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EXCHANGE FOR 4TH YEAR

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IN SECOND T20I
11 SPORT

Odisha Health Min shot dead by policeman

Naba Das who was shot by 'mentally disturbed' ASI succumbed to his injuries in hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das on Sunday succumbed to bullet injuries inflicted by a police officer.

The incident took place in Brajrannagar town in Jharsuguda district around 1 PM when the Minister was on his way to attend a public programme.

An Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) of police fired four to five rounds at the Minister when he got out of his car. The ASI was nabbed by local people, who then handed him over to the police. Reports suggested that the accused ASI was suffering from mental illness for the past seven-eight years.

"Das was admitted with gunshot wounds on the left side of his chest. On operating, it was found that a single bullet had entered and exited the body, injuring the heart and left lung, causing massive internal bleed-



Odisha Health Minister Naba Das at a hospital after he was shot at by a policeman near Brajrannagar in Jharsuguda district on Sunday PTI Photo

ing and injury. The injuries were repaired, and steps were taken to improve the pumping of the heart. He was given urgent ICU care. But despite best efforts, he could not be

revived and succumbed to his injuries," said the statement issued by Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar.

According to reports, Das suffered injuries on the left side of

his chest, while another policeman, who was standing guard, was also injured in the firing.

"Assistant Sub-inspector of Police (ASI) Gopal Das opened fire at the Minister, who sustained bullet injuries. The Minister was then rushed to a hospital," Brajrannagar SDPO Guptaeswar Bhoi told reporters.

An inquiry has been launched to find out what prompted the ASI to open fire, Bhoi said.

In a video footage of the incident, Das is seen bleeding from the chest. Some people lifted the injured Minister, who seemed unconscious, and placed him on the front seat of a car.

Initially, he was taken to the Jharsuguda district headquarters hospital, the SDPO said. Arrangements were then made to airlift him to a Bhubaneswar hospital for "better treatment", he said.

The incident triggered tension in the town as the Minister's supporters pointed fingers to the "security lapses".

Some supporters even claimed that a conspiracy was hatched to target him.

Bhoi said that the ASI was currently being interrogated, and more details will be available after a thorough investigation.

The Government has ordered a Crime Branch probe into the incident.

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Rahul unfurls Tricolour at historic Lal Chowk

75 yrs after Nehru hoisted flag at Lal Chowk, Gandhi hoists Tricolour to mark yatra's end

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday unfurled the Tricolour at the historic clock tower of Lal Chowk in Srinagar to mark the end of the 3,500-km-long Bharat Jodo yatra. After attending the brief ceremony at Lal Chowk Rahul posted a tweet on his timeline, saying, "By hoisting the Tricolour at Lal Chowk, the promise made to India was fulfilled today. Hate will lose, love will always win. There will be a new dawn of hopes in India."

Rahul hoisted the Tricolour at Lal Chowk 75 years after his great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru did so for the first time here. Rahul was first scheduled to hoist the Tricolour at the Congress office in Srinagar as earlier the Congress said that hoisting the national flag at Lal Chowk is "part of the RSS' agenda". But the party changed it plan at the last minute after its leaders perhaps realised the significance of the Lal Chowk. To mark the end of the yatra,



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi unfurls the Tricolour at the Lal Chowk in Srinagar, on Sunday

PTI Photo

the Congress has convened an all-party gathering that will also reflect the extent of Opposition unity Rahul has been able to achieve through the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir foot march.

Rahul was accompanied by his sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and party leaders from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for the flag hoisting.

The security for the 10-minute event was at its peak as all roads leading to Lal Chowk had been sealed off from Saturday night

and no vehicular movement was allowed. Shops, business establishments, and the weekly flea market were closed as part of the security drill for the flag unfurling by the former Congress president.

Taking a 30-minute break from the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir foot march at Sonawar, Rahul drove to the Pradesh Congress Committee headquarters on Maulana Azad Road before heading to the clock tower, locally known as 'Ghanta Ghar', to unfurl the Tricolour.

More than a dozen Opposition

parties will attend the concluding function on Monday. While the DMK, NCP, RJD, Shiv Sena, CPI(M), CPI, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Kerala Congress, National Conference, PDP, and JMM have confirmed their participation, the Trinamool Congress, Samajwadi Party, and the TDP will skip the function. A total of 24 parties were invited by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for the final function of the foot march led by Rahul.

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'Padma Awards echoes in Naxal-hit areas this time'

Those who showed right way to youth were honoured, says PM in talk show

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, in his monthly radio talk 'Mann ki baat', spoke about 'Padma Awards' echoing "even in those areas which used to be Naxal affected" with the awardees recognised for showing the "right path to the misguided youth".

Addressing the people, the Prime Minister took on a range of issues including the environment, wetlands, e-waste, and the importance of millets and yoga in health, and also praised the Republic Day celebrations of this year.

Drawing the attention of listeners to the grand Republic Day parade and Padma awards,



Modi said, "This year the echoes of the Padma Awards are being heard even in those areas which used to be Naxal affected. Due to their efforts, those who show the right path to the misguided youth in Naxalite-affected areas have been honored with Padma Awards."

"For this, Ajay Kumar Mandavi, who does wood carving in Kanker, and Parshuram Komaji Khune, associated with the famous Jharipatti Rangbhoomi of Gadchiroli, have also received this honour."

This time there has been a good representation of the trib-

al community and people associated with tribal life among the Padma awardees.

"Tribal life is different from the hustle and bustle of the cities; its challenges are also different. Despite this, tribal societies are always ready to preserve their traditions. Efforts are also made to preserve and research aspects related to tribal communities," said Modi.

"Similarly, many great personalities who have worked on tribal languages like Toto, Ho, Kui, Kuvi and Manda have received Padma Awards. It is a matter of pride for all of us."

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Rain fails to dampen Beating Retreat spirit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Beating the Retreat ceremony to mark the formal ending of Republic Day celebrations was a spectacular affair on Sunday despite the rain and inclement weather.

The lighted mass brass drums and crescendo of martial music by soldiers of the Armed forces dispelled the chill of the cold weather at Vijay Chowk here.

While the performers braved incessant rain to play tunes in their uniforms, the drone show was cancelled due to bad weather.

Foot-tapping music marked the beginning of the ceremony with the arrival of President Droupadi Murmu. She was welcomed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The Prime Minister was drenched as he moved around outside the sheltered area, waving at the audience after the ceremony was over. For the first time, a 3-D anamorphic projection was done on the facade of North Block and South Block.

As many as 29 Indian tunes were played by the music bands



Tri-services bands perform at the Beating Retreat ceremony, at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi, on Sunday.

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the State Police and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).

Never missing a step despite the wet ground, the bands began playing the "Agniveer" tune followed by the enthralling tunes like "Almora", "Kedar Nath", "Sangam Dur", "Queen of Satpura",

"Bhagirathi" and "Konkan Sundari".

The Air Force's band played "Aprajey Arjun", "Charkha", "Vayu Shakti", "Swadeshi", while fascinating "Ekla Cholo Re", "Hum Taiyyar Hai", and "Jai Bharati" were played by the band of the Navy.

The Army's band played "Shankhnaad", "Sher-e-Jawan",

"Bhupal", "Agranee Bharat", "Young India", "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja", "Drummers Call", and "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon". The event came to a close with the ever-popular tune "Sare Jahan se Achha".

In a magnificent sight, the contrast of the bands playing with the lights on their instruments on and then playing "Aye

mere watan ke logon", with the same lights switched off, cast an ethereal spell on the Vijay Chowk.

The buglers performed under the leadership of Naib Subedar Santosh Kumar Pandey, and the pipes and drums band was played under the instructions of Subedar Major Baswaraj Vagge. Continued on Page 2

Thalaivar's unherioc act to hit small artistes' livelihood

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Hundreds of comedy and mimicry artists across the country are in for a shock as South India's superstar Rajinikanth has cracked the whip on them through a public notice.

The artists eking out a living by mimicking and imitating Rajinikanth are banned from doing so, according to the public notice issued by Rajinikanth through his lawyer Subbiah Elambharathi on Saturday.

The superstar, popularly addressed as 'Style Mannan (King of Styles)', 'Thalaivar (leader)', and 'Badshah (emperor)' is one of the leading Indian personalities caricatured by mimicry artists in the country. No comedy shows would be complete without the portrayal of Rajinikanth, and there are artists specialising in mimicking and caricaturing the superstar. "Our client is an actor of



humongous reputation having acted in films across languages for decades. His charisma and nature as an actor and a human being has earned him the title "Superstar" called upon by millions of his fans worldwide. The sheer proportion of his fan base and his respect across the film industry is unmatched and indisputable. Any damage or violation to his reputation or persona would entail great loss to our client having its effect

over many spheres," says the notice. It warns the general public that their client is the only person who has control over the commercial utilization of his personality, name, voice, image, likeness and other characteristics that are uniquely identifiable with their client and no one can utilize or misappropriate or imitate any facets of their client's personality and exploit the same commercially in any manner whatsoever without the

consent and express authorization from him. "It has come to our client's notice that various platforms and mediums and also various product manufacturers are misappropriating our client's name, voice, image, photographs and caricature image, artistic image, computer Artificial Intelligence generated images and other characteristics to create popularity amongst the public and to entice member of the public to purchase their products and to have access their platform and medium. Our client is popularly known as Superstar," the notice continues.

The advocate concluded the notice with the warning that of anyone was found infringing their client's rights, the violator would have to face civil and criminal charges in accordance with the law.

Rajinikanth's dialogue delivery and mannerisms are the most sought-after items in

mimicry shows. There are many artists who caricature the superstar as chief minister and army commander much to the delight of the audience. One of the mobile phone manufacturers had named a signature phone series after a Kochadiyaan a character portrayed by the superstar. In 2015, Rajinikanth patented the mannerism of the character he portrayed in 'Baba', a movie in which he played the lead role. Salim Kumar, who bagged the national award for best actor, said one cannot blame the superstar for his decision to issue a notice like this. "It is his personal decision. What I understand is that some of the comedy artists have spoofed him and it is bound to have hurt him. Mimicking should not end up in spoofing anybody," Salim Kumar, who himself was a leading mimicry artist before entering the film industry told The Pioneer.

Indian women win U-19 T20 WC

PTI ■ POTCHEFSTROOM

India on Sunday won their maiden ICC title in women's cricket as a bunch of sprightly and talented teenagers lifted the inaugural U-19 World Cup with an emphatic seven-wicket victory over England.

The Shafali Verma-led India U-19 squad managed to do what their seniors could not do by clearing the final hurdle in a global event. India first bundled out England for 68 in 17.1 overs and then returned to knock off the paltry target in 14 overs to lift the coveted trophy.

"It is just a proud moment, it's our first world cup," said Trisha with stumps in hand after the memorable win. The win on Sunday also reaffirms India's dominance at the U-19 level with the boys winning the world title in the Caribbean last year. India's bowling attack, led by pacer Titas Sadhu and support-

ed by leg-spinner Parshavi Chopra, set up the comprehensive win on Sunday as they blew England away with a clinical display at Senwes Park.

While Sadhu showed that Indian women pace bowling is in safe hands following the retirement of Jhulan Goswami with impressive figures of 4-0-6-2, Chopra too continued her dream run as she snapped two for 13. Archana Devi also scalped 2f or 17, while Mannat Kashyap (1/13), Shafali(1/16) and Sonam Yadav (1/3) accounted for one wicket each as England were all at sea after being asked to take first strike.

Following a pep talk from India's Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, India came out with a specific plan and executed it perfectly as England's innings never really took off after being reduced to 16 for three in four overs. (Detailed report on P11)

SEBI may probe recent short selling on bourses

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator, SEBI is likely to probe short selling in the Indian stock markets in the last few days. Sources said Indian markets have been under onslaught in the last few trading sessions and a probe will ascertain the role of short sellers in bringing the market down.

According to a SEBI discussion paper, 'Short selling — the sale of a security that the seller does not own' — is one of the long-standing market practices, which has often been the subject of considerable debate and divergent views in most of the securities markets across the world. The votaries of short selling consider it as a desirable and an essential feature of a securities market.

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Farmers back on Rly track protest in Punjab

Stage rail-roko in 13 dists over demands not met by Centre

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The farmers were back on tracks in Punjab on Sunday. Up in arms against the powers-that-be — both at the Centre and in the State — for not fulfilling their pending demands, the farmers under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC), staged three-hour rail roko protest at 15 locations in Punjab's 13 districts affecting the rail traffic resulting in cancellation and delay of several trains.

Notwithstanding the light rain all through the day, the protesting farmers continued with their protest on the rail



Farmers block railway tracks during a protest, in Jalandhar on Sunday

PTI

tracks from 1 pm till 4 pm, after which they vacated the tracks and the train movement resumed. However, the protestors continued their "indefinite" blockade at Gurdaspur, and was not yet lifted.

The protests were held at Jandiala Guru in Amritsar, Batala Railway Station in Gurdaspur, Khadoor Sahib, Patti and Tarn Taran Railway Stations in Tarn Taran, Guru Har Sahai in Ferozepur, Moga

Railway Station, Malout Railway Station in Muktsar, Fazilka Railway Station, Ghunas Station in Barnala, Jalandhar Cantt and Kapurthala Railway Station, Tanda Railway Station in Hoshiarpur, Samrala Railway Station of Ludhiana, and Faridkot Railway Station, covering 13 districts.

The trains, including the routes of Amritsar-Delhi, Tarn Taran and Amritsar-Jammu

and Kashmir, were mainly affected. These included: Amritsar Shatabdi, Shan-e-Punjab, Nagpur Express, Paschim Express, Golden Temple Mail, Dadar Express, and Jammu Tawi Jodhpur Express.

Besides, nine inter-city trains — Ferozepur-Fazilka, Fazilka-Bathinda, Jalandhar-Hoshiarpur, Hoshiarpur-Jalandhar, Bhagtanwala-Khemkaran, Khemkaran-Bhagtanwala, Amritsar-Qadian, Qadain-Amritsar, and Ferozepur-Jalandhar — were cancelled; while many others were delayed or short-terminated.

"Neither the state nor the Center has time to listen to us. And because of this, we have decided to conduct the rail roko protest... This must have caused trouble to the passengers, but we were left with no other option," said KMSC general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher.

Court intervention or discussion: Visva-Bharati gives Amartya Sen 2 options to settle land issue

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Amid the exchange of words between Visva-Bharati and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen over the economist's alleged unauthorised possession of land, the university on Sunday asked the economist either to discuss the matter with it or the issue will be settled in court.

The central university issued a statement saying it is putting "facts on record" and requests Sen to do what is required to be done to protect his self-esteem and Visva-Bharati's reputation.

"Two options are open: the confusion that Prof Sen seems to be happily nurturing shall be cleared with the intervention of the court of law or through discussion with the Visva-Bharati authority," the statement read.

Alleging that a mudslinging is taking place by those seeking to fulfil their vested interests over the matter, the statement said the issue needs to be addressed freely and frankly with no baggage carried from distortions of the reality.

The university sent two

letters within three days last week to Sen, asking him to immediately hand over the 0.13 acre of land he was allegedly occupying in an "unauthorised manner" at the Santiniketan campus. Sunday's statement reiterated the claims made earlier that Sen is in possession of 1.38 acres of land which is in excess of his legal entitlement of 1.25 acres.

"We have requested him to hand over the excess land and have also offered him the opportunity of a joint survey in presence of his surveyor/advocate," the statement said.

Sen repeatedly asserted that most of the land he is holding in Santiniketan was purchased from the market by his father while some other plots were taken on lease.

Stating that of the 1134 acres of land in possession of the central university, 77 acres were encroached till 2018, the statement said the authorities have reclaimed 15 acres from illegal occupants. The drive towards evicting illegal occupants started in response to the central government order of November 30, 2017, it said.

Reward-carrying criminal shot dead in Hapur

PTI ■ HAPUR

A reward-carrying criminal succumbed to bullet wounds during treatment at a hospital in Hapur, a senior police officer said on Sunday. Manoj Bhati carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh and was shot by police on Saturday.

A resident of Dadri, Bhati was a shooter associated with the Ranveer Bhati gang, and had over 35 cases registered against him, Superintendent of Police Abhishek Verma told reporters.

"He was wanted in a case pertaining to a shootout outside Hapur court on August 16, 2022, in which Lakhan Singh, who had come from Haryana for a hearing, was shot dead. Cases of murders, extortion and other crimes were registered against him. Police had arrested him yesterday from Haryana. His accomplice Ankit was also arrested," Verma said.

Bhati was shot on Saturday when he tried to escape during a visit to crime spot.

"He was brought by the police to a highway for recovery of a weapon. Once there, he snatched the pistol of a head constable, and started firing. The police in self-defence fired at him and wounded him. He was taken to a hospital, where he was declared dead," the SP said, adding that the injured policeman Somveer is also undergoing treatment.

On August 16, 2022, a history-sheeter from Haryana was shot dead by three people outside the district and sessions court here. Haryana Police Constable too was injured in the incident.

Lakhan, alias Yashpal, 35, was brought from Haryana's Faridabad jail in connection with a case registered against him at the Dhaulana Police Station in Hapur, the then Circle Officer (City), S N Vaibhav Pandey, had earlier told PTI. Lakhan was a known criminal from Haryana and had a number of cases registered against him, he had said.

Mental Math quiz develops mathematical, logical skills of students: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia attended the State-level mental maths quiz competition 2022-23 at Dr. BR Ambedkar School of Specialized Excellence, Rohini 11. The aim of such competition is to develop mathematical and logical skills among students and make them prompt, confident and mentally agile.

Sisodia interacted with the students and motivated them to participate in such competitions more and more. Along with the quiz competition, a TLM (Teaching Learning Material) exhibition was also organized that showcased various educational models made by the Delhi government



school teachers.

Addressing and motivating the students, Sisodia said, he was amazed to see the mathematical and logical skills of the students of Delhi Government schools. This quiz competition hosted by the Directorate of Education is a very innovative step in the right direction to inculcate the habit of doing calculations in the head, without the use of any tools.

This will make students more prompt, confident and

mentally agile. Today, the performance of our students in the mental maths competition shows that students of Delhi government schools are now less than anyone."

The Deputy Chief Minister said that Mathematics is equally enjoyable as any other subject like English, Hindi, and History and activities like these quiz competitions make it more fun.

"Students often consider it as a scary subject but I can see that there are many people who enjoy it too. Such a fun filled environment to learn mathematics in a government school was unimaginable earlier but our students and teachers have made it a reality now," said Sisodia.

Bengaluru to host 3-day G20 Energy Transition Working Group meet

From Feb 5

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The first G20 Energy Transition Working Group (ETWG) meeting under India's presidency will be held in Bengaluru from Feb 5 to 7.

The meeting will have over 150 participants including G20 member countries, nine special invitee guest countries – Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Spain, the Ministry of Power said in a statement. In addition, leading international organisations including The World Bank,

Asian Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Energy Agency (IEA) will be part of the meeting, the statement read.

Senior government officials from the ministries concerned will also participate in the ETWG meeting for which Karnataka is extending all its support and coordination.

According to the statement, the first ETWG meeting will focus on areas like energy transition through addressing technology gaps, low-cost financing for energy transition, energy security and diversified supply chains, energy efficiency, industrial low carbon transitions and responsible consumption, fuels for future and universal access to clean and affordable energy.

There will also be a high-level international seminar on 'Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)'.

India has assumed the Presidency of the G20 for one year from December 1, 2022, to 30 November 2023 and over 200 meetings will be held across the country. The G20 Leaders' Summit at the level of Heads of State/Government is scheduled to be held on September 9 and 10, 2023 in New Delhi. The G20 or Group of 20 is an inter governmental forum of the world's major developed and developing economies.

Rain fails to dampen Beating Retreat...

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The ceremony traces its origins to the early 1950s when Major Roberts of the Indian Army indigenously developed the unique ceremony of display by the massed bands.

Now, it has emerged as an event of national pride when the colours and standards are

paraded.

"It marks a centuries-old military tradition when the troops ceased fighting, sheathed their arms and withdrew from the battlefield and returned to the camps at sunset at the sounding of the Retreat," a Defence Ministry statement said on Saturday.

‘Padma Awards...

From Page 1

"Dhani Ram Toto, Janum Singh Soy and B. Ramakrishna Reddy ji...the whole country has become familiar with them now", he said.

The Prime Minister spoke about the importance of 'millets' and said 2023 will be the 'International Year for Millets'. Modi mentioned the names of people from different states who have dedicated their professional lives to promoting 'millet-made' food.

