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WOULD NOT SLOW DOWN'

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Where're 80K cops, HC slams Punjab for Amritpal's escape

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab & Haryana High Court on Tuesday slammed the Punjab Government over the "intelligence failure" that led to pro-Khalistan preacher giving police the slip. "You have 80,000 cops. What were they doing? How did Amritpal Singh escape?" the High Court asked Punjab Government.

The State Government informed the HC that the stringent National Security Act has been invoked against Amritpal. Police arrested four people who helped the radical preacher on Saturday carry out his escape as police cars gave chase.

Amritpal switched from one car to another, changed clothes at a gurdwara and then fled along with three other associates on two motorcycles. About 154 people have been arrested since police began its crackdown against those linked with the preacher and "Waris Punjab De".

Three more people, including the preacher's uncle Harjit Singh, were brought Tuesday to the central jail in Assam's Dibrugarh. Four others were sent there on Sunday. The jail now holds seven men caught during the operation that began weeks after Amritpal Singh and his supporters stormed the Ajnala police station near Amritsar on February 23.

According to the affidavit submitted by police in the the



Tight security arrangements at Dibrugarh Central Jail where close aides of 'Waris Punjab De' founder Amritpal Singh are lodged, in Dibrugarh on Tuesday



Pro-Khalistan supporters vandalise the Consulate General of India during a protest in San Francisco on the USA

High Court, a non-bailable warrant was also issued against the extremist on Monday.

The detention order against him under the NSA was issued by the Amritsar district magistrate on Saturday, it said. The tough law allows prevention of anyone who could threaten peace and national security.

The trigger for police action was the storming of the Ajnala police station near Amritsar by the Amritpal Singh and his supporters on February 23 to force the release of an arrested man.

The HC was hearing the habeas corpus petition filed by Imaan Singh Khara that claimed that Singh was already in police custody, and sought his production in court.

US raps Khalistani vandals; diaspora in UK stands by Indian High Commission

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ WASHINGTON/LONDON

Assuring security to Indian diplomats and their premises in the US, Washington has condemned as "absolutely unacceptable" the attack on the Indian Consulate in San Francisco by alleged Khalistan supporters during a protest.

The US State Department issued a statement indicating that those behind the act would be held accountable. "The US condemns the attack on

Sunday against the Indian Consulate in San Francisco. Violence against diplomatic facilities within the US is a punishable crime," it said.

Senior Indian diplomats have told their American counterparts that they anticipate more such protests by anti-national and anti-social elements in the coming weeks and months. Security has been increased at all the Indian diplomatic missions in the US.

Taking a serious note of the incident on Sunday, India late

Monday summoned US Charge d'affaires in New Delhi to register a protest. The US was also asked to take appropriate measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

The US official condemnation late Monday came after the protestors on Sunday broke open the makeshift security barriers raised by the San Francisco police and installed two so-called Khalistan flags inside the Indian Consulate premises. Two consulate personnel soon removed these flags.

Chief Minister opens World Cup Shooting Competition

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that life is incomplete without sports, but life itself is a sport. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is engaged in making sports an integral part of life. He said that the Aanaad department has been set up in the state, and care is being taken to make people happy. We will strive to make Bhopal a sports hub. We will do what we say. There will be no dearth of money for sports.

Chouhan was addressing the inauguration ceremony of the World Shooting Competition at Kushabhau Thackeray International Convention Center. Chief Minister Chouhan inaugurated the World Cup shooting competition by pressing the remote button. Bhoomi puja was also performed for the shooting complex to be constructed at Barkheda Nathu.

Chouhan announced the launch of the World Cup Shooting World Cup competition. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Govind Singh, President of the International Shooting Sports Federation



(ISSF) Luciano Rossi, National Rifle Association of India Raninder Singh, General Secretary K.K. Sultan, Principal Secretary Sports, and Youth Welfare Deepthi Gaur Mukherjee was present.

The Chief Minister said that our country has a tradition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. There will be no inconvenience to all the guests and players in the heartland of India. He said that we are all one. There is a tradition of the welfare of the world. May you all be happy and healthy. Chouhan said that the game is played not only to win but also to learn.

Sports keep us happy and

healthy by removing stress. It increases competition. He said that Madhya Pradesh is moving fast in sports. We are not satisfied with this now, we have to move further. The Chief Minister said that such competitions allow excellent players to move forward. He said that Bhimbetka is a world heritage. Sanchi is world famous. The Bhopal lake is very beautiful. Welcome to the beautiful state. Bhopal is the cleanest capital of the country.

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Yashodhara Rajee Scindia welcomed the guests. She said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making many

efforts to promote sports. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is determined to make the state an excellent state for sports and make Bhopal a hub.

In the opening ceremony, International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) President Luciano Rossi said that India is a beautiful country. The beauty of Bhopal is also unique. Praising Chief Minister Chouhan, he said that he is making an unprecedented contribution towards sports. Raninder Singh, President of NRI also expressed his views. Players and dignitaries from India and abroad were present in the World Cup shooting competition.

Restore Choksi red notice, CBI urges Interpol Commission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a day when reports said fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi was removed from Red Corner

Notice database of Interpol, the CBI on Tuesday said it remains in active communication with Commission for Control of Interpol's Files (CCF) and other bodies in global police body seeking restoration of the RCN against the fugitive.

"The CBI remains committed to return of fugitives and criminals to India to face process of criminal justice. Systematic steps have been initiated in close coordination with foreign law enforcement agencies for geo-locating and return of wanted criminals and economic offenders. In the last 15 months, over 30 wanted criminals have returned to India," the CBI said.

PARLIAMENT IMBROGLIO

BJP calls Rahul 'Mir Jafar'; Cong won't budge on JPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the sixth day in a row, Parliament was again adjourned for the day on Tuesday amid bedlam with the Opposition demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the alleged Adani share manipulation issue and the ruling party members seeking Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's apology over his alleged critical remarks abroad against democracy in India.

Queering the pitch of its "Mafi mago" campaign against Rahul on his alleged "insult" to Indian democracy in London, the BJP on Tuesday compared the latter with Mir Jafar and pledged that "come what may" he will have to offer apology to the "people of India". Jafar was the commander of the Bengal Army under Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah but betrayed him during the battle of Plassey.

The Lok Sabha, however,



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi interacts with the elected UDF and LSGI members from Wayanad district at Kalpetta in Wayanad district on Tuesday

managed to pass a ₹1.185-lakh crore Budget for 2023-24 for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir through the ruckus.

Parliament will meet again on Thursday. Wednesday is a holiday on account of the Hindu new year.

As soon as the proceedings started in the Lower House

after the first adjournment in the morning, members of the Opposition benches raised the JPC issue and shouted slogans like "we want JPC".

Speaker Om Birla made repeated appeals to the protesting MPs to allow the Question Hour to function, giving the assurance that everyone will be given a chance to speak.

Pak skips SCO meet after India objects to flawed J&K map



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan on Tuesday reportedly skipped a meeting under the aegis of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) here after India raised objection to Pakistan map incorrectly depicting borders of Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting pertained to military medicine specialists under the SCO and when India asked Pakistan to refrain from showing its map, its delegation decided not to attend it.

India had reportedly urged Pakistan not to show the map or not attend the seminar here, it was learnt. India has in the past also raised objections to Pakistan's inaccurate maps in the SCO meetings.

In September, 2020, India walked out of a virtual meeting

of national security advisers (NSA) of member-states of the SCO after the Pakistani representative projected a map that inaccurately depicted the borders of the two countries.

"At the meeting of the national security advisers (NSAs) of member-states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), hosted by the chair of the SCO (Russia), the Pakistani NSA deliberately projected a fictitious map that Pakistan has recently been propagating," said External Affairs Ministry had then said.

"This was in blatant disregard to the advisory by the host against it and in violation of the norms of the meeting. After consultation with the host, the Indian side left the meeting in protest at that juncture," it said.

Tremors in Delhi-NCR

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Strong tremors jolted parts of north India, including Delhi-NCR, on Tuesday night as an earthquake of magnitude 6.6 struck the Hindu Kush region in Afghanistan.

Panic-stricken people rushed out of buildings as the earthquake struck around 10.20 pm and was also felt in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan. There was disruption in mobile services in some parts of the Jammu region immediately after the earthquake, an official said.

CAPSULE

KANNADA ACTOR HELD FOR TWEET ON HINDUTVA

Bengaluru: Kannada actor Chetan Kumar, popularly known as Chetan Ahimsa, has been arrested by Bengaluru police after his tweet on Hindutva went viral. The complaint against him stated that his tweet, which says that "Hindutva is built on lies", allegedly hurt the sentiments of Hindus. He was taken into custody by the Sheshadripuram police in Bengaluru.

NIA CHARGESHEETS 12 PRO-KHALISTANI OUTFITS

New Delhi: The NIA on Tuesday filed its first Chargesheet against 12 accused, found to have links with pro-Khalistani outfits and Pak-based conspirators, in one of the three terror-gangster nexus cases it is investigating.

UAPA tribunal upholds ban on PFI, 7 affiliates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The UAPA tribunal on Tuesday upheld the Central Government's decision declaring the Popular Front of India (PFI) and its seven associated organisations as unlawful association and imposing a five-year ban on it.

Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma of the Delhi High Court, heading the tribunal, formed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, pronounced the verdict confirming the ban on the PFI and its related organisations. On Sept 27 last year, the Centre had banned the PFI for five years.

BJP most important foreign political party in world for US: WSJ

PTI ■ NEW YORK

An opinion piece in the influential Wall Street Journal has described the BJP as the most important foreign political party in the world for America's national interests and the "linchpin" of the US strategy in the Indo-Pacific amid China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

The BJP may also be the least understood, the opinion piece written by Walter Russell Mead, a leading American academic, commented. He added that the party combines the most striking principles of three major political entities in the world — the Likud Party of Israel, the Communist Party of China and the Muslim Brotherhood

of Egypt. According to the opinion piece published on Monday, the BJP is poorly understood in the West because it grows out of a political and cultural history unfamiliar to most non-Indians.

The BJP's electoral dominance reflects the success of a "once obscure and marginal social movement of national renewal based on efforts by generations of social thinkers and activists to chart a distinctively Hindu path to modernisation", it says.

"Like the Muslim Brotherhood, the BJP rejects many ideas and priorities of Western liberalism even as it embraces key features of modernity. Like the Chinese Communist Party, the BJP



hopes to lead a nation with more than a billion people to become a global superpower," Mead writes.

"Like the Likud Party in Israel, the BJP combines a

basically pro-market economic stance with populist rhetoric and traditionalist values, even as it channels the anger of those who've felt excluded and despised by a cosmopolitan,

Western-focused cultural and political elite," the 70-year-old academic says.

"After an intensive series of meetings with senior BJP and RSS leaders, as well as some of their critics, I am convinced that Americans and Westerners generally need to engage much more deeply with a complex and powerful movement," Mead says.

From a fringe of mostly marginalised intellectuals and religious enthusiasts, the RSS has become perhaps the most powerful civil-society organisation in the world, he writes.

Mead also highlights the importance of stronger ties between the US and India.

"It's important because the BJP — which came to power in 2014, won a second term in

2019, and is headed for a repeat victory in 2024 — sits securely at the helm of Indian politics at a time when India is emerging both as a leading economic power and, along with Japan, as the linchpin of American strategy in the Indo-Pacific," he writes.

"For the foreseeable future, the BJP will be calling the shots in a country without whose help American efforts to balance rising Chinese power are likely to fall short," Mead writes.

The invitation to engage with the BJP and RSS is one that Americans can't afford to reject, Mead says.

"As tensions with China rise, the US needs India as both an economic and political partner. Understanding the ideal-

ogy and the trajectory of the Hindu nationalist movement is as important for business leaders and investors seeking to engage economically with India as it is for diplomats and policymakers wanting to put the strategic relationship on a stable footing," he writes.

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

Mead also writes about his meeting with Yogi Adityanath — the Chief Minister Uttar Pradesh — and recalls that the conversation was about bringing investment and development to his State.

Survey of crops of affected farmers to be carried out

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan reached village Rusalla in Bina tehsil of Sagar district on Tuesday and inspected the farmers' fields damaged by hailstorm. He saw the damaged crops in the field of farmer Virendra Patel. The Chief Minister consoled the farmers of village Rusalla and said that the State Government was with them in this hour of crisis.

Chouhan said that due to unseasonal rains and hailstorm in 20 districts of the state, there has been extensive damage to the crops of the farmers. Crops have also been damaged in Khurai, Naryawali, Bina areas of Sagar district. He said that the compensation amount would be given after the survey by a joint team of Agriculture, Revenue and Panchayat Department. The Chief Minister told the farmers that don't get sad and don't let tears come in your eyes, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is with you.

The Chief Minister inspected the sprouted wheat and gram crop after reaching another field as well. He asked the farmers to be patient in this

hour of crisis. Our farmers work hard day and night, shed blood and sweat, then after a lot of difficulty the crop is ready. Farmers are happy when the crop is ready. Due to hailstorm, the hopes of the farmers have been dashed. The CM said that he is standing with the farmers in the hour of crisis. An amount of Rs. 32 thousand per hectare will be given in case of crop loss of more than 50 percent of wheat, gram and lentils. The work of crop insurance will also go on simultaneously. Madhya Pradesh government will give relief amount which is not available in any other state. The CM instructed to get the survey of crops done through satellite as well.

Chouhan said that there has been loss of life due to lightning, their families will be given financial assistance of Rs. 4

lakh. Rs 37 thousand will be given for the death of a cow-buffalo, Rs. 4 thousand for the death of a sheep-goat and Rs. 100 for the death of a chicken-hen. Loan recovery will also be postponed for farmers whose crops have been damaged due to hailstorm.

