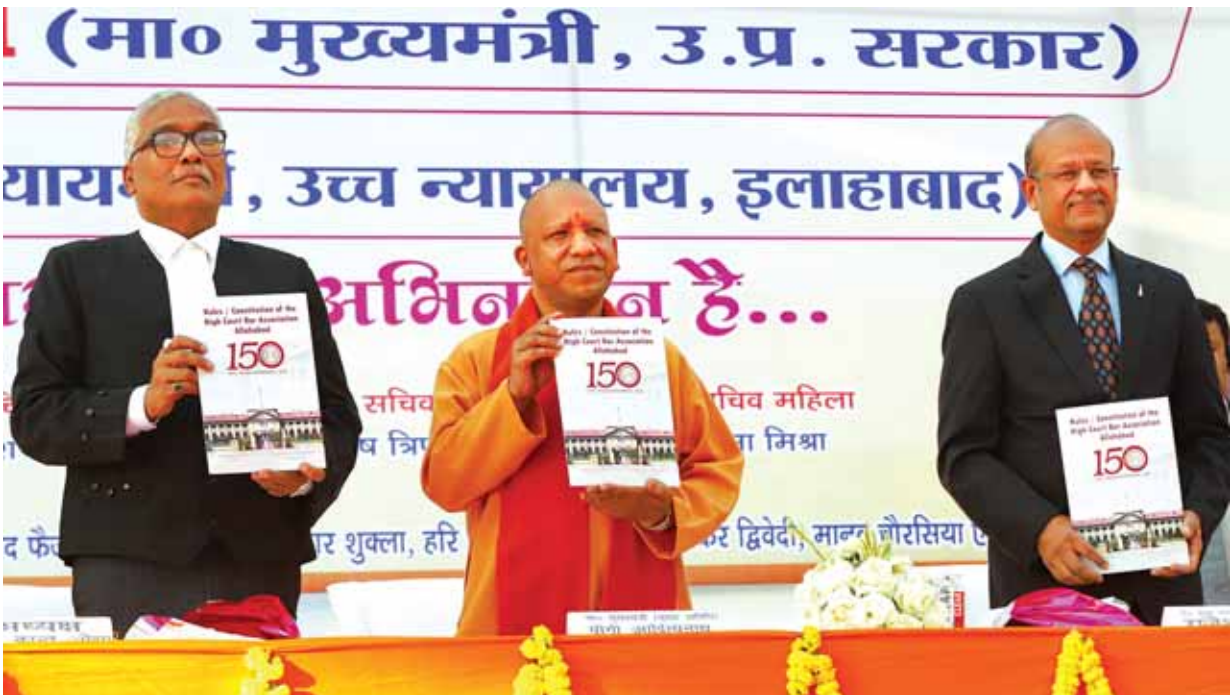
**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed a chargesheet before a court here on Friday against six accused for allegedly laundering money received from ISI for the alleged conversion of deaf students and poor people to Islam in UP.

### TALIBAN WELCOME INDIA'S ₹200 CR AID TO AF

**New Delhi:** Taliban welcomed the Indian announcement for Afghanistan in the Budget 2023-24. New Delhi announced a development assistance of ₹200 crore (\$24.3 million) for the country in the Budget.

### PAK ULTRA'S LIFE TERM UPHeld BY CALCUTTA HC

**Kolkata:** The Calcutta High Court on Friday upheld the life sentence to a Pakistani terrorist arrested in Kolkata with explosives in 2009.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Allahabad High Court Bar Association President Radha Kant Ojha during a programme organised on completion of 150 years of Allahabad High Court Bar Association, at Allahabad High Court in Prayagraj on Friday.

Report on Page 5

## BJP wins 4 of 5 UP Council seats

PNS ■ LUCNOW

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party bagged four of the five seats in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council polls on Friday. The fifth seat went to an independent candidate. In all five seats, the Samajwadi Party was the main Opposition party.

Among the five seats three are graduates' seats and two teachers' seats and the BJP managed to bag all the three graduates' seats — Gorakhpur-Faizabad, Prayagraj-Jhansi and Kanpur-Unnao. The party also won from the Moradabad teachers' constituency.

Independent candidate Raj Bahadur Singh Chandel won from the Kanpur teachers' constituency. These polls were significant for the SP, which was hoping to increase its number in the Upper House of the Uttar Pradesh Legislature in order to be

able to elect a leader of opposition. Since neither Congress nor Bahujan Samaj Party fielded candidates, the council polls were a direct contest between the BJP and the SP. In the Gorakhpur-Faizabad graduates' seat, the BJP had once again fielded outgoing MLC Devendra Pratap Singh. Singh defeated Karunakant Maurya of the SP by 17,455 votes by bagging 51,699 votes against Maurya's 34,244 votes. In the Kanpur-Unnao graduates' seat, BJP candidate Arun Pathak won for the third time. He defeated Kamlesh Yadav of SP by 53,285 votes. Pathak polled 62,601 votes and Yadav got only 9,316 votes. In the Bareilly-Faizabad graduates' seat, BJP's Jaipal Singh defeated SP's Shiv Pratap Singh by 51,257 votes. Jaipal polled 66,179 votes, while Shiv Pratap got 14,922 votes.

Notably, the Bareilly-Faizabad seat is a traditional

BJP seat and the saffron party has been winning it since 1986.

In the Prayagraj-Jhansi teachers' constituency, BJP's Babul Tiwari defeated three-time MLC Suresh Kumar Tripathi by 1,403 votes. Tiwari got 10,205 votes and Tripathi polled 8,802 votes. Congratulating the winners, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the victory of the BJP candidates in the election to the Upper House of the state legislature testified to immense public faith in the double-engine government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said that the presence of hardworking members, who had deep faith in democratic values in UP, would enhance the dignity of the legislative council and that the contribution of experienced new members would prove to be helpful in building a 'New Uttar Pradesh of New India'.











# IIT-Kanpur signs MoU for mass manufacturing of smart watch

PNS ■ KANPUR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur entered into a technology transfer MoU with Ambrane India Private Limited for mass manufacturing and sales of the “haptic smart watch for blind and visually impaired”. The breakthrough innovation of the novel touch sensitive haptic smart watch come with two variants and developed by Prof Siddhartha Panda and Vishwaraj Srivastava from the National Centre for Flexible Electronics at IIT Kanpur.

The technology licensing agreement was formally signed between IIT Kanpur and Ambrane India Pvt. Ltd and the MoU exchange ceremony was graced by Prof Abhay Karandikar, Director IIT Kanpur, Prof AR Harish, Dean R&D, IIT Kanpur, Prof Ankush Sharma (PIC, Innovation & Incubation), co-inventors Prof Siddhartha Panda and Vishwaraj Srivastava from NCFlexE, IIT Kanpur and r Ashok Rajpal (licensee and director of Ambrane India).

Watches that are currently available for the visually impaired can be broadly classified into tactile, talking, vibration and braille-based. These watches have their limitations – if there is a risk of needle breakage in tactile watches, talking watches do not offer a private mode of communication. Similarly, vibration watches are complicated and braille watches are expensive. This haptic watch developed at IIT Kanpur addresses the draw-



IIT-K Director Prof Abhay Karandikar and licensee and director of Ambrane India Ashok Rajpal exchange the MoU

backs of all conventional technologies and offers a seamless experience to the wearer.

Prof Karandikar, said, “The development of the haptic smart watch for the visually impaired and the blind is a revolutionary innovation from the team of Prof Siddhartha Panda and Vishwaraj Srivastava at NCFlexE, IIT Kanpur. He added that IIT-K believed that this watch will make a great social impact by enabling the visually impaired and blind to make seamless use of this technology for everyday usage.

The watch will soon be commercialised by Ambrane India and will be available in the market at an affordable price. This development is a testament to IIT Kanpur’s commitment to promote inclusivity through novel technology development. He added this innovation will make a great impact at the national as well as international market.

The haptic watch developed at IIT Kanpur has 12 touch sensitive hour markers arranged over the dial face. The user is required to scan the markers with his/her fingers. For instance to check the time of 3:40, the 3rd and 8th marker in the watch will be termed as the active markers. The vibration pulse will get generated on touching the active markers.

A long pulse on 3 will indicate hours and a short pulse on 8 will indicate minutes for checking the time of 3:40.

This watch is a fusion of tactile and vibration watches. The complexity of vibration watch generating more than 20 pulses has been reduced to 2 pulses and the fragile nature of a tactile watch is eliminated, thus resulting in a simple-to-use, private, affordable and robust watch. The smartwatch variant is equipped with smart features to indicate health para-

meters such as heart rate, step count, hydration reminder and smart timer to set short timer by using simple gesture.

The existing smartwatches for the blind and visually impaired use audio-based output and lacks privacy.

The IIT Kanpur-developed smartwatch, which offers a tactile-haptic interface for display of time and health parameters addresses these drawbacks.

The use of innovative haptic icons makes it easy to navigate the menu and a simple gesture like the double-tap can open a particular health monitoring app. These numbers are communicated in a similar way as the time.

IIT Kanpur has been proactively working with an objective to develop more such technologies having societal impact, especially in the assistive domain, which can be transformed into a product.

## AG assures financial aid to needy lawyers

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

While felicitating newly elected chairman of the Bar Council of Uttar Pradesh Panchu Ram Maurya and secretary Rakesh Pathak, advocate general of the state Ajay Kumar Mishra assured that all possible financial aid would be extended to the lawyers of the state on behalf of UP government. Mishra and Maurya said a meeting of Advocates Welfare Committee would be held in Lucknow on February 11 where all the modalities would be discussed to help the needy and ailing lawyers and their dependents. Mishra further said Yogi Adityanath government is fully committed to the welfare of lawyers and the fund required for this purpose would be released as and when required.

Ajay Kumar Mishra assured that since he is representing the state government in the bar council and is also its ex-officio member, he would help the lawyers.

### CP: CHALK OUT PLAN TO EASE TRAFFIC

Commissioner of police Ramit Sharma has asked additional DCP (traffic) to chalk out an effective plan to ease traffic congestions on city streets. “More manpower would be deployed at busy crossings and intersections to check congestion problem,” he said. Taking cognizance of frequent traffic jam in city, Sharma has directed officials of traffic police and police stations concerned to understand their role and responsibilities to tackle traffic problems of their respective areas and take measures accordingly.

## Training workshop on self-defence



A women self-defence training workshop being held at Mahila Mahavidyalaya on Friday

PNS ■ KANPUR

CP Ghatampur, Dinesh Kumar Shukla, while addressing the training workshop on women self-defence at Mahila Mahavidyalaya on Friday said self-defence training helped women and girls to protect not only themselves but others too. He said the training helped one become physically and emotionally fit, including the ability to defend oneself also boosted self-esteem and confidence. He said self-defence ultimately provided women freedom as they were able to defend themselves against both mental, emotional and physical challenges.

He said women who were afraid to express themselves were confined by their fears and thus self-defence builds confidence and provided freedom. He said a woman must equip herself with simple self-defence techniques to catch an attacker off guard and show him the consequences of misbehaviour. He said even the basic style of

self-defence was better than no defence at all.

Programme incharge Dr Deepali Nigam addressing the students said rape, molestation, kidnapping and murder were the most common forms of crime against women in India and they were also vulnerable to acid attacks and eve-teasing. She said the mindset of the people, including the victim and spectator, was to ignore and just let it go.

She said but what as the responsible citizens of an independent country, fail to realise was that these instances of harassment can flare up into other bigger heinous crimes against women and that was when the importance of learning self-defence techniques for women was felt.

She said various studies had shown that criminals tend to choose their targets when they were unaware of surroundings.

She said thus it was time that each woman became vig-

ilant and totally aware of one’s surroundings. She said women should be aware of strategies to be adopted under different adverse circumstance for example, like if one were alone at home during such an attack, one should hurriedly run to kitchen to find chilli powder and knives to use them as weapons.

She said there were some possible measures women should take to safely steer away from danger. She advised girl students to note down the number of the cab when travelling alone. She also advised them to enrol themselves for self-defence classes and learn several techniques to physically fight the attacker.

She also advised them to opt for trainings in basic karate, kickboxing, Israeli Krav-maga and traditional stick fighting. Dr Pooja Srivastava, Dr Shweta Singh Chandel and other faculty members took part in the training workshop.

# ‘TNBC found in around 32% cases in India’

PNS ■ KANPUR

Noted and senior-most cancer surgeon and author of a famous book titled “Text Book of Breast Cancer in India”, Dr PK Agarwal, who had worked at King’s College Hospital, London, under Prof Michael Baum, while addressing presspersons on the eve of World Cancer Day said breast cancer had become number one cancer leaving far behind the uterine cancer. He said it was a truth that one in every 14 females will suffer with cancer in lifetime. He said this year’s theme marked the second year of the campaign “close the care gap” which was about understanding the inequities in cancer care and taking action to make necessary progress to address them.

Narrating his long experience in the field of cancer surgery, he said average survival rate was between 15 and 25 years. He said the longest surviving patient from Kanpur is a 45-year-old woman who suf-

fered from congenital cancer and was operated upon at the age of six months of age. He said the woman was now in perfect health and visits India every year. He advised people not to delay and never fear the scalpel as once the cancer has spread chances were drastically reduced for survival. He said some cancers can be prevented just by medicine or finally by preventive surgery.

He said in India triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) was found in around 32 per cent of cases and was the most difficult cancer to be treated. He said the major breakthrough in cancer treatment is targeted therapy and genomic testing and added the former was in fact a type of cancer treatment that targeted proteins that controlled how cancer cells grew, divided and spread. He said it was the foundation of precision medicine and as researchers learnt more about the DNA changes and proteins that drove cancer, they were better able to design treatments that targeted

these proteins.

Dr Agarwal said the latter was genomic testing where advanced genomic testing was designed to help identify the DNA alterations that may be driving the growth of a specific tumour. He said information about genomic mutations that were unique to one’s individual cancer may help doctors identify treatments designed to target those mutations.

He said TNBC is a kind of breast cancer that did not have any of the receptors that were commonly found in breast cancer. He said one was for the female hormone estrogen. He said second one was for female hormone progesterone while third was a protein called human epidermal growth factor. He said TNBC had fewer treatment options than other types of invasive breast cancer. He said this was because the cancer cells did not have the estrogen or progesterone receptors or enough of HER2 protein to make hormone therapy or targeted HER2 drugs work.

# ‘Maurya should change his name’

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Chhattisgarh’s senior official (Kathawachak) Dr. Ashok Hariyansh has given his reaction on the statement of SP leader and former minister Swami Prasad Maurya regarding Ramcharitmanas. He said that Swami Prasad Maurya must first understand the meaning of his name. His name has both Swami and Prasad, both these words are associated with our Sanatan.

Swami means Jagat Swami Lord Shri Ram and his name also has Prasad. Prasad means the offerings of God, which we take every day. His parents must have named him in the same spirit. Famous storyteller Dr. Ashok Hariyansh, who reached Magh Mela in Prayagraj, expressed these views while talking to the media persons.

He said that Swami Prasad’s daughter’s name is Sanghamitra and wife’s name is Shiva. All these names have come from Sanatan only. He has said that if Swami Prasad Maurya is opposing the verses of Ramcharit Manas, then first of all he should change his

name. Dr. Ashok Hariyansh said that Swami Prasad Maurya is doing politics regarding Ram Charit Manas and is also trying to mislead people. Challenging Swami Prasad Maurya, he has said that he should gather his entire clan and hold a meeting and decide that they should not say “Ram Naam Satya Hai” after his death.

Then we will accept that Swami Prasad Maurya is right. He has said that Swami Prasad Maurya should read Ram Charit Manas with his eyes open and even after that if he has any doubts, he should increase his level of knowledge by contacting my Guru Jagadguru.

Swami Rambhadracharya Ji Maharaj. He has said that this statement is being made only for the forward and backward vote banks. Manas Marmagya famous story teller Dr. Ashok Hariyansh is working on the post of Joint Commissioner in Panchayat Department in Government of Chhattisgarh. He is also a blessed disciple of Padma Vibhushan Jagadguru Swami Rambhadracharya Ji

Maharaj. He has been telling Manas Katha for the last several years.

### TRAFFIC CURBS IN PLACE FOR MAGHI PURNIMA

Restrictions have been imposed from Friday night for traffic and crowd control regarding Maghi Purnima on the fifth bathing festival of Magh Mela to be held on Saturday. Under this, the interstate diversion of heavy commercial vehicles will be applicable on the night of February 6 starting from 12 midnight. Apart from this, heavy vehicles like trucks will also have a no entry order in the city during the same period.

There are no entry points in the city Police Chowki Bamrauli Police station Pooramufti, TP Nagar Tiraha Police station Dhoomanganj, Sahaso Chauraha, Habusa Mod Police station Saraiyanat, Soraon Bypass Police station Soraon, Nawabganj Bypass Police station Nawabganj, Phaphamau, 40 Gunti Police station Tharavai, Rampur Chauraha Police station Industrial Area, Ghurpur

Police station Gate Police station Ghurpur. Traffic police officials said that even if the parking lot of Magh Mela is half full, the entry of vehicles inside the fair will be banned. Recently, due to sudden increase in the pressure of vehicles in the city, the situation of jam remained for three days. When all the three parking lots of the fair are half filled, the vehicles of different routes will be parked at the designated parking places on the same route.

The operation of e-rickshaws and tempos will be restricted in Magh Mela area on Maghi Purnima. Along with this, e-rickshaws and tempos will not ply from Shastri Bridge, New Yamuna Bridge and Old Yamuna Bridge. E-rickshaws and tempos going from the city towards the Mela area will be stopped at CMP Degree College, Bairhara Square, Sangam Petrol Pump Square, Alopi Mandir Tiraha.

Under the aegis of Ganga Seva Abhiyan, a meeting was held at the camp located at Magh Mela to give protocol to the national river Ganga.

## More men than women lost in Magh Mela

Prayagraj (PNS): This year at the ongoing Magh Mela more men went missing on the campus compared to their female counterparts. According to the data of missing and found persons, as many as 2,773 men went missing on mela campus in past 25 days (from January 6 to 30) and later reunited, whereas the strength of women who went missing and later reunited with their families was 1,935 only.