Modi said a revolution is

underway in the health sector because of public participation in campaigns such as International Yoga Day and International Year of Millets.

"Just as people have made yoga and fitness a part of their lives by active participation, similarly they are also adopting millet on a large scale," he said.

"What is common between Yoga Day and our different types of coarse grains – Millets, then you might think...what is this comparison? If I say that both have a lot in common, you will be surprised. In fact, the United Nations has taken the decision of both International Yoga Day and International Year of Millets after India's

proposal.

"Secondly, yoga is also related to health and millets also play an important role in health. The third thing is more important – a revolution is on the way because of public participation in both campaigns. Just as people have made yoga and fitness a part of their lives by taking active participation on a large scale; similarly people are adopting millets on a large scale," said Modi.

"People are now making millets a part of their diet. A huge impact of this change is also visible. On the one hand, the small farmers who traditionally used to produce millets are very excited. They are very happy that the world has now

started understanding the importance of millets. On the other hand, FPOs and entrepreneurs have started efforts to market millets and make them available to people," he said.

"Have you ever heard the word Milletpreneurs?", asked the Prime Minister.

A women's self-help group in the tribal district Sundargarh is associated with Odisha Millets Mission. They make biscuits, cakes and other eatables from millets," Modi said.

He said a revolution is underway in the health sector because of public participation in campaigns such as International Yoga Day and International Year of Millets. "Just as people have made

yoga and fitness a part of their lives by active participation, similarly they are also adopting millet on a large scale," the Prime Minister said.

Drawing the attention of people towards the problem of e-waste, Modi said, "Proper disposal of e-waste can become a great force to build a circular economy. Today's latest devices are also the e-waste of the future. Whenever someone buys a new device or replaces his old device, it becomes necessary to keep in mind whether it is discarded properly or not."

The Prime Minister also touched on India being the largest democracy in the world.

"We Indians are proud of the fact that our country is also

the Mother of Democracy. Democracy is in our veins, it is in our culture – it has been an integral part of our work for centuries. By nature, we are a Democratic Society," he said.

"Dr. Ambedkar had compared the Buddhist monks union to the Indian Parliament. He described it as an institution where there were many rules for Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Voting and counting of votes. Babasaheb believed that Lord Buddha must have got inspiration from the political systems of that time," he said. The Prime Minister also hailed India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index and said India has improved and achieved a good rank

Odisha Min...

From Page 1

Das, a three term MLA, has represented the Jharsuguda Assembly constituency since 2009. He is considered to be the second richest minister in the State government after Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Das, a 60-year-old politician from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is said to be a confidante of Patnaik.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolence over the demise of Naba Kishore Das.

Taking to Twitter, PM Modi wrote, "Saddened by the unfortunate demise of Minister in Odisha Government, Shri Naba Kishore Das Ji. Condolences to his family in this tragic hour. Om Shanti."

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik offered his condolences and said that Naba Kisore Das' death was a great loss to Odisha.

"He was an asset for both the government and the party. He has successfully carried many initiatives in the health department to the benefit of the people," the Chief Minister said.

Rahul...

From Page 1

The Congress did not extend an invitation to the AAP, BRS, BJD, and Akali Dal, who are the party's bitter rivals in their respective states.

Earlier, Congress former ally in Karnataka, JDS said the Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda was invited to the rally but will be unable to attend it. He conveyed his "deep appreciation" for Rahul Gandhi for his achievement of walking the length of the nation for harmony.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar hours after unfurling the national flag at the historic clock tower of Lal Chowk, Rahul advised the Modi government to deal with China firmly by making it clear that "we are not going to tolerate them sitting on our land."

Rahul claimed the approach that the government was following "by completely denying that the Chinese have taken our land", is extremely dangerous as it would give them the confidence to do even "more aggressive things."

The government must deal with China firmly and make it clear that "we are not going to tolerate them sitting on our land".

Rahul said the Prime Minister of India is the only person in the country who is under the impression that the

Chinese have not taken any land from India.

"I recently met some ex-army people and even a delegation from Ladakh. They said that 2000 square kilometres of our Indian territory have been taken over by the Chinese," Gandhi said.

They also said that many of the patrolling points that used to be in Indian territory are now firmly in Chinese hands, he said.

Rahul was responding to a question a day after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said some people deliberately spread wrong news about the China issue, knowing it is not true, for politics and by talking about some land, which was taken by China in 1962, they give the impression this happened recently - comments that are viewed as a dig at Gandhi.

"Sometimes, they talk about some land, which was taken by China in 1962. But they will not tell you the truth. They will give you the impression that this thing happened yesterday," he had said without taking names. Rahul Gandhi has been raising the issue of Chinese aggression along the Line of Actual Control, alleging that Indian land has been occupied.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi concluded on Sunday at Sonwar amid tight security arrangements. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the Yatra has spread the message of love to every corner of the country and urged the party's supporters to unite to take the nation forward.

Challenging Union Home Minister Amit Shah about law and order situation in Kashmir, Rahul said if the situation is so good in J&K, then he should walk to Srinagar's Lal Chowk from Jammu.

"There are targeted killings in the state, bomb blasts happening, what security personnel are talking indicates that the situation is not good... if the BJP thinks so, why doesn't Amit Shah walk to Lal Chowk from Jammu," he said.

The mainstream Kashmiri leaders belonging to the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party, however, stayed away from the flag ceremony.

During the press conference Rahul Gandhi also targeted the ruling party and accused them of attacking the institutions. "I think what the RSS & BJP are doing is attacking the institutional framework of the country, judiciary, media etc. What you see in J&K is the same assault. When we talk in the parliament our mics are muted. I want to talk about GST, China... but you can't. It's happening all across the country in different ways. As far as I'm concerned I'm very clear, the first step should be the restoration of statehood and democratic rights."

Expressing his gratitude for the welcome he received in J & K, Rahul also said that statehood and restoration of the democratic process is fundamental and very important. He also said that if the situation is normal then why doesn't Amit Shah walk from Jammu to Kashmir and unfurl the tricolor at Lal Chowk?

SEBI may probe short selling on Indian...

From Page 1

The critics of short selling on the other hand are convinced that short selling, directly or indirectly, poses potential risks and can easily destabilise the market.

In an efficient futures market, the relationship between spot price and futures price of the underlying asset is governed by cash-and-carry arbitrage and reverse cash-and-carry arbitrage. The latter requires that traders should be able to sell the underlying security short unless of course there are enough traders who own the security and are able to sell it cash to take advantage of a too low futures price.

It is noteworthy though, that despite the conflicting schools of thought, securities market regulators in most countries and in particular, in all developed securities markets, recognise short selling as a legitimate investment activity. Such jurisdictions also have an active market for equity derivatives which includes stock futures. Some of the jurisdictions even recognise the usefulness of naked short sales in certain circumstances and instead of prohibiting short sales; the regulators have permitted it to take place within a regulated framework.

The International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) has also reviewed short selling and securities lending practices across markets and has recom-

mended transparency of short selling, rather than prohibit it. As per media reports, in 2022, the US prosecutors considered racketeering charges in a sprawling probe of hedge funds and research firms that bet against stocks.

The US Justice Department issued subpoenas to dozens of firms as part of the sweeping probe focused on potentially manipulative trading around negative reports on listed companies published by some of their investors, media reports said.

Adani Group has said in a statement that accounting (or fraud type assertions) "investigation" by Hindenburg are devoid of facts. Of Adani portfolio's nine public listed entity's eight are audited by one of the Big 6.

On leverage or over leverage issue -- 100 of our various companies are rated (the peer account for nearly 100 per cent of our EBITDA), Adani Enterprises said in a stock exchange filing.

On revenue or balance sheet being artificially inflated or managed -- out nine listed companies in Adani portfolio six are subject to specific sector regulatory review for revenue, costs and capex, Adani Group said.

In relation to governance, four of our large companies are in the top 7 per cent of the peer group in Emerging markets or the sector or the world. On the LAS position do note that overall promoter leverage is less than 4 per cent of promoter holding, the group said.

Two arrested for pro-Khalistan graffiti in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Days after pro-Khalistan posters and graffiti were put up in several West Delhi localities, the Delhi Police Special Cell arrested two men in connection with alleged "anti-national" and "Khalistan-related graffiti", that appeared on walls in areas of west Delhi on January 19, ahead of Republic Day.

The walls were painted with slogans like "Khalistan Zindabad", "SFJ", "1984", "Punjab Banega Khalistan", "Vote for Khalistan" and "Referendum 2020" at various locations in Vikaspuri,



Janakpuri, Paschim Vihar, Peeragarhi, Meera Bagh and adjoining parts in west Delhi on January 19 and 20. The accused -- Vikram Singh (29), a resident of Tilak Nagar, and Balram Singh (34), hailing from Bharatpur in Rajasthan -- were tasked to paint "pro-

Khalistani" slogans in western part of Delhi in lieu of Rs 2 lakh and further lucrative offers in future, a senior police officer said. However, they were paid only Rs 2,000 after the act, he added. Both the accused worked as drivers in a prominent hotel in Aerocity, Delhi, the officer said.

Addressing a press conference, H G S Dhaliwal, Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), said the arrested accused clandestinely sprayed "these pro-Khalistani graffiti" during the intervening night of January 18 and 19 and recorded videos of the same and sent them to senior cadres

of the Sikh for Justice (SFJ) based abroad. "Proscribed terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun then broadcast the videos on YouTube claiming responsibility of the graffiti and threatening an attack on Republic Day in Delhi. Multiple cases were registered in various police stations of Delhi in this regard," he said.

Preliminary interrogation revealed that Vikram Singh was in close association with one of the senior cadre of the SFJ named Gagandeep, based in the US, whom he knew from previous association. Gagandeep contacted Vikram Singh and claimed to be a close

aide of Pannun, chief of the SFJ. He tasked him to spray pro-Khalistani slogans in lieu of Rs 2 lakh and further lucrative offers in future, Dhaliwal added. Narrating the sequence of events, the senior officer said Vikram Singh then contacted and convinced his colleague Balram to take a few days off and participate with him in the nefarious plan in lieu of quick money.

"Vikram bought multi-colour sprays from a shop in west Delhi. The accused clandestinely wrote these pro-Khalistan graffiti during the early hours of January 19 and recorded the videos of same.

These videos were then sent to Sikhs For Justice senior cadre based abroad for further broadcast through social media. Further nodes of this network are being identified. Investigation is in progress," he said.

A case under sections 154B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code was registered by the Special Cell in this regard, police said. According to the police, considering the gravity of the situation in view of Republic Day, a multi-pronged operation was launched and

several teams of Special Cell were deployed in major suspected areas in and around the National Capital Territory of Delhi. A large-scale manhunt was launched to arrest the perpetrators responsible for the graffiti, they said.

"Round the clock surveillance was mounted on persons of interest. Hundreds of hours of CCTV footage were analysed. After development of all the inputs generated through different means and efforts of multiple teams stationed in the areas of Vikaspuri, Janakpuri, Paschim Vihar, Peeragarhi, Meera Bagh and adjoining parts of western, the

suspects were zeroed in on Sunday. A team was deployed and both the accused persons were arrested in a swift operation," Dhaliwal said. A motorcycle, six spray-paint bottles of multiple colours along with a bag, two mobilephones, shoes, clothes including a jacket worn by one of the accused on the day of the incident and a bed-sheet used to cover the number plate of the vehicle have been recovered, police said.

Since the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) is a banned organisation, it is trying to make itself known and wants to be in the news, Delhi Police had said earlier over the graffiti.

Provide 1,300 MGD of water daily, Kejriwal urges Centre

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday urged the Centre to provide 1,300 million gallons per day (MGD) of water to Delhi, saying it will help ensure round-the-clock water supply to the people in the city. The Delhi government is trying to increase water availability in the city, he said after inaugurating an 11 million litres capacity underground water reservoir in Patparganj village.

"Delhi received 800-850 MGD water around 1997-98 when its population was around 80 lakh. It is still getting the same amount of water though the population has now tripled to 2.5 crore. With a slight nudge from the Centre, water can be made available from neighbouring states," the chief minister said while inau-

gurating the Patparganj reservoir. The Patparganj village underground water reservoir, constructed at Rs 32 crore, will benefit nearly one lakh residents of Patparganj village, Pandav Nagar, Shashi Garden, Mayur Vihar societies and Chilla village among others.

"We will supply round-the-clock water to each household in Delhi if the city is provided 1,300 MGD water by the Centre," he added. The chief minister also assured residents of Delhi that their water bills would be rectified in case of any anomaly and suggested they hold paying the charges till the correct ones were available as Delhi Jal Board (DJB) would come up with a plan for it. Delhi can be provided water from the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, Kejriwal said, adding that his government would work for this.

Besides water from the Yamuna, Ganga and the neighbouring states, Delhi is also working to boost availability through local sources, he added. In the last seven years, the availability of water in Delhi has increased from 861 MGD to 990 MGD through water treatment plants, tube wells and rainy wells, the chief minister said.

Twelve reservoirs and three treatment plants were constructed by the Delhi government in the last seven years, he said. Kejriwal said the city's water requirement was fixed at 800-850 MGD by the Centre, Supreme Court and other agencies around 1997-98 when the city's population was 80 lakh. Now the population has increased to 2.5 crore but the supply of water to Delhi from the Ganga and Yamuna was not raised, he said emphasising

more water for Delhi to meet the needs of people.

Since 2015 when AAP came to power in Delhi, 12 underground water reservoirs, three water treatment plants, one water recycling plant, 500 tubewells and a 2,250 km long water pipeline network that have benefited 30 lakh people have come up, he said. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who is also chairman of DJB said that Kejriwal, despite facing obstacles like delay in fund release, was working to ensure adequate water supply to the people of Delhi.

The Patparganj village underground water reservoir will be supplied water from Sonia Vihar through a 4 Km long pipeline. Water from the reservoir to different localities will be supplied by a network of 12.90-km pipelines and six pumps, officials said.

Kejriwal's ₹4.5K cr for road infra gimmick: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at the Arvind Kejriwal's announcement to improve roads, Delhi BJP on Sunday said that the announcement made by the Chief Minister to improve the roads of Delhi at a cost of Rs 4,500 crore in the next one year is gimmick announcement to start a new controversy.

"The BJP has been continuously saying that Kejriwal government makes announcements without administrative and financial approval and when there are obstacles in it, it accuses the central government and the Lieutenant Governor.

It is a matter of surprise that Chief Minister Kejriwal did not consider it necessary to take the approval of the Finance Department or the Lt. Governor before announcing the scheme of Rs. 4500 crores," Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva said. The Leader of Opposition in Delhi



Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri also criticised the Kejriwal saying he is the only chief minister who makes only announcements and did nothing. "Most of the time he is indulged in petty politics," he said.

"Sometimes he promises to make Delhi like the roads of Paris, sometimes showing dreams of London and Singapore roads, while the ground reality is that the condition of Delhi's roads is dilapidated. The Supreme Court has

termed the roads as a major cause of Delhi's pollution. In the last eight years, far from building new roads in Delhi, the Delhi government could not even repair the existing roads," Bidhuri added.

"This government has a plenty of time to hold protests and abuse the higher authority but they do not have time to serve the people of Delhi. After the rainy season in October last year, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had claimed that all the roads in the capital

would be repaired in a month, but the people of Delhi are breathing dust due to the bad condition of the roads," Bidhuri added.

Bidhuri said that now Chief Minister Kejriwal has given a new bluff of repairing the roads from April. "The Chief Minister has probably forgotten that the rainy season starts in Delhi from May-June and it is not possible to build roads in such a situation.

Therefore, if the intention of the government was to repair the roads, then this work should have started immediately, but the government has been trying to mislead the public by making only paper plans and is doing the same now," he added.

As per the report titled "Delhi Road Safety Report: Data to Action", 18 crash hot spots that are infamous for the high number of fatalities from traffic accidents and requires safety interventions to lower the mortality count.

Data: Fire Services rescued 7K birds, animals in 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

From rescuing an owl that got entangled in a kite thread to saving a cow which fell into a pit, Delhi Fire Services rescued more than 4,000 birds and 3,000 animals last year, officials said on Sunday.

Most of these rescue operations were carried out around Independence Day -- the traditional kite flying season in the national capital.

According to data accessed by PTI, firefighters in the national capital responded to 28,449 distress calls between January and December last year and rescued 3,354 animals and 4,182 birds. Over 16,500 of these distress calls were fire related, the data showed. Eighty-two people died and more than 700 were injured in fire-related incidents last year.

According to the Fire department, April (4,140), May (3,362) and June (3,186) recorded the majority of these distress calls -- most related to fire, building collapse, drowning, bird and animal rescue, among various other assistance sought by different agencies.

The maximum number of such cases were reported around Independence Day when people traditionally fly kites and the strings get suspended from trees and poles, creating a death trap for birds, said Delhi Fire Service Director Atul Garg. "Every life is important to us and our firefighters risk their lives daily to save the lives of others. According to our data, our firefighters not



only take part in fire rescue operations but also go beyond their call of duty to rescue birds and animals that get trapped or entangled.

"Fire department personnel managed to rescue 3,354 animals and 4,182 birds between January and December last year," he said.

Most of the distress calls received by the Fire department were for rescuing birds such as crows, pigeons, parrots that got entangled in kite strings dangling from overhead wires or trees. The department also received calls related to cows, cattle, dogs or cats and reptiles that got stuck inside narrow lanes, closed spaces, and even in houses, pits, canals or drains.

In December, the firefighters rescued a cow trapped under a pit using a crane in Tikri, the Fire department said.

They also came to the rescue of a pigeon entangled in wires over Ring Road. An owl that was stuck in a kite's thread was also rescued.

In August, the firefighters rescued two birds trapped by kite thread in Shastri Park and an eagle stuck in the railings at Babarpur metro. Similarly, a crow that had got entangled in a kite string dangling from a tree was also rescued.

City receives rain, minimum temperature 6.4 deg C

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After 110 dry days, the National Capital received 3.0 mm rainfall, finally a rainy day on Sunday as the minimum temperature settled at 6.4 degrees Celsius. Delhi usually gets around 17 mm of rain in January.

This, however, is the first rainfall of the winter season, which has been among the driest in the past decade. More rain is expected on Monday. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Delhi usually gets around 17 mm of rain in January. The last rainy day was



recorded on October 11, 2022. A rainy day is considered when rainfall is above 2. mm in 24 hour. After touching 10 degrees Celsius last week, morning temperatures in Delhi dipped again, with the minimum temperature on Sunday recorded as 6.4 degrees Celsius, three degrees below normal.

Cold winds also swept through the national capital region on Sunday. The IMD said an intense western disturbance over Afghanistan and the neighbouring area is the reason behind the rain in Delhi. A more intense western disturbance will be active in the area on Monday, bringing more

Bail plea of former Okhla MLA Asif rejected

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has dismissed the bail plea of former Congress legislator Asif Mohammad Khan, who is accused of misbehaving with police personnel, and also issued a show cause notice to the investigating officer and the Station House Officer of Shaheen Bagh.

The court issued the notice of show cause as to why both police officials should not be "convicted and punished for furnishing false information" to the court regarding the previous involvement report of Khan. Khan was arrested for allegedly misbehaving with police in southeast Delhi's Shaheen Bagh area on January 5. "If law enforcers are attacked or abused and accused are released on bail,

it will send the wrong signal in society. To my mind, in these circumstances, the bail application of accused Asif Mohammad Khan does not deserve to be allowed and is accordingly dismissed," Additional sessions Judge Sonu Agnihotri said in an order passed on Saturday.

The judge said the conduct of Khan in the videos regarding the incident prima facie showed that he did not have respect for the law and considered himself above law.

"The manner in which he is seen speaking with police officials is depreciable. Whatever the cause may be available to a person against government officials, but he is not expected to take the law into his own hands and misbehave and mishandle government officials who are

discharging their official duties," the court said. It noted that according to the FIR, Khan stopped the complainant Constable Dharampal from going to the place of occurrence, threatened him, used objectionable words and tried to incite the public. Thus, Khan used criminal force against the complainant, the court said.

During the proceedings, the court noted that the wrong involvement report or non-updated involvement report of Khan was submitted by the IO. "Issue show cause notice to IO... and SHO (of) police station Shaheen Bagh... to show cause as to why they should not be convicted and punished for furnishing false information to this court regarding the previous involvement of accused..." court said.