Along with this, the government will also pay the interest for the next year. He said that such efforts would be made that they could get loans again at zero percent interest. Hailstorm-hit farmers whose daughters are to be married will be given funds for marriage under the Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana. Those farmers who have not been able to register for minimum support price due to hailstorm, registration will be done by opening the portal again.

This arrangement will be for

all the 20 hailstorm-affected districts of the state. The Chief Minister told the collector that after the survey, the assessment should be done with full honesty. Farmers should be given compensation for losses and relief from crop insurance. Bina MLA Mahesh Rai, District Panchayat President Hira Singh Rajput, public representatives, officers and farmer brothers were present.

While returning to Bhopal from Bina, 51 Banjara family members living near the refinery met Chief Minister Chouhan and told him their problems. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan instructed the Divisional Commissioner and the Collector that all Banjara families should be given pattas under the Mukhya Mantri Bhu-Awasiya Yojana and their drinking water problem should also be resolved.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan meets the President of International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) Luciano Rossi at his residence in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Doctors in AIIMS create a new food pipe in a patient

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a rare feat, a team of doctors at AIIMS, Bhopal, successfully performed a rare and complex operation to create a new food pipe.

Some time ago, one female had consumed corrosive substance (toilet cleaner) at home that severely damaged her food pipe (esophagus). This corrosive substance had severely burnt and completely closed her food pipe. It had also affected her stomach. She was unable to swallow anything through her mouth, not even water or her own saliva, a condition called as dysphagia.

She was dependent on tube feeding (feeding jejunostomy) for survival where food in liquid form is directly delivered to the small intestine. Inability to eat and drink like a normal person was severely affecting her daily life. Patient consulted at many other centers for her

problem before coming to AIIMS Bhopal.

At AIIMS Bhopal, she was evaluated by a team of doctors from Surgical Gastroenterology and ENT department. Surgery was planned to construct a new food pipe after an extensive work up and discussion with patient and family members. After getting her food pipe back, patient is now happy as she is now able to eat and drink through mouth after almost 10 months.

Dr. Vishal Gupta, Additional Professor and Head of Surgical Gastroenterology department who lead the operation, told that the patient had not eaten or drunk anything by mouth for last 10 months, and was surviving by taking food through the feeding tube. Constructing a new food pipe was a real challenge as the entire esophagus was damaged by the corrosive substance. And stomach was also

damaged. The team of Doctors constructed a new food pipe using a portion of her large gut (colon) which was pulled up all through her chest in to the neck from the abdomen. After this surgery, that is called as colonic pull-up or pharyngocoloplasty, she can eat and drink without depending on a feeding tube."

Adding to this, Dr. Lokesh Arora, informed that her stomach was also severely injured with corrosive substance and a passage was also created between stomach and small gut (intestine).

"It was a real challenge to preserve her voice as we had to join new food pipe in throat near voice box and an important nerve which control voice and also protects the airway passing through this area" added Dr Vikas Gupta, Additional Professor and Head, ENT.

This long-drawn nine-hour operation was performed

by a team of doctors that consisted of Dr. Vishal Gupta, Dr. Lokesh Arora, and Dr. Sajay Raj from Surgical Gastroenterology department; Dr. Vikas Gupta, Dr Ganakalyan, Dr Rahul from ENT department; and Dr Shikha Jain from anesthesia department. Patient remained in ICU for about 10 days under supervision of Surgical ICU Incharge Dr JP Sharma.

Executive Director Prof Ajai Singh congratulated and applauded the efforts of the entire team for conducting such a difficult supermajor operation successfully.

Experts strongly feel that the sale of unbranded corrosive substances like toilet cleaner containing strong acid, which are easily available in local market, should be strictly banned as many a times these substances are consumed accidentally, specially by children, or deliberately with life-threatening consequences.

Two-day safety training organised at BHEL

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Heeralal Bharani, Additional General Manager - H. S. E. Department and Swagata S Saxena, Sr. Deputy General Manager - H.R. in co-ordination with H.R.D.C. and Health, Safety and Environmental Engineering Department organized a two-day safety training program for society and contract workers and crane operators and slingers at Vishwakarma Hall on the occasion of Safety Fortnight.

Safety training for "Society and contract workers" was organized whose instructor H.S.E. Giriraj Aggarwal - Senior Manager and Siddharth Gantayat - Manager of the department. 137 workers participated in this programme.

In this sequence, a half-day program for safety train-



ing for "Crane Operator and Slinger" was also organized. The instructor of this program is H.S.E. Shri Rajkumar Meena - Deputy Manager and Santosh Kunwar - Additional Engineer of the department. 88 crane operators and slingers participated in the programme.

A total of 225 workers were provided safety training in this two-day programme. The convenor of this program is Arvind Tiwari - Deputy Manager/ HR. D.C.

Team HRD consisting of Molly Bibleen Xaxa (Manager), PK Suryavanshi, Mahendra Kumar Yadav, CK Sharma, Harichand and Shri Prabhakar have contributed to facilitate this training programme.

IntelliSmart rolls out third edition of INSTINCT

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

IntelliSmart Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd., India's leading smart metering and digital solutions company, today unveiled the third edition of its flagship innovation challenge and hackathon INSTINCT.

Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy RK Singh launched INSTINCT 3.0 through a curtain raiser at the plenary session of the National Dialogue on 'Smart-Metered India for a Digitalised & People-centric Power Sector', jointly organised by IntelliSmart and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

Speaking about the launch, Anil Rawal, MD & CEO, IntelliSmart said, "We take pride in the fact that in a short span of time, INSTINCT has become an innovation hotbed of the power distribution sector in general and specifically for smart metering industry, widely regarded by the innovation community of the country as the flagship Hackathon. Our endeavour is to provide a platform to the great innovative minds and budding ideas. We have already incubated some of the winning ideas of the previous editions of INSTINCT for mass-scale commercialisation."

INSTINCT, the annual innovation challenge & hackathon by IntelliSmart, has become a breeding ground for innovative ideas and breakthrough solutions for the power distribution sector.

Since its inception, INSTINCT has found widespread uptake with 2665 participants, 2368 students, more than 900 colleges, 81 startups, 184 professionals and 145 incubation centres engaged. The hackathon has given wings to great ideas and its owners a way to realise their full potential in real-world applications.



People light a huge lamp containing 1001 wicks (Al Vilikku, the traditional style of Kerala) to mark the 47th foundation day of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Glaucoma awareness rally held by the staff of Sewa Sadan Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Eminent Glaucoma specialist and paramedical staff of the sewa sadan eye hospital held a Glaucoma awareness rally at Lalghati square yesterday. Main objective of organizing rally was to spread awareness against dreaded Glaucoma diseases in the society.

People assembled in the rally were told the measures of eye care from this disease. On the occasion Glaucoma specialist Dr. Samta Patel, Dr Sapna Prashant, Dr Deepa Raidas and Sr ophthalmologist Dr Kavita Gupta and Dr. Sarita Kumar were also present.

Dr Samta Patel told that the Glaucoma is a slow and silent vision killer disease. She told that the old cataract patients who negligently avoid their surgery mainly suffer from this dreaded disease after spending long term. Dr. Samta told that there is no treatment of the patient who has once lost his/her vision.

Dr Deepa Raidas said that the Glaucoma patients see colored circles around bulb. Their vision area is also reduced. Patients always feel pain in the eyes and dazzled view. She fur-

People assembled in the rally were told the measures of eye care from this disease

ther said that due to the dryness in optic nerve the patient gradually loose his/ her vision.

Dr Sapna Prashant said that the people of 50 plus age should regularly consult with the Glaucoma specialist and ailing patient should undergo for their Glaucoma surgery and take proper medicines with the consultation of doctor.

Eye surgeons and paramedical staff also held one candle march in the evening. Candle march attract the attention of pedestrians. Managing trustee of SSEH L.C. Janiyani said that this disease spread slowly and silently.

Therefore the patients should immediately consult the glaucoma specialist and start treatment for proper eye care. Manager duo Bharti Janiyani and Kushal Dharmani were also present in the rally and candle march.

Every affected village and district will be taken care of: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that crops have been damaged due to hailstorm and untimely rains.

Prime Minister Modi has been informed about the damage caused to the crops. Farmer brothers and sisters are in crisis and trouble, but they should not worry and should not consider themselves alone.

The state government is with them in this hour of crisis. I promise to get everyone affected out of this crisis. Chief Minister Chouhan gave this message to the farmers through media representatives after planting saplings in the garden at Shyamla Hills before going on a tour of the hailstorm affected areas.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that after seeing the condition of hailstorm affected districts, he will talk to the farmers. The damage caused to the crops will be assessed and the loss will be compensated. Along with the relief amount, farmers will also be given the benefit of crop insurance scheme. Every affected village and district will be taken care of.

World TB Day will be organized at AIIMS, Bhopal on March 24

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Tuberculosis, a disease which has been affecting mankind for centuries is now global health emergency and is one of the prime targets by health agencies all over the world, especially India. As the renowned scientist Robert Koch shared his results on the discovery of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis on March 24, 1882; the day is observed as World TB Day since many years all across the globe. With the Prime Minister of India himself committing to the daunting task of TB elimination by 2025, the health activists all across the country are working towards achieving this goal in a pace never seen before.

All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been observing the World TB Day since last few years regularly and this year also, a CME on "Updates in the Management of Tuberculosis" will be held as well.

The activities will start on 23rd March whereby a poster competition amongst various students/residents will be held from 3-5 pm in the sem-

inar hall of department of Pulmonary Medicine in the Academic Block.

On the morning of 24th March, some community outreach activities will be held to increase the awareness about TB elimination and the various steps and services undertaken by the government in the road to TB elimination.

The same afternoon from 2:30 pm to 5 pm a CME will be held in LT 4 at Sardar Vallabh bhai Patel Bhawan where all important dignitaries of the institute namely Prof Ajai Singh (Executive Director and CEO), Prof Rajesh Malik (Dean Academics), Prof Manisha Shrivastava (Medical Superintendent and Chairperson, TB Core Committee) and Col Ajit Singh(Deputy Director, Administration are expected to grace the occasion. Approximately 100-150 delegates are expected to listen to the CME lectures and various faculty members of the institute will fulfil their roles as expert speakers and chairpersons as per the detailed programme attached along-with.



Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan inspects the wheat crops of the farmers damaged due to unseasonal rain and hailstorm in Patwari Khedi, Gulabganj Tehsil, Vidisha district Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

CM visits the hailstorm affected village

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that farmers will now be given a relief amount of Rs 32,000 per hectare on a loss over 50 percent to crops due to hailstorm and untimely rain.

Along with this, the amount of crop insurance will be given separately. He

also instructed the officials to include horticulture crops in the survey. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the farmer should not worry or be upset, I am with them and will take the farmers out of all kinds of trouble.

On Tuesday, Chief Minister Chouhan consoled the farmers after taking stock of the damage caused to crops due to hailstorm in

Patwarikhedi, Hathiyakheda, Ghurda, Mudraganesh and Madhichaubisa villages of Gulabganj tehsil of Vidisha district. The Chief Minister said that the farmers should not worry, the survey of each affected farm would be done with humane approach and generosity, so that the farmers could be given full relief. He said that survey work is going on in the affected districts.

Letter of intent awarded to 10 developers for solar plants

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Selected developers under "Kusum-C" scheme letter of intent was awarded to 10 selected developers for setting up 126.4 MW solar plants for 22 on Tuesday in the auditorium of "Urja Bhawan Complex", Chairman of Energy Development Corporation Girraj Dandotia distributed the letters and Managing Director Karamveer Sharma was present on the occasion.

The selected developers would set up 126.4 MW solar plants for 22 substations for solarization of agricultural feeders under Prime Minister Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Maha Abhiyan "KUSUM-C" scheme.

During this program, the detailed information of the Kusum-S scheme was informed



by the Chairman of the Corporation, Girraj Dandotia. It was told by him that under this scheme, the pumps operated in the state would be solarized and the extra electricity generated from it would be sold to the MP Power Management Company

Limited at the fixed rates.

Under this scheme, solar power plants can be set up on private and government land. It was told by him that work is going on at a fast pace in the field of renewable energy in the state. Under this, work is currently in progress on a 1500 MW solar project in Neemuch, Agar, Shajapur and 600 MW floating solar project in Ankleshwar. Apart from this, a solar project of 1400 MW capacity will be established soon in the remote area of Morena district where the land is unusable.

In this series, work on a storage project of 950 MW capacity is also under consideration. It was told by him that the state of Madhya Pradesh would be leading in comparison to other states in giving concrete shape to the resolve of the Prime Minister of the country n 05 vital elements.

It was told by him that under this project, agriculture feeder has to be supplied with solar energy and electricity has to be made available during day time for irrigation and to organize the life style of the farmers. Along with this, according to the information given by him, solar pumps are being set up for irrigation with the aim of making the farmers of the state self-reliant, in which state and central government grants are also being given.

During the program, M.P. Managing Director of Energy Development Corporation Karmaveer Sharma said that under the Kusum-S project, there is a provision to solarize 2.70 lakh (1250 Da) grid connected pumps in the state. Under this project, 30 percent central assistance amount (Rs. 1.05 crore per MW) or 30 percent of the actual cost, whichever is less, has been provisioned by the Government of India.

Under the project, the energy sector of Saachi city's domestic, institutional, industrial and agricultural sectors will be reimbursed through solar parks, solar rooftops and various off-grid based renewable energy plants. This Saachi SolarCity is proposed to be inaugurated on May 03, 2023 by the Prime Minister.