Apart from traditional announcement system, social media platforms here have also assisted the volunteers of Bhoole Bhatke Shivr (lost & found camp) to reunite a total of 4,825 persons including 2,773 male, 1,935 female and 117 children between January 6 and 30 at the ongoing Magh Mela.

Ironically, the highest number of 1,962 persons including 900 women, 1,045 men and 17 children got separated on Mauni Amavasya snan (January 21) and later reunited. Moreover, a total of 3,157 persons were lost and reunited in two days period which includes a day before Mauni Amavasya snan and during Mauni Amavasya snan (January 20 and 21). Compiling a database of lost and reunited persons both manually and digitally, over 35 active volunteers of the shivr (camp), apart from making frequent announcements, share the details of missing or lost persons on social media and messaging apps to reunite them with their families.

## Mental health camp organised at Narpatpur community health centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A large mental health camp was organised in the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Narpatpur in Chiragaon block here on Thursday in which 170 persons were screened and out of them, 36 patients got treatment. Giving this information,

Additional Chief Medical Officer (ACMO) and Nodal Officer of National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) Dr Muizuddin Hashmi said that considering the present outlook, awareness in the society towards mental health is very important and for this purpose, the camp has been organised for proper coun-

selling and better treatment.

“We should all take care not to misbehave with anyone suffering from mental illness, even by mistake. This is also important because bad behaviour can have a negative effect on one’s health as by suffering from the mental disease, one can also take some fatal step” he said, adding that if we treat

even a little sensitive mental patient at the right time, then his disease can be completely cured.

In the health camp, the medical team screened 170 persons who attended the camp and out of them, 41 were given counselling for mental health while 36 were treated. Apart from this, other health services


were also provided apart from creating awareness towards tobacco control, tuberculosis, dental problems, cancer, heart diseases, diabetes, blood pressure and many of them were examined and treated apart from some old aged persons. They were also apprised of Ayushman Bharat scheme.

In the camp, psychiatrist

Dr Ravichandra Kushwaha gave detailed information about mental health symptoms, prevention, control, prevention etc.

Due to lack of identification and information as well as social superstition, there is a danger of mental illness. “The mental patient recovers completely under regular medicine

intake and doctor’s supervision,” he said. Superintendent Dr Ramnath, medical officer incharge Dr Amit Singh, Dr PN Sharma, Dr Prashant Singh, Dr Rashmi Pathak, psychologists Dr Ravichandra Yadav, Amrita Dwivedi and other officers, along with ASHA and health workers were also present.



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**Regional Office: First Floor, B.K.D. Campus, Gwalior Road, Jhansi U.P. 284003, Ph: 0510-2444044**  
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Under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security, Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of the Powers conferred under section 13(12) and read with rule 8 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued demand notice as detailed here in below with our Branch to repay the amount mentioned in the notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notices. The borrowers/guarantors having failed to pay the entire amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules. The borrowers/guarantors in particular and public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with be subject to charge of Central Bank of India. The borrowers attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.  
**DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors	Possession Notice Date	Date of Demand Notice Amt. Outstanding (Rs.)
1.	M/s Chand Alta Chakki Prop. 1. Late Mr. Chand Khan S/o Babu Khan, R/o H No. 89 FCI Godown Ke Peechhe Lahar Grid Jhansi UP 284003 & 2. Mr. Rizwan Khan S/o Chand Khan R/o H No. 89 FCI Godown Ke Peechhe Lahar Grid Jhansi UP-284003 Branch: Sipri Bazar Jhansi	30-01-2023	Rs. 13,16,539.00 on dt. 19-07-2022 + interest thereon.

**Description of the Immovable Property**

1. All that part and parcel of the property consisting of at Arazi No. -154, H No. 89 Old/12 New, Ward No. 24 Lahar Gird Behind FCI Godown Lahar Grid Jhansi, Admeasuring 717.88 Sq. Feet within the registration District Jhansi. Property Owner: Mr. Chand Khan S/o Babu Khan & Rizwan Khan S/o Chand Khan, **BOUNDED: NORTH:** 12 Ft Wide Roads, **SOUTH:** Boundary Wall of FCI, **EAST:** House of Kaushal, **WEST:** Boundary Wall of RFC  
2. At Arazi No. -154, H No. 89 Old/12 New Ward No. 24 Lahar Gird Behind FCI Godown Jhansi Distt Jhansi., Area: 750.50 Sq. Ft. **Name of the owner:** Mr. Chand Khan S/o Babu Khan & Rizwan Khan S/o Chand Khan, **BOUNDED: NORTH:** 12 Ft Wide Roads, **SOUTH:** FCI Godown, **EAST:** House of Chand Khan, **WEST:** House of Yadav Ji

**Date: 04.02.2023****Place: Jhansi****Authorised Officer, Central Bank of India**

## ‘Scientists make efforts to use climate technologies’

PNS ■ KANPUR

Crop research scientist, Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Dr Mithilesh Verma while addressing a workshop on Friday said climate technologies that helped reduce greenhouse gas emissions included renewable energies such as wind energy, solar power and hydropower. He said to adapt to adverse effects of climate change, scientists make sustained efforts to use climate technologies such as drought-resistant crops, early warning systems and sea walls.

He said economies and societies need to transition to net zero emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degree C above pre-industrial levels. He said innovations that were driven by 3D printing, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and gene editing will speed up this transition and thus needed to be adopted in

the right earnest.

Dr Verma said trees and plants that extract CO2 from the atmosphere and turn it into oxygen through photosynthesis were one way of doing this. He said but they consumed up large tracts of land which was needed for other purposes such as growing food and were not a secure way of storing carbon, because they may be felled for firewood or burnt in forest fires. He said experimenting was being carried out with capturing CO2 from power plants and storing it deep underground and by doing this with biomass plants where recently grown plant matter is burned and not ancient fossils then power can be produced while reducing the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere.

**WORKSHOP:** The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India is currently equipped with technology and thus it was surging ahead on global scenario. There

was no doubt that technology was the sole factor for becoming successful in one’s mission and establishing oneself in this competitive world. Often success came in first, second or few attempts but it hardly mattered as once one succeeded then there was no looking back. This was stated by member Examination Committee of Central Council, Gyan Chandra Mishra while addressing a workshop in the auditorium at Lakhnau office. He said one thing was universally accepted that if the student studied seriously then he or she will certainly succeed. He said CAs soon become prominent people and affluent and advised them that despite the magnitude of success one need not forget that the family stood as a bedrock behind them and were the main architect of their success.

Praising the new curriculum said CA examination has a record of not a single case of use of unfair

means and the second that there had never been question paper leak as normally it happened in universities and competitive examination. He said thus the product which was churned out was quality and that is why India has carved a niche for itself in the field of quality accountancy. He then informed the students that in future instead of two foundation examinations there shall be three foundation courses and thus they need to be prepared for it. He said in the past the students did not have any technique for education but now the present breed of students had umpteen technique and technology.

He said to improve the quality of chartered accountants it was highly essential that the course should be made on par with the world. Mishra said students need to possess certain qualities and said they must be disciplined and believe in diligence and hard work.



# CM: Govt, judiciary want to provide fair & accurate justice to citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that the government and the judiciary both want to provide fair and accurate justice to the state's citizens and when the bar association joins them, things move along more rapidly. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was participating in a programme organised on the completion of 150 years of Allahabad High Court Bar Association (HCBA).

During this the CM also unveiled the photographs of the advocates. The CM congratulated everyone and said it was a coincidence that the nation had just completed the Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav at the same time the bar was celebrating 150 years. "A long time was spent fighting in the independence war. The advocate community not only participated in the freedom struggle, but also gave leadership to the country." Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that every citizen of UP comes to Prayagraj seeking justice. This programme is a better coordination between Bar and Bench, which can be called 'Adhivakta Kumbh'.

"Since ancient times, the land of Prayagraj has been an inspiration. This is the home of religion; it is here that spirituality draws its inspiration. As an educational hub for the nation, Prayagraj has been significant. Prayagraj is also the holy temple of justice." The CM added: "When someone is betrayed by his own people and loses trust and hope, he looks with hopefulness towards this temple of justice. A new path of life can be found from this point. This coordination of Bar-Bench



is working here towards the same." The CM asserted that the Allahabad High Court has provided the nation with leadership in every field. A recent gathering of chief justices and chief ministers took place in Delhi. According to the estimates of the Lok Adalat, more than half of the cases that were resolved in the nation were from UP. UP provided leadership in every area, today it is being recognized in the same role. There should be a collective effort. The CM went on saying that India has got two achievements in Amrit Kaal. "India became the fifth largest economy by leaving behind Britain, secondly, in Amrit Kaal, India got the privilege of G-20 presidency. There will be 11 G-20 summits in four UP metropolitan cities. We have got the opportunity to present the country and the state on the global platform." The CM said that a multi level parking is being arranged here. The government has made the funds avail-

able. As soon as it gets completed, there will be arrangements for making 2,500 chambers and seating for 10,000 advocates. The CM said that the government has already given consent for the National Law University here. Prayagraj is the land of justice and education, so there should be a good law university named after Dr Rajendra Prasad. The district administration should take it forward by making land available immediately. The university will be able to get the cooperation of the Bar and Bench Association. The CM noted that many announcements related to advocates were made earlier. It has been decided to increase the provision of financial assistance on accidental deaths from 60 to 70 years. He informed that after 30 years of membership in the Advocates Welfare Fund, the dependent fund has been increased from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh upon resignation or death. He said: Orders have been issued

regarding financial approval of the amount to be given to young advocates for the purchase of books and periodicals in the initial three years. From 2017-18 till January 31, 2017, more than ₹13, 37,92,000 has been paid by the Trustee Committee as a death claim under the Social Security Fund Scheme. "An amount of more than ₹47,83,07,900 has been paid for the return of the institution. ₹111,81,50,000 have been paid as financial assistance to the heirs of the deceased advocates." Not only the High Court, it has also been decided to integrate the district and commissionerate headquarters with the construction of integrated court buildings where district courts have not been set up. Work is going on fast for the judicial and administrative system, he added. The CM stated that the government wishes to build good chambers for advocates, which will become powerful mediums to provide justice to the poor.

# Seer Govardhan ready for Sant Ravidas Jayanti tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Thousands of followers of Sant Ravidas have started thronging Seer Govardhan, the birthplace of the great Dalit poet of medieval period, to celebrate his birth anniversary, falling on the auspicious occasion of Maghi Purnima on February 5. Meanwhile, hundreds of followers

led by Sant Niranjan Das Maharaj, the head of Sant Ravidas temple, also arrived here on Friday evening by a special train from Punjab to pay obeisance at birthplace of Sant Ravidas. Many non-resident Indians (NRIs) from different countries also arrived in the same train. Meanwhile, Sant Satwinderjit Singh Hira, national president of All India Adi Dharam Mission Bharat, also arrived along with his followers from New Delhi. When he arrived at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station, he was warmly welcomed amidst the dhool of a band. Sant Niranjan Das left Jalandhar in Punjab on Thursday afternoon and his special train arrived here on Friday evening. Two more trains are coming along with followers from Jalandhar and Bhatinda are expected to arrive here. Apart from Punjab, a good number of followers are also coming here from Haryana. When Sant Niranjan Das arrived here, hundreds of sevadars reached the station to accord the warm welcome to the former. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the fol-



Chief of Sant Ravidas Mandir Sant Niranjan Das being welcomed at Varanasi Jn station on Friday evening.

lowers of Saint Ravidas living abroad could not come here but this time a good number of NRIs are expected to attend the function. Ranveer Singh, manager of Shri Guru Ravidas Janmasthan Public Charitable Trust, about 2,000 followers including about 300 NRIs came here along with Saint Niranjan Das. Meanwhile, almost all preparations have been completed at

Seer Govardhan as it is expected that several top leaders of different political parties would also arrive here to offer prayers and woo the Dalits, especially the Sikh Dalits, in view of parliamentary elections in 2024. The city has two temples of Sant Ravidas located in the southern and northern parts of the city. Apart from this important janmasthan temple in the south, there is also a temple at Bainsasur Ghat near Rajghat in the north, where Modi not also attended Dev Deepawali function in 2019 but also on December 13 in 2021 while going to inaugurate Shri Kashi Vishwanath

Dham by cruise. The temple near Rajghat was built with the support of former Union Minister Babu Jagjeevan Ram. His daughter and ex-Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar visited almost every year there on the occasion of Sant Ravidas Jayanti. However, the top leaders of different parties, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and others visited the Seer Govardhan located temple in the past frequently due to its popularity among the Dalits, especially from Punjab.

# Drive to search kala-azar patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The week-long campaign to eradicate kala-azar under the National Kala-azar Eradication Programme continued to search for active cases of the disease. This Active Case Detection (ACD) campaign will continue till February 7 in the district, according to Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary.

The CMO said to find patients with possible symptoms ASHA workers are screening people door-to-door in border villages, especially in kala-azar affected areas, and directed them to inform block level medical incharge if possible persons are found so that immediate action can be taken there apart from starting Indoor Residual Spray (IRS) spraying in the affected area.

ACMO and nodal officer Dr SS Kanauiya said to control communicable diseases, Dastak campaign is already being run in the district. "Through the campaign, the people are being made aware about dengue,



Campaign against kala-azar being carried out in an affected village in Varanasi.

malaria, filariasis, chikungunya along with kala-azar. In it people with possible symptoms are being screened through kits and if anyone is found positive, he/she will be put on treatment," he said, adding that kala-azar disease starts spreading due to water accumulation and moisture in the walls.

District Malaria Officer (DMO) Sharad Chand Pandey said two villages of different blocks of the district are affected by kala-azar. These villages are Harpalpur (Kashi

Vidyapeeth block) and Arjunpur (Sewapuri block). The screening campaign will be conducted in nearby villages like Kesaripur, Khulaspur, Parmanandpur, Rahimpur, Kanisarai and Islampur of Kashi Vidyapeeth block and Bashunchak, Bhishampur, Matula, Takhu ki Bowli and Kakarhawan of Sewapuri block. For this 14 teams have been formed in Kashi Vidyapeeth block and six teams in Sewapuri, he said. One ASHA worker will cover 50-50 houses in a day, he added.

"Regular active patient search campaign is being run to ensure that new patients are not found again. On the other hand, IRS spraying is being done regularly to reduce the spread of kala-azar in the villages where such patients have been found in the past," he said, adding that, however, no new patient was found in the last two years. The DMO said kala-azar patients were found in 2008 and 2009 in the Kashi Vidyapeeth block and after that no patient was found till 2017 but in the year 2018, one kala-azar patient was found in 2019 while two in 2020. These patients were found only in Harpalpur (Kashi Vidyapeeth) and Arjunpur (Sewapuri) villages. After this, till now not a single patient of kala-azar has been found but keeping vigilance, along with these villages, active patient search campaign and spraying are being done from time to time, he said, adding that the kala-azar is a sand fly bite which can be controlled with early diagnosis, treatment and spraying with insecticides.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A global level ideological dialogue 'Kashi Shabdotsav' will be organised at Rudraksha Convention Centre here from February 10 to 12 under the aegis of Vishwa Samvad Kendra (Kashi unit) with the objective of educating the youth towards the nation. Giving this information in a press conference, Sah Kshetra Prachar Pramukh (Eastern UP) of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Manojkant said the relevance of knowledge, religion, culture and tradition has to be understood from local level to national and international perspective. The dialogues will be centered on the basis of how valuable the global vision of the Indian knowledge-tradition is, he said.

According to him, in the Kashi Shabdotsav, the country's leading litterateurs, celebrities and others, including Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, eminent speaker Manoj Muntashir, renowned presenter of 'Chanakya' serial Dr Chandraprakash Dwivedi and



RSS activist Manojkant telling about the proposed Kashi Shabdotsav in Varanasi on Friday.

others will present their thought-provoking speeches. "It will be an event of the tra-

dition of Kashi for the local people," he said. National Book Trust (New

Delhi) is also participating in this event. A book fair will also be organised.

Besides, continuous efforts are going on to connect the students and teachers of Varanasi district and nearby educational campuses so that national and world class literature can be easily available to readers and scholars as well as other intellectuals," said Manojkant, adding that as our country is the chairman of G-20 and keeping this in mind we are making Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam the subject of diplomatic dialogue. "It is our effort that this whole dialogue should be positive and generate constructive vision so that the Indian society and the world can be made aware of our basic philosophy as well as practical knowledge," he said, adding that we are trying to bring the celebrities of Kashi on one platform so that this unique event of confluence of knowledge, culture and tradition can be made.

# Effigy of Swami Prasad Maurya burnt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The activists of Bharatiya Awam Party (BAP) led by its president Najma Parveen demonstrated at Munshi Premchand Smriti Dwar in Lamhi and protested against all those who made objectionable remarks on holy book 'Ramcharitmanas'. They also burnt the effigy of former UP Minister and Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Swami Prasad Maurya. They said that holy scripture Ramcharitmanas teaches the world the lesson of peace, sacrifice and Ramrajya (good governance). In the procession, a section of Muslim women were carrying placards in their hands giving a message that insults to any religion would not be tolerated anymore. They demanded immediate arrest of Swami Prasad Maurya and attachment of the proper-



BAP activists burning the effigy of Swami Prasad Maurya in Varanasi on Friday.

ty of his entire family apart from imposing ban on the party he is associated with at present. BAP chief said that 'Ramcharitmanas' is the most sacred religious book of the world and it is important not only for Sanatan Dharma but for every citizen of the world. She termed the statement of Swami Prasad against the book as unrighteous and

sinful. "God will surely punish him for his sins. If Swami Prasad's property is not confiscated by sending him to jail, then tomorrow there will be a flood of sinners who question all religious scriptures," said Nazma Parveen. She also expressed concern over the attitude of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in case of Swami Prasad.

## Ganja recovered

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

The Rajgarh police have arrested a person and recovered 11.3 kg of ganja worth around ₹2.40 lakh on Thursday.