Hindu Sena puts up anti-BBC placards outside its office

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Hindu Sena on Sunday allegedly put up anti-BBC placards outside the UK-headquartered broadcaster's office on Kasturba Gandhi Marg over its documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

Placards reading "BBC is a threat to India's Unity and it should be Banned" and "BBC stop tarnishing India's image. BBC leave India" were put up outside the main gate of the BBC office amid a row over the controversial documentary. The placards were removed by the police.

Hindu Sena members also accused the media organisation of conspiring to tarnish and malign the image of both India and Prime Minister Modi. The BBC is a threat to the unity and integrity of the nation and the

channel should be banned in India immediately, Hindu Sena chief Vishnu Gupta said. He recalled that BBC was banned in India during the tenure of Indira Gandhi as prime minister. The ban was lifted after the organisation submitted an apology, Gupta claimed. When asked, a senior police officer said, "Our patrolling team, which was present nearby, spotted the placards outside the BBC office and removed those.

"Some of them (Hindu Sena members) were still trying to display placards elsewhere but they could not due to police presence and fled." Legal action has not been initiated as no complaint was received, he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday cautioned against attempts to sow differences and create divisions in country and asserted that such efforts will not succeed.

Setting up of CCTV cameras sought in area outside JNU

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Protests at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) have started troubling senior citizens living in Delhi's Munirka Vihar, not for the noise or the traffic but strangers knocking on their doors to use the washrooms.

The lack of public convenience booths in the locality has also resulted in people relieving themselves in the open, causing a foul smell in the entire area, local residents said, claiming that they have approached authorities on sev-



eral occasions but in vain.

The Senior Citizen Forum of the locality has now written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighting the issue,

demanding the construction of a public convenience booth to avoid open defecation on Bada Gang Nath Marg near Rock Garden, Munirka, and also the installation of CCTV cameras for security reasons.

In the letter dated December 12, 2022, the forum noted that the DDA flats in Munirka Vihar were mostly allotted to central government employees in 1977 and most of the residents now are senior citizens.

The situation worsens during protests at the university, which is located just opposite Munirka Vihar, locals claimed.

As there is no public convenience booth, police personnel and media persons stationed outside the university often knock on the doors of the people living there while some relieve themselves in the open, they alleged, adding that residents are also concerned about the health impact of the open defecation.

Forum member P N Malhotra said the concerns had been raised several times but nothing was ever done to address them. Due to the lack of convenience booths, women police personnel and media persons face major problems.

"Men can relieve themselves in open. Let me stress that this is also wrong. But when there are no other option, they can. But women journalists stationed outside the university for hours have no option but to knock on our doors," he said.

"We try to help them, but we also feel unsafe because the security situation outside is not great. It is necessary to instal CCTV cameras in the area and build a convenience booth," Malhotra added.

Another resident, K C Pathak, also highlighted the issue and said a well-maintained public convenience

booth for police personnel and media persons needs to be built outside the JNU gate as the protest often continue for many days.

Besides, the facility will also come to the use of passers-by as there is no other public convenience booth in the area, she said. Protests at JNU and deployment of police personnel have become an usual phenomenon, causing inconvenience to residents of the locality, especially when traffic is diverted.

Stressing on the need for CCTV surveillance, resident Satwant Kaur said it was very

much required as many residents in the area are senior citizens and some even live alone. "Their houses are prone to theft and burglary," she said, adding, "CCTV surveillance would instill fear in the minds of outlaws."

In the letter to the prime minister, the Senior Citizen Forum wrote, "Our police force in Delhi works day and night to safeguard the security of our worthy VIPs, senior citizens and residents of Delhi.

Our police force deserves your appreciation and reward of encouragement to boost their efficiency. The letter also

mentioned other demands of the people in the locality such as covering open drains and verification of vendors.

It asked for "installation of a small LED screen in the police booth near D Street gate of DDA flats, Munirka, and 85 CCTV cameras in D, E, F and G blocks."

There should be "verification of vendors, domestic helps, car cleaners etc. In our colony. Marking for parking of cars in our colony to provide way for ambulances and fire tenders. Construction of broken wall in D street," the forum said in the letter.

Probe team recovers Mirage black box

Efforts on to retrieve all parts of SU-30 data recorder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

As the IAF has started investigations to ascertain the cause of the air mishap near Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on Saturday, its teams on Sunday recovered the black box of the ill-fated Mirage-2000 and a part of the flight data recorder of the SU-30 MKI. Efforts were on to retrieve all the parts of the black box or the data recorder of the SU-30 to enable the board of inquiry to find out the reason for the accident.

The data recorder of the Mirage-2000 and the SU-30 were found in the Morena district where both planes went down. Wing Commander Hanumanth Rao Sarathi flying the Mirage was killed while the two pilots of the SU-30 managed to eject before the crash. They were now undergoing medical treatment, officials said here.

As regards the recovery of the data recorder and collecting the wreckage of both the planes, officials said teams of IAF studied and inspected a forested area of Pahargarh where the debris of the two



Relatives and Air Force personnel during the last rites of Wing Commander Hanumanth Rao Sarathi, who was killed in plane crash in Morena, Madhya Pradesh, at Belagavi on Sunday

fighter jets fell on Saturday.

The two frontline combat aircraft of the IAF crashed during a training mission in Morena possibly due to mid-air collision when the wings of the two aircraft brushed against

each other while flying at speeds of more than 800kms.

A black box, or the flight data recorder, is an electronic recording device placed in an aircraft and helps in the investigation of flight accidents.

Pahargarh area police inspector Dharmendra Gour said the forested area where the wreckage fell has been cordoned off.

"Even police are not being allowed in the (cordoned off)

area. Officials of IAF are present there," he said. Media personnel are also not allowed in the area.

Defence experts have said the Russian-designed Sukhoi-30MKI jet and the French Mirage-2000 possibly had a mid-air collision, but there was no official comment on the cause of the crash from the IAF.

Both the jets had taken off from the Gwalior Air Force station. The base has squadrons of both Sukhoi-30MKIs and the Mirage 2000 jets. The crash took place at about 5.30am.

Morena Collector Ankit Asthana on Saturday said the debris of both aircraft fell in the Pahargarh area of the district and also in Rajasthan's Bharatpur, which borders Madhya Pradesh.

A high-level probe has been ordered into the accident, officials earlier said. It was the first Mirage 2000 as well as Sukhoi-30MKI that the IAF lost in a mid-air collision.

The SU-30MKI is a twin-seater combat jet, while the Mirage 2000, manufactured by French aerospace major Dassault Aviation, is a single-seater aircraft.

CPI demands probe into all Adani group business deals

Attacks Centre for allowing monopoly to company in the ports and airports

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (CPI) on Sunday demanded a thorough probe into all deals of the Adani group. The party's national secretariat in a statement blamed Modi Government for patronage given to industrialist Gautam Adani by allowing monopoly in the ports, and airports sector and backing of LIC in share markets.

"The National Secretariat of the Communist Party of India has repeatedly pointed out that the pro-corporate and pro-big business policies adopted by the RSS-BJP combine government led by Narendra Modi are resulting in the loot of national and natural assets by Adani and others. The Modi government has asked the public sector enterprises including LIC to invest in Adani companies' shares.

"The Adani group is now having control over seaports,



airports and profit-making public-sector enterprises. The sudden growth of Adani group after Modi came to power is proof of the patronage received from the government. The investors including the average Indian investor and the public sector units are already under heavy loss due to alleged manipulations by the Adani

group," said CPI. The CPI demanded a thorough probe into all the deals of the Adani group by competent authorities so that further loss can be averted. "Party also demands exemplary punishment to all those responsible for the loot of the national and natural assets," said CPI.

Bihar students in lurch over JEE dates clash

NTA assures JEE aspirants, new date to be announced today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/PATNA

The schedule of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main 2023 examinations has left the Bihar students jittery as it coincided with the Class 12 mathematics exam to be conducted by the Bihar Intermediate board on February 1.

Sources in the Ministry of Education said a late evening meeting conducted on Sunday has decided to hold a discussion with the Bihar Education Department to adjust the conflicting exam dates either way.

A senior official of the National Testing Agency (NTA) has assured that Bihar students desiring to take the JEE will not face any problems and a new decision to tweak the



date and timing shall be announced positively by Monday morning.

Students taking the Bihar Board (BSEB) exam in 2023 have took to social media to express their concerns and urged either of the organizers to adjust or reschedule the exam dates. National Testing Agency (NTA) which conducts

the JEE for admissions towards IITs and engineering colleges across the country recently revised JEE Main 2023 exam dates, as of which, the JEE Main 2023 Exams will be conducted on January 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31 and February 1.

Interestingly the JEE 2023 exam had to be rescheduled since a date of testing of one

batch of aspirants/applicants fell on January 27 earlier which had to be withdrawn because of the Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) 2023 was scheduled on January 27 in which lakhs of students, teachers parents and other stakeholders participated.

The Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) will conduct the mathematics exam of the class 12th board exam for 2023 on February 1, from 9.30 am to 12.45 pm. While the JEE Main 2023 will take place from 9am to 12pm.

Candidates who has to mandatory take the Class 12 board exams and those who have intended to take JEE Main schedule for same day on February 1 have requested the Bihar government to amend

necessary changes which is significant for their career.

Man booked for impersonating as secretary of PMO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked Ankit Kumar Singh for impersonating as Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in a case for personating a government servant.

"It has been learnt by this office that a man Ankit Kumar Singh is moving around claiming himself to be Dinesh Rao, an IAS officer of 1997 batch of Bihar cadre and posted as a Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, and looking after Varanasi district.

His mobile number is 9454008098 and he is learnt to have contacted Prabhu Narayan Singh, District Magistrate, Agra, Uttar Pradesh seeking favours for his con-



stituency.

Prima facie, it appears to be a case of impersonation as PMO official as no official by the given name is posted in this office. Accordingly, CBI is requested to lodge a complaint for initiating investigation into the matter, as per law," Assistant Director, PMO, said in a complaint dated September 24, 2021.

The case was registered following notifications from the Department of Personnel and Training under which the CBI functions and the Home Department of the Uttar Pradesh Government for investigating the case.

While the UP Government accorded consent to the CBI to investigation the case under its jurisdiction across the State on August 24, 2022 and subsequently the DoPT notified the agency to probe the matter in a notification dated November 14 last year.

The suspect has been booked under Section 170 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for personating a government servant.

Rollout of HPV vax against cervical cancer: Govt likely to float global tender in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry intends to roll out HPV vaccine against cervical cancer in the national immunisation programme for girls aged nine to 14 years in June for which a global tender is likely to be floated in April, official sources have said.

Serum Institute's made-in-India HPV vaccine "CER-VAVAC" was launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on January 24, in presence of the Pune-based firm's CEO Adar Poonawalla and Prakash Kumar Singh, its Director-Government and Regulatory Affairs.

"The ministry is likely to float in April a global tender for 16.02 crore doses of HPV vaccine, which will be supplied by 2026. Apart from domestic manufacturer Serum Institute of India, global vaccine manufacturer Merck is also likely to participate in the tender," an official source said.

In July last year, India's drug regulator granted market authorization to Serum Institute of India's indigenously developed HPV vaccine.

It has also been cleared by government advisory panel National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) for use in the public health programme.

Prakash Kumar Singh, on the sidelines of a South Asia meet on HPV last month, had said that the price of CER-VAVAC will be affordable compared to the international HPV vaccine available in India.

India, at present, is fully dependent on foreign manufacturers for HPV vaccines.

Globally, three foreign firms manufacture HPV vaccines out of which two sell their doses in India.

Each dose of the vaccine available in the market costs more than ₹4,000, sources said. In September 2022, Poonawalla had said that each dose of its "CERVAVAC" vaccine would cost ₹200 to ₹400.

Cattle runover on tracks: Rly starts fencing Mumbai-Ahmedabad route

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

To curb incidents of cattle runover in the busy Mumbai - Ahmedabad section, Indian Railways has initiated the work of construction of cattle barrier fencing.

To begin with, the Western Railway has initiated the work of construction of Metal Beam fencing on Mumbai - Ahmedabad section. The metal barrier fencing will cover a length of about 622 km, between Mumbai to Ahmedabad and will be undertaken at an approximate cost of ₹245.26 crore.

"All the 8 tenders have been awarded and work is progressing in full swing. The work is expected to be completed by end of May 2023. The fencing will be of guard rails made of metal. The fencing is very robust as it consists of two W-beams. A W-beam type stands for wide flanges, which are thicker, that aid in resisting bend stress," said a senior railway official.

Such fencings are used in



highways & expressways, especially at accident prone areas to provide protection to vehicles as well as pedestrians.

At the same time Western Railway appealed to the cattle owners/cattle grazers to not let their cattle come near the railway land/tracks.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had announced that barriers or concrete bollards

will be constructed along the fast moving train sections to secure the rail infrastructure and at the same time safety of the passengers on board.

In yet another initiative, Railways have already put on the service of its security personnel to man and then simultaneously create awareness along the residents of tracks.

Put conversion matter before 5-judge bench, urges fresh plea in SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh application has been moved before the Supreme Court urging that the matters related to alleged forcible religious conversions be taken up by a larger bench of five judges as they involve the interpretation of the Constitution.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud is scheduled to hear the batch of pleas on Monday against anti-conversion laws of several states regulating religious conversion due to interfaith marriages and on matters related to alleged forcible conversions.

The fresh application is filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, who is among the petitioners. He has asked the court to refer the petitions to a larger bench saying there are several questions of laws involved which require the interpretation of the Constitution.

He raised questions like whether the previous judgments of this Court interpreting Article 25(1) of the Constitution are grossly erro-



neous in so far as they upheld the word "propagate" would include entitlement to convert.

"Whether the word 'propagate' needs to be construed in a manner which is not detrimental to fraternity, unity, dignity and national integration..." Upadhyay's fresh plea said.

It should also not lead to communal conflagration on account of religious communities trying to convert the weaker section of other religious communities and "attempting to make demographic changes as witnessed in the nine states/UTs (Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh) and around 200 districts of India", the application said.

PIL filed in SC challenging Centre's decision to ban BBC documentary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court against the Centre's decision to "ban" a BBC documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots in the country, alleging it was "malafide, arbitrary and unconstitutional".

The PIL filed by advocate ML Sharma also urged the apex court to call and examine the BBC documentary - both parts I and II - and sought action against persons who were responsible and were involved directly and indirectly with the 2002 Gujarat riots.

Sharma said that in his PIL he has raised a constitutional question and the top court has to decide whether citizens have the right under Article 19 (1) (2) to see news, facts and reports on the 2002 Gujarat

riots.

He has sought direction to quash the order dated January 21, 2023 of the Ministry of the Information and Broadcasting, terming it as illegal, malafide, arbitrary and unconstitutional.

His plea said whether the central government can curtail freedom of press which is a fundamental right as guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (2) of the Constitution.

"Whether without having an Emergency declared under Article 352 of the Constitution of India by the president, Emergency provisions can be invoked by the central government?" the PIL said.

It claimed the BBC documentary has "recorded facts" which are also "evidence" and can be used to further the cause of justice for the victims.

Leprosy cases declining not due to non-transmission, but due to non-detection: WHO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Sunday reminded the member nations not to be complacent in view of declining new leprosy cases, which it asserted were not due to decrease in transmission of the disease, but because of cases remaining undetected amid covid-related disruptions.

Against this backdrop, it has asked the countries to urgently address gaps in leprosy services which were affected

due to Covid-19 pandemic. "Act Now. End Leprosy," is this year's theme for World Leprosy Day being observed on Sunday.

"Leprosy is 100% curable when detected early. Yet, today, in addition to covid-19 related challenges, stigma and discrimination- both institutionalized and informal, continue to impede prompt diagnosis and treatment and facilitate onward spread of leprosy. This has to change," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, regional director, WHO South-East Asia.

She pointed out that over

the past decade, strong progress was achieved in several key areas of leprosy prevention, treatment, and control globally, with new cases among children reduced by 27% between 2010 and 2019, visible deformities at time of diagnosis reduced by 23% between 2014 and 2019 and the rate of new cases among children reduced to 7.6 per million children as opposed to 9.8 in 2014.

However, in 2021, 140,000 new leprosy cases were reported, with 95 per cent of new cases coming from the 23 global priority countries. Of these,



File photo

6 per cent were diagnosed with visible deformities or grade-2 disabilities (G2D). Over 6 per cent of new cases were children under the age of 15, with 368 being diagnosed with grade-2 disabilities, she said.

Even as a 10 per cent increase in new cases was reported in 2021 against 2020, the reported cases were still 30% lower than in 2019. Reportedly, this is not because of a decrease in transmission, but due to cases remaining undetected amid covid-related disruptions.

"Countries must continue

to urgently restore leprosy services, with a focus on expanding single dose rifampicin chemoprophylaxis, intensifying active case finding, and ensuring prompt diagnosis and treatment with multidrug therapy," added Dr Khetrapal Singh.

The global health official also stressed on ensuring increased access for persons affected by leprosy and their families to mental health care as up to 50% of those affected face psychiatric morbidities such as depression, anxiety disorders and suicide attempts.

Junior clerk recruitment exam paper leaked in Guj

Exam cancelled, 16 arrested by ATS



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The competitive examination for the recruitment of Gujarat government's junior clerks scheduled on Sunday was postponed soon after it came to light that its question paper had been leaked, following which 16 persons were arrested, officials said.

The Gujarat Panchayat Service Selection Board (GPSSB) announced postponement of the examination early Sunday morning, hours before it was scheduled to start across 2,995 centres at 11 am.

As many as 9.5 lakh candidates had applied for 1,181 posts. The Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) said it arrested 16 persons in this connection and recovered the copy of the question paper from their possession.

GPSSB's in-charge chairman Sandeep Kumar later announced that the examination will be conducted within 100 days and a new date will be announced in the next few days.

Addressing a press conference, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Gujarat ATS Sunil Joshi said 16 persons have been arrested so far in this case, including 15 from Vadodara and one from Hyderabad. Seven out of the 16 accused are part of a gang from Bihar.

"The state ATS nabbed 15 accused from a computer exam centre named Stackwise Technology in Vadodara around 1.30 am on Sunday when they had gathered there with the copy of the question paper.

The question paper recovered from them matched with that of the original paper, prompting the government to immediately decide on postponing the exam," he said. Working on a tip-off that a man from Odisha, identified as Pradip Nayak, was going to deliver the question paper to Ketan Barot and Bhaskar

Chaudhary in Vadodara city, the ATS formed a special team involving personnel from the Surat crime branch and Vadodara Special Operations Group (SOG) and arrested 15 persons from the exam centre along with the copy of the photo and copy of the question paper, Joshi said. "When we contacted the GPSSB, it confirmed that the copies matched with that of the original question paper. It was immediately decided to postpone the examination," he said. Further investigation revealed that Nayak was given the copy of the paper by one Jeet Nayat, who worked at K L Hitech Press in Hyderabad where the paper was printed. A team rushed to Hyderabad and arrested Nayak who was being brought to Gujarat, he said.

Barot and Chaudhary were arrested in the past in cases investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), he said. Chaudhary is a native of Bihar and lives in Vadodara, and Mohanty hails from Odisha and resides in Surat, Joshi said.

"The accused from Odisha contacted Chaudhary and Barot through the gang from Bihar. Chaudhary and Barot then contacted the accused in Gujarat, and they all decided to gather at Chaudhary's exam centre in Vadodara," Joshi said.

He said that most of the accused are involved in education consultancy business. "The accused persons were booked under sections 406 and 409 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating) and 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the case will be investigated by the ATS," he said.

Further probe will reveal the extent of exchange of money and the involvement of students in this connection.

An ATS team was sent to Odisha to arrest a wanted accused from the state, he said. Revealing the modus operandi,

Joshi said that Nayak came in touch with a gang from Bihar led by one Murari Paswan, one of the accused.

"Paswan and his gang member Mintu Kumar contacted the accused persons from Vadodara. Through the Paswan gang, the supplier group came in contact with the recipients," he said.

"Most of them are involved in education consultancy, and one is a co-owner of a nursing college. We have arrested 16 accused, and the gang is completely busted," he said.

Early in the day, GPSSB's Sandeep Kumar told reporters that the examination will be held within 100 days. The board expressed regret for the inconvenience caused to the candidates and announced the examination will be conducted afresh at the earliest, for which the board will issue a new advertisement.

Meanwhile, candidates reached the examination centres from far-off places on Sunday and expressed anger over the development. Members of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the Congress's student wing, blocked roads and shouted slogans against the government even as a number of them were detained in different parts of the state, according to police.