Congress MLAs walk out from the house and stage a protest to highlight the issue of the death of a Tribal woman in Dongargaon, during the budget session of the State Assembly in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo



Congress Corporators stage a protest in front of the Speaker Kishan Suryavanshi as Mayor Malti Rai presents the annual budget during BMC council meeting in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

Bhopal Mayor announces budget of Rs 3306 crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Mayor Malti Rai announced the budget of Rs 3306 crore for development of the state capital on Tuesday with a deficit of Rs.82 crores. The Mayor said that she is working towards individual tap connections in Bhopal and will make Bhopal number-1 in cleanliness. She emphasised the role of councilors to support this effort and asked them to take responsibility of their wards. The mayor asked the councilors to plant a sapling on birthdays and anniversaries and take care of it like a child.

In the budget meeting of Bhopal Municipal Corporation, Congress councilors created ruckus

regarding the wind and solar project to be set up in Neemuch district. They asked whether the opinion of the expert was taken ? After this, the Congress councilors sat on a dharna in front of the Speaker's chair. Both the projects were approved on the basis of majority.

The name of Aishbagh Stadium has also been changed, the stadium has been named after senior BJP leader and former MP of Bhopal Late. Kailash Sarang. Apart from this, the names of two roads are also named after former Chief Minister Late. Babulal Gaur and Shaheed Group Captain Varun Singh. No new tax was imposed in the budget. Property and water tax will remain the same.

Mayor Malti Rai said during the budget meeting that the present financial condition of BMC is not good, with expenses overshooting income. She said that in this budget, efforts have been made to strike a balance between income and expenditure. It will be the first budget under an elected council after a gap of three years.

Commenting on PMAY, the Mayor said that there are many such houses under PM Awas, in which allotment was done in someone's name, but someone else has been living there. She asked councilors to remove such persons, so that the right people can get houses.

Budget Highlights:
-50 percent of the amount of property tax that

will be received in the ward will be spent in the development of the ward.

-The chairman of the municipal corporation will get an amount of two crore rupees. With this amount, they will be able to get work done in any ward.

-Auditoriums will be built at various places in Bhopal. Where programs can be held.

-To encourage the girls of the employees of the corporation, they will be given five thousand rupees for getting 75 percent marks in class 10th and 12th.

-Covered meat and fish markets will be made. A provision of Rs 2 crore has been made for this.

-A provision of Rs 25 lakh has been made for the lake festival in Bhopal.

Cops involved in 190 heinous crimes: Home Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Police are given the status of protector in society but many of MP policemen are suspect and serious allegations are raised against them.

In serious cases like rape, 190 accused are policemen. Among these, most police personnel are facing rape cases in Gwalior. This information was given by Home Minister Dr. Narottam Mishra in response to the question of Congress MLA and former minister Jitu Patwari.

There are 190 rape accused in the police from constable to officer. Of these, maximum 28 rape accused are in Gwalior. There are 44 rapists in the Gwalior-Chambal range police

which is the highest in the state. Cases of rape have been registered against 28 policemen in Gwalior, 44 in Gwalior Chambal range, 17 in Indore city, 14 in Indore Dehat and 16 in Bhopal, while serious allegations have been leveled against the guards.

In case of encounters, 45 encounters in 12 years, out of which 42 are only in Gwalior district.

There have been 45 encounters in the state between 2010 and 2022, out of which 42 are in Gwalior district only. Which is a shocking figure. In response to Patwari's question, the Home Minister said that in the period of 12 years, there have been 13 deaths in lock-up during investigation. While 31 people have committed suicide in lockup during the same period.

Jeetu Patwari sought information about complaints filed against doctors in Lokayukta. In response to this question, Minister Vishwas Sarang said that 26 complaints have been received against doctors in Lokayukta and 36 complaints have been received against doctors in EOW in which complaints have been received for filing cases of economic corruption.

According to the complaint, the name of RS Sharma, the former Vice-Chancellor of Jabalpur Medical University, was also mentioned, which has been banned, along with the name of Ashu Pathak, the registrar of the same university and episode is still going on.

There are ample possibilities of sports tourism in Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was paid a courtesy visit by the delegation of International Shooting Sports Federation at Samatva Bhawan at the CM's residence. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Smt. Yashodhara Rajee Scindia also accompanied. Chief Minister Chouhan welcomed the delegation by presenting a bouquet and angavastram.

The delegation included President of the Federation Luciano Rossi, National Rifle Association of India President Raninder Singh, National Rifle Association of India General Secretary K. Sultan Singh and Chief Coach Manjher Singh. It is noteworthy that the ISSF World Cup is being held in Bhopal from

March 21 to 27. Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Smt. Scindia put the lapel pin of the ISSF World Cup on Chief Minister Chouhan.

During the meeting with Chief Minister Chouhan, the members of the delegation appreciated the world-class infrastructure and facilities available for shooting sports in Bhopal. They said that there are ample possibilities of sports tourism in Bhopal. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the organisation of ISSF World Cup will make the global sports community aware of the capability of organising international level sports competitions in Bhopal. Chouhan informed the delegation about the ongoing activities for expansion of sports up to the village level in the state, promotion of sports and enhancing the skills of the players.

Three booked for human trafficking

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chunabhathi police have booked three persons including a woman for human trafficking, girl was held captive and sexually assaulted by the father-son duo at Hansalpura near Dewas after she was sold at Rs 1 lakh to them by the accused woman.

A case of human trafficking has come to light in Chunabhathi area. Her friend's mother-in-law sold the girl to father and son for Rs 1 lakh. Both raped her. The victim told the police that both the accused kept her hostage in the house. Both used to fight with her everyday she escaped and reached her home in Bhopal on Rang Panchami.

After this the police were informed about the incident. The police have registered a case against the father-son, mother-in-law of her friend. The accused have not been arrested yet.

Chunabhathi police station in-charge Nitin Sharma said that the girl living in Kolar slum had mysteriously gone missing on July 15, 2021. His relatives had registered his missing.

The father said that the daughter is retarded. Police

and relatives searched, but could not find her. After about a year and a half, on the day of Rang Panchami, she suddenly reached her aunt's house living in Chunabhathi.

She told the police that on July 15, 2021, she had gone to visit Lakshmi's house where her friend Muskaan's mother-in-law Lakshmi gave her sedated water. After this she became unconscious and when she regained consciousness, she was in Hansalpura near Dewas. There were two men in the house Harisingh and Inder Singh.

Inder was Hairsh's father and the two sexually assaulted her. Initially she was not allowed to leave the house and when she protested, father and son used to beat her. The accused sexually exploited her for about one and a half years. Later Inder forcibly married her.

Lakshmi goes to Indore and Dewas to work as a labourer. During this, he got acquainted with Inder's mother. Inder's mother tells him that he is not getting married and provide a girl if available and for this she will spend Rs 1.5 lakh. Lakshmi sedated the water and took the victim to Inder's house and sold her.

House adjourned sine die in MP

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Assembly was on Tuesday adjourned sine die ahead of schedule after the House passed the state budget for 2023-24 with a voice vote amid a walkout by the Congress over the government not holding a discussion on department-wise demands for grants and Legislative Affairs Minister Narottam Mishra moving a proposal to apply the "guillotine".

The last sitting of the House was scheduled on March 27 with holidays in between.

Normally, after a discussion, voting is held during the budget session. If in case there is no time for discussion, then the state moves a proposal to apply the guillotine legislative method under which all department-wise demands for grants or proposals are passed without any debate in the House, an expert explained.

The Speaker applies guillotine which allows demands for grants to be put to vote at once, whether they have been discussed or not.

The guillotine proposal was moved by the legislative affairs minister citing paucity of time, but it invited opposition from the Congress. Leader of Opposition Dr Govind Singh said they were against the proposal of guillotine and he and other Congress MLAs staged a walkout in protest.

Later, Finance Minister Jagdish Devda presented the department-wise demands for grants and the budget for 2023-24 was passed by the Assembly with a voice vote.

Earlier, a no-confidence motion moved by the Congress against Speaker Girish Gautam, after party MLA Jitu Patwari was suspended for creating a ruckus during the budget session, was rejected by the Assembly.

Legislative Affairs Minister Mishra said as per rules a no-confidence motion cannot be moved against the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, and only a resolution can be submitted against them.

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S. No.	Power Home Loan A/c no	Name of Borrower(s)	Demand Notice Id. Possession Date	Other Assets
1.	83730703	MJ Associates, H.No.F-52, Narela Sankari Ward No. 65, Tehsil- Huzur, Bhopal	22/02/2022 30/12/2022	MP04 SN6085
2.	502000136636619	Ashwa Realinra Pvt. Ltd, Plot No.E-8/184 Trilochan Nagar, Trilanga Dist. Bhopal	24/09/2018 25/11/2022	NA
This Public Notice is issued in view of the fact that in spite of sending notice to the borrower, HDFC Bank Ltd has not been able to communicate/establish contact with the aforesaid Borrower(s)/ Legal heirs(s)/ Legal Representative(s) at his/her/their last known address as per bank's records. Whereas the Authorised Officer of the bank in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) has issued demand notice(s) to the Borrower(s)/ Legal heirs(s)/ Legal Representative(s) on the date mentioned above. On the Borrower(s)/ Legal heirs(s)/ Legal Representative(s) failure to comply with the said Demand Notice(s) within the period set out therein, the Authorised Officer of the bank has taken over possession of the immovable property/secured asset more particularly described in the said Demand Notice.				
At the time of taking over possession of the said immovable property /secured asset, the Authorised Officer of the bank has drawn up an inventory of personal belongings, household goods, hosiery and cosmetics items lying therein, copy whereof can be collected from the undersigned on any working day during office hours. In the circumstances, Notice is hereby given, to the said borrower/Legal heirs/ Legal Representative to forthwith remove the personal belongings/ household goods lying in the aforesaid immovable property/ Secured Asset within 07 (seven) days from the date thereof, failing which the Authorised Officer has no other option but to remove the personal belongings, household goods, hosiery and cosmetics items and dispose off / deal with it in the manner as may be deemed fit, entirely at the Borrowers/Legal heirs/ Legal Representatives risk as to cost and consequences, in which event, no claim will be entertained in this regard in future.				
Date : 22.03.2023 Place : Bhopal			(Authorized Officer) HDFC Bank Ltd.	

Experts express views at SRMUHs conference

New Delhi: Prominent experts have underpinned the dire need of combating Anti-Microbial Resistance through the Vasudeiva Kudumbagam ideology.

The renowned experts expressed their concerns and the way forward at a Conferenced titled Nobel Laureate Talk: Thought Leadership Forum on Anti-Microbial Resistance-AMR organized by SRM University Delhi-NCR, Sonepat (SRMUH) in New Delhi.

The Conference- Nobel Laureate Talk- was organized by SRMUH in association with the British Council, Department of Science and Technology, IISER Pune, Royal Society of Chemistry, and Tata Technologies. The talk was attended by a host of eminent scientists, academicians, and researchers working in the field of Anti-Microbial Resistance.

Opening the conference, Prof. Paramjit Singh Jaswal, Vice Chancellor, SRMUH high-

lighted the dire need of combating AMR through Vasudeiva Kudumbagam' ideology. Padma Bhushan Prof. G.P. Talwar founder Director of the National Institute of Immunology (NII) demonstrated his contribution to the field of immunology through his MIP vaccine and ongoing studies on modern contraception in association with the ICMR and ICCR at the Talwar Research Foundation.

Prof. Virander Singh Chauhan, Chancellor, Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management underpinned the challenges in tackling antimicrobial resistance and emphasized the need to reorient policies for the effective attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Prof. V. Samuel Raj, Director (C4D) and Dean Academics, SRM University Delhi-NCR spoke about the current situation of anti-microbial resistance in India and the emphasized repurposing of drugs to combat this issue.

Police register case in IELTS question paper leak

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Koh-e-Fiza police have registered a case against the owner of the loading vehicle, the agent, the employee of Blue Dart Express Courier Company, who sold the IELTS paper for Rs 1 lakh.

The police have arrested both the employees and are questioning the gang. IELTS test is for students-immigrants going to Canada, Australia, UK. This exam is for testing the English language. It is mandatory to pass this exam to get a visa for these countries.

According to the police, Sunil Kumar Saxena (46) of Sunder Nagar Ashoka Garden, is the operation in-charge of Blue Dart Express Limited Company. He told the police that the company has its office at Zone-1,

Nirmal Bhawan, MP Nagar in Bhopal. Gurgaon-based IDP Education India Pvt Ltd is a client of his company. The company conducts IELTS (International English Language Testing System) tests across India.

The company sent a consignment of examination papers on February 8 from its Gurgaon office in a bag weighing 28 kg on Indigo flight 6E602 through docket number 16267303743. The courier reached Bhopal on the morning of February 9. The said courier was picked up by our employee Kapil Karan from AAICLAS on February 9 at 8.45 am. The bag was loaded in the vehicle bearing registration number MP04GB2608. The owner of the vehicle, Saif, reached the cargo office at the State Hanger, dropped

the driver in the parking area and took the car. Kapil was also in the car with him.

After a short distance, after removing the paper bag from the loading vehicle, they kept it in the Innova car and left. There was another car along with the Innova car. Both the vehicles reached Hotel Royal Atlantis located on Panchavati Colony Road. The paper was taken to room number 101 on the first floor of the hotel. This paper was handed over to Deepak in the hotel. Some other people were also present in the hotel along with Deepak. The paper bag was returned to Saif.

Police suspect that the accused returned the paper after taking photographs of the paper with their mobiles. After this, Saif hef and Deepak reached the parking

lot of the airport with the paper. He kept the bag in the loading vehicle and took it to the company's Govindpura office.

The IELTS exam was on February 11, at around 10.30 am, the courier company handed over the bag full of papers to the examination in-charge staying at LN Hotel Resorts, ISBT. On the same day, information was received from the Blue Dart Delhi office that the paper bags for the IDP exam had been tampered . The team arrived from Delhi on March 17 for investigation, questioned Kapil.

He revealed that he was involved in the paper leak and car owner Saif was involved in this conspiracy along with an outsider (Deepak) since 3 months ago. On February 9, he got Rs 1 lakh for this.