As per reports received here, the police was active in checking of suspicious vehicles on Wednesday night when a suspect was spotted on a scooter. During checking the police recovered six bundles of ganja. After registering a case, the police arrested the accused and recovered the ganja along with ₹2,370 cash and mobile phone. The police seized the scooter under MV Act and after completing the necessary legal formalities the police sent the accused to jail. The accused was identified as Ramesh Singh, a resident of Majhigawan under Dramondganj police station.

# PMG honoured with 'Kashi Sahitya' award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi Region Krishna Kumar Yadav has been honoured with 'Kashi Sahitya' award at the three-day 'Kashi-Varanasi Literature Festival' being organised for the first time in Varanasi. Yadav, a well-known writer and blogger, was awarded for his remarkable contribution, dedication and achievement in the field of literature and Rajbhasha.

Yadav was given this honour by the chief patron of the festival and former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Ravindra Kishore Sinha at a programme organised in the corridor auditorium of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham here on Friday. President of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Nyas (trust) Prof Nagendra Pandey, Vice Chancellor of Makhanaal



PMG KK Yadav being honoured with an award in Varanasi on Friday.

Chaturvedi National University of Journalism and Communication (Bhopal) Prof KG Suresh, VC of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (Amarkantak) Prof Sriprakash Mani Tripathi, former head of Hindi department, Lucknow University, Prof

Surya Prasad Dixit, ex-VC of Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha (Chennai) Prof Ram Mohan Pathak and many others were also present.

Yadav is a popular administrator as well as a litterateur, thinker and blogger who writes prominently on subjects relat-

ed to social, literary and contemporary issues. Seven of his books have been published in different genres including a book on his own life. He has received several honours and honorary degrees from various prestigious socio-literary institutions in the country and abroad, along with Awadh Samman by the Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, a literary honour by the then West Bengal Governor late Keshari Nath Tripathi and Vigyan Parishad Centenary Award by then Chhattisgarh Governor Shekhar Dutt. He has also been awarded in Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Yadav has so far travelled to countries like London, France, Germany, Netherlands, South Korea, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal etc in the course of departmental responsibilities and promotion of Hindi.

# Move to displace Dundhiraj Ganesh opposed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Mahant of Maa Annapurna Mandir Shankarpuri strongly protested against the displacement of Dundhiraj Ganesh and said that the people of this holy city as well as the temple administration would not make any kind of compromise in this direction. Talking to reporters here on Friday, Mahant Shankarpuri said that there is no opposition to development, but he opposed the move to displace Dundhiraj Ganesh as he thought that the idol of Lord



Mahant of Annapurna Mandir Shankarpuri addressing a press conference in Varanasi on Friday.

Ganesh should remain at the

same place. Expressing serious concern over it, he said that last night Kashi Vishwanath temple administration started breaking its back walls and seeing the same the people of the city started discussing that there is a move to displace Dundhiraj Ganesh. He said that the public is sad about the displacement move.

"If the place of Dundhiraj Ganesh is changed then the people of Kashi will be bound to agitate and if any untoward happens then all the responsibility will be of the Kashi Vishwanath temple adminis-

tration," he said.

He said that the ownership of this idol of Lord Ganesh is also with the Annapurna temple. "There is no opposition to renovation and development, but on the issue of changing the pace of Lord Ganesh, the Annapurna temple and the people of Kashi are united".

On the occasion, Chandrashekhar David, Ajay Sharma, Pradeep Srivastava, Dharendra Singh and manager Kashi Mishra from Chintamani Ganesh temple were also present.

# 64th foundation day of TTC celebrated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 64th Foundation Day of Technical Training Centre (TTC) at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) was celebrated at TTC auditorium on Thursday. In the beginning principal of TTC BLW Ram Janam Choubey welcomed the chief guest and Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) Sushil Kumar Srivastava. The programme started with the lighting of the lamp by the chief guest in front of the picture of Maa Saraswati. Saraswati Vandana was presented by the trainees. In his welcome address, TTC principal gave details of annual training and achievements of the centre. Then Chief Electrical Engineer (Planning) Ranvijay addressed the function. It was followed by presentation of



cultural programmes by trainees of the centre and distinguished artistes of BLW. A comedy drama was staged after instrumental music, dance and singing programmes. The best apprentice trainees of the centre and participants of the competitions organised in various fields were awarded by the chief guest who also

addressed the function. The function was concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Bipin Kumar Srivastava, Assistant Mechanical Engineer (Training).

Meanwhile, according to a release, registering a new record, BLW has supplied 121 turbo clutch assemblies (TCAs) in January this year to different zonal Railways, which is the highest-ever supply. In January 2019 114 TCAs were supplied. According to Public Relations Officer (PRO) this has helped the zonal Railways to maintain their high horsepower (HHP) locos, which were, otherwise, lying ineffective for want of TCAs. Besides, he said, this will help in increasing the revenue of Railways by improving availability of HHP locos for freight operations during peak loading season.



## Debate needed

Discussion in Parliament over the Adani affair will help the Government rather than the Opposition

The free fall of Adani scrips, which began after the US short-seller Hindenburg Research's report last week, continued on Friday. Bad news for the group continues to pour in; S&P Dow Jones Indices on Thursday removed Adani Enterprises shares from the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices. This, S&P Dow Jones Indices, said was "triggered by allegations of stock manipulation and accounting fraud." The carnage on Dalal Street found its resonance in Parliament. With the Opposition determined to have a discussion on the Adani Group, proceedings of the Budget Session were disrupted on the fourth day on Friday. While Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar adjourned the House for the first half of the day, in the Lok Sabha too the proceedings were adjourned till 2 pm. On Thursday also both Houses got adjourned for the day amid shouting by Opposition members. They wanted discussions over the allegations of fraud by the Adani Group. The issue seems to have united the Opposition, with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge seeking an investigation into the matter either by a Joint Parliament Committee or a CJI-appointed panel. Neither the presiding officers of the two Houses nor the Government seems inclined towards a debate. Kharge is reported to meet the floor leaders of Opposition parties in his chamber on Friday. Evidently, the parties against the Bharatiya Janata Party scent an opportunity to launch a serious attack on it.



So far, the Opposition has not been able to hurt or even badly embarrass the BJP or its Government at the Centre. Anti-BJP leaders have said a lot of bad things about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ruling party, and the saffron bodies seen aligned with the regime; the Government is flayed, rightly, over its inability to generate jobs; high oil prices and soaring inflation last year also attracted a great deal of criticism; allegations of cronyism are made routinely against the Government. But all the criticisms are just water off a duck's back; nothing sticks. This time, it may be different—this seems to be the idea that is animating the Opposition. The Government would be well-advised to let discussions happen over the subject; this will help the Government rather than the Opposition, for it would be able to easily deflect the charges of favouritism. This will also deprive the Opposition of the opportunity to say that the Government is fearful of discussing the issue involving a controversial tycoon. Second, this will send across a good signal to the public, investors, and the corporate sector that the Government is concerned about the capital market. Third, meaning discussions, if they take place in Parliament, can also throw up ideas that would strengthen the functioning of the stock market. Finally, this will strengthen our system, for good debates in Parliament are the soul of democracy. And when democracy is strengthened, it is a win-win situation for all parties.

### PICTALK



Devotees take part in a religious procession ahead of Ravidas Jayanti, in Jammu

PTI

## Rejig higher education

The UGC guidelines for foreign universities to setup campus in India are ill-conceived

Higher education in India has always been an underperformer. Though we have 40,000 colleges and 1000 universities most of them do not impart quality education to the students and leave them high and dry after they pass out. This is one big reason for unemployment as most students passing out from the colleges with degrees are unemployable as the curriculum, as well as the quality of education they receive, is below par. Though we have world-class institutions like IITs and IIMs, they can be counted on tips and even there after taking a subsidized fee structure students to leave the shores and give their best years to the multinational companies abroad. Some \$3 billion are spent by Indian parents to fund their children's education abroad. But the fact is most of them have good returns as they get employed easily and are able to pay back their loans etc. On the other hand, students who study in India go through a grind to get a job; their ordeal begins after they leave college and most end up working in jobs they were not trained for.



The government has recently come up with the idea to offset this lacuna by allowing foreign universities to open their campuses in the country. But that the UGC guidelines to this effect are flawed and would not lead to universities from abroad coming here and starting their classes here. The biggest problem is that in India education institutions cannot make a profit that is they have to work on a pro bono model. If the foreign universities set up campuses here, the same rule would apply to them and they would not be able to remit money. After all profit would be their motive to come here. Most private colleges make a profit by manipulating the account books to skirt this clause. Moreover, the foreign campuses would indeed hit the private colleges hard as they would not be able to compete with them on brand and facilities, curriculum, etc. Moreover, if foreign universities do come to India they would have their own agenda and not the best interest of India in mind which is another major drawback. UGC had earlier invited foreign universities, but none showed interest. So the Government would do well to go back to the drawing board and rethink the whole higher education policy rather than finding easy solutions. Besides the interest of the private colleges must also not be overlooked and a level playing field must be provided to all else it would destroy the education system we have.

# A tale of two nations poles apart

Pakistan and Bangladesh charted their course differently, while former was fixated with the 'two nation theory' latter adopted a liberal approach



BHOPINDER SINGH

Two nations emerged from non-contiguous territories in 1971, one willingly and the other unwillingly, after violently disproving a religion-based assumption i.e., the 'two-nation theory' that beset the 'Idea of Pakistan'. Over fifty years since, both these countries have invested and institutionalized a starkly different path, trajectory, and consequently an inevitable socio-economic narrative. Bangladesh under Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had inherited a land subjected to genocide and plunder that had ensured shipment of anything of value to West Pakistan (soon, just Pakistan) — even in defeat, Pakistani leadership had displayed unbelievable avarice and wantonness. While newly independent Bangladesh had gone about putting its ravaged house in order, Pakistan had simply refused to learn any lessons. The Pakistani leadership baton passed from its defeated dictator, General Yahya Khan, to an equally unhinged, imperious, and morally compromised, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Instead of reflecting on its regressive underpinnings of the 'two-nation theory', Pakistan under the civilian leadership of Zulfikar Bhutto further strengthened its religio-populism with puritanical moves — he appeased the pernicious clergy, declared Ahmadis as heretics, recklessly funded the 'Islamic Bomb', banned alcohol (even though he drank himself), etc. Whereas Mujibur Rahman decided to walk a contrarian path in terms of land reforms, nationalization, and perhaps the most revolutionary of all, adopted the word 'secularism' in its newly adopted constitution. It had inadvertently modeled itself like another Muslim-majority Turkey (of Kemal Ataturk's sensibilities, not Erdogan's) — whereas Pakistan after tenures of Zulfikar Bhutto and General Zia-ul-Haq went on a sliding slope of a total abyss.

Indeed, Bangladesh's story was not linear or smooth and it had to deal with its subliminal regressions, natural disasters, and frequent disruption to democracy. Mujibur Rahman himself toyed with a one-party state and



censorship when things were not going in his favour. He was assassinated in a military coup. Bangladeshi Military soon rewrote the constitution obliterating the word 'secularism' and the same was reinstated only in 2010, when the Bangladesh Supreme Court ruled that the removal was illegal, leaving Bangladesh with a coexistent State religion and the principle of 'secularism', to imply neutrality of religion. Again, the phenomenon of Pan-Islamism and political Islam has not spared Bangladesh either, yet in relative terms, Bangladesh under the current Awami League government has not gone the Pakistani route of religious puritanism.

Importantly, Sheikh Hasina has insisted, "You live in equal rights. You will observe your religion and celebrate festivals with equal rights. This is the real policy of Bangladesh and our ideal. I urge you never to think of yourself as a minority". While there have been multiple communal issues and provocations in Bangladesh, at least the leadership has spoken in favour of religious pluralism. Contrast this with Pakistan even in recent times, with the former Imran Khan (popularly known as Taliban Khan) promising a 'Riyasat-e-Madina' and even the current coalition government has Maulana Fazlur

“WHILE NEWLY INDEPENDENT BANGLADESH HAD GONE ABOUT PUTTING ITS RAVAGED HOUSE IN ORDER, PAKISTAN HAD SIMPLY REFUSED TO LEARN ANY LESSONS

Rehman, the emir of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, as its Presidents! These political-societal wirings have inevitable socio-economic consequences owing to governance structures and choices and therefore the contrasting fate of current Pakistan and Bangladesh is only natural. This week the headlines from Bangladeshi newspapers were 'Metro Rail transported 3.35 lakh commuters since opening', 'Two committees formed over mistakes and errors in textbooks', 'cancellation of Jamaat's registration', 'Bangladesh to get \$4.7 bn IMF package' etc., Whereas the headlines from across the Line-of-Control (LOC) were 'Death toll from an attack on mosque rises to 92', '35-rupee hike in petrol prices', 'failed policy of suing for peace with terror group' and 'No IMF loan, a mission to visit Pakistan for talks on 9th review!' A combusting Pakistan grapples with abject political, financial, diplomatic, security, and social failure. On easily securing the IMF loan as opposed to a Pakistan, Bangladeshi Finance Minister said, "This loan approval proves that our economy is standing on a solid foundation and our fundamentals are better than many other countries". However, the Pakistani Finance Minister in 2023 was still banking on divine intervention as he stated incredulously, "If Allah can create Pakistan, then he can

also protect, develop, and make it prosper". Pakistan's fixation with its foundational 'two-nation theory' and its inevitabilities have led to imploding relations with neighboring Afghanistan to a perennially tense equation with Iran. Pakistan simply refuses to come to terms with its genealogical flaw, which was wisely skipped by the founding fathers of Indian independence and constitutionality who opted for an inclusive, liberal, and progressive agenda.

Bangladesh went ahead of even India in 2021-22 in terms of per capita income, and this is especially impressive as in 2007 (15 years back), India's per capita income at \$1028 was almost double of Bangladesh at \$558. It is the same story with various UN Sustainable Development Goals. The invaluable lesson to India, given that Pakistan suffers from ostrich syndrome and simply refuses to learn, is to put economic and progressive agendas over petty religious 'divides' and the supposed rewriting of history. Our politics could look westwards or eastwards for learning different lessons and implications of choices made.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INCOMPREHENSIBLE BUDGET

Sir — Apropos union budget 2023-24 is called the 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat ka budget' but it is very unplanned and unrelated with the ongoing socio-economic situation of the country. The trade deficit with China is soaring while there are hardly any steps to reduce imports of petroleum products from the gulf and mineral-rich countries.

The defense sector primarily depends on France and Russia for the import of modern aircraft and equipment. Modernization of agriculture has been overlooked. Budget allocation for the Education and Health Sector is decreased. There is hardly any serious mention or proposed roadmap about the mass employability and skill development of youths in the budget. Tax rebate is of no use for a large section of underprivileged or poor people in society.

However, macroeconomic indices like the economy's predicted growth rate of 7% and the reduction of the fiscal deficit to 5.9% of GDP are positive signs. The increased funding for the railroads and the encouragement of tourism expansion is both much-needed and always appreciated but time-bound completion of projects is still a major and critical challenge that often results in cost overruns and budget constraints. Overall, this budget is not much promising as several key components and areas of development are missing out with a big question mark.

Bishal Kumar Saha | Murshidabad

### AMRIT ALL THE WAY

Sir — Nirmala Sitharaman needs to be complimented for a perfect budget. Even political leaders do not have words to criticize and waited for a day to provide false allegations after paying money to experts. Anyway, it was not a budget that stole Paul to pay Peter. Moreover, this government is functioning without corruption and that itself is a boon to the people. People around the world are admiring the state of affairs in India and admire the administration of 130 crore people in the most admirable way. In between such print media is look-

### SBI at risk



India's largest bank, the State Bank of India has an exposure of around \$2.6 billion (over Rs 21,000 crore) of public money to the crisis-hit Adani group, the latest report from Bloomberg has claimed. SBI has reportedly given loans of this amount to companies of the Adani Group. The exposure of SBI to Adani includes \$200 million from its overseas units, the unidentified source further revealed. SBI

**Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai**

ing at Amrit all the way and poking their nose in an indifferent way.

After all, Budget means a balancing act and that is done most meticulously. When everything went normal and to the liking of many it was a fake call to find fault. Balancing growth and fiscal constraints will be a knack and the taskmaster had a task cut out and succeeded in a very successful way.

Chitra Krishnan | Mumbai

### THE CONTROVERSIAL AWARDS

Sir — The Padma Awards have frequently generated controversy, especially in recent years. The main complaint has been that undeserving individuals have received them or that deserving individuals have been excluded, that the governments have weighed choices based on political, personal, and other factors. For instance, SM Krishna received the Padma Vibhushan. No doubt, he is a great man, but why not for HD Deve Gowda, the former prime minister? In the election-bound state of Karnataka, Krishna is a leader of the powerful Vokkaliga community, and Mulayam continues to be one of the most well-known figures among the OBCs, whom the BJP has been trying to woo with a

brazen political message.

Similar to how former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's surgeon was honoured in 2001, the surgeon who operated on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has earned a spot on the list. Even though treating a prime minister's health is crucial for the nation, it cannot be justified as a public service worthy of recognition. The majority of doctor awards have gone to people who work in the corporate sector, with doctors from Delhi receiving an outsized amount of these honours.

Former President Abdul Kalam has counseled then-Prime Minister Vajpayee to exercise caution in the selection of awardees. When KR Narayanan was vice president, and a committee produced some excellent proposals.

The Supreme Court once addressed the matter and established a process. Even after all of this, several undeserving individuals have succeeded in leaving with the honours, while deserving individuals have fallen short. The prestige associated with the awards has suffered, and they have been devalued in the process.

KV Chandra Mouli | Mysuru

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

Zindagi ke saath thi, ab Adaniji ke saath hai (remained with life, now with Adani). This is the situation of LIC. And the Prime Minister is silent on the issue.

Congress leader — Pawan Khara

Unfortunately, we see that the ideology of Nazism in its modern form and manifestation again directly threatens the security of our country. Again and again, we have to repel the aggression of the collective West.