Members of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) also joined the protest. Some of the angry candidates demanded strong action against those responsible for the paper leak.

Police teams were deployed at the exam centres and bus stands as agitated candidates expressed their anguish and anger over the development.

"We feel helpless and uncertain about their future due to paper leak incidents happening regularly. The government should take care that such an incident does not recur. We travelled from far-off places and took trouble to reach here only to find the exam was cancelled," said a candidate.

The opposition Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) demanded strict action against the culprits. Gujarat AAP president Isudan Gadhvi demanded that the government form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to investigate the paper leak cases in the state.

"Apart from the SIT, we demand that the government come up with a strict law against paper leak in the upcoming budget session of the Assembly (to begin from February 23).

well as Rafik Hariri University Hospital Chairman Dr Jihad Saadeh were present on the occasion.

DR Mehta, founder and chief patron of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, said over 10,000 people with disabilities in over 40 countries in Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands had been rehabilitated under the India for Humanity programme, launched to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2018.

The Samiti conducted four similar camps in the country between 2006 and 2008 with support from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. During these camps, 381 limbs were fitted, according to the release.

Jaipur Foot maker begins limb fitment camp in Lebanon



PTI ■ JAIPUR

The Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti - makers of the famous Jaipur Foot -- has started an artificial limb fitment camp in Beirut, Lebanon. The camp is sponsored by the Union Ministry of External Affairs under the 'India for Humanity' programme.

"The Jaipur Foot artificial limb fitment camp was inaugurated at the Rafik Hariri University Hospital, Beirut, on India's 74th Republic Day (Thursday)," the organisation said in a release on Sunday.

Representatives from the Foreign Affairs and Public Health ministries and the Lebanese Armed Forces as

WB Govt staffers protest over non-payment of DA

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As though the 600-days-long sit-in demonstration by the victims of recruitment scam was not enough, a joint forum of 8 lakh strong State Government employees unions too have begun a continuous dharna in support of 38 per cent hike in dearness allowances.

The government employees including the retired staff have been protesting for months alleging that the Government had not paid them the revised dearness allowance after the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations were implemented by various governments. This, despite the Calcutta High directing the State to do so.

According to the joint forum leaders while they were eligible for an approved 34 per cent DA of the basic pay the government has so far given 3 per cent DA, which was not only less than the central government standards but also lesser than the DA given by the other States like Kerala, Bihar,

Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and even Uttar Pradesh. The employees association which promptly got support from the protestors of teachers' recruitment scam said they would continue the movement, till their demands were made.

"We have called for a 2-hour cease work on Wednesday ... if the Government continues to pay no heed to our demand then we will go for a bigger movement," one of their senior leaders said, even as the ruling Trinamool Congress blamed the Opposition BJP and the Left for fomenting problem.

"It is the CPI(M) and BJP which are inciting the government workers to derive political mileage from it ... still the people will once again vote for the Trinamool Congress in the panchayat and general elections" TMC MP Shantanu Sen said.

Supporting the cause of the State employees, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said, his party would raise the issue inside the Assembly and take the move-

ment to its logical end. "We will raise this issue in the Assembly ... because this Government does not even listen to the High Court which has directed them repeatedly to clear the DA," he said. The State government has moved the Supreme Court after the High Court order directing the government to clear the DA arrears of the employees.

CPI(M) MP and senior counsel Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya said "there is no rule of law in Bengal which is proved by the way they get the audacity to defy the High Court ... this is sheer arrogance that has come with power..."

However TMC MP Sen advised the opposition to consider the large-scale welfare works undertaken by the Chief Minister.

"Mamata Banerjee has introduced a whole range of projects from Kanyashree, Yuvashree, Sabooj Saathi, Sikshashree, Swasthya Saathi to Lakshmir Bhandar ... on the other hand the Centre is not releasing more than Rs 1 lakh crore due to the State



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives for the Beating Retreat ceremony, at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi, on Sunday

PTI Photo

2,300 hectares land retrieved during anti-encroachment drive in J-K's Kishtwar

PTI ■ JAMMU

Over 2,300 hectares of state and 'kahcharai' land were retrieved during the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir, an official said on Sunday.

The anti-encroachment drive is going on in full swing in all tehsils under the direct supervision of Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar, Devansh Yadav, registering 75 per cent progress, he said.

"The district administration has activated men and machinery on mission mode to evict the illegal occupants from the state land. Till date, around 47,552 kanals (2377.6 hectares) of state and Roshini land, out of total 64,192 kanal, have been retrieved," the official said.

Under kahcharai land, he said, over 384 kanals (19.2 hectares) have been retrieved, out of a total encroached 572 kanals through a series of anti-encroachment drives. The



retrieved land in Kishtwar town is worth crores of rupees, he added. Yadav has passed strict directions to Assistant Commissioner, Revenue, Kishtwar, Varunjeet Singh Charak and all tehsildars to chalk out a comprehensive plan and intensify the eviction and demolition drives in collaboration with police and other concerned in the coming days so that the rest of encroached land is retrieved in stipulated time.

Meanwhile, officials said more than 35 kanals of encroached land was retrieved from illegal occupants in different parts of Kathua district on Saturday. The retrieved land included over three kanals and six marlas from former minis-

ter Prem Sagar Aziz and nine kanals and 15 marlas from District Development Council, Chairman, Kathua, Col (retd) Mahan Singh from Plahi village, they said. The officials said the land freed from the encroachers also includes a high-value land worth Rs 2.41 crore in Basohli sub-division.

The Jammu district administration has retrieved prime government land, measuring 20 kanals and five marla, from Machallian-Nagbani village in the Domana area on the outskirts of the city, they said.

Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, Avny Lavasa appreciated the efforts of revenue officers and asked them to leave no stone unturned to retrieve the state land from encroachers.

Maurya, Shivpal and Azam appointed SP general secys

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Swami Prasad Maurya, who recently stirred a controversy by his intemperate remarks on Ramcharitmanas, has been rewarded by being appointed as general secretary of the Samajwadi Party. Shivpal Singh Yadav, uncle of party chief Akhilesh Yadav, and veteran leader Mohammad Azam Khan are also among the 14 national general secretaries appointed by the party.

The SP declared its 62-member national executive on Sunday with Akhilesh Yadav as its national president. The nephew duo of Shivpal and Akhilesh, who parted ways in 2016, came together during the Mainpuri Lok Sabha by-election in December last year following the death of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The SP on Sunday released the list of 62 national executive members on its Twitter handle. In 2016, Shivpal Yadav, the then SP's Uttar Pradesh unit president, had an open feud with the then chief minister Akhilesh Yadav and was sacked from Uttar Pradesh cabinet.

AMU students raising religious slogans should be sent to Pak: Min



PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGHARH

The controversy over raising religious slogans in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh Muslim University is not taking its name to stop. Actually, slogans of Allah Hu Akbar were raised by a student wearing NCC uniform on Republic Day whose video became quite viral on social media.

However, action is being taken on the matter by the AMU administration. But the statement of Minister of State of Uttar Pradesh Government Raghuraj Singh has given rise to the matter again.

In fact, regarding the whole matter, Minister of State of Uttar Pradesh Government, Raghuraj Singh says that "the students raising controversial slogans should be sent to Pakistan".

Those who raise such slogans have no right to live in India. Not only this, Minister of State Raghuraj Singh says that a sedition case should be filed against such people".

He furiously said that send the terrorists to Pakistan, I will pay the fare. He further said that "slogans of 'Allah Hu Akbar' should be raised in the mosque, it is okay, it is not a problem, but when it is a national festival of 26 January, if such words are used under the flag on this day, then you are a terrorist".

After the statement of the Minister of State, there is panic in AMU, on the other hand, the accused student has been identified in the case of raising religious slogans. The student is studying in BA 1st year and his name is Wahiduzma.

He is a resident of West Bengal. However, the university administration has suspended the student. Along with this, a three-member inquiry committee has been constituted, which will prepare and submit the inquiry report very soon.

Bad weather forces Shah to address Hry rally over phone

BJP leaders will win all LS seats in State in 2024

PTI ■ GOHANA (HARYANA)

After his visit here to attend a public rally on Sunday was cancelled due to bad weather, Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the gathering briefly over phone and exuded confidence that "lotus will bloom" on all Lok Sabha seats in the state in 2024 elections.

He also said the Manohar Lal Khattar government has reined in corruption and undertaken development in all fields during the past eight years. Addressing the 'Jan Uththan Rally', Shah appealed to the people of Haryana to vote for BJP to make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister again.

"I could not come, but in near future I will come to Gohana," he said, adding "on every Lok Sabha seat, Bharatiya Janata Party's lotus will bloom, I have full belief." BJP had in 2019 won all the 10 Lok Sabha seats from Haryana.

Haryana unit of the BJP had been preparing for the Gohana rally for the past few weeks and Shah was also to address a party meeting here.

Addressing the rally, Shah said the present state government has ended casteism, improved the law and order, and ensured there is no corruption in recruitment for government jobs in the state.

Shah said that the development which has been undertaken in the past eight years was not witnessed in the state in decades.

He also mentioned that now educated sarpanches are taking Haryana forward.

10 killed in separate road accidents in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



Ganesh Prasad Saha along with other police officials rushed to the spot and monitored the operations to rescue the victims.

According to police officials, a car going towards Bagraich on Pilibhit Basti road near Pangri Khurd village hit a scooter coming from the opposite direction at around 7:30 pm in which the scooter rider sustained injuries. After this, a crowd gathered on the spot, most of whom were residents

of the village. The speeding truck coming from Bagraich ran over the crowd and fell into a ditch. The injured were rushed to the district hospital for treatment. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the loss of lives, and directed officials to ensure proper treatment of the injured persons, the chief medical officer said in a tweet in Hindi.

District Magistrate Mahendra Bahadur Singh, Chief Development Officer Anil Kumar Singh and Superintendent of Police Ganesh Prasad Saha took cognisance of the accident. Identification of the injured was underway. The Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party expressed condolences and

urged the UP government to give compensation to the families of the victims.

Meanwhile, a motorcycle-borne man and his son were hit by a truck while going to distribute wedding cards in Kannauj district. They died on the spot. After the accident, the driver fled with the truck. Komal, daughter of farmer Awadhesh Dubey (50) of Nathapurva village of Tirwa Kotwali area is to be married on February 15.

Aditya Dubey (26), the family's only son working in a furniture factory in Bareilly, came home on January 28. Awadhesh Dubey had left the house to distribute the wedding card with his son Aditya on Sunday morning. A speeding

truck hit their bike on the bypass near Pal crossing in Sadar Kotwali, killing Awadhesh and Aditya on the spot. Kotwali in-charge Rajkumar Singh said that both the bodies were sent for autopsy and efforts were on to nab the truck driver.

Meanwhile, Vedprakash (50) and his wife Shakuntala Devi (48) of Bari village under Pilibhit police station Newriya, were killed in a collision between a Bolero and an unknown vehicle near Lauhangapur forest on the Khutar Purnapur state highway in Shahjahanpur at around one o'clock on Saturday night. Ved Prakash had left for Ayodhya on Saturday night with family members and relatives. His

Bolero collided with a vehicle due to fog in Lauhangapur forest. Vedprakash and Shakuntala Devi died on the spot. After this, the driver of the other vehicle fled along with the vehicle.

On getting information about the accident, the police reached the spot and sent the injured to the community health centre where the doctor pronounced Vedprakash and Shakuntala Devi dead.

Seriously injured Ram Singh, his wife Anita Devi, son Aryan, Ashok Kumar, his wife Sarita Devi, Anand Swaroop were referred to government medical college. Vedprakash's son Kamal Kumar filed a complaint against the unknown driver.

Easy choice

Renaming of Mughal Gardens as Amrit Udyan is a convenient way of making a nationalist statement

Renaming of Mughal Gardens at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi as Amrit Udyan has resulted in reactions from various quarters on expected lines. The new name has been given by President Draupadi Murmu as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav festivities to mark 75 years of India's independence. Deputy Press Secretary to the President Navika Gupta told reporters on Saturday. Typically, the Bharatiya Janata Party has lauded the move, with spokesman Sambit Patra calling it a "historic decision" of the Narendra Modi government that was needed to "come out of 'slavery mentality'." Law minister Kiren Rijju saw the rise of New India in it. The Opposition, also expectedly, slammed the renaming of Mughal Gardens. Who knows, they might now want to rename the Eden Gardens and call it Modi Gardens, Trinamool Congress' Parliamentary party leader in the Rajya Sabha Derek O'Brien told a news agency. CPI general secretary D Raja saw "the RSS" agenda... to rewrite Indian history and redefine nationhood" in the decision.

There is no doubt that the BJP Govts at the Centre and in states are in overdrive in changing the names of places, buildings, etc., in their bid to present themselves as true and staunch nationalists, to instill pride in people about the glorious past. Besides, renaming is the easiest exercise; a government need not do any real work for the benefit of the people to rename a town or garden. Sometimes, renaming is

also done to score political points and needle the Opposition. For instance, the names Gandhi and Nehru have been removed from several government schemes and places. It should, however, not be forgotten that the BJP, though the most active player of the game of symbolism, is not the only one. The Congress actually began the game. In 1995, the Congress government, at the behest of its MP Mani Shankar Aiyar, changed the name of the iconic Connaught Place (CP) to Rajiv Chowk and Connaught Circus to Indira Chowk. In 2004, in his capacity as petroleum minister, Aiyar got a plaque on RSS ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the Cellular Jail premises in Andaman and Nicobar Islands removed. For Aiyar, as for the BJP, such decisions are ideological and political rather than rational. But then reason is increasingly playing a smaller role in politics; concomitantly, irrationality is growing by the day. When the BJP is in power, it removes the names of Gandhi and Nehru from schemes and places; when the Congress comes to office, it humbles Hindutva heroes. Such puerility cannot be allowed to continue. It is time political leaders across party lines considered the possibility of a comprehensive policy. The objective should be to make nomenclature apolitical and sensible. It is not good for the nation if a name changing exercise is criticised as being biased against Muslims, but this is exactly what has been happening. The Govt must ensure that it doesn't face such accusations in the future.



Prioritise healthcare

The Finance Minister would do well to increase the budget allocation for the public health

It is unfortunate that even after seven decades of independence fatalities due to diseases in the country are high and infant mortality rate is a cause of concern. Many people suffer from life threatening diseases such as TB, Cancer, heart ailments but are unable to get the treatment due to high cost of treatment. People suffer from disabilities such as blindness which seriously impact their life. The reason they do not have access to affordable healthcare. The government health infrastructure falls way short of the desirable levels. The gaps in public health are filled by private hospitals and doctors; that are way too expensive and do not have a footprint in far-off areas especially tribal areas and remote villages. Public health is a state subject and so primarily the state's responsibility. There is a strong case to shift it to a concurrent list of the Constitution which would allow the center to directly address health issues. As many states struggle with funds, public health takes the beating. Public health is directly correlated to national productivity and hence it is a good investment to make for the health of the nation too. India ranks lower than many countries, like, Brazil, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand when it comes to life expectancy at birth.

The reason is not difficult to fathom. In 2019, India's government health expenditure per capita (in purchasing power parity, or PPP, terms) was \$69 as against \$154 in the Philippines, \$175 in Indonesia, \$492 in China, \$524 in Thailand, and \$610 in Brazil.

That greater investments in health will positively impact India's GDP by increasing productivity over the long term. It was also acknowledged in the National Health Policy 2017, which suggested increasing public health spending. The finance minister has a shot in the present budget to increase the budget outlay for health. If the Union Budget 2023-24 can lower this gap by stepping up the budget outlay it would be a great service to the people. Budgetary allocations in the financial year 2020-21 were only 1.8 percent, well short of the expenditure on health of the stipulated target of 2.5 percent of the GDP by 2025 as suggested by NK Singh, chairman of the 15th Finance Commission. He had also advised the Developmental Finance Institution (DFI) dedicated to healthcare investments to channel the funds for health in a better way. But a decent allocation in the budget for health can be a good start.

Indian aviation is becoming chaotic

The civil aviation authorities should focus on providing better facilities at the airports, not on bragging about the scale of their operations

The Indian aviation industry is now a farce. The recent disgraceful alleged incident involving an "unruly" passenger on Air India, an airline leaving behind a busload of passengers and flying off, the systematic chaos at Delhi International Airport (DIAL), and the frequent and unreported incidents at other airports all raise one question. What direction is the industry taking? What exactly does a passenger receive from these airports in exchange for paying the passenger terminal fee? How do airlines handle their obligations? What is being done to make travel safer and less stressful? Airports and airlines in India clearly do not provide the level of service that is expected of them. The stress of the journey begins and continues as a result of how airports handle ground situations.

Who needs the lofty titles and laurels of being the world's "busiest" or "best" airport? Passengers would prefer a more "efficient" airport! The "busiest" airport benefits only the operator and not the customer.

Consider our opulent airports, which appear to have heralded, albeit in reverse, a revolution. Despite the grandiose nature of many modern airports, inefficiency seems to be widespread. Aviation was created to change the way people travel by allowing them to travel long distances in a fraction of the time it would take by other means. Airports appear to put a dent in this theory.

They waste most of the passengers' valuable time and energy. Even for domestic travel, airlines and airports have set a reporting time of 2-3 hours. It is an unacceptable step back. Isn't it strange that in that amount of time, one can land on a foreign shore? The scales established by airlines and airport operators are only self-serving, without putting the customer at the center.

Ironically and equally fascinating are how technology has advanced to the point where it can detect if one's heart valves



need to be repaired, while airport x-ray machines still can't see through the bags and force us to go through the rather antiquated process of removing articles from cabin baggage as well as our jackets, belts, boots, and socks. Such mindless checks are an insult to any civilized process. It is a form of public humiliation that we have all come to accept as necessary.

Are we saying that the deployed man and machine are so skeptical of each other that they want to double-check that the passenger isn't a criminal on a mission? It calls into question both men's and machines' capabilities. Handlers at x-ray machines are unfamiliar with the objects or electronics that must be handled properly.

Many of us have seen the airport's general atmosphere deteriorate in recent years. The serpentine lines and cramped quarters give you a headache, but the lack of air circulation exacerbates the situation. In the dead of win-

WHO NEEDS THE LOFTY TITLES AND LAURELS OF BEING THE WORLD'S "BUSIEST" OR "BEST" AIRPORT? PASSENGERS WOULD PREFER A MORE "EFFICIENT" AIRPORT!

ter in Delhi, one can easily sweat in one's jacket while navigating the lines. What advantages does this have for passengers?

Practical solutions, such as displaying the estimated time it will take to clear passengers or the crowd size inside the check-in and security areas, can be beneficial. Passengers' stress levels will be reduced if they are cleared in the order in which the airline or destination departs in real-time.

The passenger is entirely on his own until the end of the boarding. Rather, it should be the responsibility of the airline and airport operators to own the customer once he is inside the airport and make his journey safe, secure, and hassle-free in exchange for the cost of the ticket and taxes he has paid. That's the bare minimum any service provider is expected to do.

Why should a passenger be made to suffer because he or she is flying a specific airline and bunched like sar-

dines with other airlines that have peak capacity at that hour? Essentially, why should every airline passenger pass through the same rabbit hole? These are systems designed for a different era with the sole purpose of saving money. It is time to review the procedures that create friction and stress and eliminate them.

We don't want silent airports; we want upbeat airports. Airports that are conscious of customer needs and that are practical. We want airports that deliver speed, efficiency, and care from the moment the passenger enters the terminal until they depart.

Alas, the airport operators and airlines are not catering to these issues. Negligence and air rage are direct and indirect results of the broken, negligent, and hands-off attitude of the airport, airlines, and stakeholders.

(The writer is a communications specialist based in New Delhi, a travel writer, and an aviation geek. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PENDING VACANCIES IN THE JUDICIARY

Sir — The noted former Supreme court Judge R F Nariman has made a very valid observation that the government could not keep pending the postings of new Judges as recommended by the Collegium for an indefinite period in view of crores of pending cases hanging in different courts at different levels.