India Fashion Tex 23 to excel woolen Industry

New Delhi: To transform India's woolen textile industry and help India become a global hub for "Make in India" woolen textiles & apparels, Wool and Woolens Export Promotion Council (WWEPC) in association with Power loom Development & Export Promotion Council (PDEX-CIL) under the aegis of the Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, jointly organized the 3rd edition of India Fashion Tex 2023-Reverse Buyer Seller Meet (RBSM) at Hotel Ashoka, New Delhi from March 20 to 22.

The three day exhibition will be attended by over 200 international buyers from various countries like United

States, EU, Scandinavia, UK, Australia, Japan, Middle East, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and many more along with them there will be more than 100 Indian exhibitors attended the exhibition. Some of the international brands including Impulse, Li & Fung, Triburg, Puma, Adidas, Ikea, New times Group, Falabella and many other established buying houses have showcased a wide range in textiles & apparels, while, there were a special Pavilion from J&K to exhibit variety and innovation.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Shubhra, Trade Advisor and Development Commissioner (Handicrafts & Handlooms) Ministry of Textiles, Gov of India.

Workshop on cooperation from hospitals held

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two-day workshop for cooperation at hospital level in crime investigation was organized at Jaiprakash Hospital with members of the Police Department, Health Department, Childline and UNICEF.

Separate meetings with gynecologists to attend all rehabilitation situations better than children, such as during the medical examination of a victim of sexual assault.

Regarding the long time taken in the medical examination and the materials etc. to preserve the fetuses, their points were discussed with the doctors.

Doctors shared that apart

from the main hospitals in Bhopal district, there are medical arrangements at the PHCs as well, all the police stations should get medical done at the local PHCs, but this does not happen, due to which the burden on the main hospitals increases.

We have to put this process into practice. In relation to preserving the fetus, the doctors told that they do not have any such box and other means available, for this there is a need to lobby the Chief Medical Officer and at the state level.

It was suggested by Amarjeet and Archana Sahay that such hospitals,PHC, CHC and Civil Hospitals should be identified in the district in

coordination with the Chief Medical Officer and a checklist should be prepared of the arrangements required for medical training there so that the arrangements can be made.

There will be an increase in the number and for the victims in the POCSO case, the format described in the Act is used in other hospitals, which is to be used on a large scale. At the end of the meeting, Mrs. Archana Sahay shared the information about the problems faced by the girls coming for MTP with the doctors and put forth her side for better operation of this process.

Concluding the workshop it was decided that under the

guidance of senior officers and in collaboration with the officers of the health department, such meetings will be organized from time to time by the police department so that better coordination can be maintained between the two departments.

In the meeting Assistant Commissioner of Police Women's Security Nidhi Saxena, Women's Station Incharge Anjana Dhurve, Station Incharge AJK Akansha Sharma, Urmila Yadav SJPU Incharge, Dr. Shakti, Dr. Abha Gynaecologist, Dr. Shraddha Agarwal, Nursing Staff and Archana Sahay Director Childline, Amarjeet Singh Consultant UNICEF were present.

Opp hits out at BJP over Choksi’s removal from Interpol database

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Opposition parties on Tuesday hit out at the BJP-led government over fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi’s removal from the Interpol database of Red Notices, saying while the Opposition was being targeted by the Enforcement Directorate and CBI, its “friend” was being let off.

While Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said talk of patriotism by those giving “protection” to such people is a “joke”, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that businessmen Gautam Adani and fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi are the “best friends” of the BJP-led government at the Centre and saffron party was working only for these people. The Aam Aadmi Party accused the Centre of trying to save fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi after his name was removed from the Interpol database of Red Notices.



In a tweet, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said, “Vipaksh ko ED, CBI, Mittr ko rihaa” (ED, CBI for the Opposition, let off for friend).” “Modani’ model matlab pehle looto, phir bin sazaa ke chooto’ (Modani model means first loot and then go scott-free without punishment),” he said.

“They are doing things to divert attention from real issues. Our embassies are being attacked. People who have run away with money from banks, Mehul Choksi, those giving protection to

such people talk about patriotism, it is a joke.” Kharge told reporters outside the Parliament.

Hitting out at the BJP government, the TMC supremo said that banks have no money and people are not getting their payments even after working for the 100 days’ work scheme. “... The country is run by only a few people. Banks are totally penniless and the Centre is not giving money for the 100 days’ work scheme (MGNREGA). But these people (Adani and Choksi) have collected lots of

funds,” Mamata claimed.

Choksi is wanted in a Rs 13,000 crore bank fraud in Punjab National Bank and is holed in Antigua and Barbuda after fleeing from India in 2018.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP and spokesperson Raghav Chadha claimed that Choksi’s name was removed from the Interpol’s Red Notices as Indian probe agencies failed to provide “concrete evidence” of the charges slapped on him. Choksi had managed to obtain citizenship of Antigua as the BJP-led Centre issued a no objection certificate for this, Chadha alleged.

“While the government of India had issued a no objection certificate to Mehul Choksi to enable him to become citizen of Antigua earlier, the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation failed to provide concrete evidence against him resulting which his name has been removed from the Red Notices list,” the AAP leader alleged.

SC to mull if pleas challenging electoral bond scheme can be shifted to Constitutional Bench

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it will consider whether the pleas challenging the validity of the electoral bond scheme for political funding of parties can be referred to a Constitutional Bench for an “authoritative pronouncement”.

The top court’s observations to decide whether the pleas can be referred to a Constitutional Bench assume significance in the wake of the claim of an NGO, a PIL petitioner on the issue, that so far Rs 12,000 crore has been paid to political parties through electoral bond and the two-third of the amount has gone to one major political party and hence, the matter needed to be decided expeditiously prior to the upcoming Karnataka assembly polls.

“We will see whether the petitions can be referred to a constitution bench on April 11,” said the bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha.



Lawyer Shadan Farasat, appearing for one of the PIL petitioners, said that the pleas be referred to a constitution bench due to the impact of the electoral bond scheme on the democratic polity and funding of political parties. Farasat said the issue needed an “authoritative pronouncement” by a larger bench. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), also supported the submission with regard to referring the batch of PILs to a constitution

bench.

Dave said the matter be taken up for in April itself prior to the upcoming Karnataka assembly polls. Advocate Prashant Bhushan sought urgent hearing, pointing out that petitions are pending for the past five years. He said that the apex court must issue direction to the Centre not to open any further window for the sale of electoral bonds during the pendency of a case pertaining to funding of political parties and alleged lack of transparency in their bank accounts.

The Government notified the Electoral Bond Scheme on January 2, 2018. According to the provisions of the scheme, electoral bonds may be purchased by a person who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.

An individual can buy electoral bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals. According to the notification, electoral bonds shall be encashed by an eligible political party only through an account with an authorised bank.

‘Def manufacturers should also focus on indigenous design, development’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining the need for self-reliance in defence production, IAF Chief V R Chaudhari on Tuesday said here manufacturers should also focus on indigenous design and development and not confine themselves only to production.

Stressing upon this point, he also said called for building offensive and defensive space capabilities to safeguard assets, and developing directed energy weapons that have significant advantages over traditional weapons. Chaudhari also said stakeholder collaboration was imperative to achieve self-reliance, and without it, “we will wallow in the dark.”

Pointing out that future wars will be across the entire spectrum including land, sea, air, cyber and space, the IAF chief said “the key to faster development of niche technology is to identify core areas of development, clearly articulate requirements, and closely interact with the industry to design and develop the technology.”

Addressing the Def Tech 2023 on “India’s Aerospace Capabilities And Technology Requirements”, the IAF chief said “the weapons of India @100 would look very different from weapons of India @75”. He went into flashback to demonstrate the capability difference due to technological enhancements over a gap of 25 years, from 1998 to now.

“Directed-energy weapons and hypersonic weapons have already been tested and employed. DEWs, particularly lasers, provide significant advantages over traditional weapons such as precision engagement, low cost per shot, logistical benefits and low detectability,” he said.

Highlighting the need for all round synergy, Chaudhari said “well established defence manufacturing public sector enterprises must hand-hold and get the developed tech-



nology into the market for mass production. Unless all stake holders come together, I am afraid, we will continue to wallow in the dark and not see tangible progress.”

The race to weaponise space has already started and the day is not far when the next war will be fought across land, sea, air, cyber and space, he said. “We need to capitalise on our initial successes in space

and prepare ourselves for the future. The Indian aerospace industry along with other players like Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Defence Space Agency (DSA) need to collaborate and chalk out the path for the future,” Chaudhari said. He also said the focus of IAF was on strengthening indigenous capabilities and upgrading its older equipment.

2nd edition of AFINDEX commences in Pune



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PUNE

The second edition of Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX- 2023) between India and 23 nations of the African continent commenced on Tuesday at Foreign Training Node, Aundh, Pune. It will culminate on March 30.

Nearly 100 participants from Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, are attending this unique field

training exercise. The participants were addressed by Lt General Rakesh Kapoor, Corps Commander, Desert Corps, officials said on Tuesday.

The joint exercise is in keeping with India’s outreach to Africa, which commenced in 2008 through the India-Africa Summit and has been thereafter held in 2015 and 2019.

The theme of the exercise is focused on Humanitarian Mine Action and Peace Keeping Operations. The Military cooperation and engagement between the participating member nations are vital for refining the interoperability and operational preparedness for UN peace keeping operations.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed its first Chargesheet against 12 accused, found to have links with pro-Khalistani outfits and Pak-based conspirators, in one of the three terror-gangster nexus cases it is investigating.

The agency said 10 other suspects are still under investigation for their role in the terror conspiracy, which included plans to eliminate certain leaders, singers and businessmen to terrorise people, extort money from them and create a sensation.

The NIA investigations have revealed linkages of the chargesheeted accused with Khalistan Tiger Force, a banned organisation, and its operative Arshdeep Singh Gill alias Arsh Dala, a listed ‘Individual Terrorist’.

Besides being in contact with Pakistan-based conspirators, the accused were also in touch with pro-Khalistanis elements based in Canada and abroad, the NIA said.

The chargesheet filed on Tuesday in Delhi related to dismantling of the gangster-terror network, along with their funding and support infrastructure.

These gangs were conspiring to carry out targeted killings and were also raising funds to carry out these and other terror activities, as part of a deep-rooted conspiracy amongst terrorists, gangsters, drug smugglers and their networks, operating from both within and outside the country.

The 12 accused chargesheeted in the case are Arsh Dala, Gaurav Patyal, Sukhpreet Buddha, Kaushal Choudhary, Amit Dagar, Naveen Bali, Chhotu Bhat, Asif



Khan, Jagga Takhatmal, Tillu Tajpuria, Bhupi Rana and Sandeep Bandar.

“The Chargesheet against them followed six months of extensive searches and examination of around 100 members of different Organised Crime Support networks by the NIA at 91 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, across 25 districts, i.e. Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Mohali, Muktsar, Moga, Ferozepur, Bhatinda, Sangrur, Patiala in Punjab; Gurugram, Sirsa, Yamunanagar, Jhajjar, Rohtak, Rewari in Haryana; Outer North, North, Rohini, Dwarka, North-west, North-East in Delhi; and Baghpat, Bulandshahar, Pilibhit, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh,” it said.

The searches led to seizure of large amounts of incriminating materials. The NIA has also unearthed centres created for harbouring the gang members and stocking weapons for them in various places across Haryana and Punjab.

Around 20 weapons, 527 rounds of ammunition, 195 digital devices and 281 documents among others were seized in these raids and searches.

Seven look out circulars (LOCs) and 10 non-bailable

warrants (NBWs) have so far been issued as part of the investigations. Three immovable properties and three mov-

Made first arrest in NGO terror funding case in J&K, says NIA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday said it has made the first arrest in the NGO terror funding case of Jammu and Kashmir.

Following comprehensive investigations into the NGO Terror funding case registered in October 2020, the NIA arrested Irfan Mehraj from Srinagar late on Monday.

Mehraj was a close associate of Khurram Parvez and was working with his organization, Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS), the agency said in a statement.

“Investigation revealed that the JKCCS was funding terror activities in the Valley and had also been in the propagation of a secessionist agenda in the Valley under the garb of protection of human rights,” it said.

Involvement of some Valley-based NGOs, Trusts and Societies in funding of terror related activities is being probed in this case.

Some NGOs, both registered as well as unregistered, have come to notice for collecting funds domestically and abroad under the cover of doing charity and various welfare activities, including public health and education.

But some of these organisations have developed links with proscribed terrorist organizations, such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) among others.

In a separate case, the NIA has filed the first supplementary chargesheet against one overground worker of proscribed terrorist organization Hizb-ul-Mujahideen Md. Rafi Najar under various sections of the Indian Penal Code

(IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the Jammu and Kashmir Terrorism Conspiracy Case.

The case relates to the conspiracy hatched by the proscribed terrorist organisations, such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), along with their frontal organisations, such as TRF and PAFF, and their Over Ground Workers operating in Jammu and Kashmir to undertake violent militant action in Kashmir valley and in other major cities of India, including Delhi.

“Investigations in the case had earlier established the connections of Commanders of these proscribed organisations based in Pakistan with their operatives in Kashmir valley to recruit and train the youth in handling of arms and explosives,” the agency said.

Millet-based diet chart must be included in PM-POSHAN: Panel

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Millet or Shree Anna (coarse grains) can be the best bet for India’s fight against malnutrition and thereby tuberculosis (TB) in children, a Parliamentary panel has noted as it suggested a millet-based diet chart should be included in the central flagship PM-POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman) Scheme.