Russian President — Vladimir Putin

She was super chill the whole time. I was very impressed. It was wonderful to have her and my wife, (Priyanka Chopra), out.

Singer — Nick Jonas

Shafali led from the front. She injected confidence into the team. She always said 'Chinta mat karo hum jeetenge'.

Wicketkeeper U-19 women's cricket team — Richa Ghosh

This will play out in the market. This is one company's events and the regulator will have a look at whether they have adhered to the norms of the market.

Economic Affairs Secretary — Ajay Seth



FIRST COLUMN

MILLETS' IMPORTANCE GROWS WORLDWIDE

They help us fight problems of malnutrition, obesity




SHARMILA OSWAL

Milletts were a major crop consumed in India and numerous other nations till about five decades ago. According to a 2014 National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) report, the plate share of millets has declined significantly in favour of wheat, rice, and processed foods.

As a result of increased land being used for wheat and rice production, the cultivation area for millets has decreased by 58 per cent for small millets, 64 per cent for sorghum, 49 per cent for finger millet, and 23 per cent for pearl millet since 1956. Millets are considered to be the sole crop that can handle critical challenges in the future such as food, fuel, malnutrition, health, and climate change.

With India's growing malnutrition problem—both under-nutrition (vitamin, mineral, and protein deficiencies) and over-nutrition (obesity, metabolic syndrome, and lifestyle diseases)—there is a growing awareness of the need to move to healthier, more accessible, and inexpensive diets that include millets. In addition to being naturally gluten-free and nutrient-dense, millets are also a rich source of protein, essential fatty acids, dietary fibre, and vitamin B.



When it comes to the global scenario of millet production, India is the top producer of millets in the world and the fifth-largest exporter of millets globally. As the demand for millets rises quickly, their exports are expanding dramatically. More business opportunities are being created for entrepreneurs as millets' demand rises.

The millet market has a value of over \$9 billion in 2018, and is expected to grow at a rate of over 4.5 per cent from 2018 to 2025, with a value projection of over \$12 billion.

Apart from creating business opportunities, millets also aid in the prevention of numerous non-communicable lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease, and are considered to be a potential choice or solution to lessen the negative effects of rising malnutrition and to improve the food and nutrition security of the nation.

Due to their adaptability to a wide range of temperatures and moisture regimes as well as their low input requirements, millets are resistant to climate change. They are resilient crops with small water and carbon footprints.

Millets can withstand droughts and can even survive on 350–400 mm of rain, making them an ideal crop for production.

As proposed by India to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The main goal of this initiative is to raise public awareness of the health benefits of millets and their suitability for cultivation under challenging conditions brought on by climate change.

The International Year of Millet provides an excellent chance to:

1. improve millets' contribution to food security
2. increase millet output globally
3. make sure that the processing, transport, storage, and consumption are efficient
4. and sustainable millet production and quality with stakeholder participation

Millet farming is still an area with a lot of room for ecosystem-level interventions. Promoting millets not only raises awareness of these wonder crops, but also of women farmers and their farming knowledge.

Raising awareness among farmers and the general public about the numerous benefits of millets can help to revitalise millets production and consumption in India.

*(The author is Founder and MD, Gudmom by 10rganic, and Millet Evangelist)*

# Govt must step in to help tobacco users

PRITAM SENGUPTA

In several countries, the government has provided tobacco alternatives to deal with nicotine use and addictions

The Constitution asks citizens to develop a scientific temper and this could well be their greatest contribution to health. The Covid-19 has been an eye-opener to the importance of modern science. Many understand diseases better and that knowledge helps to combat it through vaccines, prophylactics and medical treatment.

That same scientific temper is lacking when it comes to tobacco use. More than a third of the Indian male population uses tobacco. The situation is particularly grim in rural India, where 42 per cent of men use tobacco products. It is time to employ science to combat death and disease by tobacco.

The data is culled from the National Family Health Survey, which is an important vehicle to understand the status of India's health. The most recent one, NFHS-5, was carried out in 2019-21.

The data from the NFHS on the consumption of tobacco in India has thrown up shocking data. There has been a little change in patterns of tobacco use amongst the Indian population despite advertising ill-effects.

There are graphic images on tobacco pouches and cigarette packets yet these seem to have little effect. The data on tobacco use also throws up several scary observations on the smoking population, which is quite high. But the message is not percolating down to the smokers, particularly in rural areas.

The study of tobacco consumption also shows that the prevalence of smoking decreases with increased exposure to schooling. The NFHS-5 reports that 39 per cent of men and nine per cent of women age 15 and over currently use any tobacco products. This percentage is less than reported in the NFHS-4 (conducted in 2015-16) which had shown that tobacco use amongst 45 per cent of men and seven per cent of women in the 15-49 age group.

However, it is far from ideal in the modern world. Those who smoke in a family are not smoking alone. The NFHS-5 survey revealed that, in 25 per cent of Indian households, at least one person smokes tobacco on a daily basis, exposing others to passive smoking and its ill-effects. This is down a few notches from 29 per cent in NFHS-4.

The percentage of men aged 15 years and above who use any kind of tobacco exceeds 40 per cent in most parts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Northeastern states, northern part of Maharashtra, western Gujarat, and southern Rajasthan.

Use of tobacco is also high (30–40 per cent) in Ladakh, Uttarakhand, most parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, northern parts of Rajasthan, and north-western Gujarat.

The lowest kind of tobacco use (below



THE NFHS-5 SHOWS THAT TOBACCO CONSUMPTION IS MUCH HIGHER IN RURAL INDIA THAN URBAN. AMONG WOMEN, THERE ARE 5.5 PER CENT TOBACCO USERS IN URBAN AREAS AND 10.5 PER CENT (OR NEARLY DOUBLE) IN RURAL AREAS

*(The author is a data journalist with experience in reporting health and science)*



30 per cent) is mostly observed in Punjab and southern states. The five states with the highest tobacco use in rural population are Mizoram (73.1), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (58.7), Manipur (58), Meghalaya (57.8), Tripura (57.2). For women, it's Mizoram (61.7), Tripura (50.5), Manipur (43.3), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (31.2), and Meghalaya (28.3).

The data shows that these five states have the highest percentage of tobacco users for both men and women. These five states are also the top five states of India with the highest tobacco consumption in rural areas.

The NFHS-5 shows that tobacco consumption is much higher in rural India than urban. Among women, there are 5.5 per cent tobacco users in urban areas and 10.5 per cent (or nearly double) in rural areas. For the men, there are 28.8 per cent tobacco users in urban areas and 38 per cent in rural areas.

Indians both smoke and chew tobacco. The smokers consume bidis and cigarettes and account for around 20 per cent of tobacco users in the country. The rest use different forms of chewing tobacco.

The chewing or buccal consumption of tobacco is a traditional practice that was once rooted in consumption of paan. Traditionally, tobacco (zarda, kimam, patti) was added to betel leaves along with betel nuts, ground limestone and other natural substances. That has undergone a sea change in recent years. Most chewing tobacco consumers prefer gutka, or packets of readymade paan-like products. Previously, these came in two varieties: a benign one

without tobacco and one with tobacco pre-mixed into it. Following changes in regulations, all manufacturers were asked to sell packets of tobacco separately with the risks of cancer advertised through graphic images on tobacco pouches, same as on cigarette packets.

The paan is a perishable item but the gutka packets are convenient to buy and store for long periods. The result is that there are different grades available and their quality is subject to manufacturing standards and preservatives may be added to make them last longer. This means that inorganic substances are added to preserve the tobacco or betel nuts in the packets.

Another popular form of chewing tobacco is khaini—raw tobacco mixed with limestone and stored in the cavity between the gums and the cheeks for the buccal absorption of nicotine.

Indian law prohibits the sale of tobacco to minors. But, when was the last time you saw a tobacco seller asking for proof of age? The NFHS-5 survey was conducted amongst those who are aged 15 and above. This itself is an indicator that minors in India are using tobacco products. Most minors use tobacco secretly and away from the gaze of their parents and guardians. There is no evidence that minor tobacco users have scientifically explained the consequences of using tobacco, that it leads to an addiction and attracts a range of diseases.

The NFHS report says: "Tobacco use is associated with a wide range of diseases, including several types of cancers and heart and lung diseases, diabetes, eye disease, and rheumatoid arthritis. Studies have shown that in addi-

tion to sharing the same health risks as men, women who use tobacco experience difficulty in becoming pregnant and are at an increased risk of infertility, pregnancy complications, premature births, low birth-weight infants, stillbirths, miscarriages, and infant deaths."

Earlier, some doctors would ask smokers to cut down during the course of ailments or treatments and would tell them to quit in case of some conditions. Now, doctors advise all smoking patients to quit smoking.

This is regardless of whether the patient has a lifestyle disease, a life-threatening one or one that directly affects the lungs. Even for bone or muscle injuries, physiotherapists and orthopaedic doctors advise quitting smoking because tobacco use can delay/stunt the healing time and process.

The NFHS-4 survey had found that around 50 per cent of all tobacco users were asked by a doctor to quit smoking tobacco in the 12 months before the survey. Where does science come in?

Creating regulations and following the bare minimum will also reap the bare minimum results. A sea change in attitudes is required and this is only possible with sustained, aggressive drives to create awareness amongst the Indian population.

In several other countries, the government has provided tobacco alternatives to deal with nicotine use and addictions. These alternatives have to be pushed especially amongst the rural population amongst India, where the numbers of tobacco users is increasing.

The celebration by a healthy, tobacco-free nation will be the biggest tribute to the republic.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THIS IS NOT MERELY AN UNWARRANTED ATTACK ON ANY SPECIFIC COMPANY BUT A CALCULATED ATTACK ON INDIA. — BUSINESSMAN GAUTAM ADANI



IT IS A MATTER OF CONCERN THAT A GROUP AGAINST WHOM SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE IS USING THE INDIAN FLAG AND HAS THE AUDACITY TO SAY THAT IT IS AN ATTACK ON INDIA. — RJD LEADER MANOJ JHA



# Intelligent automation can transform businesses

It helps them streamline processes, reduce costs, improve compliance, measure performance, and optimise resource utilisation

In recent years, the business world has seen its share of dramatic changes, ranging from inflationary pressures to disruptions in supply chains and talent shortages. These factors have pushed businesses to become more agile and find new ways of improving efficiency. One such method is intelligent automation (IA)—a concept that combines artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning with human-centered design principles to streamline processes and make them more efficient.

IA can help businesses stay ahead of the competition by automating mundane tasks, freeing up valuable resources for higher-level jobs, increasing profitability, and enabling faster decision-making.

With the help of IA solu-



SRIVIDYA KANNAN

*(The author is Director and Founder, Avaali Solutions)*

tions, organisations can increase their operational efficiency and cost effectiveness while making better decisions in a more structured and data-driven way. For example, IA can be used to detect patterns in customer data or feedback that can automate decision-making processes, intelligent capture solutions, workflow automation, low-code/no-code solutions, and robotic process automation (RPA), which automates repetitive and rule-driven tasks such as data entry or invoice processing. The main benefit of using IA is that it can speed up processes while maintaining accuracy and reliability. Furthermore, IA solutions can help reduce costs associated with manual labor, thus improving overall profitability.

Finally, IA solutions are also beneficial for companies looking to adopt sustainable practices as they can minimise their carbon footprint while still achieving their goals effectively. IA can be used to monitor energy consumption patterns more closely so that unnecessary usage can be avoided or minimised; this reduces both wastage and costs over time. The introduction of RPA within the organisation's supply chain could reduce waste generated due to inefficient manual processes while helping them comply with strict regulations set forth by various government agencies such as GDPR or other ethical rules related to consumer protection. Moreover, automated systems can optimise resource utilization more effi-

ciently than humans can do manually, thus reducing waste production while maintaining quality standards. The rise in IA presents a massive opportunity for businesses looking to improve their operations in the coming years; however, some challenges must be considered when introducing this technology into existing systems. Firstly, there is always the question of security when dealing with automated systems; ensuring that sensitive data remains protected and inaccessible by unauthorised parties is paramount when implementing any automated system. Secondly, organisations need to consider how they will manage any potential disruption caused by introducing new technologies into existing operations—ensuring

employees are aligned with how the process would run post-automation is essential for successfully adopting these solutions in the long term.

In conclusion, IA presents an exciting opportunity for business transformation in 2023 and beyond; by leveraging these solutions correctly, enterprises will be able to run more profitably while still adhering to sound governance principles and best-in-class sustainable practices that respect both the environment and society around them.

IA will enable organisations to streamline processes, reduce costs, improve compliance, measure performance, and optimise resource utilisation—helping them maintain a competitive edge regardless of industry or sector.



# Rahul urges PM to solve Kashmiri Pandits' woes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to look into the "plight" of Kashmiri Pandit employees who do not want to return to the Kashmir Valley without a guarantee of their security, and accused the Union Territory administration of adopting an "insensitive" approach towards them.

In a letter to Modi, Rahul flagged the issue of the recent spate of targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits and others by terrorists, which he said, has created an atmosphere of fear and gloom in the Valley.

He wrote to the prime minister, saying a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits met him during the Jammu leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra that was aimed at uniting the whole of India in a thread of love and unity.

"They (Kashmiri Pandits) said government officials are forcing them to go back to work in the Kashmir Valley. In these circumstances, forcing them to go back to the Valley without any surety of their



safety and security is a cruel move," he said. Till the situation improves, the government can take services from these Kashmiri Pandit employees in other administrative and public facilities, the former Congress chief said in his letter in Hindi to Modi.

"At a time when the Kashmiri Pandits are pleading for their safety and families' concerns, and expecting sympathy and affection from the government, use of words like 'beggars' by the Lt. Governor for them is irresponsible. Prime Minister, you may not be familiar with this insensitive style of functioning of the administration," Rahul said.

"I have assured the Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters that I will try my best to

convey their concerns and demands to you. I hope that you will take appropriate steps in this regard as soon as you get this information," he said in the letter. A Kashmiri Pandit delegation had called on Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra in Samba district and briefed him about their issues, including the "targeted killings" by terrorists and the resultant protest by those employed under the prime minister's package.

Nearly 4,000 Kashmiri Pandits are working in different departments in the Kashmir Valley after their selection under the prime minister's employment package announced in 2008. The package has two major components — 6,000 jobs for the youth from the community and building as many accommodation units for the recruited employees.

However, many of the employees fled to Jammu after one of their colleagues, Rahul Bhat, was shot dead by terrorists inside his office in Budgam district on May 12 last year in what was described as a case of targeted killing.

# QUAD vows to boost cyber security with tech; ensures free, open Indo-Pacific region

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

In an effort to enhance cyber security, the Quad combine comprising India, US, Japan and Australia have agreed to leverage Machine Learning (ML) and related advanced technologies for the purpose. The four countries have also reaffirmed their commitment to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient.

This reiteration in the backdrop of China adopting an aggressive stance in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region came during the two-day meet of the Quad grouping in New Delhi on January 30-31.

Moreover, Beijing has all along opposed the Quad grouping claiming it will lead to militarization of the Indo-Pacific. As regards the meeting in the Indian capital, the White House in a statement late Thursday said officials of Australia, India, Japan and the United States met for the Quad Senior Cyber Group.

In the longer term, the Group committed to leverage machine learning and related advanced technologies to enhance cyber security and establish secure channels for Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and private sector threat information sharing.

The Group also committed to create a framework and methodology for



ensuring supply chain security and resilience for information communication technologies (ICT) and operational technology (OT) systems of critical sectors, the White House said, adding these objectives form an important part of the future-looking, leading-edge work plan for the Group.

The White House said progress on these objectives will enhance Quad members' national cyber capabilities, lowering the number of serious cyber incidents and improving their response capabilities.

Closer collaboration on machine learning research will enable better detection of network intrusions and improving cyber risk management of critical infrastructure, it said. The

framework for secure threat information sharing by CERTs and private sector entities will enable better real-time cooperation and assessments as cyber incidents arise, the White House said.

"A supply chain methodology will encourage major software services, products, and providers leveraged by governments to adhere to a Quad-endorsed best practice guideline for cyber security ICT and OT requirements for critical infrastructure," it added.

Observing that telecom security is a core function of national security, the statement said working in conjunction with Quad CET Working Group, the Group will strive to ensure that security-by-design and best practices of cyber security are incorporated in 5G and 6G technologies. "Our meeting advanced the Group's positive and ambitious agenda.

Quad partners are working together to better secure cyberspace and foster an international digital economy that works for everyone, including regional partners in the Indo-Pacific," the White House said.

The Quad countries, it said, are committed in the near term to drive more secure software services and products by common Quad government security practices, establish common cyber security requirements for nations' critical infrastructure, conduct a Quad Cyber Challenge (a cam-

paign to raise awareness among our populations and drive action to improve cyber security), collaborating on capacity-building activities and information sharing in the Indo-Pacific region under the Quad Cybersecurity Partnership.

Among other things, the Group discussed the importance of utilising trusted vendors in telecommunications infrastructure as part of our shared commitment to promote safe, resilient networks and technologies, including through exploration of open and interoperable network solutions which are occurring in each of and among our countries, the statement said.

These efforts demonstrate the Quad's commitment to building regional capacity and ensuring the delivery of an open and secure telecommunications infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific, it said.

According to the statement, the Quad Cyber Challenge Campaign will promote basic cyber security awareness among individuals, organisations, businesses and governments throughout members to prevent them from becoming victims of cyber crimes and threats that can cause untold financial and personal damage.

"We are committed to provide educational resources to our citizens to increase their cyber security as part of this effort," it said.

# Protect small investors, Sena leader urges SEBI after Adani bloodbath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the raging demand of a JPC over the alleged irregularities by Adani Group, Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Friday wrote to the SEBI to take concrete steps to ensure that the actions of private business entities do not cause market instability and put the hard-earned money of India's middle-class investors at risk.

In a letter addressed to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairperson Madhabi P. Buch, the Deputy Leader of Shiv Sena in Rajya Sabha stated all the allegations against the Adani Group exposed by the Hindenberg are of serious concern not only for the shareholders but for India's national interest.