The law minister should answer whether he is not concerned with the real problem of pendency of cases and if so whether he wants to cling to the same old reasoning that they are not responsible for this pendency as they have inherited them from earlier governments. As suggested by Mr. Nariman too, the government at least should tentatively form a committee of say 5 judges or so from different states who should be advised to give their opinions regarding new judges' postings say within around a month or so and the government should clear such names subject to having no 'objectionable comments' on the suggested names. Both the central government and the law minister seem to have no scant concern about delivering speedy justice to the innocents' litigations in the courts whatsoever which is the most atrocious attitude of the central government.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

TROUBLE FOR ADANI

Sir — The shares of several companies owned by billionaire Gautam Adani collapsed due to heavy losses on Friday (January 27) after a report by a US investment firm accused the Adani Group of being involved in committing "brazen" corporate fraud. The report raised questions over the financial stability of Adani Group in the coming days and concerns are now raised over the savings of millions of Indians in big financial institutions like the State Bank of India (SBI) and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).

The Congress party demanded that a thorough probe should be launched into Hindenburg Research's allegations adding that it may have exposed the financial system of the country to systemic risks "through the liberal investments in the

Iconic Telugu Actress Jamuna



The death of a Legendary actor of the yesterday years of the Telugu film industry's golden era - Jamuna - marks an end of an era of those great actors. She acted with other legendary actors of the era such as N T Rama Rao, Akkinnein Nageswara Rao, Savitry and S V Ranga Rao and others.

Her claim to fame came with the release of Missamma (1955) Telugu-language romantic comedy film directed by L. V. Prasad, arguably Missamma is one of the greatest movies of all times in the history of Tollywood, in which NT Rama Rao, with his indomitable nuances and

style, have his stamp of authentic life in, with this film Jamuna metamorphosed into an unabashedly artistic.

While she predominantly acted in Telugu films, she was a multilingual actress who had acted in about 200 films in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Hindi. She was the most glamorous actress of her era, playing a wide variety of roles such as Satyabhama, wife of Lord Krishna, in "Sri Krishna Tulabharam" and Kaikeyi, wife of King Dasaratha in "Sampoorna Ramayanam."

Jamuna also acted in a few Hindi films including Sunil Dutt-starrer box office hit film "Milan (1967)", her superb performance in this film won her the Film fare award. Jamunaa also had an inning in politics and was a Member of Parliament in the 9th Lok Sabha from Rajahmundry (AP). She has left behind an indelible mark in the heart of her fans with several memorable films Gundamma Kanth, Missamma, and many more. RIP Jamuna

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bangalore

Adani Group made by strategic state entities like LIC, SBI and other public sector banks".

"These institutions have liberally financed the Adani Group even as their private sector counterparts have chosen to avoid investing because of concerns over corporate governance and indebtedness. As much as 8 percent of LIC's equity assets under management, amounting to a gigantic sum of 74,000 crores, is in Adani companies and comprise its second-largest holding. If proven correct it will "destroy lives of crores of Indians who park lifelong savings in LIC & SBI" With this US investment firms have exposed the Adani groups.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

STOP THE FREE USE OF ARMS

Sir — The police are the body to ensure citizen safety and security, not doing brutality to the citizens by taking the law into their hands. It is a tragic reality for American police right now. The protest of #Blacklifelatters seems to be the ever-

green protest in American history. Every single year, global outrage has been created to churn the seriousness of Black people's rights issues. Unfortunately, this year too, Tyre Nichols was beaten to death in Memphis city by American police officers. This reminded the story of George Floyd who had been murdered by Minneapolis Police by choking his neck. This is ridiculous for any developed country to do such barbaric and racist acts with the minorities they have.

The arms too are frequently misused by Americans also. In fact, their kids too had been shot in their classroom due to racist mentality towards those, they share their class. This kind of misuse of arms and police brutality only left citizens angry. America must change laws of stringent freedom, and there is an urgent need to change the free use of arms, by making the lives of citizens happier.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Thousands of people - men, women, children, elderly, and every section of society - stood on the roads and welcomed the Yatra and Gandhi heartily.

Congress general secretary — Jairam Ramesh

The Abrams tank is a very complicated piece of equipment. It's expensive, and it's hard to train on.

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, USA — Colin Kahl

For all those who have high hopes, please note that Pathaan might be a film, but the country will still roar with Jai Shri Ram

Actor — Kangana Ranaut

Najam Sethi has the experience, and it's no concept that only cricketers should be PCB chairman. You need to be a good administrator, and you need to be a good repo with other boards. People can disagree for all I care. Former Pakistan cricketer — Wasim Akram

We are taking legal action against the husbands forcing minor girls to become a mother. I would suggest women become mothers before 30.

Assam chief minister — Himanta Biswa Sarma

FIRST COLUMN

EXAM ANXIETY IS BIG ISSUE FOR STUDENTS

A sound mental health depends upon multiple factors



DR JYOTI **KAPOOR**

Anxiety is one of the major mental health issues that students face just before their board and competitive examinations. Anxiety stems from the unrealistic expectations of family members and parents. In India, success is often measured in terms of outstanding grades.

A student often goes through anxiety, stress and in extreme cases depression. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his bestselling book 'Exam Warriors' talked about examinations and has outlined a refreshing approach, urging everyone to celebrate the tests like a festival with enthusiasm. Mental health experts across India have opined that every year before and after examination sessions, they have been getting a lot of youngsters suffering from anxiety and stress. Most of them have been victims of burnout due to long preparation hours and uncertainty about the future. They need counselling and medicines to deal with stress post their examinations.

The stress becomes all the more over-powering when the student appears for competitive exams, which are highly competitive, rigorous, and target-oriented. A recent study showed that among those preparing for medical entrance exams, 72.2 per cent experienced high levels of stress interfering with their day-to-day functioning.



The most common complaints of such students are poor concentration level and lack of focus. Fear of failure keeps it going. In most of the cases, students hardly consult a mental health expert or talk about their issues with peers/parents. No recreation, continuous study for most of the day, parental pressure and fear of failure aggravate their condition. Such preparations are time-consuming and tedious, and students frequently sacrifice other aspects of their lives to focus on one test. One should not forget the fact that our brain needs to break. It cannot function 24/7. The scenario becomes worse when results for competitive exams or board exams are not according to their expectations.

A sound mental health depends upon multiple factors and the most important one is emotional support. If somebody has that, it ensures a healthy growth of mind, body and soul. Many students stay away from their parents (in a different city to prepare for exams) or if at all they are staying with their parents, they hardly interact with them due to their busy schedule. At times, dealing with such a stressed environment with no emotional support, students start to feel lonely. They get addicted to unhealthy practices, including excessive alcohol consumption, gambling, overeating, participating compulsively in sex, shopping or internet browsing, smoking and substance abuse.

Unfortunately, our education system doesn't prepare us for failure. Nobody tells us that if plan A fails then what would be plan B. That's the reason when a student experiences failure, they feel that it's the end of the world for them. They get exposed to enormous stress both physically and mentally. In many cases, a student might not want to appear for a competitive course and he/she is just doing it because of certain family and societal pressure. These young children have known their entire lives that this one exam will determine how long they live. They have no time for extracurricular activities, socialising, or sports, which prevents their personalities from developing.

The coping mechanism is incumbent upon creating a schedule that enhances the performance of body and mind, while refreshing with short breaks. Consuming wholesome foods and at least eight hours of sound sleep each night also help. Long study sessions reduce the amount of time available for exercise and the body becomes lethargic, and the mind begins to react negatively, which calls for taking time out for physical activity. Discovering a calming exercise is also important. Speaking to loved ones frequently for emotional support also helps along with staying away from unrealistic expectations.

(The author is Founder and Senior Psychiatrist, Manasthali)

Some modest Budget expectations from FM



GOVIND **BHATTACHARJEE**

The tax slabs can be suitably adjusted for inflation to alleviate the economic hardships of the common man

In a few days' time, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will be presenting her fifth budget, the last full budget before the 2024 elections. Despite pressure for increasing populist expenditure, one hopes that she will stick to the pragmatism that marked her earlier budgets and focus instead on consolidating the fiscal path further.

Given the present state of the economy with seven per cent growth looking achievable, revenues showing healthy growth, the GST stabilising at around Rs 1.5 lakh crore a month and the continuing bull run in the stock markets, the factors are favourable for the government for projecting a fiscal deficit target less than the last year's budget estimate of 6.4 per cent.

However, there are some aberrations in our taxation structure which must be corrected. These were flagged after the last year's budget and it is time the government acts. Chief among these is the complex structure of our capital gains taxation that is arbitrary, ad-hoc and distorts the market, and this must be rationalised for efficient allocation of resources.

There is not only a multiplicity of rates and holding periods for different types of investments, but some have benefits for inflation indexation which others do not have. Capital gains tax is levied on profits made on capital investments on real estate, gold, stocks, mutual funds, and various other financial and non-financial assets. It can be either a long-term capital gains tax (LTCG) or short-term capital gains tax (STCG) depending on the holding period of the investments.

Unlike income tax, for the LTCG, the tax rate does not change in a progressive manner. Thus, the same rate of tax applies for all capital gains whether in lakh or crore rupees. There is also a separate set of exemptions that apply to LTCG, and they come with arbitrary conditions. For example, one can get exemption for buying a house after selling another, provided the new house is bought within two years or constructed within three years of the sale. On LTCG on stocks and equity mutual funds, there is an exemption limit of Rs 1 lakh.

On others, the benefit of indexation is available.

The last time the government tinkered with the capital gains tax regime was in the Budget for FY19, when the LTCG was reintroduced on listed shares. The surge in capital market transactions combined with the booming stock market since then has led to healthy growth in collections, and these can be further streamlined and increased by rationalising and simplifying the structure of capital gains taxation.

There should be one uniform rate for LTCG and all LTCGs should be given the benefits of indexation. There is no ratio-



OVER 100 MILLION DEMAT ACCOUNT WERE OPENED IN INDIA DURING THE PANDEMIC YEARS (MARCH 2020 TO DEC 2022), HUGEY EXPANDING THE BASE OF RETAIL INVESTORS IN THE STOCK MARKET WHO ARE WILLING TO TAKE ADDITIONAL RISKS TO GENERATE WEALTH

(The author is a former Director General at the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India)



nale for treating listed and unlisted stocks differently and applying different rates in respect of them. Different tax rates in respect of tax assets move resources from one to another, and the same happens with different holding periods.

Real estate sector is the biggest absorber of black money, which is why its prices are way above its intrinsic value. If we want to cleanse the system, special incentives for investing in real estate or holding onto it must be removed and the sector must be brought under the GST regime.

Over 100 million demat accounts were opened in India during the pandemic years (March 2020 to Dec 2022), hugely expanding the base of retail investors in the stock market who are willing to take additional risks to generate wealth. Given an estimated 10-fold increase in our direct tax collections from the increased stock market activity and the future potential for further increases, rationalisation of the capital gains structure is urgently called for. The threshold limit for LTCG also needs to be raised substantially from the present limit of Rs 1 lakh to encourage more retail participation in equity investing.

This can only increase the direct tax collections further. Even if all these changes cannot be introduced in this budget, the FM must make her intent of rationalising the structure of capital gains taxation absolutely clear with a

specific roadmap.

Secondly, there is also an urgent need to rationalise the centrally sponsored schemes to increase the allocative efficiency in the budget. But there are many schemes which have inherent populist biases and are economically inefficient; they consume scarce resources that have an opportunity cost.

These schemes also tend to proliferate. There is an urgent need to take a hard look at some of these schemes and rationalise them, not through bundling together under some umbrella schemes as the government had done in the past, but through convergence and merger, and substantial reduction of redundancies.

The previous finance commissions have all red-flagged this issue and the latest, the 15th Finance Commission has said, "We have noted the proliferation of centrally sponsored schemes and central sector schemes and the tendency to continue with them without an evaluation of their outcomes. It is our expectation that the Union Government will utilise the year 2020-21 to complete the review of such schemes and thereafter prune and rationalise the list to focus on certain key sectors and interventions with nation-wide externalities. The objective in our view should be to ensure that there is a minimum level of expenditure on certain desired sectors to improve human development and

infrastructure. This will also reduce pressure on the revenue account of the Union to enable higher capital expenditure within the available fiscal space." Government is yet to review and rationalise these schemes which will release lot of taxpayer funds for capital purposes and curtail unproductive expenditure.

Lastly, the dual system of income tax assessment that was introduced in the FY20 budget under section 115BAC of the Income Tax Act is making no sense. For one thing, it is again too complex with six rates — 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 per cent - without exemptions, as against three in the pre-existing tax regime with exemptions. With or without exemptions, there should be only a single tax regime. The alternate tax regime has failed to enthuse people, and if the FM is serious about it, she should simplify it to the extent that a taxpayer can prepare and file her tax return under the new regime without the help of chartered accountants.

The alternative is to raise the existing exemptions suitably keeping in mind the fact that high inflation which has become the new permanent normal now will not slow anytime soon, especially with the Russia-Ukraine War showing no sign of ending.

The tax slabs can be suitably adjusted for inflation to alleviate the economic hardships of the common man.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT


SWAMI PRASAD MAURYA IS CONTINUOUSLY ATTACKING 'HINDU DHARMA', 'HINDU AASTHA' AND RAMCHARITMANAS. — BJP LEADER SIDHARTH NATH SINGH




IF MAHANTS ARE TALKING ABOUT BEHEADING ME AND CHOPPING OFF MY TONGUE, ARE THEY NOT TERRORISTS AND BUTCHERS? — SAMAJWADI PARTY LEADER SWAMI PRASAD MAURYA

Focus on rural consumption to revive the economy


Rural consumption is facing headwinds in the wake of double-digit price increases and dim prospects of income



ANAND **RAMANATHAN**



ROUNAK **BAHETI**



SOUMYA **BOSE**

(Anand Ramanathan is Partner, Deloitte India; Rounak Baheti is Director, Deloitte India; and Soumya Bose is Manager, Deloitte India)

Rural consumption is currently facing headwinds in the wake of double-digit price increases and lower visibility of future income among rural households. However, in the long term, rural markets possess immense growth potential, and the upcoming budget is expected to provide adequate focus on job generation, capability development and infrastructure related initiatives which can have a multiplier effect towards driving growth in rural consumption.

The Indian agriculture sector is still dependent on the timely arrival of monsoon, as a result there is a need to protect farmers from vagaries of weather conditions. The Government needs to focus on enhancing benefits and coverage of crop insurance schemes

and focus on increasing coverage under micro-irrigation (like drip, sprinklers, etc.) which has proved more efficient than traditional techniques.

India is one of the countries with significant post-harvest losses. There are 8,000 cold storages having 35 million metric tons capacity across India, but 59 per cent of this capacity is concentrated in only four states — Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

In addition to encouraging private sector to develop such facilities through foreign direct investment (FDI) and tax incentives, the Government can also incentivize Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) to develop low capacity warehouses and micro cold storages for reducing wastages of small farmers. An average agricultural household in India has 60 per cent of their annual income in debt. The Government can increase outlay towards initiatives/schemes aimed at financial inclusion and generate greater awareness on existing schemes which extends credit guarantees to MSMEs/ FPO/SHGs for working capital financing and term lending with interest subvention.

Additional outlay under NABARD Fund can be committed towards providing credits to processing units even outside designated food parks for modernization/ upgradation. According to the NSS, the annual income of a farm household was Rs 1.23 lakh,

whereas average debt was Rs 74,100 from July, 2018 to June, 2019. With increasing internet and smartphone penetration in rural markets, the Government can focus on improving access to information for farmers through online trainings, advisory services on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and other allied sectors.

Expediting 5G rollout, with network availability, will also help speed up implementation and adoption of Agri-tech in generating more opportunities and employment in Rural India. Market linkages can facilitate better price realizations for farmers. The Government can look at accelerating adoption and integration of National Agriculture Market (eNAM) with the

Agri-markets across the country through policy levers like synchronization of quality standards in agricultural produces, standardization of sorting/grading systems and systematic and accelerated registration of farmers, traders, and other ecosystem players in the portal.

Rural reach has been a challenge with higher cost of logistics driven by less-than-truckloads. Government impetus in fast-tracking National Logistics Policy implementation, coupled with integrated information platforms, will reduce inefficiencies in movement of goods, increasing access and opportunities for rural India.

Micro-clusters through setting up rural entrepreneurship hubs in districts under

'One District One Product' initiative is an excellent opportunity to promote the rural economy. Interventions include support through training, better exposure to markets and setting up of facilities for value addition. This can promote entrepreneurship opportunities for rural youth.

In addition, the Government can also consider providing a separate allocation to create a dedicated Venture Capital (VC) fund for new age startups focused on servicing the rural economy. With global recession looming in the horizon, the upcoming Budget presents the Government a timely opportunity to unlock the levers for harnessing the growth and employment potential of the rural economy.

Ukraine: Talks underway for missiles, planes

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine and its Western allies are engaged in "fast-track" talks on the possibility of equipping the invaded country with long-range missiles and military aircraft, a top Ukrainian presidential aide said on Saturday.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said Ukraine's supporters in the West "understand how the war is developing" and the need to supply planes capable of providing cover for the armoured fighting vehicles that the United States and Germany pledged at the beginning of the month.

However, in remarks to online video channel Freedom, Podolyak said that some of Ukraine's Western partners maintain a "conservative" attitude to arms deliveries, "due to fear of changes in the international architecture".

Russia and North Korea have accused the West of prolonging and taking a direct role in the war by sending Kyiv increasingly sophisticated weapons.

"We need to work with this. We must show (our partners) the real picture of this

war," Podolyak said, without naming specific countries.

"We must speak reasonably and tell them, for example, This and this will reduce fatalities, this will reduce the burden on infrastructure. This will reduce security threats to the European continent, this will keep the war localized.' And we are doing it."

The US and Germany agreed on Wednesday to share advanced tanks with Ukraine along with the Bradley and Marder vehicles promised earlier, a decision that led to criticism not only from the Kremlin but from the prime minister of NATO and European Union member Hungary.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban asserted Friday that Western countries providing weapons and money to assist Ukraine in its war with Russia have "drifted" into becoming active participants in the conflict.

Orban has refused to send weapons to neighbouring Ukraine and sought to block EU funds earmarked for military aid.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said it would summon Hungary's ambassador to complain about Orban's

remarks. A ministry spokesperson, Oleg Nikolenko, said Orban told reporters that Ukraine was "a no-man's land" and compared it to Afghanistan.

"Such statements are completely unacceptable. Budapest continues on its course to deliberately destroy Ukrainian-Hungarian relations," Nikolenko said in a Facebook post.

President Joe Biden's announcement that the US would send 31 M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine reversed months of arguments by Washington that they were too difficult for Ukrainian troops to operate and maintain.

The US decision persuaded German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who had expressed concern about a unilateral action drawing Russia's wrath, to agree to send 14 Leopard 2 tanks from Germany's stocks and to allow European countries with tanks to send some of theirs.

Western weapons have proven essential to Ukraine's defence while stoking ever-higher tensions with Moscow.

Russia's Defence Ministry said on Saturday that Ukrainian forces used US-made HIMARS rockets to

strike a hospital in the eastern Ukrainian town of Novoaidar, killing 14 people.

Novoaidar is located in Luhansk province, which is almost entirely under the control of Russian forces or Russian-backed separatists. The Russian Defence Ministry reported that Russian attacks in the province killed four civilians in all and wounded seven others in 24 hours.

Russian rockets hit a residential area the Donetsk town of Chasiv Yar on Friday night, killing of two people and wounding five more, the governor said. Photos attached to Kyrylenko's post showed a three-story school building on fire.

Donetsk province, where the territory is roughly split between Russian and Ukrainian control, has become the battle epicenter of the war as Moscow tries to jump-start a monthslong, grinding offensive to capture the city of Bakhmut.

Chasiv Yar lies on a hill strategically located for the defense of Bakhmut, and has come under intensified Russian shelling. Capturing Bakhmut would allow Russian troops to disrupt Ukrainian supply lines and potentially

from enemy attacks. Everyone who remains in the city exposes themselves to mortal danger," Kyrylenko said. "The Russians target civilians because they are not able to fight the Ukrainian army."

In a separate Telegram post earlier on Saturday, Kyrylenko alleged the hospital was deliberately targeted. Its claim of a strike in Novoaidar could not be immediately verified.

"A deliberate missile attack on a known operating civilian medical institution is an unconditional grave war crime of the Kyiv regime," the ministry said, according to Russian news agencies.

Amid the news of the Western pledges of heavy tanks, Russia bombarded Ukraine with missiles, exploding drones and artillery shells this week. The attacks continued on Saturday, when Russian missiles struck the city of Kostyantynivka in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province.

The missiles fell in a residential area, killing three civilians, wounding 14 and damaging four high-rise apartment buildings, a hotel and garages, Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

"Kostyantynivka is a city relatively far from the front line, but still, it constantly suffers



pave the way for them to threaten Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the largest remaining Ukrainian-held cities in the country's east.