The Committee headed by Rajya Sabha MP Bhubaneswar Kalita noted that the twin problems of malnutrition and tuberculosis pose challenges to Health orders in considerable magnitude in certain States in the country. “These two problems tend to interact with each other as nutritional status is significantly lower in patients suffering from tuberculosis. Similarly, malnutrition can lead to immunodeficiency which increases the person’s susceptibility to infection. In this light, the Government’s push for ‘Shree Anna’ (coarse grains) or millets as announced in



Budget 2023-24 can play a key role in addressing the challenge of malnutrition particularly in children in India,” said the panel in its report submitted to Parliament recently.

It recommended the ICMR to undertake a research project in coordination with Indian Institute of Millet Research and develop a diet chart constituting different types of Shree Anna including Raagi, Bajra, Jowar, Ramdana, etc.

“The Committee is hopeful that this diet chart, if

included in the PM-POSHAN Scheme, can go a long way in improving the nutritional status of children and thereby reducing the TB case load in the country,” said the report.

The panel’s observations come in the backdrop of various researches showcasing that these “smart foods” can boost growth in children and adolescents by 26 – 39% when they replace rice in standard meals. The results suggested that millets can significantly contribute to overcoming malnutrition.

Indian origin journalist assaulted by Khalistan supporters in British Columbia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/TORONTO

An Indian-origin journalist was assaulted by alleged Khalistan supporters in British Columbia while he was covering an event to welcome Indian envoy to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma there. The program was cancelled due to protests. Some of them were reportedly wielding swords and blocked the entry of the venue.

The event was organised on Sunday at the Taj Park Convention Centre Surrey to welcome High Commissioner of India, Sanjay Kumar Verma’s first visit to the west coast. He was scheduled to attend a reception organized by the Friends of India and Canada Foundation in Surrey, British Columbia.

The event was ultimately cancelled for security reasons, Global News, the news and current affairs division of the

Canadian Global Television Network, reported.

Indian-origin journalist Sameer Kaushal, who was at the venue to cover the protest, was also assaulted by protesters. Kaushal, a journalist and news director with AM600 Sher E Punjab Radio, said when he arrived at the venue, he found a large protest and said demonstrators would not allow him to access the event.

When he identified himself as a journalist and asked the protesters if he could interview their organisers about their concerns, things quickly went sour, he told Global News late Monday.

“They tried to instigate the whole crowd. Approximately 50 to 60 youngsters, they came around me, they made a circle, they had covered their faces with clothes, and they were just pushing me and threatening me and abusing me in my mother tongue,” he said.

India will ‘unitedly’ tackle terrorism, internal security challenges in future: Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GURUGRAM

India will continue to face the scourge of terrorism and internal security challenges in the future, Army Chief General Manoj Pande said here on Tuesday and assured that the security forces of the country will “unitedly” tackle them.

He made these observations after inaugurating the All India Police Commando Competition organised by the National Security Guard (NSG) at its garrison in Manesar here.

Pande said the new-age technology has enabled the enemy to perpetrate its activities using drones, internet, cyberspace and social media.

“You all know that terrorism and internal security situation is affecting our country in different ways. We are facing these challenges unitedly. Due to this, the (security) situation is improving in various states.

“These challenges will continue in the future too. Some of these challenges will be there for a long time, some will be present indirectly while some will remain secretly,” he said.

Pande said the “possibility” of terrorist



attacks taking place in the country cannot be ignored as he praised intelligence and security forces for foiling and thwarting a number of such designs and networks.

He praised the NSG, a federal counter-terrorist force, for developing special skills in bomb detection and disposal, sniping, countering drones as well as effectively coordinating with other security agencies.

A total of 24 teams from various Central Armed Police Forces and state police organisations are participating in the competition that ends on March 31.

Mamata to stage sit-in against Centre

CM says Bengal has not got farthing towards payment of MNREGA wages, PMAY funds

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With her Government's so-called "integrity TRP" taking a hit as never before in the wake of multi-departmental recruitment scams (the school level appointment scandal to begin with) exploding in the face of the ruling Trinamool Congress packing a number of her senior ministerial and party colleagues off to jail, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has decided to launch a movement against the BJP Government alleging deprivation.

Moments before leaving for Puri where she would offer prayers at the Jagannath Temple, Banerjee on Tuesday said she would soon start a two-day dharna against central deprivation. While in Odisha Banerjee is also likely to meet Chief Minister Naveen Pattanaik apparently to discuss the possibilities of an anti-BJP, anti-Congress Front ahead of the 2024 general elections.

"We are an ideal case of central deprivation ... Bengal has been subjected to a lot of deprivation and torment ... they (read the BJP Government) have not been paying our legitimate dues ... Why are they not clearing the funds for 100-days' work scheme and even the housing scheme ... what is the reason," Banerjee asked adding she would hold a sit-in demon-



stration at the statue of Baba Saheb Ambedkar in Kolkata.

"In protest against central deprivation and torture I will personally sit in a dharna for two days on March 29 and 30 ... the people must be told the kind of treatment we are getting ... Bengal is the only state that has not received a farthing from the Centre (towards the payment of MNREGA wages and PMAY funds) ... They did not earmark anything even in this year's Budget," Banerjee said.

Experts called it a desperate attempt to turn the popular attention from the SSC and other scams and rising discontent inside the party that has unnerved the top leadership to an extent that even senior ministers have been asked not to speak out of turn.

"The Centre on the one

hand has blocked the funds and on the other they are sending inspection teams and agencies" to brow-beat the State, Banerjee said reminding how the "agencies are being used for political reasons only."

Her dharna resolution notwithstanding, the sharp sting in her speech seemed missing on Tuesday, said experts wondering whether she was unwilling to provoke Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

This, particularly at a time when the Enforcement Directorate has told the designated courts that while in the course of investigation into the SSC scam case it has hit goldmines — in the shape of mobile call data records that could put top-most TMC leadership in trouble.

ED grills BRS' Kavitha for 9 hours in 3rd session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday grilled Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) leader K Kavitha for over nine hours after she appeared at the agency headquarters for the third round of questioning in the money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy case.

Till now, the ED had subjected her to questioning for 27-28 hours during her three appearances on March 11, March 20 and Tuesday (March 21). In the first chargesheet filed by the agency, it alleged that she was using two mobile phones whose IMEI changed 10 times. Before her appearance at agency's office, the MLC daughter of Telangana Chief Minister KC Rao shot off a letter to ED stating, "These phones are submitted without prejudice to my right and contentions and larger contentions whether a woman's phone can be intruded, in the teeth of her right to privacy".

Flashing some mobile phones wrapped in a transparent sheet, the BRS leader said she was going to submit them to the ED. Referring to the charge of changing IMEI numbers 10 times, she said, "It is baffling to note as to how, why and under what circumstances the agency made such allegations when I was not even summoned or asked any questions." Accusing the agency of making insinuations the leader said she was submitting the phones to dispel any notion or "adverse impression" that the agency is trying to create.

'Amid standoff Indian troops at high level of preparedness in Ladakh'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Amid ongoing standoff between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, the Northern Army Commander Lieutenant-General Upendra Dwivedi on Tuesday said while the talks are going on at different levels all our formations remain at a high level of operational preparedness in the cold desert region. The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GoC) of Udhampur-based Northern Command also maintained the situation is under control in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the efforts are on to stop terror incidents completely. Lt-Gen Dwivedi made these observations while addressing a mega 'Veterans Sampark' rally which was attended by over 800 veterans and 'Veer Naris' at a



unit of Jammu and Kashmir Rifles at Digiana.

"The status quo is maintained with China on the LAC. Talks are going on at different levels and all our formations are at a high level of operational preparedness," Lt-Gen Dwivedi said. Referring to the prevailing security situation in the region Lt-Gen Dwivedi said even though the ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC) with

Pakistan is holding on, there have been some infiltration attempts which have been successfully foiled by the Indian Army.

"The situation in the hinterland is largely under control. Our counter-insurgency/counter terrorism grid is fully working with civil administration and efforts are on to stop terror incidents completely," he added.

Min Gadkari's security beefed up after threat

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Security was increased at Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's home and office in Nagpur on Tuesday after a man made three calls threatening to harm the senior BJP leader if Rs 10 crore was not paid to him, a police official said.

The caller identified himself as one Jayesh Pujari, alias Jayesh Kantha, the same person whose name had been used to make similar calls to the Minister's office in January, he said.

Rahul Madane, Deputy Commissioner of Police (zone II), said three calls, two in the morning and one around 12 noon, were made to Gadkari's public relations office, opposite Orange City Hospital in Nagpur.

The person demanded Rs 10 crore and threatened to harm the minister, who holds the portfolio of road transport and highways, if the money was not paid, he said.

After being alerted by Gadkari's staff, the city police have started an investigation, he

said. Security has been beefed up at the minister's home and office, said the DCP.

On January 14, a man identifying himself as Pujari had made threat calls to Gadkari's public relations office, demanding Rs 100 crore. The caller claimed that he was a member of the Dawood Ibrahim gang.

Pujari, who is lodged in Hindalga jail in Karnataka's Belagavi after being sentenced to death in a murder case, had denied his involvement in the calls.

BJP schemes come from babus, Cong's from people: Rahul



PTI ■ WAYANAD (KER)

is not there.

"If you look at the Congress party schemes, like MNREGA, and you compare them to BJP schemes, you will find that the Congress party schemes emerged from the people, from the panchayats, and the BJP schemes emerged from the bureaucracy," the Wayanad MP claimed.

Gandhi then went on to elaborate about the launch of the MNREGA scheme, telling people how the idea emerged from a district in Maharashtra and how it was later conceptualised as a national scheme and expanded to the remaining parts of the country.

"MGNREGA emerged from the people of India. People demanded work, and the government responded to that idea. And it took many years for the scheme to be developed after talking to many, many different stakeholders. It was the scheme that emerged from the people of India. It was the wisdom of the people of India that created MGNREGA," Gandhi said.

He alleged that Modi had ridiculed MGNREGA, but was forced to expand the scheme himself when the country faced the COVID-19 crisis.

"When COVID came, this same Prime Minister, who was ridiculing MNREGA, was forced to expand MNREGA....

"When the Prime Minister came up with the idea of demonetisation, it came from his mind. He did not consult the people of India. He did not even consult the banking system," the Congress leader said.

During his interaction with the office bearers of local bodies, Gandhi also discussed developmental issues on the ground and matters related to the buffer zone for forests, human-animal conflict, waste management issues, and concerns regarding MNREGA.

K'taka BJP leader who played role in Kharge's 2019 poll defeat to join Cong

PTI ■ BENGALURU

BJP leader Baburao Chinchansur, believed to be one of those who played a key role in defeating AICC president M Mallikarjun Kharge, in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, appears set to join the Congress in Karnataka.

Chinchansur, a prominent leader of the Koli-Kabbaliga community in the Kalyana Karnataka region, resigned from his post of Member of the Legislative Council on Monday.

He had represented Gurmitkal assembly constituency in Kalaburagi district from 2008 to 2018, and was a Minister in the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government earlier. However, he quit the Congress in 2018 after his defeat in the assembly election and joined the BJP.

As a BJP member, he is



viewed as one of the main leaders who played a key role in defeating Kharge in Gulbarga (Kalaburagi) Lok Sabha constituency. BJP candidate Umesh Jadhav, who too had resigned from the Congress and joined the BJP, won that election.

Congress sources said Chinchansur is expected to join the party in the coming days.

Earlier this month, another BJP MLC Puttanna resigned from the Legislative Council and

joined the Congress.

When reporters sought a reaction from Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, he said Chinchansur had come from the Congress and was going back to the same party. He added that the BJP was strong in Gurmitkal and Chinchansur quitting the party would not have any effect on the party's prospects there.

Assembly elections in Karnataka are due by May.

BJP stalwart and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa refused to discuss the issue of Chinchansur's switching of loyalties, as he had already quit.

"Just a few days ago, the husband and wife (Chinchansur and his wife) fell at my feet and vowed that they will not go anywhere," Yediyurappa said. "They might have succumbed to various pressures," he added, saying, "We are ready for anything."

Centre warns Govt employees against joining OPS strike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday cautioned Government employees and staffers of face consequences if they participate in any kind of protest or strike. The instructions issued by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) to Secretaries of all Central Government departments prohibited government servants from participating in any form of strike, including mass casual leave, go-slow, sit-down etc.

The directives came in the wake of district-level rallies planned to be organised across the country on Tuesday by the National Joint Council of Action (NJCA) under the banner of 'Joint Forum for Restoration of old pension scheme (OPS)'

"There is no statutory pro-



vision empowering the employees to go on strike. The Supreme Court has also agreed in several judgments that going on a strike is a grave misconduct under the conduct rules and that misconduct by the government employees is required to be dealt with in accordance with the law," the order said.

Any employee going on strike in any form, including

protest, would face the consequences which, besides deduction of wages, may also include appropriate disciplinary action, it said. "The central government employees under your ministry/departments may, therefore, be suitably informed of the aforesaid instructions under the conduct rules issued by this department and other regulations upheld by the Supreme court. This may be dissuaded from resorting to strike in any form including protest," it asked all the central government departments.

Instructions may be issued not to sanction Casual Leave or other kind of leave to employees if applied for, during the period of the proposed protest/strike and ensure that the willing employees are allowed hindrance free entry into the office premises, the order said.



People buy leaves and flowers on the eve of Ugadi festival, at a wholesale market in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

PTI

Vaishno Devi to welcome pilgrims from today

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The cave Shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, illuminated with colorful lights and adorned with multi-hued flowers, is all set to welcome the pilgrims from different parts of India during the nine day long Navratri festival beginning from Wednesday.

The Shrine Board authorities have made elaborate security and other necessary arrangements to ensure smooth flow of pilgrims along the 13 km long serpentine hilly track connecting the base camp of Katra with the cave shrine nestled in Trikuta hills.

Each pilgrim is provided with RFID cards for effective crowd management along the yatra track. In addition 24x7 vigil is maintained with the help of a dedicated CCTV network of over 700 cameras along the yatra route.