"I am writing this letter out of deep concern over the market volatility due to the alleged irregularities by a crucial business firm – Adani Group. The market capitalisation of the 10 Adani Group of companies have so far lost 43 per cent which translates into a loss of around \$100 billion or Rs. 8.3 lakh crore.

The total investment value of individual investors in the 10-listed Adani group of firms

declined to Rs 41,499 crore on January 30, 2023, from Rs 54,066 crore on January 24, 2023," Chaturvedi mentioned. She further said there are serious allegations levelled against the group including that of market manipulation, improper use of off-shore tax havens, risks to the retail investors, over-pricing of stocks and over-exposure of public sector entities etc.

"The concerns have also been raised regarding the independence of auditors, transparency in accounting, liquidity risks due to short term liabilities, off-shore funding through shell companies and other irregularities in compliance of SEBI rules.

In the light of the systemic importance of the firm in India's economy and its presence in critical infrastructure such as coal, cement, energy, natural gas, electricity, airport operations, infrastructure etc., please take urgent measures," she wrote.

She also recalled that SEBI had initiated investigations against some companies of the group in 2021, however, no closure report has been filed in this regard nor any reasons for the delay have been apprised by the regulator to the investors and general public.

# India imported ₹2 L cr weapons in 5 yrs: MoS to LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of enhancing operational readiness of the armed forces, India in the last five years imported weapons and allied systems worth over Rs 1.93 lakh crore, the Government informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt said the major defence equipment that were imported included helicopters, aircraft radars, rockets, guns, assault rifles, missiles and ammunition.

The data provided by him regarding the procurement of military hardware pertained to the period from 2017-18 to 2021-22. Weapons were pro-

cured from US, Russia, France, Israel and Spain besides others. He also informed the Lok Sabha some military units reported minor injuries to paratroopers while using airborne helmets last year.

Bhatt said this while replying to a question on whether airborne helmets procured for Special Forces malfunctioned resulting in injuries to troops. He said necessary proceedings were initiated to take action as per laid down policy.

The contract for procurement of ballistic helmets at a cost of Rs 170.81 crores was signed in December, 2016. "While conducting para jumps, some of the units reported minor injuries to para troopers while using the airborne helmets during the year 2022,"



Bhatt said. "The item was trial evaluated in the year 2016 by Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (MoD) Army and ballistic testing of samples was done at Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), Chandigarh," he added.

The minister said airborne helmets, based on technical specifications obtained after trials, were duly inspected by the Authority Holding Sealed Particulars (AHSP) that is Controllorate of Quality Assurance (General Stores), Kanpur.

Bhatt said the procurement was undertaken post clearance by the AHSP. The airborne helmets were found suitable for induction after being trial evaluated by the Indian Army. The contract for procurement of ballistic helmets at a cost of Rs 170.81 crores was signed in December, 2016, he

said. On procurement of weapons for the armed forces, the minister of state for defence said the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020) with a focus on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) and 'Make in India' introduced major policy initiatives for boosting indigenous defence capability and reduction of reliance on imports.

"Further, DAP-2020 provides the highest preference to Buy Indian (IDDM) category of acquisition and 'Buy Global' is only permitted in exceptional situations with specific approval of Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)/the Defence Minister," he said in the written reply.

According to the details provided by Bhatt, procurement from foreign countries in 2017-18 was Rs 30,677.29 crore, while it went up to Rs 38,115.60 crore in 2018-19 and

Rs 40,330.02 crore in 2019-20. The amount in 2020-21 was Rs 43,916.37 crore and came down to Rs 40,839.53 crore in 2021-22. The total comes to Rs 1,93,878.81 crore.

"During last five financial years (2017-18 to 2021-22) and current financial year 2022-23 (up to December, 2022), total 264 capital acquisition contracts have been signed for procurement of defence equipment, out of which, 88 contracts accounting for 36.26 per cent of total contract value have been signed with vendors from foreign countries such as the US, Russia, France, Israel, Spain etc," Bhatt said.

Replying to another question, Bhatt said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is working on 55 'mission mode' projects for a total sanctioned cost of Rs 73,942.82 crore. He said

these are in the areas of nuclear defence technologies, air independent propulsion (AIP), combat suite, torpedo, fighter aircraft, cruise missile, unmanned aerial vehicle, gas turbine engine, assault rifle, warhead, light machine gun, rocket, advanced towed artillery gun system, infantry combat vehicle command, surface-to-air missile, anti-ship missile, anti-airfield weapon and glide bomb.

To another question on whether the government proposes to make public the report of the One Member Judicial Committee (OMJC) constituted to look into the grievances of the defence veterans pertaining to One-Rank-One-Pension (OROP), Bhatt said "no". "Final decision on the recommendations of the One Member Judicial Committee has not yet been taken by the government," he said.

# Study: Men fare worse than women in Covid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Males fare worse than females with the COVID-19 disease because the virus more readily attacks females' fat tissue, instead of lung tissue, thus sparing them from a greater viral load and preventing pulmonary damage due to infiltrated immune cells.

In contrast, Covid-virus infect male lung tissues, as per a study. It is published in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences.

The research indicates males fare worse than females with the COVID-19 disease because the virus more readily attacks females' fat tissue, in lieu of lung tissue.

"Our data suggested that in female mice adipose tissue may act as a sink/reservoir for SARS-CoV-2 and thus spares

the lungs from a greater viral load, preventing pulmonary damage due to infiltrated immune cells and activated pro-inflammatory cytokines," said Jyothi Nagajyothi, from the Hackensack Meridian Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI), US.

The researchers evaluated the effect of SARS-CoV-2 infection on the function of adipose (fat) tissue and the impact of disease on fat loss in a COVID-19 model.

They examined hACE2 mice of both sexes and performed a comparative analysis. The hACE2 serves as an entry receptor for SARS-CoV-2 to infect people via binding to envelope spike proteins.

The Nagajyothi Lab's mouse models, mimicking the human immune system, showed that females lost more fat compared to males when

infected with COVID-19. The study found that males had more virus in their lungs, while the females showed more virus in their fat tissue. The theory is that the adipose (fat) tissue in females may act as a "sink" or "reservoir" of the virus, the researchers said.

The study follows a paper published last year in the journal Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine in which the team showed the virus infiltrated the lungs of males much more readily than it did in females.

The latest paper shows that an inverse relationship exists between the viral loads in the lungs and adipose tissue, and it differs between males and females, the researchers said.

They found that SARS-CoV-2 infection alters immune signalling and cell death signalling differently in Covid-19 infected male and female mice.

# PM to address 6 rallies in Tripura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the campaign heat rises for the Tripura Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address six election rallies in West and South Tripura districts on February 13. Modi will be visiting Tripura on the last day of the campaign, sources said. Union home minister Amit Shah will address as many as 10 rallies and roadshows in three visits to states.

He is expected to address campaign rallies on February 6 and February 12. The ruling BJP is seeking to make a second come-back to power as against the tough challenge from the Congress-Left-alliance and the TMC.

BJP president J P Nadda on Friday addressed the first election rally at Kumarghat in Unakoti district followed by roadshows seeking votes for BJP candidates.

# ‘India sees 8 L cancer deaths annually; cases to spurt by 2026’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the World Cancer Day on Saturday, health experts have warned that India's cancer burden is projected to increase from 14 lakh to 20 lakh by 2026 mainly because of unabated consumption of tobacco and junk food besides pollution, chemicals, poor lifestyle and genetic reasons. Every year, around 8 lakh Indians succumb to cancer.

However, they said that early detection, timely diagnosis and comprehensive management can help bust the common myth that cancer is the end of life and it is incurable. Prof Sushma Bhatnagar, Head of Department of Onco-anesthesia and Palliative Medicine at AIIMS Delhi said



that at the AIIMS "we are undertaking a multi-disciplinary approach including research and capacity building to treat and manage the disease."

Dr SVS Deo, Head of Surgical Oncology at AIIMS, Delhi and National Cancer Institute, Hajjar talked about advancement in the sector which has ensured better cure rate. Unfortunately, 70 per cent cases the AIIMS receive are in

an advanced stage, said the doctors in an interaction here with reporters as they also shared various activities planned for the D-Day that include discussions, walk and public lecture to create awareness about the disease.

In fact various activities are lined up for the day. For instance, the WHO on its part has initiated a campaign to prevent 30-40 per cent of deaths in females due to cervical cancer,

the second most common cancer among women and India contributes the largest proportion of global cervical cancer.

The WHO ran a month-long campaign in January to create awareness on cervical cancer, including on social media campaigns like Instagram. In line with the WHO objectives, the Union Health Ministry has also decided to curb it by initiating HPV vaccines early at the age of 9.

A senior official from the Ministry said that all States have been asked to create awareness on prevention of cervical cancer and the importance of the HPV vaccine among girl students across the country.

The Government is planning to introduce cervical cancer vaccines for girls aged

between 9 to 14 years. Primarily, the girls will be provided the vaccines through schools, he said, adding that cervical cancer is caused by chronic infection with human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a sexually transmitted virus.

If the vaccine is given to girls before sexual exposure between 9-14 years, it is more than 99 per cent effective in preventing cervical cancer, the doctors said adding that parents and caregivers should be made aware of the need to administer the vaccine between the age of 9 to 14 years as a major preventive exercise against cervical cancer.

The WHO has also released a new Global Breast Cancer Initiative Framework providing a roadmap to attain the targets to save 2.5 million

lives from breast cancer by 2040.

The new Framework recommends to countries to implement the three pillars of health promotion for early detection, timely diagnosis and comprehensive management of breast cancer to reach the targets.

There are more than 2.3 million cases of breast cancer that occur each year, which make it the most common cancer among adults. In 95 per cent of countries, breast cancer is the first or second leading cause of female cancer deaths.

Yet, survival from breast cancer is widely inequitable between and within countries; nearly 80% of deaths from breast and cervical cancer occur in low- and middle-income countries.

# Cong suspends Capt's wife Preneet Karu for anti-party activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress disciplinary committee on Friday suspended party's Lok Sabha MP Preneet Karu and asked her to explain within three days why she should not be expelled for anti-party activities. Former Union Minister Preneet Karu is the wife of former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, who was ousted from the party and he later joined the BJP.

Congress' disciplinary panel member secretary Tariq Anwar said the action follows complaints against her from

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Raja Warring and other state leaders that she was helping the BJP.

"The Congress president has received a complaint from Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, president of PCC Punjab, alleging that Preneet Karu, MP (Lok Sabha) from Patiala is indulging in anti-party activities to help BJP. Some other senior Congress leaders of Punjab also share this view," Anwar said in a statement. He said the complaint was referred to the Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) of AICC for necessary action.



# Doda goes Joshimath style! 20 families moved to safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Around 20 families were relocated to safer areas by the district administration in Doda after their houses, constructed on a steep mountain slope, developed cracks in the Nayi basti area of Thathri on Friday.

The cracks were developed following fresh landslides in the area on Thursday.

Panic stricken residents, mostly families of retired soldiers, policemen shifted their household items before vacating the structures.

According to local reports, the first cracks emerged in a few houses in the month of December. With the passage of time some more houses developed minor cracks but the situation aggravated on Thursday as around 20 houses were declared unsafe by the local district authorities.

According to Sahil Randhawa, Tehsildar Thathri, "19 families comprising 102 souls were relocated from Nayi



Basti area and accommodated in prefabricated structures in view of adverse weather conditions on Friday". According to him 15 houses were completely damaged and four others had developed major cracks and were declared unsafe for living purposes.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Doda Dr RK Bharti also visited the area to supervise their shifting to safer locations. The district administration had also summoned experts and Geologists to ascer-

tain the cause behind the sinking of earth in the area.

"Geologists from Chenab Valley power projects and National Highways Authority of India have already inspected the site and briefed the district authorities", official sources said.

Meanwhile, several other families, living in the same stretch, continue to stay put inside their houses despite warnings by the local authorities to relocate to safer areas for the time being.

# MVA bags 3 of 5 seats in MLC polls BJP suffers setback as Cong candidate defeats 2-time MLC in Nagpur

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a clear reflection of the changing political mood in Maharashtra, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) – comprising the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena — has outsmarted the ruling Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena-BJP alliance, by winning three out of five seats in the biennial MLC elections to the Teachers and Graduates' constituencies.

The BJP suffered a major jolt in the RSS headquartered city of Nagpur, as the Congress candidate Sudhakar Adbale trounced sitting two-time MLC Nago Ganar, an Independent nominee supported by the BJP in the elections to the Maharashtra Legislative Council from the Nagpur Division Teachers' constituency.

The electoral defeat in the MLC poll from Nagpur Division Teachers' constituency is being seen as a personal setback for Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, both of whom



Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena (UBT) workers celebrate their candidates' victory on the Graduates and Teachers constituency seats, in Solapur on Friday PTI

hail from the orange city of Nagpur.

The Congress' victory in the Nagpur Division Teachers' constituency is of considerable political significance, as it comes two years after its candidate Abhijit Wanjari romped home in the Nagpur Division Graduates' constituency, by defeating the BJP's Sandeep Joshi by a comfortable margin of 18,910 votes.

The BJP's debacle in the December 2020 election to the

Nagpur Division Graduates' constituency had come in the backdrop of the fact that this seat was represented in the past by senior party minister and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari and former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's father Gangadharrao Fadnavis in the past. Gadkari, it may be recalled, had won this seat for four terms since 1989 before he contested successfully the 2014 Lok Sabha election from Nagpur.

# Opposition slams Kerala budget

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The opposition Congress-led UDF on Friday slammed the Kerala state budget for the fiscal 2023-24 in which it has proposed a cess on petrol, diesel and liquor and said the Left government was looting people. Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal on Friday presented the Left government's budget for the fiscal 2023-24. Leader of Opposition V D Sathesnan said the Left government was hiding the critical financial situation of the state and has increased the tax burden on the people. "The budget is hiding the critical financial situation faced by the State Government and the proposals amount to looting the people. The decision to impose cess on liquor will lead to people shifting towards drugs,"

# BJP urges Muslims to throw out Didi Govt Party should first explain why it has no Muslim MP or Min, counters TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a move indicative of BJP's changing tack vis-a-vis the minorities, particularly Muslims, senior Bengal saffron leaders including Mithun Chakraborty, Dilip Ghosh and Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari have appealed to the Muslims to help them throw out the Mamata Banerjee Government from power.

While Adhikari had on Thursday appealed to the Muslims to remove a corrupt BJP regime, Bollywood star-turned-saffron leader Mithun Chakraborty on Friday said his party had never been against the Muslims.

BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh too asked the Muslims to consider whether they wanted to continue with

Mamata Banerjee or be a part of the massive developmental projects initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"About 95 percent of Muslims vote for Mamata Banerjee which means she is in power because of you... Now it is upto you to decide whether you want to be a part of her corrupt regime or otherwise... I am not asking for votes but requesting you to think over what I said," Adhikari had told on Thursday in a meeting at Kultali in South 24 Parganas.

His views were echoed by Chakraborty who on Friday said BJP had never been against Muslims. "A narrative is being created that BJP is against Muslims... BJP has never been against Muslims. Rather we have always endorsed the cause of Hindustani Muslims," he said.



BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh too said how the Muslims in Bengal were being deprived of the various schemes launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The Prime Minister has introduced a number of schemes for the poorer sections but those schemes are not reaching the Muslims because of a corrupt TMC government. Time has come when the

Muslims should take a stand and be a part of the ongoing developments," Ghosh said.

The Bengal BJP's changed stance comes in the wake of the Prime Minister's direction to the saffron leadership to reach out to the minorities.

Reacting to the BJP's "reach-out efforts," senior TMC minister Firdah Hakim said no secular people worth their salt would go with BJP. "It is the same party that killed 2,000 people in Gujarat and Delhi... Now the cat is going to Haj after eating 100 rats."

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said how the BJP was hailing Lord Rama and "doing the politics of Ravana ... First they should answer why there is no Muslim MP or Minister from BJP before asking for their votes."

# CDS chairs security meet over rising terrorist attacks in Valley

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Amid rising incidents of terrorist violence across Jammu region in the recent months, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan chaired a high level security meeting at Nagrota based headquarters of White Knight Corps along with Northern Command, Army Commander Lt-Gen Upendra Dwivedi on Friday.

During the security meeting CDS General Anil Chauhan was briefed by GoC White Knight Corps Lt-Gen Sandeep Jain about the prevailing security situation under the jurisdiction of 16 corps.

Detailed presentation was made before the CDS about the measures taken to plug the possible infiltration routes, maintain 24x7 vigil along the Anti



Infiltration Obstacle system (AIOS) and operational readiness of troops in the hinterland.

During the meeting General Anil Chauhan appreciated the professional competence of all personnel in successfully overcoming challenges.

On his arrival in Jammu via Srinagar CDS General Anil Chauhan was received by Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Station Jammu, Air Commodore G S Bhullar. CDS chaired a separate meeting

with DGP, Dilbagh Singh, ADGP Mukesh Singh and others at the Air Force Station.

Principal Spokesperson of the Defence Ministry A Bharat Bhushan Babu tweeted, "Gen Anil Chauhan accompanied by Army Commander Northern Command, Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi arrived at Jammu. The CDS chaired a high level security meeting attended by ArmyCdrNC, DGP Dilbag Singh, ADGP JKR, Lt Gen Sandeep Jain GOC 16 Corps & GOC 26 Infantry Div".

The Chief of Defence Staff had earlier visited forward areas and hinterland formations in Kashmir on the first day of his visit and was briefed about the security situation by field officers. General Chauhan later returned to Delhi after visiting Nagrota cantonment.

## FROM PAGE 1

# PARL STALLED OVER ADANI AS OPP STICKS TO ITS JPC GUNS

Birla said as it was the first address to the joint sitting of the House by the country's first tribal woman president, all members should participate in it.

He said he was ready to give the Opposition enough time to raise their issues if they give proper notice.

However, an unrelenting Opposition continued their protests and sloganeering, forcing the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings till 2 pm. The House resumed the proceedings only to be adjourned for the day with protesting members trooping into the Well of the House.