Russian forces continued ground attacks around Bakhmut and Avdiivka, another Donetsk city to the south, while Ukrainian troops were on the offensive in southern and northeast Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said in a Saturday morning update.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said

that Russian troops "are defending themselves" near Lyman in Luhansk and Kharkiv provinces north of Donetsk, as well in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces in the south.

The fighting has largely been deadlocked over the past months, with winter conditions slowing down ground operations and neither side reporting significant progress.

In the same update, the military reported that Russian forces launched 10 missile

strikes, 26 air strikes and 81 shelling attacks on Ukrainian territory between Friday and Saturday mornings. The shelling killed two civilians in Kherson, another province that is partly Russian-occupied.

Podolyak, the presidential adviser, said Ukraine needs supplies of Western long-range missiles "to drastically curtail the key tool of the Russian army" by destroying the warehouses where it stores cannon artillery used on the front line.

Russians gone from Ukraine village, fear and hardship remain

AP ■ KALYNIIVSKE

When night falls in Tatiana Trofimenko's village in southern Ukraine, she pours sunflower oil that aid groups gave her into a jar and seals it with a wick-fitted lid. A flick of a match, and the make-do candle is lit.

"This is our electricity," Trofimenko, 68, says.

It has been over 11 weeks since Ukrainian forces wrested back her village, Kalynivske, in Kherson province, from Russian occupation. But liberation has not diminished the hardship for residents, both those returning home and the ones who never left.

In the peak of winter, the remote area not far from an active front line has no power or water. The sounds of war are never far.

Russian forces withdrew from the western side of the Dnieper River, which bisects the province, but remain in control of the eastern side. A near constant barrage of fire from only a few kilometers away, and the danger of leftover mines leaving many Ukrainians too scared to venture out, has rendered normalcy an elusive dream and cast a pall over their military's strategic victory.

Still, residents have slowly trickled back to Kalynivske, preferring to live without basic services, dependent on humanitarian aid and under the constant threat of bombardment than as displaced people elsewhere in their country.

Staying is an act of defiance against the relentless Russian

attacks intended to make the area unlivable, they say.

"This territory is liberated. I feel it," Trofimenko says. "Before, there were no people on the streets. They were empty. Some people evacuated, some people hid in their houses."

"When you go out on the street now, you see happy people walking around," she says.

The Associated Press followed a United Nations humanitarian aid convoy into the village on Saturday, when blankets, solar lamps, jerrycans, bed linens and warm clothes were delivered to the local warehouse of a distribution centre.

Russian forces captured Kherson province in the early days of the war. The majority of the nearly 1,000 residents in Kalynivske remained in their homes throughout the occupation. Most were too fragile or ill to leave, others did not have the means to escape.

Gennadiy Shaposhnikov lies on the sofa in a dark room, plates piled up beside him.

The 83-year-old's advanced cancer is so painful it is hard for him to speak. When a mortar destroyed the back of his house, neighbours rushed to his rescue and patched it up with tarps. They still come by every day, to make sure he is fed and taken care of.

"Visit again, soon," is all he can muster to say to them.

Oleksandra Hryhoryna, 75, moved in with a neighbour when the missiles devastated her small house near the village centre. Her frail figure steps

over the spent shells and shrapnel that cover her front yard. She struggles up the pile of bricks, what remains of the stairs, leading to her front door.

She came to the aid distribution centre pulling her bicycle and left with a bag full of tinned food, her main source of sustenance these days.

But it's the lack of electricity that is the major problem, Hryhoryna explains. "We are using handmade candles with oil and survive that way," she says.

The main road that leads to her home is littered with the remnants of the war, an eerie museum of what was and what everyone here hopes will never return. Destroyed Russian tanks rust away in the fields. Cylindrical anti-tank missiles gleam, embedded in grassy patches. Occasionally, there is the tail end of a cluster munition lodged into the earth.

Bright red signs emblazoned with a skull warn passersby not to get too close.

The Russians left empty ammunition boxes, trenches and tarp-covered tents during their rapid retreat. A jacket and, some kilometers away, men's underwear hangs on the bare branches. And with the Russians waging ongoing attacks to win back the lost ground in Kherson, it is sometimes hard for terrorized residents to feel as if the occupying forces ever left.

"I'm very afraid," says Trofimenko. "Even sometimes I'm screaming. I'm very, very scared. And I'm worried about



us getting shelled again and for (the fighting) to start again. This is the most terrible thing that exists."

The deprivation suffered in the village is mirrored all over Kherson, from the provincial capital of the same name to the constellation of villages divided by tracts of farmland that surround it. Ukrainian troops reclaimed the territory west of the Dnieper River in November after a major counteroffensive led to a Russian troop withdrawal, hailed as one of the greatest Ukrainian victories of the 11-month war.

The UN ramped up assistance, supporting 133,000 individuals in Kherson with cash assistance, and 150,000 with food. Many villagers in Kalynivske say the food aid is the only reason they have something to eat.

"One of the biggest challenges is that the people who are there are the most vulner-

able. It's mainly the elderly, many who have a certain kind of disability, people who could not leave the area, and are really reliant on aid organisations and local authorities who are working around the clock," says Saviano Abreu, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The shelling is constant.

Ukraine's Defence Ministry reports near daily incidents of shelling in Kherson city and surrounding villages, including rocket, artillery and mortar attacks. Most fall closer to the river banks nearer to the front line, but, that doesn't mean those living further away feel any safer. On Friday, a missile fell in the village of Kochubeivka, north of Kalynivske, killing one person.

"Kherson managed to resume most of the essential services, but the problem is the hostilities keep creating chal-

lenges to ensure they are sustained," Abreu says. "Since December, it's getting worse and worse. The number of attacks and hostilities there is only increasing."

Without electricity, there is no means to pump piped drinking water. Many line up to fetch well water, but a lot is needed to perform daily functions, residents complain.

To keep warm, many forage around the village for firewood. This is also not without danger.

"Before we could easily get wood from the forest, but now there are mines everywhere," says Oleksandr Zheihin, 47.

Everyone in Kalynivske knows the story of Nina Zvarech. The woman went looking for firewood in the forest and was killed when she stepped on a mine.

Her body lay there for over a month, her relatives too afraid to go and find her.

Friends remember volunteer killed trying to help civilians



AP ■ KYIV

Friends and volunteers gathered in Kyiv's St Sophia's Cathedral on Sunday to say goodbye to volunteer Andrew Bagshaw who was killed with his colleague Christopher Parry while they were evacuating people from a front-line Ukrainian town.

Bagshaw, 48, a New Zealand-British joint national, and Briton Parry, 28, went missing earlier this month while heading to the town of Soledar, in the eastern Donetsk region, where heavy fighting was taking place.

Volunteers spoke of their memories of Bagshaw and read out tributes from his family.

Nikolletta Stoyanova, a friend of Bagshaw's, spoke afterwards of his bravery.

"Even if no one wanted to go to Soledar, they can't do it. Because if he understood that someone needs help, they need to do this help for these peo-

ple," Stoyanova said.

Bagshaw's father, Phil, told reporters in New Zealand that his son wanted to do something to help.

"He was a very intelligent man, and a very independent thinker," he said.

"And he thought a long time about the situation in Ukraine, and he believed it to be immoral. He felt the only thing he could do of a constructive nature was to go there and help people."

Ukrainian police said on January 9 that they had lost contact with Bagshaw and Parry after they headed for Soledar.

Their bodies were later recovered.

In a statement released earlier this week, Parry's family said he had been "drawn to Ukraine in March in its darkest hour." It added that he'd "helped those most in need, saving over 400 lives plus many abandoned animals."

Turkey issues travel warning to Europe following protests

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Turkey issued a travel warning late on Saturday for its citizens living in or planning on going to European countries, citing Islamophobia and anti-Turkish demonstrations.

The warning comes after last weekend's protests in Sweden where an anti-Islam activist burned the Quran and pro-Kurdish groups protested against Turkey.

The Turkish foreign ministry urged its citizens to take precautions and stay away from demonstration areas. It also said they should go to local authorities if they face xenophobic or racist attacks.

Turkey strongly condemned far-right activist Rasmus Paludan's burning of the Quran in Stockholm, which he repeated in Copenhagen Friday. Ankara also summoned the Dutch ambassador after another far-right activist tore pages of the Quran in the Hague.

The Turkish government also said there was an increase in anti-Turkish protests by "groups with links to terror groups" - a reference to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency



against Turkey.

Pro-Kurdish groups have been demonstrating in Sweden, waving the flags of the PKK and its affiliates. The protests are a response to Sweden and Finland's promise to prevent the PKK's activities in their countries in order to gain Turkey's approval for their NATO bids.

Following the protests, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Sweden not to expect support for its membership bid for the military alliance. Turkey also indefinitely postponed a key meeting in Brussels that would have discussed Sweden and Finland's NATO membership.

Earlier Saturday, before Turkey had issued its travel

warning, the Nordic countries separately issued updated travel guidelines for Turkey. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden urged their citizens visiting Turkey to avoid large gatherings and to exercise caution.

The Swedish Foreign Ministry said in a message on its website that Sweden's embassy in Ankara remains closed to the public and visitors to the country's consulate general in Istanbul are "requested to exercise vigilance."

"We want to make Swedes in Turkey aware that further manifestations may occur," the Swedish ministry said, referring to counter-protests that erupted in Turkey after last weekend's events in Stockholm.

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council does not reflect today's realities, is paralysed and unable to discharge its basic function of maintaining international peace and security when one of its permanent members has attacked its neighbour, UN General Assembly President Csaba Korosi has said.

Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN, attacked Ukraine in February 2022. Russia has vetoed UNSC resolutions on Ukraine while it has voted against a resolution in the UN General Assembly which calls on countries not to recognise the four regions of Ukraine that Russia has claimed.

Korosi, a Hungarian diplomat currently serving as President of the 77th United Nations General Assembly, said that there is a push from a growing number of member nations to reform the powerful UN organ.

"The Security Council which has been created back then" and given the primary responsibility of maintaining "international peace and security and preventing wars now is paralysed," he told PTI ahead of his visit to India.

Korosi will arrive in India on Sunday on a three-day visit at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. It is his first bilateral visit to any country since he assumed his role as President of the UN General Assembly in September 2022.

"The Security Council cannot discharge its basic function for a very simple reason. One of the permanent members of the Security Council attacked its neighbour. The Security Council should be the body to take action against the aggression. But because of the veto power, the Security Council cannot act," he said, in a reference to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Korosi said this was a "very serious lesson learnt" for the future when talking about how to improve functioning of global organisations.

He said that the issue of UNSC reform is both "burning" and "compelling" since the composition of the Security Council reflects "the outcome of the Second World War".

India has been at the forefront of the years-long efforts to reform the Security Council, saying it rightly deserved a place as a permanent member in the United Nations.

Currently, the UNSC has

five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the UK and the US. Only a permanent member has the power to veto any substantive resolution.

In the 77-year-old history of the UN, the composition of the Security Council has been altered only once - in 1963 when the General Assembly decided to expand the Council from 11 to 15 members, with the addition of four non-permanent seats. "Since then, the world has changed. The geopolitical relations in the world altered, the economic responsibilities in the world in some countries, including in India, including some other very strongly developing countries, actually changed," Korosi said.

"So, the composition of the Security Council does not reflect today's realities," he said adding that not to mention "a whole continent with 50 plus countries, Africa," is not in (the Council) in terms of permanent members.

In response to a question on whether he has hope for any forward movement in the long-pending UNSC reform, Korosi replied in the affirmative.

"Yes, I do have hope," he said, noting that reform of the United Nations entails several areas and Security Council is "a very important" part of it.



Korosi stressed the reason for hope of the UNSC reforms is that the issue has been on the agenda for decades and negotiations have been going on for several years.

"But this particular issue, the urgency and concrete steps to be achieved in the reform of Security Council" has been mentioned and urged for by over 70 leaders of the world during the high-level UN General Assembly session last September.

"More than one-third of the UN membership directly addressed this question. So, there's very clearly a push (from) the membership. I do have hopes," he said.

Korosi has previously noted that during the high-level week in September 2022, one-third of world leaders underscored the urgent need to

reform the Council - more than double the number in 2021.

Korosi has appointed Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations Michal Mlynar and Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait Tareq M A M Albana as co-chairs of the International Negotiations on UNSC reform.

He said he has asked them to do their best to try and convince the UN membership that it is their responsibility and a membership-driven process to achieve UNSC reforms.

"But if they really want to achieve results, they may think in little bit different terms, in terms of whether or not they could make compromises, negotiations. If they don't do that, the chances will be very small. But I do have hopes," he said.

Sri Lanka police investigates threats on election commission

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan police have launched an investigation into alleged telephone threats received by the members of the independent elections commission, an official said on Sunday.

Police spokesman Nihal Thaldudu said court orders to analyse telephone records had been obtained.

On 19 January, two members S.B. Divaratne and K.P. Pathirana had lodged complaints over telephonic threats to resign. Later M.M. Mohamed, another member, had received similar threats.

Fourth member P.S.M. Charles had reportedly offered her resignation from the membership.

The opposition charged that it was the government which was keen to postpone

the local election scheduled for March 9.

The opposition pointed to statements made by ruling SLPP members that the current economic collapse environment was not the best to hold an election when the entire focus must be to restore the economy derailed by the shortage of foreign reserves in the country.

The opposition claims that resignation of election commission members would lead to the postponement of the election.

However, the chair of the Commission SG Punchihewa said the election could only be postponed by a court order or an act of parliament.

The ruling SLPP controls a larger majority of the 340 local councils having won them in 2018.

However, with their



bungling in the economy which led to the worst economic crisis ever, the opposition said the ruling party faced the prospect of being routed and therefore wanted to postpone the election.

Sri Lanka is yet to clinch the anticipated bail out from the IMF as negotiations for

debt restructuring had slowed down the process since September.

Many reforms such as tax hikes and utility tariff raises are being opposed by the trade unions further complicating the electoral prospects for the ruling party at the March 9 election.

Trump says beating of Nichols ‘never should have happened’

AP ■ COLUMBIA

Former president Donald Trump on Saturday said the footage of the brutal beating of Tyre Nichols by five Memphis police officers is "horrible" and that the attack "never should have happened".

"I thought it was terrible. He was in such trouble. He was just being pummelled. Now that should never have happened," Trump said in an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday, a day after authorities released footage of the attack on the 29-year-old Black man after a traffic stop. Nichols died three days later.

The comments were notable for Trump, who is running for the White House again and has a history of encouraging rough treatment of people in police custody.

He was president during the racial justice protests that

emerged in the summer of 2020 following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. At the time, he signed an executive order encouraging better police practices but was criticised for failing to acknowledge systemic racial bias.

Trump ultimately centred his 2020 reelection bid around a "law and order" message that emphasized support for law enforcement.

The newly released violent video in Memphis shows police holding down and beating Nichols for three minutes with their fists, boots and batons. The footage shows police screaming profanities at him while Nichols screams for his mother. Trump said Nichols calling out for his mother was "a very sad moment".

"That was really the point that got me the most, to be honest with you," he said.



Trump did not address the video in his campaign speeches in New Hampshire or South Carolina, the first stops of his 2024 presidential campaign.

The five former Memphis Police Department officers, who are also Black, have been fired and charged with murder and other crimes. The legal team for Nichols' family has likened it to the infamous 1991 police beating of Los Angeles

motorist Rodney King. Trump said Memphis Police were taking a "strong step" by disbanding the police unit involved in the attack, which was created to target violent offenders in areas beset by high crime.

"Look, the tape was perhaps not totally conclusive but, to me, it was pretty conclusive and it was vicious and violent and hard to believe - over a traffic violation," he said.

Israeli police seal off home of Jerusalem synagogue attacker

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli police on Sunday sealed up the east Jerusalem home of a Palestinian attacker who killed seven people and wounded three outside a synagogue, one of several punitive measures approved by Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet overnight.

The move came following a deadly weekend in which seven people were killed and five others wounded in two separate shootings in Jerusalem, in one of the bloodiest months in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem in several years.

The measures threatened to further raise tensions and cast a cloud over a visit next week by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The weekend shootings followed a deadly Israeli raid in the West Bank on Thursday that killed nine Palestinians, most of them militants.

In response, Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a barrage of rockets into Israel, triggering a series of Israeli airstrikes in response. In all, 32 Palestinians have been killed in fighting this month.

Addressing the Cabinet on Sunday morning, Netanyahu said that "we sealed the home of the terrorist who carried out the horrendous attack in Jerusalem, and his home will be demolished".

"We are not seeking an escalation, but we are prepared for any scenario. Our answer to terrorism is a heavy hand and a strong, swift and precise response," he said.

The police on Sunday released footage of Israeli army engineers welding metal plates over the windows and welding the front door shut as part of the operation in response to Friday night's deadly shooting.

Police said the attacker, identified as a 21-year-old east Jerusalem resident, was

killed in a shootout with officers after fleeing the scene in the predominantly ultra-Orthodox east Jerusalem settlement of Neve Yaakov.

On Saturday, a 13-year-old Palestinian boy opened fire elsewhere in east Jerusalem, wounding two Israeli men, paramedics said. The attacker was shot and hospitalised.

Funerals for the victims in Friday's shooting, the deadliest attack on Israelis since 2008, were scheduled to take place Sunday.

Netanyahu's Cabinet also said it plans a series of other punitive measures, including cancelling social security benefits for the families of attackers, and would take steps to "strengthen the settlements" this week as part of the government's response to the weekend's attacks.

Netanyahu said that strengthening settlements in the occupied West Bank was aimed at "sending a message to



the terrorists that seek to uproot us from our land that we are here to stay".

Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. It has built dozens of settlements, now home to more than 500,000 Jewish settlers, in the decades since.

Most of the international community considers the settlements an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians, who

seek the West Bank as the heartland of a future independent state.

In Cairo, Blinken opened his Mideast tour on Sunday and was to speak with students at the American University in the city before holding talks with Egyptian officials on Monday.

He was then scheduled to travel to Israel for the most critical leg of the visit for talks with Israeli and Palestinian officials.

2 Palestinians killed by Israeli security personnel in West Bank

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Two Palestinian men died on Sunday from gunshot wounds from Israeli security personnel in separate incidents, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, as Israeli forces sealed off the home of an east Jerusalem man who killed seven people outside a synagogue on Friday.

They were the latest Palestinian casualties in one of the bloodiest months in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem in recent years, and followed two Palestinian attacks targeting Israelis in Jerusalem. The escalating violence threatened to further raise tensions and cast a cloud over a visit next week by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The ministry said an 18-year-old Palestinian man who was shot by a security guard next to the West Bank settlement of Kedumim died

Sunday.

The Israeli military said that a settlement security guard had identified a man armed with a pistol outside the settlement and shot him.

The ministry also confirmed the death of a 24-year-old Palestinian man who was wounded in an Israeli army raid in Jenin on Thursday that killed nine other Palestinians. There was no immediate claim of his affiliation with a militant group.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli police sealed up the east Jerusalem home of a Palestinian attacker who killed seven people and wounded three outside a synagogue, one of several punitive measures approved by Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet overnight.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Israel said Saturday that one of the seven people was a Ukrainian national.

Israeli media reported that Irina Korlova, a healthcare worker, was killed along with six Israelis in the shooting.

The weekend shootings followed a deadly Israeli raid in the West Bank on Thursday that killed 10 Palestinians, most of them militants. In response, Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired a barrage of rockets into Israel, triggering a series of Israeli airstrikes in response. In all, 34 Palestinians have been killed in fighting this month.

Addressing the Cabinet on Sunday morning, Netanyahu said that "we sealed the home of the terrorist who carried out the horrendous attack in Jerusalem, and his home will be demolished."

"We are not seeking an escalation, but we are prepared for any scenario. Our answer to terrorism is a heavy hand and a strong, swift and precise response," he said.

Peru's protest 'deactivators' run toward tear gas to stop it

AP ■ LIMA (PERU)

When police fire tear gas at protesters demanding the resignation of Peruvian President Dina Boluarte, most run away.

A few, though, run toward the gas canisters as quickly as possible — to neutralize them.

These are the "deactivators." Donning gas masks, safety goggles and thick gloves, these volunteers grab the hot canisters and toss them inside large plastic bottles filled with a mixture of water, baking soda and vinegar.