An estimated number of over 3 lakh pilgrims are expected to pay obeisance inside the sanctum sanctorum during the festival. To accommodate the rush of pilgrims in the shrine area a quake resistant five storey building with a capacity to accommodate 3000 pilgrims has been constructed.

Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board reviewed the arrangements for pilgrims on the track and other locations which include water and power supply along the track leading to the shrine, sanitation, medicare and availability of special "fast-related" food at shrine catering outlets.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Elusive fugitive

Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh dodges 80,000 Punjab cops, and yet Kejriwal lauds CM Mann

Politics, Niccolo Machiavelli said, has no relation to morals. Often, it also has no relation to facts, commonsense, and decency. Nothing else explains Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's praise for his Punjab counterpart and party colleague Bhagwant Mann for the latter's handling of the situation arising out of Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh's inflammatory remarks and violent activities. Amritpal has the temerity to take on the entire official machinery of Punjab. The Central Government believes that Amritpal is a Pakistani agent. He openly supports Khalistan, makes anti-national statements, and disregards the Indian Constitution; his followers, protesting against the arrest of one of Amritpal's supporters, attack a police station, leaving many cops injured. The result? The cops meekly endure the assaults; and his follower is released the next day. When an attempt is made to arrest Amritpal, he dodges the police. Even after a number of days, in which many of his supporters were arrested and many arms recovered from them, police are unable to find him. And yet, Kejriwal has the cheek to say, "I want to congratulate Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann for maintaining the law and order situation in a patient and mature way." Congratulate for what? Letting a non-entity emerge as a great rebel? Restraining the police to act against an anti-national character so that he grows bigger, becomes Bhindranwale 2.0? Letting violent Khalistanis attack a police station — and getting away with it? Party camaraderie and partisanship are important but more important is national interest.



Instead of lauding his party leader and Punjab CM, Kejriwal should pay heed to what the Punjab and Haryana High Court said on Tuesday. Blasting the Punjab police for their inability to arrest Amritpal who heads an outfit called Waris Punjab De, the court said, "You have 80,000 cops. What were they doing? How did Amritpal Singh escape?" The Punjab Police informed the high court that, in a major crackdown against Amritpal Singh and his outfit, they arrested 120 of his supporters, but that didn't impress the court. And rightly so. He should have been under watch — very strict watch. After all, he not only promotes secession but also assassination. Former Punjab CM Beant Singh was blown up by Dilawar Singh, who acted as a human bomb. Amritpal Singh says that many Dilawars are ready in Punjab. But the Mann Government did not do that. Bharatiya Janata Party national executive member Sunil Jakhar correctly said, "The operation that could have been carried out without any force and show-off is now today being done in front of the whole country." It looks like the Aam Aadmi Party, which rules Punjab, is weighing political gains and losses before doing anything against Amritpal Singh. AAP leaders became successful by making all manner of statements and distributing freebies. But you need more than fiscal profligacy to tackle separatism.

PICTALK



People buy flowers on the eve of Ugadi festival, at a wholesale market in Bengaluru

PTI

Missing the chorus chirping

It is far better to hear the chirping, rather than the numb silence. The sparrows have disappeared so quietly that no one noticed them go

*A little bird, with plumage brown,
Beside my window flutters down,
A moment chirps its little strain,
Ten taps upon my window-pane,
And chirps again, and hops along.
To call my notice to its song;
But I work on, nor heed its lay,
Till, in neglect, it flies away.*

In my childhood, I remember the above lines from the first African American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906). Giving these spunky naughty birds broken rice grains to feed on, watching them wait impatiently for their food. This was as grandma and mother would clean grain in the open veranda — the sparrows were a part of our lives back in the hills. Ever since this friendly companion of ours is missing from the metropolitan cities, the poem seems to hold more relevance as the poet observes that this "Bird of peace and hope and love" has left us, since, "We in traffic's rush and din/Too deep engaged to let them in/With deadened heart and sense plod on/Nor know our loss till they are gone".

The sparrows have disappeared so quietly that no one has noticed them go. Either that or in the din of city life,



people have been too busy to even notice their choral chirping, let alone miss their presence. The house sparrow (Passer domesticus) is no longer what it used to be — our 'common' friend. According to scientists, sparrows thrived around human beings and where grain was abundant. Lack of nesting sites in modern concrete buildings, disappearing kitchen gardens and a general apathy of humans towards this small but attractive bird have deprived them of their general habitat.

We remembered this 'common' household member on "World Sparrow Day" on March 20 — a result of a vigorous campaign by scientist-conservationist Mohammad Dilawar, founder of "Natura Forever". But we also need to be serious as this little bird is gradually edging towards

extinction and is listed in the Red List of endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as well as of the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB), United Kingdom.

There is a sharp decline in many places in India such as Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan, etc. However, a ray of hope has emerged with the "State of India's Birds 2000" report, which suggests that the population of House Sparrows has been fairly stable for the past 25 years. The report is based on 10 million observations contributed by over 15,500 birdwatchers since 2000, to an online portal called eBird. It suggests that the population of House Sparrows has been fairly stable for the past 25 years.

The history of the house sparrow is also fascinating. It was the ancient Romans who introduced the house sparrow to Europe from North Africa and Eurasia. Scientific studies also point to the astonishing fact that wherever there is a human population, sparrows follow them there. Fossil evidence from a cave in



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Bethlehem dating back 4,00,000 years suggests that the house sparrow shared its space with early humans. Conservationists attribute the decline in the population of house sparrows to the unfriendly architecture of our homes. This is because of chemical fertilisers in our crops, noise pollution that disturbs the acoustic environment and noxious exhaust fumes from vehicles. A report further attributed the depleting population of sparrows to the increased use of packed food, insecticides in farming, and changing lifestyles. This resulted in inadequate food supplies for the birds. They also feel that unlike pigeons that can make nests on ledges, sparrows need cavities to build their nests. Since the newly constructed defective architectural matchbox style buildings don't have cavities, sparrows are left homeless.

Ornithologists suggest that people should provide some places in their homes for shelter, where sparrows can easily make their own nests and lay their eggs.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti)

Fake diagnosis, fake prescription

Peddlers of the vehicles-pollute-Delhi narrative are silent over the most comprehensive study which blames biomass burning for the mess

If there is anything more polluted than Delhi's air, it is the discourse on the environment. For years, we were told that vehicular emissions were the root cause of dirty air in the national capital. Now, the most authoritative study on the subject has pointed out that the real reason is something else: biomass burning. The proponents of the vehicles-pollute-Delhi narrative are conspicuous by their silence on the matter.

According to the US Energy Information Administration, "Biomass is a renewable organic material that comes from plants and animals." It includes wood and wood processing wastes, agricultural crops and waste materials, biogenic materials in municipal solid waste, and animal manure and human sewage.

The study, led by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, had contributions from 19 scholars and experts from the Physical Research Laboratory, IIT Delhi, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), Switzerland, and University of Helsinki, Finland. Researcher Suneeti Mishra and Prof Sachchida Nand Tripathi, both from the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Kanpur, co-authored the paper.

In the study, published in the prestigious Nature Geoscience journal, the scholars "observed intense and frequent nocturnal particle growth events during haze development in Delhi from measurements of aerosols and gases during January-February at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi... We estimate that this process is responsible for 70 per cent of the total particle-number concentration during haze."

It went on to say "that the condensation of primary organic vapours from biomass burning is the leading cause of the observed growth." It further said, "As uncontrolled biomass burning for residential heating and cooking is rife in the Indo-Gangetic plain, we expect this growth mechanism to be a source of ultrafine particles, affecting the health of 5 per cent of the world's population and impacting the regional climate."



In other words, the health of almost 40 crore people is adversely affected by biomass burning.

Switzerland-based IQAir's recent World Air Quality Report confirmed this. It ranked Delhi and Rajasthan's Bhiwadi fourth on the list of 50 most polluted cities in the world in 2022. In addition, six Indian cities figure in the top 10 most polluted cities, 14 in the top 20, 39 in the top 50, and 65 in the top 100. In 2021, there were 61 in the top 100.

No one disputes that the quality of air is extremely poor in not just the national capital but also in entire northern India. It is a diagnosis that is not just wrong but also dangerously misleading. In addition, there has been a persistent effort on the part of doctrinaire environmentalists to distract attention from the real cause.

It is not that a non-vehicular source of pollution was never suspected or detected. In July 2021, for instance, a study by IIT Kanpur's Tripathi found that in summer, 52 per cent of Delhi's PM 2.5 concentration was because of dust.

Yet, the entire debate about the cause of air pollution revolved around vehicles, especially cars. This was the reason that the Delhi Government

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under Arvind Kejriwal opted for the odd-even scheme to curb it.

Nothing could be further from the truth. According to the latest National Family Health Survey-5, just about 8 per cent of Indian households own cars. In Delhi, one in five households owns a car. In comparison, in Helsinki, the third cleanest city in the world, there are more than two cars for every individual. In general, Western nations have more cars per household than in India, and yet the air there is much cleaner than in our country.

At the heart of the problem of air pollution in India is not automobile density (which is low anyway) but illegal urbanisation; slums and unauthorised localities are destroying our cities. The consequences are rampant encroachments, unregulated and dangerous construction, solid waste dumping, contamination and death of water bodies, drying of aquifers, and countless more. Unsurprisingly, many areas become dust bowls—and are shrouded in a haze caused by biomass burning.

Addressing these issues presupposes a fundamental change in governance and politics. This certainly involves actions that would be disliked

by the beneficiaries of chaotic urbanisation: the residents, the local authorities, the local politicians, the bleeding-heart activists, even certain sections of the media. Anybody determined to clean up the mess runs the risk of being branded as 'anti-poor,' heartless, etc.

It begins with a win-win situation. The original landowners get much higher prices than they would have got had they sold it as farmland; those with meager resources get a house of their own; the officials concerned get bribes; local politicians provide protection from legal action and get votes in return; and all manner of employers get a cheap workforce.

Few are interested in the real analysis of the situation, for that would mean challenging the dogmas of received wisdom.

The flourishing tribe of activists is certainly not interested in anything that hurts their shibboleths. Besides, it is easier to blame everything on those who are better off, like car owners. So, fake analysis continues, with horrifying consequences, as underlined by the IQAir report.

(The writer is Resident Editor, The Pioneer, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Open letter to the BJP president



During your speech after virtually inaugurating the National Youth Parliament of BJP Yuva Marcha rightly asserted that those who do not believe in democracy cannot participate. Rahul Gandhi was definitely in mind when you said the above words. According to Rahul Gandhi, democracy is under threat under BJP's rule. Is it not true Naddaji?. You said that Rahul Gandhi has crossed all bounds of democracy and instigated foreign powers like US and European countries to interfere in India's internal affairs. But will you show any one of the videos of the UK, in which Rahul Gandhi said foreign countries interfere in India? No you cannot. In fact there are numerous videos circulating in YouTube of the PM. Narendra Modi insulting India in foreign countries. You have for-

gotten that the PM also humiliates the citizens by saying nothing was done in 60 years and insulting India by claiming that the people lamented what sin they committed to have been in this country. You are asking Rahul Gandhi to apologize for his comments. Will you dare to ask the PM to apologize for his comments? No you don't. If it is wrong to Peter it is also definitely wrong to Paul also.

You claimed that Rahul Gandhi has become a permanent feature of the "anti-nationalist tool kit". What proof do you have of it Nadda Ji?. You've forgotten that Rahul Gandhi comes from a patriotic family, his grandparents and father have sacrificed their lives for this country. The great grandfather of his father distributed all his wealth to this country and joined the freedom struggle. Finally, what is your contribution for this country? In eight years of rule instead of giving two crores of jobs to youth as you and your party promised, how many jobs were given to youth? Instead in this eight years of your rule your party has made the youth hate mongers among two communities. So please kindly introspect, Naddaji.

Zeehaan I Kazipet

Adivasi and the youngest to become president of the country, how many people in this country really know about the lives of different Adivasi tribes? The average Indian citizen has little to no knowledge about Adivasis, their varied cultures, religions and beliefs. The Adivasi communities, constituting about 40 percent of the displaced, therefore earnestly look forward to president Murmu to immediately look into their grave situations and reduce the pain of their displacement through her good offices.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

OPPOSITION SOLIDARITY

Sir — It is obvious that if the opposition does not come together, then the BJP's majority in the upcoming 2024 elections is certain. Uniting the opposition is extremely difficult. There are the following reasons

for this. In Bihar, RJD and JDU together are creating an atmosphere to make Nitish Kumar as the prime minister of India. On the other hand, in the last election, the coordination of BSP and SP with Congress did not prove successful.

Turning to other parties, there is a direct contest between TMC and Congress in some political areas. And the Aam Aadmi Party, which has recently emerged as a national party, is in the process of replacing the Congress and becoming the opposition itself. Although not impossible. For a better position the opposition will have to focus more on ground issues like inflation, employment, education and poverty.

Rohit Pandey | New Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

NEP AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

It is a visionary document that takes school education to the next level



RADHIKA ZAHEDI

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays out an educational vision with a lot of promise for the future of education in India. One of the things it suggests is a revised structure for school education in India, known as the 5+3+3+4 model. This proposed structure proposes that we replace the existing 10+2 structure that has been in place for several decades. This is in order to provide a more flexible and holistic approach to education. Let's take a closer look at the 5+3+3+4 model, how it differs from the previous structure, and why it might be better for education in India in the future.