Scenes were not different in the Rajya Sabha, which was adjourned till 2.30 pm following uproar by the Opposition members demanding a discussion on the Adani issue. Soon after the House met for the day, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected the 15 adjournment notices filed by members of various Opposition parties to discuss the Adani Group issue in the wake of allegations made against the conglomerate by a US-based short seller. The chairman urged members of the Rajya Sabha to maintain order and allow the listed business of the House to be taken up. But unrelenting Opposition members raised uproar over the rejection of their adjournment notices.

Dhankhar told the protesting members that Parliament is the essence and the North Star of democracy. It is a place for discussion and deliberation and not a place of disturbance, he said.

"I have received 15 notices under Rule 267 from different members...I have gone through all the notices. I am unable to accede to them as these are not fulfilling the requirements of rule 267," the chairman said, leading to uproar from opposition members.

He then adjourned the House till 2.30 pm, as Opposition members continued to cause uproar.

# RATING AGENCIES HELP EASE ADANI PRESSURE

"There is a risk that investor concerns about the group's governance and disclosures are larger than we have currently factored into our ratings, or that new investigations and negative market sentiment may lead to increased cost of capital and reduce funding access for rated entities," S&P said adding short-term liquidity is adequate, and debt maturities in the next 12 months are

manageable.

Adani Group got a vote of confidence from its French partner. TotalEnergies SE said it invested in two Adani Group companies in full compliance with Indian laws and no re-evaluation has been performed.

It said its exposure to Adani Group companies was USD 3.1 billion of capital employed at the end of December, a small fraction of the energy giant's globe-spanning interests.

State-owned lenders too said their exposure to Adani group was well within limits.

State Bank of India (SBI) said its total exposure to Adani Group was 0.88 per cent of the book or about Rs 27,000 crore, and that it does not envisage any setback on its bets.

Bank of Baroda said it has reduced exposure to the ports-to-energy conglomerate over the last two years, and has no concerns on asset quality issues with the conglomerate.

But politically, opposition parties are using the saga to mount pressure on the Modi government.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said the government has been stalling the Opposition's demand for discussions on every issue which it feels would embarrass it.

"All the opposition parties unitedly want to discuss this (Adani Group issue) extremely important issue as it affects the citizens of this country. They believe that this is a matter of sufficient importance that the government should permit," Tharoor told PTI. But the government doesn't want to discuss any issue that it thinks would embarrass it, he alleged.

# SC NOTICE TO GOVT ON BBC DOCU BAN, BUT OFFERS NO INTERIM RELIEF

The plea has also sought quashing of "all orders directly or indirectly censoring" the information, including those shared on social media.

The plea, which has made Twitter Communications India Private Ltd and Google India parties, has also sought a direction for the restoration of the tweets of the petitioners. "The power of the executive under Section 69 A to lay down directions for blocking public access is limited to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to

above," it said.

# WILL SOON CLEAR COLLEGIUM PICKS, CENTRE INFORMS SC

When Venkataramani said the issue concerning appointment of High Court judges be deferred for some time, the bench referred to the aspect of delay in clearing the recommendations for transfer and said it is "greatly troubling us."

"If transfer orders are not implemented, what do you want us to do," the bench said, adding that "we withdraw judicial work from them, is that what you want?" It said when the Collegium thinks somebody is appropriate for working in a high court and the government keeps the issue of transfer pending, it is "very serious".

"We will not permit any third party to play a game with this," The bench said there is no question of delay in transfer of judges from one High Court to the another when the Government has little role in this. It further said one name was recommended by the Collegium for appointment as Chief Justice of a High Court but the judge concerned is going to demit office in 19 days. "You want him to retire without being appointed as the chief justice?" Venkataramani said he is aware of it and necessary action is being taken.

The bench observed that sometimes names are cleared overnight, sometimes it takes time and there is no uniformity in this. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, flagged the issue of names reiterated by the Collegium not being cleared by the Government. He said in some cases, despite second reiteration, the appointment has not been made yet. According to the law, the Government has no option but to appoint those whose names have been reiterated, Bhushan said. "It can't go on like this."

An advocate, appearing for another petitioner, said the court is being "attacked outside the court". "We are used to it...We are used to handling this and be rest assured, it does not, beyond a stage, bother us. It is for different authorities to see what is appropriate and what is not appropriate," Justice Kaul said. The bench, which posted the matter for further hearing on February 13, said it is trying to resolve all the issues.

"Attorney, at least, I am taking your words for the five appointments and number two, the transfers and chief justices' appointment... These must come. It is on that understanding I am putting this after 10 days," Justice Kaul said.

# Chennai firm recalls eye drops after US flags vision loss, death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After its artificial tear lubricant eye drops were linked for possible contamination causing vision loss of five people and one death in the US, the Chennai-based Global Pharma Healthcare has voluntarily recalled its product sold under the brand name EzriCare.

This is the third Indian pharmaceutical company in the past few months whose pharmaceutical products have been allegedly found to be of substandard quality. The move to recall came after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urged people to immediately stop using the eye drops, which had possibly been contaminated with Pseudomonas aeruginosa, a type of bacterium resistant to most antibiotics.

The EzriCare artificial tears have been linked to at least 55

cases of bacterial infection in 12 States. Five of those people so far have had vision loss. One person died when the bacteria entered the bloodstream.

"The product was distributed nationwide in the USA over the internet," Global Pharma Healthcare wrote in its announcement of the recall.

The drops are distributed by EzriCare and Delsam Pharma. EzriCare said in a statement on Wednesday that it "had no role in the formulation, packaging delivery system or actual manufacturing of this product." The company said it only designed the label and marketed the product.

On Wednesday, the CDC said it is working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and State and local health officials to investigate the outbreak. A majority of the patients reported using the eye drops before they became ill.

Cases have been reported in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin, the CDC said, according to news reports.

The CDC investigators found the bacteria in bottles of the eye drops, and are now doing tests to determine whether it matches the strain found in patients. It is unclear whether the contamination occurred during the manufacturing process, or when bottles were opened by consumers. Pseudomonas aeruginosa bacteria can be found on the hands of otherwise healthy people.

The FDA cited multiple violations of manufacturing regulations by the company, including a "lack of appropriate microbial testing" and a "lack of proper controls concerning tamper-evident packaging."

"FDA is warning consumers and health care practitioners not

to purchase and immediately stop using EzriCare Artificial Tears or Delsam Pharma's Artificial Tears due to potential bacterial contamination. Using contaminated artificial tears increases risk of eye infections that could result in blindness or death," the agency said in a statement Thursday.

According to the CDC, symptoms of an eye infection included, yellow, green or clear discharge from the eye, eye pain or discomfort, redness of the eye or eyelid, feeling foreign body sensation, increased sensitivity to light and blurry vision.

Last month, 20 children in Uzbekistan died, reportedly after consuming cough syrup marketed by Noida-based Marion Biotech. Before that in October last year, 66 deaths in Gambia were linked to the consumption of cough syrups from the Indian company Maiden Pharmaceuticals.

# Reveal truth of 'deal' with RJD: Kushwaha to Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA

Disgruntled JD(U) leader Upendra Kushwaha demanded that party supremo Nitish Kumar reveal the truth behind rumours of an alleged "deal" struck with the RJD over the Chief Minister's post, when the two decided to forge an alliance last year.

The JD(U) leader, who has been sulking ever since the Bihar CM ruled him out as his second deputy, besides RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, made a statement to the effect at a function here on Thursday.

Kushwaha, who had merged his Rashtriya Lok Samata Party with the JD(U) less than two years ago, accused the RJD of having strayed from the socialist ideal of decentralisation of power and "concentrating all authority within a family".

"They (RJD) speak as if socialism was all about reversing the power structure, making some OBC groups the new elite. It was not.

And it was in revolt against this tendency of theirs that Samata Party came into being which later came to be known as JD(U)," said Kushwaha.

The former Union minister, however, added that "our party, too, has fallen short of devolving power to the lowest strata of the society. And the rumours of a deal with the RJD is leading to tremendous disappointment among JD(U) rank and file."

He alleged that RJD leaders had been openly stating that it was high time that the CM stepped down for Tejashwi Yadav to take over, "as per the deal". Silence on part of our party is only making matters worse, Kushwaha said.

# Assam cops arrest 2044 in crackdown on child marriage

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Over 2044 people on Friday in a crackdown on child marriage, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The crackdown began early in the morning and it will continue over the next three to four days, Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here. The police had registered 4,004 cases of child marriage in less than a fortnight since the State Cabinet decided on January 23 to take action, with the arrest of offenders and a simultaneous launch of an extensive awareness campaign. The Chief Minister said the crackdown was continuing and a clear picture will emerge by evening on

the number of arrests and the districts from where those were made. The highest number of 136 arrests so far has been made in Dhubri where 370 cases have been registered, followed by 110 in Barpeta and 100 in Nagaon. Those having married girls below 14 years of age will be booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and cases under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 will be registered against those who have married girls in the 14-18 years age group.

They will be arrested and the marriages will be declared illegal. If the boy is also below 14 years of age, he will be sent to a reform house as minors cannot be tried in the court.



# Chinese spy balloon spotted over US airspace

Beijing says it is mainly used for 'meteorological purposes'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON/BEIJING

A suspected Chinese spy balloon, said to be the size of three buses, was spotted over the United States' airspace, the Pentagon has said, a development that is likely to further strain the already tense bilateral ties ahead of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's key visit to Beijing.

Pentagon spokesman Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said the US government has been tracking the balloon for several days as it made its way over the northern United States and flying over sensitive installations.

He told reporters on Thursday that the balloon was "travelling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military

or physical threat to people on the ground."

"NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) continues to track and monitor it closely," he said, adding the balloon was spotted over Montana on Thursday and is "said to be the size of three buses".

Montana, a sparsely populated state, is home to one of only three nuclear missile silo fields in the US, at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

"Once the balloon was detected, the US government acted immediately to protect against the collection of sensitive information," Ryder said.

Reacting to the Pentagon's report, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed that the balloon was a Chinese "civilian airship" which had deviated from its planned route.

"The airship is from China. It is a civilian airship used for research, mainly meteorological, purposes," the spokesperson said in a statement posted on the Chinese foreign ministry's website.

"Affected by the Westerlies and with limited self-steering capability, the airship deviated far from its planned course. The Chinese side



regrets the unintended entry of the airship into US airspace due to force majeure," the statement said.

Earlier, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing on Friday that

China was verifying the Pentagon's report on the balloon.

She urged calm "until the facts are clear."

"China is a responsible country and always abides strictly by inter-

national law. We have no intention of violating the territory or airspace of any sovereign country," she said.

In Washington, Pentagon spokesman Ryder said the balloon is travelling at an altitude well above

commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground.

US President Joe Biden was briefed about the incident, a senior defence official said, adding the Pentagon is exploring various options.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Mark Milley and US Northern Command Gen Glen VanHerck have recommended not to "take kinetic action" because of the potential risk to the safety and security of people on the ground from the possible debris field, officials said.

"Currently, we assess that this balloon has limited additive value from an intelligence collection perspective. But we are taking steps nevertheless to protect against foreign intelligence collection of sensitive information," said a defence official.

The US government has engaged with the Chinese government both through the Chinese embassy in Washington and the US diplomatic mission in China.

US national security officials have constantly warned about growing Chinese espionage efforts and the balloon's presence in the US comes at a sensitive moment with Secretary

of State Blinken expected to travel to Beijing next week, a significant trip meant to follow up on President Joe Biden's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in November last year in Bali, Indonesia.

Biden has declared China "America's most consequential geopolitical challenge" and competition between the two major powers is growing. Bilateral tensions have flared over the self-governing island of Taiwan, China's human rights record and its military activities in the South China Sea, among a host of other issues.

Meanwhile, Canada said on Thursday that it is also tracking the Chinese balloon's movements and working with their American partners.

Balloons are one of oldest forms of surveillance technology. Compared to other air types of surveillance devices, the unmanned balloons can be operated cheaply.

The US believes Chinese spy satellites in low Earth orbit are capable of offering similar or better intelligence, limiting the value of whatever Beijing can glean from the high-altitude balloon, CNN quoted a defence official as saying.

## China confirms offer to Sri Lanka of debt moratorium

AP ■ BEIJING

China's Government on Friday confirmed it is offering Sri Lanka a two-year moratorium on loan repayments as the Indian Ocean island nation struggles to restructure USD 51 billion in foreign debt that pushed it into a financial crisis.

China lent to Sri Lanka as part of Beijing's multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative to increase trade by building ports and other infrastructure across Asia and Africa.

The International Monetary Fund offered a USD 2.9 billion emergency loan but wants other creditors to cut debts, which Beijing had resisted, possibly for fear other borrowers would want the same relief.

China presented a plan to "provide an extension on debt service due in 2022 and 2023,"



said a foreign ministry spokeswoman, Mao Ning.

"During that period, Sri Lanka would not have to pay the principal and interest due on bank loans."

China is Sri Lanka's third-biggest creditor after Japan and the Asian Development Bank, accounting for about 10 per cent of its debt.

But its lack of agreement blocked a final settlement.

Sri Lanka used Chinese loans to build an airport and other projects that failed to pay for themselves.

India, which China sees as a strategic rival, announced last month it gave the IMF assurances to facilitate a bailout plan. India has given Sri Lanka USD 4.4 billion in emergency credit.

Sri Lanka ran out of foreign currency last April, leading to food shortages, power cuts and protests that forced a prime minister to resign and a president to flee the country. Debt repayment to China, Japan and other foreign lenders was suspended.

The island's government is cutting spending and says it will cut the size of its 200,000-member military by almost half by 2030.

## S Korean court sentences ex-Min to 2 yrs in prison

AP ■ SEOUL

A South Korean court on Friday sentenced a former justice minister, Cho Kuk, to two years in prison, after he was found guilty of creating fake credentials to help his children get into prestigious schools, a scandal that rocked the country's previous government and sparked huge protests.

Cho was also found guilty of abusing his powers while serving as a senior aide to former President Moon Jae-in, by blocking an investigation into a former Financial Services Commission official seen as close to Moon who was eventually arrested for taking bribes from businesspeople.

But the Seoul Central District Court decided not to place Cho under immediate arrest.

## ASEAN Foreign Ministers meet under shadow of Myanmar crisis

AP ■ JAKARTA

Southeast Asian foreign ministers met in Indonesia's capital on Friday for talks overshadowed by the deteriorating situation in military-ruled Myanmar despite an agenda focused on food and energy security and cooperation in finance and health.

Myanmar belongs to the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, but the annual ministers' retreat is being held in Jakarta without its foreign minister, Wunna Maung Lwin.

His forced absence is a result of Myanmar's lack of cooperation in implementing a five-step agreement made in 2021 between ASEAN leaders and Myanmar's military leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing.

In the agreement, Myanmar's military leaders promised to allow a special ASEAN envoy to meet with jailed ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others to foster dialogue aimed at easing the crisis, set off by the military's seizure of power two years ago.

Last year, when ASEAN was chaired by



Cambodia, Min Aung Hlaing was not invited to the November meeting of ASEAN leaders after Myanmar declined to let an ASEAN envoy meet with Suu Kyi.

Analysts said the military takeover in Myanmar loomed large over the foreign ministers' meeting, even as Indonesia, the chair of ASEAN this year, seeks to dampen concerns that the issue will hold the bloc "hostage."

Kicking off the country's turn as chair of the regional bloc, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said late last month that

ASEAN will continue contributing to making Indo-Pacific a peaceful and stable region and maintaining regional economic growth.

In her opening remarks on Friday, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said the ministers were meeting in the midst of immense global challenges in which the Indo-Pacific region is not immune, including geopolitical, food, energy, financial and ecological crises, as well as major power rivalries that could spill over and potentially destabilise the region.

## Sorry, not sorry: Some 1/6 rioters change tune after apology

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Appearing before a federal judge after pleading guilty to a felony charge in the deadly Capitol riot, former West Virginia lawmaker Derrick Evans expressed remorse for letting down his family and his community, saying he made a "crucial mistake."

Less than a year later, Evans is portraying himself as a victim of a politically motivated prosecution as he runs to serve in the same building he stormed on January 6, 2021.

Evans is now calling the Justice Department's Jan. 6 prosecutions a "mis-carriage of justice" and describes himself on twitter as a "J6 Patriot."

"Some ppl have said I need to apologize and condemn #6 if I want to win my election as the media will attack me," he tweeted recently after announcing his bid for a US House seat in 2024. "I will not compromise my values or beliefs. That's what politicians do. We need Patriots not politicians."



Evans joins a series of January 6 defendants who — when up against possible prison time in court — have expressed regret for joining the pro-Trump mob that rattled the foundations of American democracy only to strike a different tone or downplay the riot after receiving their punishment.

The very first January 6 defendant to be sentenced apologized in court and then went on Fox News Channel shortly after and seemed to minimize the riot.

Another defendant who called January 6 "horrifying and disgusting" later donned an orange jumpsuit to play the part of a distraught prisoner in a bizarre tribute to

imprisoned Capitol rioters during a conservative conference.

Some defendants have drawn ire from judges or the Justice Department for their inconsistent comments. But there's not much the legal system can do for an adjudicated defendant. And because some conservatives hold up January 6 defendants as martyrs, there's a political and possibly financial incentive for them to change their tune.

It could push judges to impose stronger punishments for rioters who haven't yet made it to the end of their criminal cases. Even before Evans' sentencing, the judge who heard his case began questioning the sincerity of rioters' apologies after he felt duped by another defendant, saying he was "all too familiar with crocodile tears."

Before being sentenced last June to three months behind bars for a civil disorder charge, Evans said he regrets his actions every day and told Senior Judge Royce Lamberth he is a "good person who unfortunately was caught up in a moment."

## Pope heads to South Sudan to urge peace as fighting kills 27

AP ■ KINSHASA

Pope Francis opened the second and final leg of his African pilgrimage by heading to South Sudan on Friday, hoping to encourage the young country's stalled peace process and draw international attention to continued fighting and a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Francis had one final appointment Friday in Kinshasa with Congo's bishops before flying to the South Sudanese capital, Juba. There, he joins the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields, in a novel ecumenical push for peace.