The deactivators made their debut in Peru street protests in 2020, inspired by protesters in Hong Kong who in 2019 unveiled new strategies to counteract the eye-stinging, breath-stealing effects of tear gas. With protesters in Lima facing a nearly daily fusillade of tear gas, more people have joined the ranks of deactivators

trying to shield them and keep the demonstrations going.

Peruvians have been protesting since early December, when former President Pedro Castillo was impeached after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress. His vice president, Boluarte, immediately took over — and has faced strong opposition ever since.

Fifty-eight people have died in connection with the unrest, including one police officer. Forty-six of the deaths occurred during direct clashes between protesters and police.

The protests have exposed deep divisions in the country between the urban elites and the rural poor. Demonstrations were first largely concentrated in the south, a long-neglected region of Peru that felt a particular kinship to Castillo's humble background as a rural teacher from the Andean highlands.

UK PM sacks Tory party chief over tax penalty row

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Sunday sacked one of his Cabinet ministers and Conservative Party chairman, Nadhim Zahawi, after he was found to have been in serious breach of the Ministerial Code.

Zahawi, who was a minister without portfolio as the chief of the governing Tory party, had faced fierce pressure in recent days to quit over questions about his finances after it emerged that he had agreed a penalty settlement with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) department.

Sunak had ordered an independent investigation into the Iraqi-born former Chancellor's tax affairs amid growing Opposition demands

for him to sack Zahawi. His independent ethics adviser, Sir Laurie Magnus, submitted his assessment on whether the HMRC settlement amounted to a breach of the ministerial code.

"When I became Prime Minister last year, I pledged that the government I lead would have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level," writes Sunak in his letter to Zahawi, released by Downing Street.

"Following the completion of the independent adviser's investigation — the findings of which he has shared with us both — it is clear that there has been a serious breach of the Ministerial Code. As a result, I have informed you of my decision to remove you from your position in His Majesty's government," he said.

He added that Zahawi should be "extremely proud" of his "wide-ranging achievements in government over the last five years", particularly crediting his "successful oversight of the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and deployment programme".

In the correspondence to Sunak, also released by Downing Street, Magnus said his overall judgement was that "Mr Zahawi's conduct as a minister has fallen below the high standards that, as Prime Minister, you rightly expect from those who serve in your government". Earlier this week, Zahawi said he welcomed the investigation and looked forward to "explaining the facts of this issue" to Magnus — the UK Prime Minister's Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests..

Iran says drone attack targets defense facility in Isfahan

AP ■ DUBAI

Bomb-carrying drones targeted an Iranian defence factory in the central city of Isfahan overnight, authorities said early Sunday, causing some damage at the plant amid heightened regional and international tensions engulfing the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian Defence Ministry offered no information on who it suspected carried out the attack, which came as a refinery fire separately broke out in the country's northwest and a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck nearby, killing three people.

However, Tehran has been targeted in suspected Israeli drone strikes amid a shadow war with its Mideast rival as its nuclear deal with world powers collapsed. Meanwhile, tensions also remain high with neighbouring Azerbaijan after a gunman attacked that coun-

try's embassy in Tehran, killing its security chief and wounding two others.

Details on the Isfahan attack, which happened around 11:30 pm Saturday, remained scarce. A Defense Ministry statement described three drones being launched at the facility, with two of them successfully shot down. A third apparently made it through to strike the building, causing "minor damage" to its roof and wounding no one, the ministry said. Iranian state television's English-language arm, Press TV, aired mobile phone video apparently showing the moment that drone struck along the busy Imam Khomeini Expressway that heads northwest out of Isfahan, one of several ways for drivers to go to the holy city of Qom and Tehran, Iran's capital. A small crowd stood gathered, drawn by anti-aircraft fire, watching as an explosion and

sparks struck a dark building. "Oh my God! That was a drone, wasn't it?" the man filming shouts. "Yeah, it was a drone."

Those there fled after the strike.

That footage of the strike, as well as footage of the aftermath analysed by The Associated Press, corresponded to a site on Minoo Street in northwestern Isfahan that's near a shopping centre that includes a carpet and an electronics store.

Iranian defence and nuclear sites increasingly find themselves surrounded by commercial properties and residential neighbourhoods as the country's cities sprawl ever outward. Some locations as well remain incredibly opaque about what they produce, with only a sign bearing a Defense Ministry or paramilitary Revolutionary Guard logo.

The Defense Ministry only



called the site a "workshop," without elaborating on what it made. Isfahan, some 350 kilometres (215 miles) south of Tehran, is home to both a large air base built for its fleet of American-made F-14 fighter jets and its Nuclear Fuel Research and Production Center.

The attack comes after Iran's Intelligence Ministry in July claimed to have broken up a plot to target sensitive sites around Isfahan. A segment

aired on Iranian state TV in October included purported confessions by alleged members of Komala, a Kurdish opposition party that is exiled from Iran and now lives in Iraq, that they planned to target a military aerospace facility in Isfahan after being trained by Israel's Mossad intelligence service.

Activists say Iranian state TV has aired hundreds of coerced confessions over the last decade. Israeli officials

declined to comment on the attack.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Mr. Devender Nautiyal and Gayatri Devi intends to purchase Freehold DDA Flat No. 275-A, Ground Floor, Pocket-J&K, Dilshad Garden, New Delhi from Mrs. Heena Aggarwal who is daughter of Late Smt. Anita Arora (registered owner of Flat by virtue of Conveyance Deed dated 28.01.2015) and said Smt. Anita Arora died 17.10.2020, her husband Mr. Subhash Arora died on 01.07.2021 and her son Mr. Chandan Arora (unmarried) died on 25.04.2022 and now except Mrs. Heena Aggarwal (being 1st class legal heirs of Late Smt. Anita Arora) there are no other legal heirs remains of Late Smt. Anita Arora, Late Shri Subhash Arora, Late Shri Chander Arora. and my clients is mortgaging the same to LIC HFL, if anybody including Bank, Financial Institutions, persons, relative has any claim, right, interest whatsoever in the said property shall inform within 7 days to the undersigned with documentary evidence. In the event of no response to this notice, than our client shall presume that title of the said property is unencumbered and clear.

Karnail Singh, Advocate,
K-8, Basement, Jungpura Extension
New Delhi
Contact No. 9811163363 & 9953683363

DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS KATHUA
E-mail: sspkathua@jkpolice.gov.in Fax/Phone No.: 01922-234010
Hue And Cry Notice
Rule No. 712/191

SHO P/S Hiranagar has intimated that the accused namely Manohar Lal S/O Bishan Dass R/O Village Gurah Sarkari Hiranagar District Kathua is evading his arrest in Case FIR No. 149/2022 U/S 447/307/147/148 IPC, 4/25 Arms Act of P/S Hiranagar, since the commission of crime.

During the investigation of said case, best efforts are made by concerned I/O to locate/arrest said accused person which has yielded no result and accused person is still at large.

As such, description roll/photograph of wanted accused is being circulated with the appeal that anybody having information about his whereabouts may inform us on below given Phone Numbers/E-mail ID. The identity of the informer will be kept secret and he will also be rewarded suitably. Anybody found providing shelter to the accused person or concealing his presence will also be booked.

DESCRIPTION ROLL	PHOTOGRAPH
> Name: Manohar Lal > Parentage: Bishan Dass > Address: Village Gurah Sarkari Hiranagar District Kathua > Tehsil: Hiranagar > District: Kathua > Age: 52/54 years > Height: 05 Feet 09 Inches > Complexion: Wheatish	N/A

1. DPO Kathua- 01922-234010 (Phone/Fax)
2. dpokathua@jkpolice.gov.in (Mail ID)
3. PCR Kathua- 01922-234311(Phone/Fax)
4. SHO P/S Hiranagar- 01922274222

DIP/J-14784/22 **Sr. Superintendent of Police, Kathua.**

NSE world's largest derivatives exchange for 4th straight year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has again emerged as the world's largest derivatives exchange in 2022, in terms of the number of contracts traded, according to the Futures Industry Association (FIA). This is the fourth consecutive year when the exchange earned the top spot, the NSE said in a statement on Sunday. In addition, the exchange was ranked third in the equity segment by the number of trades (electronic order book) in 2022, an advancement from the previous year when it was in the fourth position, as per statistics maintained by the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE).

The calendar year witnessed the benchmark equity index - the Nifty 50 touching lifetime high of 18,887.60. Further, significant strengthening in liquidity was seen in sev-



eral product categories, including equity, equity derivatives and currency derivatives.

In the equity segment, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) daily-average turnover stood at Rs 470 crore in CY 2022, an increase of 51 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

Sovereign Gold Bond's daily average turnover in the

secondary market was Rs 7 crore in CY 2022, a jump of 59 per cent YoY.

Government securities, which have been made available in the equity segment of NSE, are also seeing significant growth, although on a lower base, with volumes touching a daily average turnover of Rs 3 crore last month.

"The achievement of being ranked 3rd in equity segment and largest exchange in derivatives is a culmination of the collaborative effort of all the stakeholders," Sriram Krishnan, Head of Business Development, NSE noted.

NSE said it is expected to soon begin the Social Stock Exchange as a segment subject to regulatory approvals.

This would enable 'Social Enterprises', particularly non-profit organisations to showcase their work to a wider audience and mobilise funds through the issuance of instruments, such as Zero Coupon Zero Principal Bonds and bring efficiency and transparency to the overall ecosystem.

On the derivatives side, NSE said it is working on new products in currency, an interest rate segment and the commodity derivatives segment, and will soon announce the launch. This is subject to regulatory approvals.

Indian electronics manufacturing to cross ₹1.28 lakh crore next fiscal: MoS IT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Electronics manufacturing in the country is expected to cross Rs 1.28 lakh crore in the next financial year, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said.

The minister, in an interview with PTI, said the government is now going to broaden and widen the electronics manufacturing ecosystem with a new production-linked incentive scheme for hearable-wearable, IT hardware and component makers.

"Electronics manufacturing as a whole, we see next year that we will at least do Rs 1.28 lakh crore. I have already said that we will see mobile phone production reaching Rs 1 lakh crore in 2023-24," Chandrasekhar said.

There has been a focus on mobile phones because it is the fastest-growing segment in electronics across the world, he added.

"Value addition in manu-



facturing is a function of scale. First, you need to hit the scale. The component industry is the one which does value addition. Components will not come if the scale of manufacturing is not there. The next stage of our PLI is to get components PLI, hearable-wearable PLI and the IT server PLI," the minister said.

The government will do 100 per cent hand-holding of component players to boost the

local ecosystem, he noted.

Electronics components makers body ELCINA has requested the government to allocate USD 10 billion (about Rs 80,000 crore) for 8 years to boost the manufacturing of electronic components and key modules other than semiconductors.

It has sought a four-year extension to the Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and

Semiconductors (SPECS), with an increased outlay of Rs 16,000 crore in the Union Budget for 2023-24.

According to ELCINA, the upgraded PLI will facilitate investments of around Rs 64,000 crore with a targeted output of USD 24 billion (about Rs 1.95 lakh crore) for all components other than semiconductors.

The industry body has also sought reinstatement of income tax relief for the investment made in research and development. It has also asked for a PLI scheme with a focus on domestic electronics manufacturing services companies.

India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has requested the government to convert the PLI scheme into a design-led manufacturing scheme and impose an import duty of 10 per cent on any imported electronics equipment and assembled printed circuit board (PCB) to boost local manufacturing.

In a first, IOC begins export of aviation gas

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In a first, national oil marketer Indian Oil Corporation has started exports of aviation gasoline, the fuel that fires unmanned aerial vehicles and small planes -- turning a chapter in the nation's fuel history from being a net importer to an exporter.

The first consignment of 80 barrels of aviation gas (AV gas), each consisting of 16 kilolitres, was shipped from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) to Papua New Guinea over the weekend. This is the first-ever instance of India exporting this fuel, produced at IOC's Vadodara refinery, marking its entry into an estimated USD 2.7-billion global market, the company said in a statement.

Aviation gasoline powers unmanned aerial vehicles and piston-engine aircraft used by flying schools. It is a higher-octane aviation fuel meeting



the product specifications with superior performance, and quality standards and is cheaper compared to imported grades. The fuel that fires the engines of large commercial jets is called aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

"The indigenous production of the gas named AV gas 100 LL will not only help save foreign exchange but will also make training in domestic flying schools economical for budding pilots," IOC chairman SM Vaidya was quoted as

saying in the company statement.

The development also has military implications as it can reduce the operating costs of UAVs that are increasingly being deployed by the defence forces as force multipliers.

There is a high demand for fuel in South America, Asia Pacific, West Asia, Africa and Europe. IndianOil aims to tap into this market after addressing the domestic demand, he added.

IOC is the sole domestic

manufacturer of the fuel, having begun production last September at its Vadodara facility, which has an annual capacity of 5,000 tonne. Till then the country was shipping in fuel from European refiners.

According to Vaidya, the global AV gas market is projected to grow at 5 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate), while the country's aviation traffic is also likely to grow at 7 per cent CAGR. With superior performance, quality standards and competitive prices, IndianOil is aiming to secure a significant market share.

The principal grade of AV gas is designed for use in piston engine aircraft, mainly used by flying institutes and defence forces for training pilots. The gas has been tested and certified by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. There are over 35 flying schools in the country and the product will benefit them.

G20 International Financial Architecture Working Group meeting to begin today

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The first G20 International Financial Architecture Working Group meeting will start on Monday, where participants will discuss ways to enhance stability and cohesion of the global financial architecture and how to make it fit to address the global challenges of the 21st century.

The meeting will also focus on exploring ways to provide maximum support to poor and vulnerable countries, Anu P Mathai, economic advisor, department of Economic Affairs, told the media here on Sunday. Around 100 delegates from the G20 countries, invitee countries and international organisations will be participating in the two-day meeting.

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar and Minister of Food



Processing Industries Pashupati Kumar Paras will inaugurate it, she said.

Discussions during the meeting will be jointly steered by the ministry of finance and the Reserve Bank of India along with France and Korea who are the co-chairs of the International Financial Architecture Working Group.

"The meeting will discuss ways to enhance the stability and cohesion of the international financial architecture and how to make it fit for addressing the global chal-

lenges of the 21st century," she said.

On the sidelines of the meeting on Monday, a G20 side event titled 'Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs): Opportunities and Challenges' will also be held.

The event is aimed at sharing countries' experiences and developing a deeper understanding of the macro prudential implications of CBDCs, she said. India assumed the G20 presidency for one year on December 1, 2022. The G20, or Group of 20, is an intergovernmental forum of the world's major developed and developing economies.

It comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US and the European Union (EU).

Cyber security Hackathon 4.0 organised jointly by APTS, APIS, VIT-AP University

AMARAVATI / GUNTUR / VIJAYAWADA: Andhra Pradesh Technology Services Ltd (APTS) in partnership with AP Innovation Society (APIS) & VIT-AP University organised Cyber Security Hackathon 4.0 to select a pool of talented final year students, graduates and post-graduates and professionals interested in cyber security. The internship is designed to provide exposure to a variety of security tasks, including vulnerability assessment and penetration testing on various networks, web and mobile applications using various commercial and open source tools. Total 128 students were selected from 623 applications frothe finale which was held on Jan 25 at VIT-AP University Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence. PNS

Demand for non-tech jobs grew during December 2022: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports on layoffs by multinational technology companies, a report has revealed that there has been an increase in demand for talents in non-tech sectors in India, including healthcare, food services, construction and education in December 2022.

Global job site Indeed's monthly jobs insights showed that healthcare allied fields such as dental and nursing have the highest job postings on its platform at 30.8 per cent in December 2022.

This was followed by food services (8.8 per cent), construction (8.3 per cent), architecture (7.2 per cent), education (7.1 per cent), therapy 6.3 per cent, and marketing (6.1), among others, the report added. The report noted that the relative resurgence of business normalcy in a post pandemic world has brought buoyancy back in sectors like construction and civil engineering.

Even sectors like marketing, which was one of the earliest to see layoffs during the pandemic, has picked up steam, it said, adding that last year, brands have realised the need for marketing for enhanced customer experience as well as business and sales leading to the increase in demand. The report is based on job postings data on Indeed platform from December 2021 till December 2022.

The report further revealed that Bengaluru tops the list of cities in job postings, occupying 16.5 per cent of the total share. Bengaluru is closely followed by Mumbai at 8.23 per cent, Pune at 6.33 per cent and Chennai at 6.1 per cent, it stated. Tier II cities like Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Kochi, Jaipur and Mohali contribute around 6.9 per cent, showcasing the rising demand for talent in smaller cities.

Govt should hike assistance under PM-KISAN, give tax sops for agritech startups: Industry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government should in this year's Budget enhance cash assistance given to farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme from the current Rs 6,000 per year for purchase of crop inputs, provide tax incentives to agritech startups and cut import duties on agrochemicals, according to industry experts.

There is also need to announce some incentives to farmers as well as agritech startups for faster adoption of technologies, like artificial intelligence, precision farming and drones, in Indian agriculture sector, they added.

Edible oil industry body SEA has demanded that a national mission should be launched to increase oilseeds production and reduce imports of cooking oils.

"There is urgent need to launch the 'National Mission on Edible Oils' with adequate



financial support to boost the oilseeds production," Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) President Ajay Jhunjhunwala said. Currently, India is importing about 140 lakh tonnes of edible oils annually. The mission needs to be implemented with an outlay of Rs 25,000 crore annually for the next five years to sizably reduce our dependence on imported edible oils to 30-40 per cent of consumption by 2026 from the current level of 65 per cent, he said.

Agrochemical firm Dhanuka Group Chairman R G Agarwal said farmers should

be given more amount under the PM-KISAN programme so that they can buy adequate quantity of crop inputs like seeds, fertilisers and pesticides.

Under the PM-KISAN, the Centre pays Rs 6,000 per year in three equal instalments. The scheme, launched in February 2019, was made applicable from December 2018.

Agarwal also demanded some incentives for promoting R&D activities and extension services in the farm sector.

K C Ravi, Chief Sustainability Officer, Syngenta India, said the input cost in the farm sector has risen.

"An enhanced outlay for PM-KISAN will also ensure farmers get more liquidity to buy inputs," he added. Deepak Bhardwaj, co-founder and director of agri-drone maker IoTechWorld Aviation, said the government should set aside some fund from the Rs 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund for the purchase of drones.

Qatar replaces Russian company in Lebanon gas exploration

AP ■ BEIRUT

Lebanon, two international oil giants and state-owned oil and gas company Qatar Energy signed an agreement Sunday that the Qatari firm will join a consortium that will search for gas in the Mediterranean Sea off Lebanon's coast.

The deal inked in Beirut brings Qatar into Lebanon's gas exploration market three months after Lebanon and Israel signed a US-mediated maritime border agreement ending a years-long dispute. Qatar Energy is replacing a Russian company that withdrew from the Lebanese market in September.

In 2017, Lebanon approved licenses for an international consortium including France's TotalEnergies, Italy's ENI and Russia's Novatek to move forward with offshore oil and gas development for two of 10 blocks in the Mediterranean. The borders of one of the two blocks were disputed by neigh-



boring Israel until a maritime border deal was reached last year. The companies did not find viable amounts of oil or gas in block No. 4 north of Beirut, and drilling in block No. 9 in the south has been repeatedly postponed because of the dispute with Israel.

Lebanon and Israel have been formally at war since Israel's creation in 1948.

The agreement was signed by Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, Qatar's Energy Minister; his Lebanese counterpart Walid Fayad; Claudio Descalzi, the CEO of Italy's state-run ener-

gy company, ENI, and TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné. The signing ceremony was attended by Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

"Our concentration will be on block number nine," al-Kaabi said, adding that this could be a first step for Qatar Energy to play a bigger role in future explorations.

Back in 2017, Total and ENI each got 40% stakes in the blocs while Novatek got 20%. Under the deal signed Sunday, Qatar Energy will take the 20% stake of Novatek in addi-

tion to 5% each from ENI and Total leaving the Arab company with a stake of 30%. Total and ENI will have 35% stakes each.

Lebanese media reported that exploration in block No. 9 could begin before the end of November. "We are committed to execute this first well as soon as possible," TotalEnergies Pouyanné said. The company said two months ago it would soon launch exploration activities in search of gas off Lebanon's coast.

Cash-strapped Lebanon hopes that future gas discoveries will help the small Mideast nation pull itself out of the worst economic and financial crisis in the country's modern history.

Since the crisis erupted in October 2019, the Lebanese pound has lost more than 90% of its value. Tens of thousands have become jobless and three quarters of the population of 6 million, including 1 million Syrian refugees, now lives in poverty.