The 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 Model

The 5+3+3+4 model is the latest structure for school education in India that is proposed in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The "5" in the model refers to the foundational stage, which includes the first five years of schooling, from ages 3 to 8. The focus at this stage is on play and activity-based learning, with an emphasis on the development of cognitive and social-emotional skills. The first "3" in the model refers to the preparatory stage, which encompasses the next three years of schooling, from ages 8 to 11. The focus at this stage is on introduction to language, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts, with an emphasis on learning through inquiry and discovery. The next "3" in the model relates to the middle stage, which includes the next three years of schooling, from ages 11 to 14. The focus during this stage is on deepening the students' understanding of core subjects. In addition, they are encouraged to expand their learning to include additional languages, the arts, and other elective subjects. The "4" in the model refers to the secondary stage, which includes the final four years of schooling, from ages 14 to 18. The focus during this stage is on providing students with a broad-based education that prepares them for higher education, as well as for vocational or technical education, if they choose to pursue that path.



Starting with holistic and moving to specialisation

One of the main advantages of this structure is that it suggests that the educational journey starts with a more holistic or trans-disciplinary approach to learning when students are younger, and then over the years progresses to a more specialised or disciplinary approach.

A holistic/trans-disciplinary approach to early education allows for a holistic and comprehensive understanding of a subject, as it integrates multiple disciplines and perspectives. This approach is especially beneficial for young children as it helps them to make connections between different areas of knowledge and develop critical thinking skills.

Starting with Strong Foundations and moving to Better Choice

Strong foundational learning leads to a more equitable education, where all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential regardless of their background. The revised model places more emphasis on key foundational skills like literacy and numeracy. Educational research has shown us that gaps in literacy in early childhood can result in an educational 'Matthew Effect' of sorts. This is i.e., the high achievers get better, and the low achievers get worse over time. The NEP also emphasises the role of play and activity-based learning during the early years of schooling. Research has shown that play and activity-based learning can have a positive impact on the development of cognitive and social-emotional skills in young children. One of the main differences between the 5+3+3+4 model and the previous 10+2 structure is that the revised model focuses on providing a more flexible and holistic approach to education. The traditional 10+2 model of education often results in students being forced to make early decisions about their future careers, which can limit their options later on. The revised education policy aims to address this issue by providing more flexibility in the structure of school education. This will enable students to explore different options before making final decisions.

(The writer is School Director, The Green Acres Academy)

Trust Prachanda to build relations with Nepal



ASHOK K MEHTA

With Prachanda at the helm in Kathmandu, New Delhi can start with a clean slate. A fresh approach can put Indo-Nepal relations back on track



On Monday, Nepalese Prime Minister Prachanda won the confidence vote to start his third term. India has had far better relations with Maoist leader Prachanda than with former PM KP Oli of CPN (UML). Nepal's pro-China policy took a visible turn during Oli's term. He politically exploited India's apparent rejection of the Constitution, then Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar's virtual diktat to alter and not promulgate it and the 53-day-long and painful border blockade. Oli signed agreements with China on trade and infrastructure, thus replacing India as the country of last resort.

India's inept handling of the Kalapani border dispute allowed Oli to unilaterally incorporate the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiadora areas in Nepal with an unprecedented 100 per cent parliamentary vote. Zealous and overconfident, he accused India of cheating Nepal and hurled insults at us. The war of words abated only after New Delhi launched its charm offensive by sending R&AW chief Goyal, former Chief of Army Staff Gen Naravane, and former foreign secretary Shringla.

This helped mend relations. The visits paid off and it was business as usual, as Oli realised that no Nepal government could tread on India's toes and survive. Oli's transformation, rather than his taming by New Delhi, was a lesson in diplomacy.

Oli's survival as Prime Minister was aided by President Bidya Debi Bhandari (UML). She violated norms and even the Constitution by ensuring Oli's longevity as leader of the House till the Supreme Court intervened, not once but twice. The new pro-China Left alliance collapsed much to



HE IS PRO-NEPAL AND KNOWS THAT NEPAL CAN BENEFIT FROM TWO FAST-GROWING ECONOMIES

(The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, & founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; views expressed are personal)

the dismay of Beijing which had invested considerable resources in its survival.

Third time Prime Minister Prachanda has played the long game. He was compelled by the former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who served five terms, to jump ship to support Oli as Deuba vacillated offering prime-ministership to Prachanda. For Prachanda's party, the Maoists, had won only 32 seats in the elections.

Still Prachanda claimed he commanded the support of 64 seats. When Deuba hesitated, without blinking, he joined the perennial foe Oli. But Prachanda was never comfortable with his decision to join Oli and had sought to return to Deuba. The opportunity was provided by President Paudel. Prachanda argued that when Oli became Prime Minister, the top three positions — of the PM, the President and the Speaker — would be from the same party, leading to authoritarian rule.

Prachanda is no longer a big fan of China. During the Civil War era, Maoists fancied Mao and other communist leaders but saw communist states on the decline. He is pro-Nepal and knows that Nepal can benefit from two fast-growing economies.

Unfortunately for him, India-China relations have plummeted after the Chinese aggression in Ladakh. When he first became prime minister in 2008, his first visit was to China for the Olympics.

But his first political visit was to India, for which he has a soft corner. Nine out of ten years he directed the Maoist insurgency, mostly from Noida, UP. Maoists used to say nasty things about India and the US during those days, but acknowledged India's role in ending the conflict and paving the path for peace and democracy.

Prachanda will shortly expand his cabinet to accommodate the 11 parties that support him. As he replaces his foreign minister, the parliamentary foreign affairs committee will be responsible for making a decision on the Agnipath Scheme, which has been pending for nine months now. The feedback from Nepal is not encouraging, as the ruling party will be constrained by UML and other communists from supporting the four-year recruitment scheme with no post-retirement outlets.

Communists in Nepal have always criticised Gorkhas joining foreign armies, especially the Indian Army. In addition, the Prachanda Government's support for the scheme drew criticism from UML for being pro-India.

Agnipath is discriminatory and in breach of the tripartite agreement 1947. This is because Indian Agniveers will have 10 per cent reservation in the Border Security Force and the Central Industrial Security Force, but Nepalese citizens are not eligible for these organisations.

People also say that 90 per cent of those who join the Indian Army

are Jan Jatis and not Brahmins and Chhetris who constitute decision-making at political and bureaucratic levels. They will not worry about the Indian and Nepali Armies' relationships and history. India could have helped end the problem by simply removing the Nepali Gorkhas from Agnipath.

On 10 March was Nepal Army Day. The Nepal Embassy commemorated the event by highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in the Nepalese Parliament: "India has fought no war in which Nepali blood has not been shed." Given the warped Agniveer idea, soon there may be no Nepalese joining the Army. It's time Modi's most trusted Foreign Minister Jaishankar devoted more time on Nepal, further fostering India's Neighbourhood First Policy.

Prachanda's first visit abroad is to India next month, though China's Ambassador Chen Song tried to get him to China first. India's impeccable conduct of non-interference during elections in stark contrast to traditional charges of micro-management in the past has won it kudos.

With Prachanda at the helm, New Delhi can start with a clean slate. Just as Jaishankar has won over Sri Lanka with economic sustenance, he can begin the recovery programme in Nepal. With Deuba as leader of a single largest party and a prime minister, India has a winning hand to play the game. The ball is in Jaishankar's court

Schooling and underage marriages

There Should be more efforts to create an enabling framework for improving girls' enrollment in schools, instead of penal actions

Assam is on a vigorous drive through penal actions under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA). Over 4,000 cases have been registered and more than 3,000 people arrested, including many fathers, brothers and Muslim and Hindu priests, as 'facilitators'. The Assam Chief Minister vowed to eliminate the menace of child marriages in the state by 2026.

Amid massive public outrage, the Gauhati High Court criticised such large-scale arrests with non-bailable charges, and insisted on 'society-driven change'. The Opposition claimed it was for 'political gains'.

Many legal experts vouch



ARCHANA DATTA

(The author of a former Director General of Doordarshan and All India radio)

for the law as a means to set new norms and practices. India had the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, subsequently replaced by the existing PCMA, 2006, raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for women and 21 years for men.

Now, a move is afoot to make it gender-neutral at 21. It was claimed by the votaries of the amendment Bill that the move would enhance girls' agency, their reproductive autonomy, and reduce gender inequality. However, opponents contended that "it is not a sufficient condition to bring in changes in the mindsets of people," as it fails to address the underlying socio-economic and cultural factors that push many resource-poor families, who are also the worst victims

of emergencies, such as internal conflicts, natural disasters or the pandemic, into underage marriage of girls, either to avoid higher dowry or as a way to 'protect' the girls.

A national network of adolescents from rural and semi-urban areas suggested to the task force set up for the purpose that focus should be more on "the disadvantaged rural contexts through adequate resourcing for quality education, employment, safety, mobility, and the freedom to choose when, and who to marry, as child marriages are closely tied to low levels of education and poverty"

While, as per the NCRB data, an abysmally low number of cases booked under the PCMA, only 785 in 2020, and a study by the Partners for Law

in Development found that 65 per cent of them are filed by disapproving parents against eloping daughters, and male partners of their choice have been punished as criminals. Child rights activists fear the proposed legislation would further increase the misuse of the law, criminalising all adolescent sexuality.

However, in today's society, the existing PCMA has undoubtedly created some awareness, encouraging many girls to stop or delay their marriages. The successive NFHS data also registered a declining trend in the proportion of girls marrying below 18 years from 47 per cent in NFHS-3 (2005-06) to 27 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16), and, now, to 23 per cent in NFHS-5 (2020-21).

Studies also ruled out that

early marriage is linked to high fertility. In most of the states, including states with relatively high prevalence rates of child marriages, fertility rates have been dropping.

The NFHS-5 data corroborated that mother and child health indicators like MMR, have decreased by 80 per cent (113 per lakh live births in 2016-18 from 556 in 1990), and, the IMR by 69 per cent (35 per 1,000 births in 2019-21, from 114 in 1990). A parliamentary question in 2021, confirmed that there is no credible data to suggest that child marriage is the major reason for affecting the IMR and MMR. Instead, factors like health, nutrition, and lack of medical facilities adversely impact them.

Moreover, a correlation

study in 109 districts of 19 states by the CRY, analysing NFHS-5 data and Education Ministry's Performance Grading Index scores of Districts (PGI-D) (2019-20) on indicators like effective classroom transactions, infrastructure and students' entitlements, school safety, etc, found that "education remains the most powerful tool to curb child marriages." For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, the districts with comparatively higher percentage of women having 10 or more years of schooling like Lucknow (51.9 per cent), Gautam Buddha Nagar (51.9 per cent), Varanasi (55 per cent), and Allahabad (47.6 per cent) had significantly lower percentages of child marriage cases—9.9 per cent, 13.5 per cent, 10.4 per cent,

and 13.8 per cent, respectively. While districts like Badaun (21.6 per cent), Lakhimpur-Kheri (28.7 per cent), and Kaushambi (31.9 per cent) with lower percentage of women having 10 or more years of schooling, had higher percentage of child marriage at 22.9 per cent, 19.7 per cent, and 17.6 per cent, respectively. Over 10 million girls have been married as a result of the pandemic, according to UNICEF's report last year. As an antidote, it urged nations to "invest more in girls' education, secondary education, in particular." In addition, it was found that "better educated women tend to participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, and thus, lift their families out of poverty.."

Indian diaspora meet counters flag attack at London mission

PTI ■ LONDON

Several Indian diaspora groups on Tuesday gathered for a festive demonstration outside the India House here to show solidarity with the Indian mission following vandalism at its premises by Khalistan extremists over the weekend. Indian flags could be seen waved about as around 200 people of Indian origin chanted slogans such as “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” and danced to popular Indian tunes ‘Jai Ho’ and ‘Rang De Basanti’ at “We Stand By High Commission of India” demonstration.

The colours of the Tiranga and “I love my India” tunes formed the backdrop as men, women and children joined in a spirit of festivity, as bemused Metropolitan Police officers looked on and tried to curtail some of the over-enthusiastic crowd from spilling over into the busy traffic. “This is a crowd gathered in support of India, chanting patriotic slogans and songs and the public is in a festive mood because they have come out in support of the High Commission of India,” said Kuldeep Shekhawat, president of the Overseas Friends



of BJP (OFBJP), among the diaspora groups represented. “It’s very unfortunate that a few days ago Khalistanis under the guise of a peaceful protest came here and tried to desecrate the flag,” said Rashmi Samant, an Indian student activist at the demonstration. “We have since come out with a bigger flag showing the bharatiya spirit, that we won’t take insults lying down and we will fight back. One person has been arrested but we need more arrests and more concrete actions, such as permanent security presence at our High Commission to prevent such incidents from happening,” she said. Earlier, Indian High Commissioner in London tweet-ed following the diaspora briefing. The Metropolitan Police said its “enquiries continue” and one person arrested on suspicion of violent disorder has

since been bailed to appear in court in mid-June. Friends of India Society International (FISI) UK, one of the organisations behind Tuesday’s solidarity meet, said the Indian diaspora is deeply shocked by the “disgraceful and abominable act” of desecration of the Indian flag by extremist forces. “We are equally shocked to see the failure of the UK government to take preventive measures to prohibit such shameful incidents that endanger the Indian diplomatic officials,” said FISI UK. “In this particular incident, an Indian High Commission official braved the hooligans and restored the pride of India by taking the flag away from them. The Indian official had to act due to lack of appropriate security present at the premises,” it said. The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK was among several groups to voice their condemnation of the vandalism. “We call for swift and firm action being taken to bring the perpetrators of this hooliganism to justice. Measures should be urgently put in place to prevent the recurrence of such incidents,” it said.

paper said that the delegation, comprising 10 members from the Taliban’s intelligence, visited Islamabad last week. The delegation was also assisted by GDI official Muhammad Wardak, the source said, adding that the delegation was mandated to deliver a message from Kabul that the concerns of Pakistan would be addressed. Both sides stayed mum on the visit. The sources in Islamabad said that given the sensitivity of the issue, both sides decided to discuss such matters away from the media glare. The source in Kabul revealed that both sides made progress on various issues, but he was not authorised to make public statements. The TTP has become a thorny issue between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan expected the Afghan Taliban to address its concerns regarding the TTP after its return to power in August 2021. But contrary to the expectations, the TTP attacks only went up. The Afghan Taliban’s reluctance to take on the TTP stemmed from its fears that the group’s fighters might join Daesh (Islamic State). Second, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP share the same ideology as they fought alongside the US-led foreign forces. Nevertheless, the two sides have been trying to find a way out of the TTP problem as it has threatened to undermine their future cooperation, according to the paper.