Together, the three represent the religious leadership of the overwhelmingly Christian country, the world's youngest, which gained independence from the majority Muslim Sudan in 2011 but has been beset by civil war and conflict.

## Satellite photos: Damage at Iran military site hit by drones



AP ■ DUBAI (UAE)

Satellite photos analysed by The Associated Press on Friday showed damage done to what Iran describes as a military workshop attacked by Israeli drones, the latest such assault amid a shadow war between the two countries.

While Iran has offered no explanation yet of what the workshop manufactured, the drone attack threatened to again raise tensions in the region.

Already, worries have grown over Tehran enriching uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels, with a top United Nations nuclear official warning the Islamic Republic had enough fuel to build "several" atomic bombs if it chooses.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose earlier tenure as premier saw escalating attacks targeting Iran, has returned to office and reiterated that he views Tehran as his country's top security threat.

With State Department spokesperson Ned Price now declaring Iran has "killed" the opportunity to return to its nuclear deal with world powers, it remains unclear what diplomacy immediately could ease tensions between Tehran and the West.

Cloudy weather had prevented satellite pictures of the site of the workshop since it came under attack by what Iran described as bomb-carrying quadcopters on the night of January 28.

Quadcopters, which get their name from having four rotors, typically operate from short ranges by remote control.

Images taken Thursday by Planet Labs PBC showed the workshop in Isfahan, a central Iranian city some 350 km (215 miles) south of Tehran.

An AP analysis of the image, compared to earlier images of the workshop, showed damage to the structure's roof. That damage corresponded to footage aired by Iranian state television immediately after the attack that showed at least two holes in the building's roof.

The Iranian state TV footage, as well as satellite photos, suggest the building's roof also may have been built with so-called "slat armour." The structure resembles a cage built around roofs or armoured vehicles to stop direct detonation from rockets, missiles or bomb-carrying drones against a target.

Installation of such protection at the workshop suggests Iran believed it could be a drone target.

## US to send Ukraine longer-range bombs in latest turnaround

AP ■ WASHINGTON

After months of agonizing, the U.S. has agreed to send longer-range bombs to Ukraine as it prepares to launch a spring offensive to retake territory Russia captured last year, U.S. Officials said Thursday, confirming that the new weapons will have roughly double the range of any other offensive weapon provided by America.

The U.S. Will provide ground-launched small diameter bombs as part of a \$2.17 billion aid package it is expected to announce Friday, several U.S. Officials said. The package also for the first time includes equipment to connect all the different air defense systems Western allies have rushed to the battlefield and integrate them into Kyiv's own air defenses, to help them better defend against Russia's continued missile attacks.

For months, U.S. Officials have hesitated to send longer-range systems to Ukraine out of concern that they would be used to target inside Russia,

escalating the conflict and drawing the U.S. Deeper in. The longer-range bombs are the latest advanced system, such as Abrams tanks and the Patriot missile defense system, that the U.S. Has eventually agreed to provide Ukraine after initially saying no. U.S. Officials, though, have continued to reject Ukraine's requests for fighter jets.

Ukrainian leaders have urgently pressed for longer-range munitions and on Thursday, officials said the U.S. Will send an undisclosed number of the ground-launched, small diameter bombs, which have a range of about 95 miles (150 kilometers). The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the aid package not yet made public.

To date, the longest-range missile provided by the U.S. Is about 50 miles (80 kilometers). The funding in the aid package is for longer-term purchases, so it wasn't clear Thursday how long it will take to get the bomb to the battlefield in Ukraine.

Ukraine's defense minister Oleskii Reznikov said Thursday the country is prepared to offer guarantees to its Western partners that their weapons won't be used to strike inside Russian territory, adding that Kyiv needs weapons with the range of up to 300 kilometers (186 miles) to expel the Russian forces.

"If we could strike at a distance of up to 300 kilometers, the Russian army wouldn't be able to mount a defense and will have to withdraw," Reznikov said at a meeting with EU officials. "Ukraine is ready to provide any guarantees that your weapons will not be involved in attacks on the Russian territory. We have enough targets in the occupied areas of Ukraine, and we're prepared to coordinate on (these) targets with our partners," the minister said.

The U.S. Aid package includes \$425 million in ammunition and support equipment that will be pulled from existing Pentagon stockpiles and \$1.75 billion in new funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which is used to purchase new weapons

from industry.

The USAI, which will pay for the longer-range bombs and the air defense system integration, also funds two HAWK air defense systems, anti-aircraft guns and ammunition, and counter-drone systems. Since Russia's invasion last February, Western allies have pledged a myriad of air defense systems to Ukraine to bolster Kyiv's own Soviet-made S-300 surface-to-air missile defense systems, and the latest aid package aims to provide the capability to integrate them all, which could improve Ukraine's ability to protect itself against incoming Russian attacks.

The U.S. Has pledged medium- to long-range National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, or NASAMS, and truck-launched short-range Avenger air defense systems; the Netherlands, Germany and the U.S. Are sending Patriot missile defense systems; Germany is sending medium-range IRIS-T air defense systems; and Spain is sending Aspidite anti-aircraft air defense systems.

## EU officials hold Kyiv talks in show of support for Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Top European Union officials were due to meet Friday in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a show of support for the country as it battles to counter Russia's invasion and strives to join the EU as well as NATO. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, as well as 15 European commissioners, travelled to the Ukrainian capital for what they described as a summit meeting.

The last such summit was held in Kyiv in October 2021 — a few months before the war started. The highly symbolic visit is also the first EU political mission of its kind to a

country at war. "There will be no let-up in our resolve," Michel said in a tweet on his apparent arrival in Kyiv. "We will also support (Ukraine) every step of the way on your journey to the EU." EU assistance for Ukraine has reached almost 50 billion euros (USD 55 billion) since the fighting started, according to EU officials. The EU is providing Ukraine with financial and humanitarian aid, among other things. It also plans to adopt a 10th package of sanctions against Russia in the coming weeks.

The EU has also announced it's ramping up its military training mission for Ukraine, from an initial target of pushing 15,000 troops through the schooling to up to 30,000 troops. One focus is to

train the crews of tanks that Western countries have offered Ukraine. Ukraine wants to join the 27-nation bloc, and formally submitted its application last June, though that could take years and require the adoption of far-reaching reforms. In the meantime, von der Leyen said Thursday that the European Commission is willing to let Kyiv join what she called some "key European programmes" that will bring benefits similar to membership.

Those programmes were due to be discussed in Friday's meeting, which will also address one of the main obstacles to Ukraine's EU membership: endemic corruption.

Von der Leyen, on her fourth visit to Kyiv since Russia's invasion, said

Thursday she was "comforted" by Ukraine's anti-corruption drive. The previous day, Zelenskyy had taken aim at corrupt officials for the second time in the space of a week. Several high-ranking officials were dismissed.

Zelenskyy was elected in 2019 on an anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform in a country long gripped by graft. The latest corruption allegations came as Western allies channel billions of dollars to help Kyiv fight Moscow's forces. Ukraine's government is keen to get more Western military aid, on top of the tanks pledged last week, as the warring sides are expected to launch new offensives once winter ends. Kyiv is now asking for fighter jets.



# REAL CUT BARCA'S LEAD



AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid reduced Barcelona's La Liga lead to five points with a 2-0 win over Valencia on Thursday, thanks to spectacular goals from Marco Asensio and Vinicius Junior.

The duo struck in a three-minute second half salvo which stunned the visitors at the Santiago Bernabeu, and Valencia were later reduced to 10 men when Gabriel Paulista took a wild hack at Vinicius.

Madrid dominated throughout but an otherwise good night was tainted when captain Karim Benzema went off injured in the second half with an

apparent thigh problem, and Eder Militao was also replaced for a similar reason.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti confirmed Benzema's injury was "very light" but that Militao would miss Sunday's trip to face Real Mallorca.

The game will likely be remembered for Gabriel's red card tackle on Vinicius, who netted his 50th goal for Madrid on his 200th appearance at 22 years old.

"We have to protect Vinicius a bit, he's a very expressive kid, he dribbles a lot and defences don't like that," Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois told DAZN.

"We need that Vini. In a lot of

games he's been kicked a lot. I am happy that the referee had the bravery to send off Paulista.

"Not just because it's Vini -- if we did that then we would have to be sent off too."

Valencia's interim coach Voro, taking over for the eighth time on a temporary basis after Gennaro Gattuso departed by mutual consent on Monday, had a tough night visiting the reigning champions.

Los Che sit 14th, just one point clear of the relegation zone, and will now be without experienced defender Gabriel.

"We had a good first half, that was our plan, leaving them little space, but

in the second it was harder for us," Valencia's Hugo Guillamon told DAZN.

Ancelotti started with Eduardo Camavinga at left-back again and made two changes from Sunday's draw with Real Sociedad, bringing in Luka Modric and Asensio.

The duo combined after three minutes with the Croatian playmaker feeding the forward, who should have scored, but Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili made a fine save down to his right.

Asensio was denied again after a brilliant Benzema backheel set him up, with Gabriel throwing himself in the way of the Spaniard's shot and deflecting it over.

Vinicius sent a tame effort at Mamardashvili, while Camavinga rifled into the side netting as Madrid monopolised the chances but failed to break through.

Antonio Rudiger headed home from a corner in stoppage time but the goal was ruled out by VAR after a push from Benzema in the face of Yunus Musah was spotted.

## CHANGING GEARS

Madrid stepped up several gears after the break and quickly moved in front.

Asensio broke the deadlock with a rocket from the edge of the box which ripped past the helpless Mamardashvili in the 52nd minute.

Two minutes later Vinicius doubled their lead, with Benzema sending him sprinting through on the halfway line, outpacing the defence and tucking home.

Benzema had a chance to score the third but his effort was blocked by Mouctar Diakhaby, before the Frenchman limped off holding the back of his thigh.

Gabriel was dismissed for his hack at Vinicius as the former Arsenal defender lost his head when his Brazilian compatriot flew past him.

Madrid kept theirs to secure the three points and stay five points behind Barcelona at the halfway point of the season.

Ancelotti played down the clash between Gabriel and Vinicius.

"(They) had clashed very few times in the game, I think it was just the frustration, they were losing," Ancelotti told reporters.

"I can understand it. It's a bit of an ugly tackle, but Gabriel Paulista has always behaved well.

"Sometimes the frustration doesn't let you think in the right way."



## India maul Bhutan 12-0 in SAFF U-20 Women's C'ship

PTI ■ DHAKA

Three players scored a hat-trick each after coming in as substitutes as India mauled Bhutan 12-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship here on Friday.

Neha (45+2, 55th and 90th), Anita Kumari (50th, 69th and 78th) and Lynda Kom (61st, 63rd and 75th) netted three goals each after coming off the bench, as India completed the demolition job.

The other goals were scored by Apurna Narzary (29th and 36th) and Nitu Linda (43rd).

It, however, took them around 30 minutes to break the deadlock, but once that was done, the floodgates opened.

Kajol D'souza drove her way into the Bhutan box and squared it for Apurna, who poked it past a hapless Bhutan keeper for India's first goal in the 29th minute.

Head coach Maymol

Rocky made an early change, bringing on Neha in place of Sumati Kumari, and India soon doubled their lead.

Apurna was again in the thick of things as she beat Bhutan keeper Norbu Zangmo, and calmly put it into the back of the net.

Substitute Neha soon made her mark as sent in a low cross for Nitu Linda to tap it in. Neha turned scorer two minutes into the first half added time, as India took a four-goal lead at the breather.

The Indians pumped in eight more goals in the second half to run over the Bhutanese whose defence crumbled while facing waves of Indian attack.

"We are absolutely elated over the performance of the girls today. They were all over the place, and played very well. But now, it's time to get ready for the next game," coach Maymol said after the game. India next play hosts Bangladesh on Sunday in their second round-robin league match.

## You are my new hero: Sunil Gavaskar tells Lakshya Sen

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A star-struck Lakshya Sen couldn't believe his eyes when the legendary Sunil Gavaskar dropped in at the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) in Bengaluru to meet him and the youngsters.

The 73-year-old Gavaskar, a member of the 1983 World Cup-winning cricket team, paid a visit to the academy during a regular trip to the city on Thursday.

"He had a meeting in Bengaluru and decided to meet the young aspiring kids of the academy. Badminton and cricket are two of his favourite sports. He was here with us for about an hour," Vimal Kumar, co-founder, director and chief coach of the PPBA, said.

Gavaskar later posted a picture with Lakshya Sen on Instagram and captioned it: "My new badminton hero Lakshya Sen, after the one and only Prakash Padukone."

The legendary cricketer had hailed Padukone several times while doing cricket commentary over the years, saying he is one of India's greatest sportspersons.

Sen, who has been one of India's most prolific sportspersons in 2022, said he was too star struck to react.

"It feels good to hear such things from such big personalities. Honestly, I was too star struck to react," Sen said.

The 21-year-old from Almore won gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the India Open Super 500. He



### Praneeth loses in Thailand quarterfinal

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Indian shuttler B Sai Praneeth's impressive run came to an end after he went down fighting to China's world number 23 Li Shi Feng in the men's singles quarterfinals of the Thailand Open Super 300 badminton here on Friday.

Praneeth, who had competed at the Tokyo Olympics, blew a substantial lead of 15-10 in the opening game to lose 17-21, 23-21, 18-21 to bring down curtains on India's campaign here.

was also a member of the historic Thomas Cup win. He also won silver at the All England Championships and

is also the winner of the 2021 World Championships bronze medal.

"Gavaskar sir spoke about the Thomas Cup win. I have heard so much about him from my parents and all the seniors. Also when I watched the movie '83', I got to know what went behind that epic win," he said.

"I can relate to it now, essentially after the Thomas Cup win because back then they were the underdogs and in Thomas Cup, it was us."

India had claimed their first-ever Thomas Cup, beating Indonesia 3-0 in the final at Bangkok in May last year.

Asked what did Gavaskar discuss with the budding shuttlers, Vimal said, "He also gave some tips to the youngsters, asking them to analyse what went right in a day to get the best out of training."

"Gavaskar and Prakash are two self-taught heroes of Indian sport, so coming from him means a lot."

AP ■ LONDON

Mikel Arteta says Arsenal can have no excuses if they do not win the Premier League title for the first time in two decades after strengthening their squad during the January transfer window.

Arteta splashed out more than £50 million (\$61 million) on three new signings as the club look to hold onto their lead at the top of the table, bringing in Italy midfielder Jorginho, Belgium forward Leandro Trossard and Poland defender Jakub Kiwior.

The Gunners are five points clear of second-placed Manchester City with a game in hand on the champions and Arteta knows his side are perfectly placed to win the club's first English title since 2004.

Arteta was asked on Friday about whether there would now be no excuses if Arsenal failed to get over the line.

"If you want to put it that way, that's fine," he said. "What we have to do is train really well and win, and play well to win. That's the only thing we can do."

Arsenal would have spent even more on new signings last month but they missed out on Ukraine winger Mykhailo Mudryk, who instead joined Chelsea, and Brighton's highly rated midfielder Moises Caicedo.

Despite those frustrations, Arteta is pleased with the



## Newcastle Utd must come to terms with new status: Howe

AP ■ NEWCASTLE

Eddie Howe admits Newcastle's new-found status as a threat to the Premier League's big guns will make it harder to sign players from their rivals in future.

The League Cup finalists added Everton forward Anthony Gordon and West Ham full-back Harrison Ashby during the January transfer window.

But their long-standing interest in England midfielder Conor Gallagher came to nothing as Chelsea refused to allow him to join a top-six rival.

Howe, whose team host West Ham on Saturday, are third in the Premier League

table, with just one defeat all season.

Asked at his pre-match press conference on Friday whether other clubs now see the Magpies as genuine competition, Howe said: "I think it is potentially difficult for us."

"It depends on the player and it depends on the club, but I think we're probably aware we are seen differently this season to how we were last season."

"We are viewed differently probably by some clubs now and that is something we will have to adjust to."

Newcastle beat Southampton in Tuesday's second leg of their League Cup semi-final to reach their first final since 1999 and keep

alive their hopes of ending a trophy drought that dates back to 1969.

When Howe was hired in November 2021, just a few weeks after the Saudi-funded takeover of the club the previous month, he arrived to find Newcastle languishing in 19th place in the Premier League.

Having revitalised Newcastle with remarkable speed, Howe said the Magpies must now adopt a big-club mentality towards fighting on two fronts at the same time.

They are hoping to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish, as well as eyeing long-awaited silverware in the League Cup.

backing he received from the Arsenal hierarchy.

"I'm really happy with what we've done," Arteta said ahead of Saturday's trip to struggling Everton. "We knew that in this market you have to adapt and be flexible and ready for inconvenience."

"We've done that and the most important thing is the profile of the person, and the quality that we bring in makes us better."

"We had three main key areas of positions that we wanted to improve and fulfil. It was tricky but positive in the end."

Arteta received more good news on Friday, with the confirmation that Brazilian forward Gabriel Martinelli has signed a new long-term contract.

Martinelli has scored seven league goals this season and the 21-year-old has given Arteta a genuine threat down the left flank.

"It is great news," Arteta said. "He is a player with enormous potential that still has so many things to improve but is already performing at a really high level."

He revealed England forward Bukayo Saka and French defender William Saliba could also be in line for new contracts soon. Arsenal have yet to win at Goodison Park under Arteta and the Spaniard knows Everton could get a boost from the appointment of new boss Sean Dyche.

## India rise to No. 3 spot in IBA's world boxing rankings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India have jumped to third spot in the International Boxing Association's (IBA) latest world rankings.

The Indian boxers have accumulated 36,300 ranking points, having surpassed top boxing powerhouses including USA and Cuba, which are ranked fourth and ninth respectively in the current standings.

Kazakhstan (48,100) is the top-ranked nation followed by Uzbekistan (37,600).

Indian boxing has witnessed an unprecedented rise in recent years with the teams consistently finishing amongst the top five countries at global multi-nation tournaments such as World Championships, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

In the last two CWG, the Indian boxers have won an unprecedented 16 medals and they have 140 medals to their names since 2008 in top international events.