US to start receiving H1B visa applications from March 1

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The highly anticipated H1B visa filing season for fiscal 2023-24 will officially begin on March 1 when the US immigration agency will start accepting applications for skilled foreign workers visas, the most sought-after by Indian IT professionals.

The H1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2023, it will accept applications between March 1 and March 17 petitions for H-1B visas that allow them

to work and live in the US for up to six years in specialised fields such as technology, engineering, and medicine.

After six years, it opens up pathways to permanent residency or Green Card.

"If we receive enough registrations by March 17, we will randomly select registrations and send selection notifications via users' myUSCIS online accounts. If we do not receive enough registrations, all registrations that were properly submitted in the initial registration period will be selected," the USCIS said.

"We intend to notify account holders by March 31," a media release said. The USCIS said it would release additional information in the coming weeks.

The H1B visa allocations are capped at 85,000 visas per year, with 20,000 of those set aside for workers holding advanced degrees



from US institutions.

The remaining 65,000 visas are awarded through a lottery system, making the competition for H1B visas fierce.

The high demand for H1B visas has led to calls for reforms to the programme, with many advocating for

an increase in the number of visas available and a simplification of the application process.

Proponents argue that the H-1B programme is crucial for maintaining the United States' position as a global leader in technology and innovation, while also supporting the

country's economy.

Go First to get Rs 210 crore under govt's credit line guarantee scheme: CEOMumbai, Jan 29 (PTI) Wadia group-owned Go First expects to receive Rs 210 crore under the government's credit line guarantee scheme next month as the budget airline seeks to boost its financial position and expand operations.

The airline, which received Rs 210 crore from the promoters last month, aims to have 53 operational aircraft in its fleet by the start of April this year, its CEO Kaushik Khona told PTI.

The airline currently has 37 aircraft in operation.

Apart from the coronavirus pandemic headwinds and intense competition, the no-frills airline is grappling with the Pratt & Whitney engine issues that have forced it to ground many planes due to a shortage of spare engines.

Under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), which has come as a relief for many pandemic-hit sectors, Go First has so far availed Rs 600 crore.

With promoters' infusing Rs 210 crore, the airline will be able to get an equal amount under the ECLGS next month, Khona said.

In an interview, Khona said the engine issues are "gradually" getting resolved, and 20 new engines from Pratt & Whitney are expected to come by April.

Twenty engines can help Go First operationalise 10 aircraft. One plane has two engines.

According to him, seven new Airbus A320 neo planes will be inducted by April first week. Of this, the airline inducted one such plane last week.

Of the remaining six, two will come in February, three in March and one in April, he added.

India win U-19 Women's T20 WC title

PTI ■ POTCHEFSTROOM

India on Sunday won their maiden ICC title in women's cricket as a bunch of sprightly and talented teenagers lifted the inaugural U-19 World Cup with an emphatic seven-wicket victory over England.

The Shafali Verma-led India U-19 squad managed to do what their seniors could not do by clearing the final hurdle in a global event.

India first bundled out England for 68 in 17.1 overs and then returned to knock off the paltry target in 14 overs to lift the coveted trophy.

"It is just a proud moment, its our first world cup," said Trisha with stumps in hand after the memorable win.

The win on Sunday also reaffirms India's dominance at the U-19 level with the boys winning the world title in the Caribbean last year.

India's bowling attack, led by pacer Titas Sadhu and supported by leg-spinner Parshavi Chopra, set up the comprehensive win on Sunday as they blew England away with a clinical display at Senwes Park.

While Sadhu showed that Indian women pace bowling is in safe hands following the retirement of Jhulan Goswami with impressive figures of 4-0-6-2, Chopra too continued her dream run as she snapped two for 13.



Archana Devi also scalped 2 for 17, while Mannat Kashyap (1/13), Shafali(1/16) and Sonam Yadav (1/3) accounted for one wicket each as England were all at sea

after being asked to take first strike.

Following a pep talk from India's Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, India came out with a specif-

ic plan and executed it perfectly as England's innings never really took off after being reduced to 16 for three in four overs.

Chasing 69, Shafali started

with a boundary off Hannah Baker before launching Sophia Smale for a maximum. But Baker came back to get rid of the India skipper, who was caught by Alexa Stonehouse in

the 3rd over.

Her opening and team's best batter in the tournament, Shweta Sehrawat, also was back in the hut after giving a simple catch to Baker off Grace Scrivens in the fourth over.

Soumya Tiwari (24 not out) and Gongadi Trisha (24) then dug their heels in with a 46-run partnership.

With four runs needed, Trisha was cleaned up by Stonehouse, as Tiwari knocked off the winning runs.

Besides Shafali, Richa Ghosh was the other international cricketer in the U-19 squad.

Earlier, Sadhu bowled 20 dot balls in her quota of four overs. She struck in the fourth ball of the innings with a superb caught and bowled effort to get rid of Liberty Heap (0).

Spinner Archana then cleaned up Niamh Fiona Holland (10), while Gongadi Trisha pulled off a sensational catch to get rid of Grace Scrivens (4) to hand Archana her second wicket.

Sadhu could have added another wicket to her name but senior pro Richa dropped a regulation catch of Ryana Macdonald Gay, who had edged an away going ball.

The Bengal pacer, however, didn't have to wait longer as she went through the gates of Seren Smale (3) next.

Macdonald Gay played a

BCCI announces ₹5 crore reward for victorious squad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Sunday announced a whopping cash reward of Rs 5 crore for the entire India squad following its title winning performance at the inaugural Women's U-19 T20 World Cup.

India recorded a dominating seven-wicket win over England in the final in South Africa.

The Shafali Verma-led India U-19 squad managed to do what their seniors could not do by clearing the final hurdle in a global event.

"Women's Cricket in India is on the upswing and

the World Cup triumph has taken the stature of women's cricket several notches higher. I am delighted to announce INR 5 crore for the entire team and support staff as prize money. This is surely a path-breaking year," Shah tweeted after India's triumph.

The secretary also invited the entire unit to Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

"I invite @TheShafaliVerma and her victorious team to join us at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad and witness the third T20I on 1st February. This humongous achievement surely calls for a celebration," he added.

couple of hits to the fence to ease the pressure but in-form leg-spinner Parshavi Chopra then got into the act, trapping Charis Pavely (2) in front of wicket as England lost half their side for 39 in 10 overs.

Left-arm spinner Kashyap also kept things tight at the other end as Chopra removed Macdonald Gay with Archana taking a superb one-handed catch with a full dive at extra cover. India's fielding was exemplary in the big game.

With England at 46 for 6 in

12 overs, skipper Shafali brought herself in but Alexa Stonehouse hit her for a rare boundary.

Soumya was then in action as her direct hit found Josephine Groves short by a big margin, leaving England at 53 for 7.

Shafali and Richa then combined to pile further misery on England with the latter producing a stumping effort. Kashyap then removed Stonehouse with Sonam taking a dolly at cover.

India win low-scoring thriller

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Indian spinners revelled on a turning track before the batters made heavy weather of a small target to register a scrapy series levelling win over New Zealand in the second T20 International here on Sunday.

The trio of Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar and Kuldeep Yadav impressed on a helping surface to limit a self-destructing New Zealand to 99 for eight, their lowest total against India in the shortest format.

It should have been a straight-forward run chase but the top-order comprising Ishan Kishan (19 off 32), Shubman Gill (11 off 9) and Rahul Tripathi (13 off 18) had a tough time again in spin-friendly conditions.

In the end, Hardik Pandya (15 not out off 20) and Suryakumar Yadav (26 not out off 31) took the team over the line with a ball to spare and six wickets in hand.

The series decided will be played in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

With the likes of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli not playing T20s since the World Cup last year, opportunities have been presented to the younger players who are yet to make them count.

Kishan has gone off the boil since his double hundred in Bangladesh while Gill has not been able to carry on his scintillating ODI form into



T20s. The stylish right-hander fell while trying to pull a spinner for the second game in a row but was surprised by the amount of turn.

Tripathi, who is getting to play at number three in Kohli's absence, was unable to take the attack to the New Zealand spinners.

The Indians felt the pressure and that was evident with the run out of Washington Sundar, who sacrificed his wicket to ensure Surya's stay in the middle.

WRIST SPINNERS KULDEEP CHAHAL (1/17) AND YUZVENDRA CHAHAL (1/4), PLAYING IN A T20 TOGETHER AFTER A WHILE, EXTRACTED A LOT OUT OF THE LUCKNOW SURFACE

Since the asking rate was never an issue, India could afford to stutter in the chase.

A four after 45 balls, coming from Hardik's bat in the 19th over, released a lot of pressure before the skipper completed the job alongside Surya who hit the winning four.

Earlier, Hardik decided to employ spinners from both ends in the powerplay after opening the bowling himself.

Wrist spinners Kuldeep (1/17) and Chahal (1/4), play-

ing in a T20 together after a while, extracted a lot out of the Lucknow surface while finger spinner Washington (1/17) produced another tidy spell.

Chahal was left licking his lips after the first ball of his opening spell. It was a ripper that pitched on leg stump before beating the outside edge of Finn Allen's bat. The opener perished two balls later trying to reverse sweep with the ball thudding into his back leg before crashing on to the stumps.

The in-form Devon Conway too fell to a reverse sweep as the ball kissed his gloves on way to wicketkeeper Ishan Kishan.

New Zealand were soon reduced to 35 for three in seventh over when the dangerous Glenn Phillips missed a straight ball from Deepak Hooda in his attempt to reverse sweep the part time off-spinner.

Daryl Mitchell got a beauty from Kuldeep that came back in sharply to shatter the stumps.

New Zealand bat deep but none of their batters were able to apply themselves on a testing pitch.

Pacer Arshdeep Singh, who has been guilty of bowling too many no balls lately and Shivam Mavi, were only used in the death overs.

Arshdeep did well to take wickets in his two tough overs and conceded only eight runs.

Hardik ended with figures of one for 25 in four overs.

PTI ■ POTCHEFSTROOM

India has been waiting for this moment for a long time, said chief coach Nooshin Al Khadeer on Sunday after the U-19 women's cricket team lifted its maiden ICC trophy, adding that the T20 world cup triumph underlines the country's enormous depth of talent.

The Indian women's team on Sunday lifted its first-ever ICC trophy with a seven-wicket win over England in the U-19 T20 World Cup final.

"It is a fabulous feeling. This is the feeling we have been waiting for very long. This is the first time we won the cup and it has come with the U-19 kids. Just shows the kind of depth we have and what is there for us in the future," she said after the match.

India had lost to Australia by seven wickets in the Super Six stage, their only defeat in the tournament.

"The most special thing is the belief. I knew they had a bad game against Australia, but the way they have gathered and played there after, we kept it very simple and we thought we would just play proper and simple cricket and we would achieve this.

"From the National anthem and till the time we won we had goosebumps. I personally realise and understand how special this is for us," she said. "To live it from the young

girls it's commendable. We have been waiting very long for a cup. We have a good future back in India. God has been kind and I'm keeping it simple."

India skipper Shafali Verma credited the support staff for all the support.

"The way all the girls are performing and backing each other, so happy. Incredible feeling. Thanks to the staff, the way they have been backing us everyday and telling us that we are here for the cup and because of them we are here," she said during the post-match presentation ceremony.

"The players have been backing me a lot. Thanks to BCCI for giving me this beautiful team and really happy for winning the cup."

While Shafali had a modest outing with the bat, fellow opener Shweta Sehrawat emerged as the highest run-getter with 297 runs at an average of 99.

"She (Shweta Sehrawat) has been excellent and has followed all the plans from the staff," Shafali said.

"Not just her, Archana, Soumya and I can't really take the names but they all have been incredible."

The other senior player in the team, Richa Ghosh said the triumph will give a boost to the senior team to go for the title in next month's T20 World Cup, also in South Africa.

"It is a superb feeling. I have

been waiting for this since U-19 days for so many years. All the players have a good positive energy, I really enjoyed with them and we will take the momentum in the senior world cup," she said.

"We are looking forward to that World Cup also, if we can win 2 World Cups, it will be superb."

Player of the Match Titas Sadhu, who returned with superb figures of 2 for 6 in her four overs, said "It's really surreal. Have been looking forward to this day for a long time.

"We had a plan in our mind, and thankfully we executed what we planned. The spinners backed up really well. We have played 2 matches and watched all the games that happened here, and had a pretty good idea where to bowl."

England skipper Grace Scrivens blamed the batting unit for the loss.

"We were gutted, our batting let us down. We were so good throughout the tournament going hard at the bowlers, we tried that today but didn't quite come off," said Scrivens, who won the Player of the Tournament for amassing 293 runs and taking nine wickets.

"All these girls are unbelievable and I absolutely loved captaining them. They (England senior team) made the trip here, awesome and really unbelievable."

BY PRAVIN THIPSAY

In the erstwhile Soviet Union, four prestigious Chess awards were conferred every year for excellence in different parts of Chess. The best attack award was named after the greatest attacking player of all time, Dr. Alexander Alekhine. The best defence award was called the 'Lasker award' in memory of Dr. Emanuel Lasker, who possessed extraordinary skills in defence. The best endgame award was named after 'Chess Playing Machine' Jose Raul Capablanca, who had little difficulty in converting 'theoretically drawn' endgames in wins. And the best strategy award went to none other than legendary Wilhelm Steinitz.

A Chess game played between two strong players, who have correctly grasped the important principles of Chess, usually takes a slower pace than a game between two amateurs. Since direct skirmishes are likely to fail early in the game, nowadays the strong players choose to slowly mobilize all their forces, thereby building up the position in a true warfare style, before launching an attack. This concept was first thought of in the 1870s by a player, who, after mastering the attacking and defensive skills of Paul

Steinitz: A strategist par excellence

Morphy, felt a need to look for something more concrete and complex than a direct violent attack from move one. He came out with a new revolutionary concept with his words "In the beginning of the game ignore the search for combinations, abstain from violent moves, aim for small advantages, accumulate them, and only after having attained these ends, search for the combination with all the power of intellect, because then (after strengthening the position by accumulating the small advantages) the combination must exist, however deeply hidden". Though a controversial thought then, the player was able to justify this strategy by defeating the best of the contemporary players. This type of play is called strategic play. The Soviet Union's 'best strategy award' is named after the player mentioned above, Wilhelm Steinitz of Austria, the first official World Chess Champion.

Wilhelm Steinitz (May 14, 1836 – August 12, 1900) was born at Prague (now the capital of the Czech Republic) in the Bohemia state of the Austrian Empire and later moved to

Vienna, the capital, to study mathematics. Around 1860, he became the strongest Chess player in the world and decided to move to England in 1862 to compete with the strong players there. Steinitz had a brilliant record of matches and tournaments for more than three decades; he became famous as 'The Austrian Morphy' in the 1860s for his brilliant attacking play. Though Steinitz solicited for slower attacking methods, he never disagreed with Morphy's way of King side attack. Steinitz's match against Zukertort in 1886, in which the Chess Clock was used for the first time in history, is considered to be the first official match for the World Chess Crown. Steinitz became an American (USA) citizen in 1988. In 1894, he lost his world Chess throne to Dr Emanuel Lasker of Germany. However, Steinitz continued to play brilliantly for a couple of years more after which his health deteriorated. Steinitz succumbed to various illnesses and passed away on 12th August 1900 at New York.

For our new series "Learn

from the Champions", I have chosen a game played by Steinitz while he was on his decline and yet had not lost any knowledge or skills he had accumulated in four decades. This game has been annotated by almost all world champions and Chess writers. Here is an example of how deeply had he grasped the essence of Chess. Let us see what Grandmaster Tartakover has to say about the game. "The feature of the following game is how White fastened on a small weakness in the enemy's camp and how, by skilful maneuvering, he prevented him from castling. Never relaxing his grip, he wound up the game with one of the most beautiful and aesthetically satisfying combinations ever devised on the chessboard".

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Nc3 "A move already advocated by Greco the Calabrese in 1619, by which White offers to give up a pawn for the attack." --- Tartakover.

7...d5! "The usual and better course here is 7...Nxe4; though

Black must not hope to hold the gain of the pawn." Tartakover and Reti.

8.exd5 "White has come out of the preliminary skirmish with a pawn in the centre. Even though it is isolated, this pawn will prove a tower of strength". Tartakover.

8...Nxd5 9.0-0 Be6?! "After this move which, to all appearances, is perfectly sound, Black loses his chance of castling. He should, at all costs, have played 9...Bxc3, and then completed his development. 10.bxc3 0-0 11.Re1, was necessary, though White stands much better." --- Reti.

10.Bg5! Be7 11.Bxd5 Bxd5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 12...Bxg5 is even worse. For example, 13.Re1+! Be7 14.Nxe7 Nxe7 15.Qa4 Qd7 16.Qb4 etc.

13.Bxe7 Nxe7 14.Re1 "Black has almost castled, but not quite". --- Tartakover. 17...cxtd5 18.Nd4 Kf7 "Black has almost castled, but not quite". --- Tartakover. 19.Ne6 Rhc8 Now White wins now with a forced combination, exactly in the style Steinitz had quoted. A very difficult combination to

exchanges, as by this move White obtains command of the board, prevents Black from castling, and initiates a most powerful attack on the King." - Dr. Tarrasch.]

14...f6 15.Qe2 Qd7 16.Rac1?!

"16.Rad1! would have been more accurate" -- Anatoly Karpov. For example, if 16...c6? 17.d5! cxd5 18.Rxd5 Qc7 19.Nd4 when Black has no defensive possibility left.

16...c6? "It would have been preferable to play 16...Kf7 , as White can't embark on a combination with 17.Qxe7+ Qxe7 18.Rxe7+ Kxe7 19.Rxc7+ due to 19...Kd6! " --- Dr Tarrasch.

17.d5!! "A fine square vacating sacrifice. The d4 is made available for the knight, thus greatly intensifying the attack". --- Tartakover.

17...cxtd5 18.Nd4 Kf7 "Black has almost castled, but not quite". --- Tartakover.

19.Ne6 Rhc8 Now White wins now with a forced combination, exactly in the style Steinitz had quoted. A very difficult combination to

spect though.

20.Qg4! g6 21.Ng5+! Ke8! Black seems to have held his own as a few exchanges seem to be inevitable now. But the Austrian Morphy had already foreseen the end of the battle! 22.Rxe7+!!

"An amazing situation! All White's pieces are 'en prise', and Black threatens?xc1#. Yet he cannot take the checking rook, 22...?xe7 23.?xc8+ ?xc8 24.?xc8+, and White remains a piece ahead." --- Tartakover. "The variations resulting from 22...?xe7 show the astounding degree of precision, which was required of White's calculations, before he could venture on the move in the text, e.g. 22...?xe7 23.?e1+ ?d6 24.?b4+!?c7 25.?e6+ ?b8 26.?f4+ and wins. In this beautiful combination the rook remains 'en prise' for several moves until Black, compelled to capture it, succumbs to a mating finish". --- Tartakover.

22...Kf8! 22...Kxe7 23.Re1+ (23.Qb4+ seems as strong.) 23...Kd6 24.Qb4+ Kc7 25.Ne6+ Kb8 26.Qf4+ 23.Rf7+! Kg8!

[23...Ke8?? 24.Qxd7# Or 23...Qxf7 24.Rxc8+ Rxc8 25.Qxc8+ etc.

24.Rg7+! Kh8! [24...Kxg7 25.Qxd7+ Or 24...Qxg7 25.Rxc8+ Or 24...Kf8 25.Nxh7+! Kxg7 26.Qxd7+ 25.Rxh7+!

At this stage, Black, who himself was a strong Chess master, left the tournament hall without making a move. The rules of the game did not have a possibility of 'resigning the game' in those days. Steinitz, therefore, had to demonstrate the following winning line to the organisers before being awarded the full point! (The tournament wasn't being played with Chess clocks).

"Mr. Steinitz (at the time) demonstrated the following brilliant and remarkable mate in ten moves" - Dr Tarrasch

25.Rxh7+! 25...Kg8 26.Rg7+! Kh8 27.Qh4+! Kxg7 28.Qh7+ Kf8 29.Qh8+ Ke7 30.Qg7+ Ke8 31.Qg8+! Ke7 32.Qf7+ Kd8

It is Mate in three now. 33.Qf8+! Qe8 34.Nf7+! Kd7 35.Qd6#!

White doesn't give Black a single chance to execute mate in one withRxc1. A truly amazing combination.

(Pravin Thipsay is an Arjuna Awardee and International Chess Grandmaster)



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