Since 2016, the Indian boxers have won 16 Elite World Championships medals across men and women categories.

Boxing Federation of India (BFI) have also hosted several big-ticket international events in the country and from March 15 to 26, they will organise the prestigious Women's World Boxing Championships for the third time in the country.

India's excellent show have also extended to the junior and youth level with 22 medals from the last two Youth World Championships indicating the sport's bright future in the country.

AP ■ SYDNEY

Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios on Friday pleaded guilty to assaulting a former girlfriend, but avoided a conviction for what the magistrate called a "single act of stupidity".

Appearing in a Canberra court, the Wimbledon finalist admitted assaulting then-girlfriend Chiara Passari on January 10, 2021, by pushing her to the ground after a heated argument.

Kyrgios said he was "not in a good place" at the time, and that he "reacted to a difficult situation in a way I deeply regret".

"I know it wasn't OK and I'm sincerely sorry for the hurt I caused," he said in a statement.

Passari lodged a complaint with police 10 months after the incident, after the pair had broken up, lawyers told the court.

In a statement read to the court, Passari said she had been severely traumatised by

## Kyrgios admits assaulting girlfriend, avoids conviction



the incident, experiencing severe weight loss, staying in bed day and night -- unable to sleep or form new romantic relationships.

Lawyers for Kyrgios appealed to have the charge of one count of common assault dismissed on mental health grounds, arguing it was an

isolated incident and out of character.

Psychologist Sam Borenstein told the court Kyrgios suffered from recurring major depression, which included black periods, thoughts of self harm, insomnia, agitation and feelings of guilt.

Magistrate Beth Campbell heard that appeal but ultimately dismissed the case without conviction.

Campbell said Kyrgios acted poorly but the offence was not planned or premeditated and was a "single act of stupidity" by a young man attempting to remove himself from a tense situation.

The court was told Kyrgios shoved Passari, who was preventing him from leaving her Canberra apartment.

"I do not record a conviction against your name, I do not find any necessity to place you on a good behaviour bond," Campbell said.

Kyrgios had hobbled into court in Canberra with a pair of crutches and a brace on his knee, after suffering a "gruesome" injury that sidelined him at last month's Australian Open.

He was flanked by his current girlfriend Costeen Hatzi, an interior designer, and his mother Norlaia.

Canberra-born Kyrgios, known for his mercurial talent and on-court outbursts, later said "mental health is tough".

"Life can seem overwhelming. But I've found that getting help and working on myself has helped me to feel better and to be better," his statement read.

## Gurpreet signs five-year contract extension with BFC till 2028

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian football team goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on Friday committed his association with Bengaluru FC for another five years as he signed a contract extension with the club till 2028.

Interestingly, Sandhu, the national team's number one goalkeeper, signed the contract on a day when he turned 31.

Sandhu, who joined the club in 2017 after becoming the first Indian player to play in the UEFA Europa League at Norway's Stabaek FC, has been a mainstay in Bengaluru FC's starting XI for the last five years.

"I'm pleased to have extended my stay at Bengaluru FC, a club that has always shown faith in my abilities," Sandhu said.



# AUSTRALIA GET 'ASHWIN DUPLICATE' TO TRAIN AHEAD OF INDIA TEST SERIES



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Australia have roped in Maheesh Pithiya, a 21-year-old spinner with uncanny resemblance to Ravichandran Ashwin, to train on spin-friendly tracks as part of their preparation for the upcoming Test series against India.

Off-spinner Ashwin may prove to be a major threat for Australia, who haven't won a Test series in India since 2004.

Expecting spin to play a major role in the four-Test series, the visitors have opted for tailor-made pitches and have availed the services of Pithiya to get accustomed to the action of Ashwin.

The four-Test series begins in Nagpur on February 9.

"Of all the stops Australia have pulled out to prepare for their trip to India, the most noticeable at their Test tour's first training session was the presence of a Ravichandran Ashwin duplicate," a report in cricket.Com.Au said.

"With facing spin the major focus on Thursday, Pithiya was the standout among the local 'netties', bowling tirelessly and virtually without break through the day as he troubled the likes of Smith, Marnus Labuschagne and Travis Head, who all had long batting sessions."

Pithiya, interestingly, didn't see Ashwin bowl until the age of 11. Growing up in Junagadh, Gujarat he didn't have access to TV and when he finally watched the India

## Aussies will miss Zampa's ability to zip ball: Sriram

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former Australia assistant coach Sridharan Sriram is disappointed that spinner Adam Zampa is not with the touring team for the four-match Test series against India beginning on February 9.

Sriram said that Zampa was someone who could "hold" his action for long periods of time like Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, something which Ashton Agar and Mitchell Swepson might find difficult in tough subcontinental conditions.

Veteran tweaker Nathan Lyon, Agar, leg-spinner Swepson and young off-spinner Todd Murphy got the nod in the 18-

member Australia squad with Zampa missing out.

Sriram, who served the Australian team for six years, has seen Zampa evolve his game, and felt the 30-year-old wrist spinner's ability to zip the ball would be hugely missed by Pat Cummins' side during the Border-Gavaskar series.

"I would have personally loved to see Zamps bowl here (in India), because he's got the pace, he's got that zip off the pitch," Sriram was quoted as saying by 'Sydney Morning Herald' on Friday.

"That's something I keep an eye out for, who has got the ability to beat you off the pitch, so I think that Zamps has got that,"

said Sriram who has also played eight ODIs for India between 2000 and 2004.

Sriram, also a domestic heavyweight having scored more than 9,500 first-class runs, added Zampa was extremely keen to tour India and had even called him up a couple of times.

"He wanted it more than anyone, he wanted to play Test matches in India, he had called me a couple of times a couple of months ago saying 'Sri, I'm so excited that I could be on that tour', so he wanted it and he started to play first-class cricket for NSW. He did well, three wickets in each innings, so he's pretty disappointed that he's not on this tour."

ace in action against the West Indies in 2013, he started idolising him.

The youngster, who made his first-class debut in December for Baroda, was flown in for the four-day training camp at the KSCA Ground in nearby Alur by Australia after seeing his footages in social media.

It was Pritesh Joshi — one of the bowlers giving throw downs to

the Australian batters with the 'side-arm' aid — who first brought Pithiya to the attention of assistant coach Andre Borovec.

He also arranged for Mehrotra Shashank, a left-arm spinner who played first-class cricket for Hyderabad, to attend the camp.

"While no spinner in the world can perfectly mimic the challenge Ashwin will pose in this series, facing Pithiya over the coming days

will at least help the Australians come to terms with the visual cues of the world's top-ranked Test spin bowler," the report said.

"The Aussie batters were also tested out by a self-described throwdown specialist Khaleel Shariff, who has worked with numerous Indian Premier League teams and was known to coach Andrew McDonald and Vettori from their time at RCB.



## India's 2007 T20 WC hero Joginder Sharma announces retirement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India medium pacer Joginder Sharma, who bowled the iconic match-winning final over in the 2007 World T20 summit clash against Pakistan, on Friday announced retirement from all forms of cricket.

The 39-year-old represented India in four ODIs and as many T20s between 2004 and 2007, picking five wickets. He played domestic cricket for Haryana.

"My journey from 2002-2017 has been the most wonderful years of my life for it was an honour representing India at the highest level of sport," he said in a message posted on Twitter.

"To all my team-mates, coaches, mentors and support staff: It has been an absolute privilege to have played with you all, and, I thank you all for helping turn my dream into reality."

Handed the ball by skipper MS Dhoni in the final over of the inaugural T20 World Cup final, the inexperienced

Sharma bowled India to victory, scripting one of the most iconic moments in the history of cricket.

Pakistan were well on course for a famous win with Misbah-ul-Haq reducing the equation to six runs off four balls. But the Pakistan batter mis-timed a scoop shot with Sreesanth completing a simple catch at short fine-leg to help India lift the trophy.

However, the final was Sharma's last game for India.

He turned out for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL before joining the police service where he served as the deputy superintendent of police and was on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sharma added that he will be exploring new opportunities in the game.

"I am excited to announce that I will be exploring new opportunities in the world of cricket & the business side of it, where I will also continue to participate in the sport that I love and challenge myself in new and different environments."

## Fit-again Jamieson hopes to make it count against Eng

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

New Zealand pace bowler Kyle Jamieson is hoping to get his rhythm back after returning to the squad for the upcoming two-Test series against England following a long injury layoff.

The lanky seamer had to leave the field during the second Test against England at Trent Bridge due to a stress reaction in his back in June last year and since then has not played an international game.

He was included on Friday in the 14-member New Zealand squad for the Test series against England beginning at Mount Maunganui on February 16.

Jamieson, who has made a successful return to domestic cricket, will now be targeting a spot in the playing XI following his extended period of rehabilitation.

"It's nice to be included in the squad and back in the fold for the first time in a while," Jamieson told SEN Radio.

"My body is feeling good, I'm excited to be back with the group ... I've been bowling plenty of overs in practice and in training, I just need to get used to the rhythm of playing again. I've been bowling to empty nets for a long time so to see a few batters in the middle and see the ball get hit, it's a bit of a change."

He said he had full faith in coach Gary Stead and the support staff despite New Zealand having last won a Test series in 2021.



"Yeah, of course," said Jamieson.

"That's not something we've really thought about because there's so much confidence from the playing group in our coaching staff."

He added that the New Zealand side was a tight-knit unit where players had complete faith in the coaching staff.

"I'm not sure if it (pressure) is there or not, we sort of keep a pretty tight-knit circle. I have complete faith in our group and what we can do."

Jamieson is expected to play just one Test in series as his

recovery is monitored, and the pacer said the decision on which match he will play will depend on the conditions.

"It is a little bit different, the first Test will be under the lights with the pink ball. Wellington (venue for the second Test) with the red ball, it tends to be more seamer-friendly than the Mount (Maunganui)," he said.

"But at the Mount (Maunganui) with the pink ball under lights, it could be pretty spicy as well. We'll see how it unfolds and how it goes up there."

## WPL: Rachel Haynes appointed head coach of Gujarat Giants

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Multiple-time World Cup winner Australian opener Rachel Haynes has been appointed head coach of the Gautam Adani-owned Women's Premier League (WPL) team Gujarat Giants while Nooshin Al Khadeer, who guided India to U-19 team to World Cup triumph, will be bowling coach.

The Adani Sportline-owned Gujarat Giants, bought for a whopping Rs 1289 crore, has already roped in former India captain Mithali Raj as their mentor and advisor.

Former senior women's team coach Tushar Arothe will be the team's batting coach and Gavan Twining will look after fielding department.

"Not only have they carved a niche for themselves in their roles, but their stories of resilience will be an inspiration for the team," said Mithali.

"Their combined strengths will enable Gujarat Giants to give their best performance on the ground at the inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League, which will inspire several aspiring women athletes."

Haynes, who has played at the highest level for more than a decade, has won six world championship titles with the Australian team and was the vice-captain of the side from



2017-2022.

The left-handed batter, who was an integral part of the very successful national set-up, is a veteran of 84 T20Is and played crucial roles in the Australian team's title winning campaigns at the 2018 and 2020 T20 World Cups.

Haynes, who was part of the team that won the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup in New Zealand, has also turned out for the Sydney Thunder in the Women's Big Bash League, often leading the run scoring charts for her side.

"The Women's Premier League is such an exciting addition to the cricket landscape. The opportunity to be involved in the inaugural season with the Adani Sportline owned Gujarat Giants and work with the brilliant Mithali Raj is something I'm really looking forward to," said Haynes.

## We will look to take positives from Tri-series into WC: Deepti

PTI ■ EAST LONDON

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma is pleased with their overall effort and said they will look to take positives from the Tri-series into the ICC Women's T20 World Cup beginning on February 10.

The Indian women's team, which had secured a maiden final finish in the 2020 ICC T20 World Cup, suffered a five-wicket loss to hosts South Africa in the Tri-series final on Thursday.

"There are lots of positives from the series, we did well as a bowling and batting unit. We have to just carry on these things in the World Cup as well," Sharma said in the post-match press-conference.

"Whether we play England or any other team, we have to just focus on the things we did well here and continue doing that over there as well."

"Obviously South Africa have home conditions. But as a team, we have to carry forward what we have done right in the Tri-series and not think about the opposition but our own team, what we can do better."

Adjusted player-of-the-series for taking nine wickets in five matches, Sharma said she got a lot of help from the wickets in South Africa.

"We have played in South African wickets, spinners get turn here. All these matches that we played in the Tri-series, we got a lot of help from the wicket," she said.

"Harry di (Harmanpreet



THE INDIAN WOMEN'S TEAM, WHICH HAD SECURED A MAIDEN FINAL FINISH IN THE 2020 ICC T20 WORLD CUP, SUFFERED A FIVE-WICKET LOSS TO HOSTS SOUTH AFRICA IN THE TRI-SERIES FINAL ON THURSDAY

Kaur) also told me that I should just pick my spot and keep bowling according to the situation and I think we produced a good bowling effort and bowled according to the plan."

The 25-year-old has taken 96 wickets from 87 T20Is so far in her career.

"I had worked with single wicket with different balls like heavy ball, light ball. It was a turning wicket, so I got a lot of help. I bowled to my strength," Sharma said.

"In the powerplay, I go for breakthroughs and it helped the team. Whatever sessions that I did before the World Cup has helped me in my bowling."

India will open their World Cup campaign against Pakistan on February 12 at Newlands, Cape Town.

## MP beat Andhra by 5 wickets in Ranji QF, face Bengal in semis

PTI ■ INDORE

Riding on half-centuries from opener Yash Dubey and Rajat Patidar, defending champions Madhya Pradesh completed their remarkable fightback as they beat Andhra by five wickets to enter the Ranji Trophy semifinals here on Friday.

After conceding a big first innings lead of 151, MP bounced back on the third day on Thursday by skittling out Andhra for a mere 93 in 32.3 overs in the visiting side's second innings.

Set a target of 245 to win the quarterfinal match, MP were 58 for no loss on Thursday and they knocked off the remaining 187 runs in 61 overs on Friday to win the match with a day to spare.

The heroic efforts of Andhra captain Hanuma Vihari who batted one-handed in both their innings after a

wrist injury went in vain as his team could not stop MP from reaching 245 for 5 in 77 overs.

MP will now take on Bengal in the semifinals from February 8 in a repeat of last edition's last-four stage match. MP had won that match by 174 runs at Alur, Karnataka.

### BENGAL BEAT J'KHAND

Kolkata: Packed with impact bowlers, a formidable Bengal demolished Jharkhand by nine wickets inside four days to progress to the semi-finals for the third time in a row.

Bengal had played the final in the 2019-20 season and after a COVID induced break, the team qualified for the semifinals last year when it lost to eventual champions Madhya Pradesh.

Starting the day at 162 for 7, Jharkhand's lower-order, led by Supriyo Chakraborty (41) did delay the inevitable for just about 15 plus overs in the



morning before being shot out for 221.

The target of 67 was more of a romp for India A skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran (28 not out) and in-form Sudip Gharami (26 not out) as the umpires extended the first session to allow Bengal complete formalities in 12.4 overs after they lost opener Kazi Junaid Saifi.

Under new head coach Laxmi Ratan Shukla, Bengal's pacers Akash Deep (match fig-

ures 6/108), Mukesh Kumar (match figures 4/94), Ishan Porel (match figures 2/90) shared 12 wickets amongst themselves.

Rookie Akash Ghatak (match figures 4/36) and seasoned left-arm spin bowler all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed (2/45 and 81 runs) also played the supporting role to perfection.

### INNINGS WIN FOR K'TAKA

Bengaluru: Eight-time champions Karnataka dominated

with both bat and ball as they thrashed Uttarakhand by an innings and 281 runs to enter the semifinals.

Resuming at their overnight score of 106 for 3 after following on, Uttarakhand batters could add just 103 runs before being bowled out for 209 in 73.4 overs on the fourth day of the quarterfinal match.

Swapnil Singh (51 off 100 balls) top-scored for Uttarakhand. Shreyas Gopal turned out

to be the star for Karnataka, as, after making an unbeaten 161 with the bat in his team's massive first innings total of 606, he returned with figures of 3/26 in Uttarakhand's second essay to claim the player-of-the-match honour.

Besides Gopal, Vijaykumar Vyshak (3/55), Vidwath Kaverappa (2/30) and M Venkatesh (2/44) also chipped in with wickets.

**SAURASHTRA FIGHTBACK**  
Rajkot: Fighting half-centuries from skipper Arpit Vasavada, Chirag Jani, Prerak Mankad and Parth Bhut helped Saurashtra make a comeback in their quarter-final against Punjab on day four.

Having conceded the first innings lead to Punjab, Saurashtra recovered to score 379 in their second innings to set the opposition a 252-run target.

Vasavada (77) and Jani (77) shared a 160-run stand for the

fifth wicket before Mankad (88) and Bhut (51) shared a valuable 92-run stand for the eighth wicket. The game is nicely poised going into day five with Punjab needing 200 runs with eight wickets in hand. Pukhraj Mann (17 batting) and night watchman Siddharth Kaul (2 batting) were in the middle at close of play.

With the pitch offering a lot of turn, 2020 Ranji champions

Saurashtra will back themselves to complete the job on Saturday. It will need a special batting effort from Punjab to reach the semi-finals.

Saurashtra got a shot in the arm when they removed the opening pair of Prabhsimran Singh and Naman Dhir, who both struck fine hundreds in the first innings to take Punjab to 431.

**Notice Inviting re-Tender**

No.SSA-20014/2/2022-Equity-SSA /114524/2023 Date:02.02.2023

Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha Axom , Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, Assam invites following bid through GeM portal.

1. GEM/2023/B/3004857 Dated 18-01-2023 for Menstrual Hygiene Management and Adolescent Info Booklet Paper-based Printing Services - Printing with Material.

Interested bidder may visit GeM portal and submit their bid on GeM portal accordingly.

Janasanyog/CF/4225/22

Sd/-Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19