Thailand polls on May 14

Bangkok (AP): Thailand’s general election will take place on May 14, the country’s election regulator said Tuesday, one day after the dissolution of Parliament initiated by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is seeking a fresh term. The Election Commission said registration of candidates would begin April 3.

The election will pit the popular opposition Pheu Thai party, backed by billionaire populist Thaksin Shinawatra, against parties representing the conservative establishment and closely linked to the military, which has staged two coups in the last two decades. Other parties are likely to win enough seats to be wooed to join a coalition government. Prayuth dissolved Parliament just ahead of the end of the four-year term of the House of Representatives.

Early dissolution allows candidates for the lower house to switch party affiliations just 30 days before the election, instead of the usual 90 days. Parties led and backed by Thaksin have won the most seats in every election since 2001, but been fiercely opposed by the conservatives, who have undermined several governments headed by Thaksin and his allies by utilising legal rulings by the judiciary and military coups in 2006 and 2014.

Pheu Thai’s top candidate for the prime minister’s post is his 36-year-old daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, whom polls show to be the most popular choice by a large margin.

‘Af Taliban delegation quietly visits Pak to discuss TTP issue’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

An Afghan Taliban delegation, comprising intelligence and security officials, quietly visited Islamabad recently to discuss a way forward towards addressing Pakistan’s concerns regarding the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), according to a media report on Tuesday. Taliban ranks in Kabul also confirmed that a mid-level delegation led by Abdullah Ghazanavi, the head of the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI), travelled to Islamabad for discussion on the TTP and threats to Pakistan, the Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing sources. The visit was a follow-up of last month’s trip to Kabul by a high-powered delegation led by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, which received a briefing on the steps taken by the Afghan government to deal with the TTP. The Pakistani delegation, however, deemed those steps unsatisfactory and sought concerted actions. Pakistan also confronted the Afghan Taliban leadership with proofs about the whereabouts of the TTP leadership. According to the paper, during its stay in Islamabad, the Afghan delegation met with the relevant authorities to discuss the security situation and the fate of the TTP and its affiliates. Citing a source in Kabul with knowledge of the matter, the

paper said that the delegation, comprising 10 members from the Taliban’s intelligence, visited Islamabad last week.

The delegation was also assisted by GDI official Muhammad Wardak, the source said, adding that the delegation was mandated to deliver a message from Kabul that the concerns of Pakistan would be addressed. Both sides stayed mum on the visit. The sources in Islamabad said that given the sensitivity of the issue, both sides decided to discuss such matters away from the media glare. The source in Kabul revealed that both sides made progress on various issues, but he was not authorised to make public statements.

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Protective bail for Imran in 2 terror cases

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan’s ousted premier Imran Khan on Tuesday secured protective bail from the Lahore High Court in three cases, including two related to terrorism, registered against him over the violence that took place outside the judicial complex in Islamabad last week. A two-judge bench comprising Justice Shehbaz Rizvi and Justice Farooq Haider granted protective bail to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief in the terrorism cases till March 27.

The former premier also appeared before the Lahore High Court’s (LHC) Justice Baqir Naqvi in the NAB investigation in Toshakhana case. The court granted him protective bail till next Tuesday. “Mr Khan told the court today that he came to the court ‘secretly’ as

Sunak urged to act over English test scandal

PTI ■ LONDON

A group of international students, including many from India, have delivered a petition to British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak urging him to act against the “unjust” revocation of their visas following an English test scandal. The issue dates back to 2014 when a BBC ‘Panorama’ investigation showed some cheating had occurred at two of the UK’s testing centres for a compulsory language test required for visas.

The UK government responded by a widespread crackdown on such centres, which had the fallout of the revocation of tens of thousands of students’ visas linked with those centres. The Migrant Voice voluntary group has been supporting the students impacted and coordinated the latest petition delivered at 10 Downing Street on Monday.

“This is one of the biggest scandals in contemporary British history. The initial government reaction was unjust and has been allowed to drag on for years,” said Nazek Ramadan, director of Migrant Voice. “It could have been resolved by a simple solution, such as allowing the tests to be retaken. The



students came here to get a world-class education and best student experience in the world, but instead their lives have been wrecked. It is time for the government to step in and end this nightmare. All it takes to bring this to an end is leadership,” she said. With no right to stay, work or in a few cases to appeal, most of the accused students returned home. Those who stayed to clear their names have struggled with homelessness, huge legal fees, stress-induced illnesses and have missed family weddings, births and deaths, the petition appeals. Parliamentary and watchdog reports over the years have highlighted some flaws in the Home Office evidence used in the case in the past. Although some students won their legal challenges, scores of other students – many of them Indian –

are still in limbo.

Migrant Voice is now underlining the importance of Sunak “addressing the injustice at a time when numbers of students and migrant workers form part of UK-India trade negotiations”.

The group has been running the #MyFutureBack campaign for the affected students for over nine years now and urging the UK government to allow these students the chance to clear their names of alleged cheating. Sarjeet is a 46-year-old Indian student who has been separated from her children for 13 years, as she feels she cannot return home to India with the allegations hanging over her.

Sanjoy, another Indian student impacted, is being sued by the company that sponsored him and has also been denied the ability to go to the US because his visa withdrawal prevents him from resuming his studies in another country.

The BBC programme had revealed cheating on a compulsory language test, known as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), at two London test centres by some international students.

Months after Pak floods, millions lack safe water

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The United Nations children’s agency on Tuesday warned that after last summer’s devastating floods, 10 million people in Pakistan, including children, still live in flood-affected areas without access to safe drinking water.

The statement from UNICEF underscored the dire situation in impoverished Pakistan, a country with a population of 220 million that months later is still struggling with the consequences of the flooding, as well as a spiraling economic crisis. The floods, which experts attribute in part to climate change, killed 1,739 people, including 647 children and 353 women.

So far, less than half of UNICEF’s funding appeal for Pakistan — 45 per cent of USD 173.5 million — has been met. According to the agency, before the floods struck last June, water from only 36 per cent of Pakistan’s water system was considered safe for human consumption.

The floods damaged most of the water pipelines systems in affected areas, forcing more than 5.4 million people, including 2.5 million children, to rely solely on contaminated water from ponds and wells, UNICEF said. “Safe drinking water is not a privilege, it is a basic human right,” said Abdullah Fadil, the UNICEF representative in Pakistan. “Yet, every day, millions of girls and boys in Pakistan are fighting a losing battle against preventable water-borne diseases and the consequential malnutrition.”

“We need the continued support of our donors to provide safe water, build toilets and deliver vital sanitation services to these children and families who need them the most,” Fadil added. Amid the crisis, Pakistan faces uncertainty about a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Analysts say the revival of the USD 6 IMF bailout, which was signed in 2019, would help Pakistan. If the global lender released a key installment of the package, it would encourage other international financial institutions to help the country, they say.

a heavy contingent of police was deployed near to his house to stop him from reaching the court,” a court official told PTI after the hearing.

Khan, 70, said he has no issue to appear in any case but during his appearance in court the government should make sure no chaos is created. The number of cases registered against the PTI chief in the last 11 months of the PMLN-led government has swelled to around 100. Unlike his recent appearances in courts, Khan on Tuesday was not accompanied by party workers to the LHC from his Zaman Park residence here. The PTI appears to have changed its strategy on Tuesday regarding sending a huge number of its workers along with the party chairman to the LHC apparently after the law enforcement agencies intensified crack-



down on them. The Punjab and Islamabad police have arrested over 500 PTI workers from different parts of the province. Police said the arrested PTI workers were wanted in the recent incidents of violence in Lahore and Islamabad.

Khan appeared before the LHC in two terrorism cases registered against him by the Islamabad police after intense

clashes erupted outside the Islamabad Judicial Complex on Saturday when he arrived in the capital from Lahore to attend the hearing in the Toshakhana case. The PTI chief also appeared before LHC’s Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh in a petition seeking details of all the cases registered against him in Punjab province.

Khan informed Justice Sheikh that the Punjab government violated his (judge) order and “attacked my house in Lahore as my wife was alone who got frightened during the police attack.” Khan requested the court to order the police on his plea to register a case against Punjab caretaker chief minister Mohsin Naqvi and the Inspector General Police for violating the LHC’s order restraining police action at his Zaman Park residence.

B’desh careful about Chinese loans: Hasina

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Tuesday that her government was “very much careful” about issues of development partnership with China and Dhaka was not dependent on any particular country for overseas assistance, amid global concerns over mounting debt to Beijing by smaller countries. The 99-year lease of Hambantota port to China by Sri Lanka has raised red flags about the downside of China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative and Beijing’s push for major infrastructure projects costing billions of dollars in small countries. “We’re very much careful about taking loans - mostly we take loans from institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. From China, our loan is very low. It is not like Sri Lanka or anybody,” she said in an interview with CNN. “We’re not depending on anybody,” Hasina, who is also the President of the ruling Awami League, said.

When asked why the US thought Dhaka was get-

ting closer to China and what she would like to say about the notion, the prime minister replied Bangladesh was close to every country which supports its development efforts. “We’re close to everybody, China, USA or India. Those who are supporting our development, we’re with them,” the 75-year-old prime minister said.

Hasina described China as one of Bangladesh’s major development partners as they were investing and engaged in some major construction works in the South Asian country. “That’s all,” she said.

Hasina added that her government did not take any unnecessary loan from anyone, saying “we consider from which project we can get a return and we will be the beneficiary”. Numerous questions regarding Ukraine and the Rohingya crisis featured in her interview with CNN when she said intensified global steps were needed to stop the Ukraine war.

“I feel that the world should come forward to stop

the war as the common people are suffering,” she said. Hasina said any conflict could be solved through dialogue and “we (Bangladesh) never support any kind of invasion or any conflict”.

“Friendship to all, malice to none,” she said. “We’re following that, so, when we see any human rights violation or invasion, we definitely oppose it.” She, however, said no war could be one-sided alone as it needs the involvement of both sides. “(but) I believe each country has its own rights to live in their own territory (with freedom) and protect their own territory.”

Asked what Bangladesh needs from the international community to deal with the Rohingya crisis, Hasina said, “we have called upon the international community that they should pressure Myanmar to bring their citizens back to their country,” “Not only that, but we have also started a dialogue with Myanmar. (But) unfortunately, they are not responding properly,” she said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	07220235A	HEX. HEAD BOLT M 20X100(H.T)	113351 NOS	14-04-23
02	07220103	WALL PROTECTOR FOR LAVATORY PAN	8039 NOS	14-04-23
03	02232202	SELF PRIMING MONOBLOCK PUMP	2566 NOS	19-04-23
04	01230032	STAINLESS STEEL WIRE ROPE	2418 NOS	01-05-23

**NOTE - 1.** Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.

**2.** No Manual offer will be entertained.



Tender Notice No. 95/2022-2023 Dated : 21.03.2023

867/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that late Shri Ramesh Chander Sharma had passed away intestate on 14.10.2022 leaving behind my client Smt. Rachna Mittal, Wife of Shri Anil Mittal, Resident of D-1456, 1 "Avenue, Gaur City 1, Greater Noida West 201 009, Gautambudh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh and her sister Ms. Reshma Sharma as his only surviving legal heirs. At the time of his death, he owned and possessed property bearing No T-144, Upper Ground Floor, Parampuri, Shukra Bazar, Uttam Nagar West, New Delhi - 110 059. In view of my client being one of the legal heirs, any third party who deals with the aforesaid property or enters into any transaction with respect to the same with my client's above-named sister alone without my client's personal involvement in the same, will do so at his own peril and risk.

NITIN GUPTA (Advocate)
302, Lawyers' Chambers Block-I,
Delhi High Court, New Delhi-110003.

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Nishtha Parisar, Bijalee Nagar, Govindpura, Bhopal-462023
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No. MD/MK/04/ 3783

Bhopal, Dated : 21.03.2023

TENDER NOTICE

MPPMKVVCL, Bhopal invites online bids from Manufacturers only through E-tendering for procurement of following items :

Tender Specification Number	Particulars of material for Procurement	Approx. Value (Rs. Lakh)	Tender Fee (incl. GST) (in Rs.)	Date of Pre Bid Conference	Date of Opening of Tender
MD/MK/ 04/893	Rate Contract for Supply of "ISI" marked Rabbit, Dog & Panther Aluminium Conductor Steel Reinforced (ACSR) Conductors for a period of one year	2047.97	11800.00	05.04.2023 3.00 PM	18.04.2023 3.00 PM
MD/MK/ 04 /894	Rate Contract for Supply of "ISI" marked Rabbit, Raccoon & Dog All Aluminium Alloy (AAA) Conductors for a period of one year	1445.27	11800.00	06.04.2023 3.00 PM	19.04.2023 3.00 PM

Other details and full tender document would be available on our Company website <https://portal.mpcz.in> & Govt. Website <https://mptenders.gov.in> very shortly.
M.P. Madhyam/109090/2023

CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (PROC.)

Yellen: Bank situation 'stabilising', system sound

Washington (AP): Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is trying project calm after regional bank failures, saying the U.S. banking system is “sound” but additional rescue arrangements “could be warranted” if any new failures at smaller institutions pose a risk to financial stability. Yellen, in an excerpt of remarks prepared for delivery to the American Bankers Association on Tuesday, says that overall “the situation is stabilising.”

“And the U.S. banking system remains sound,” Yellen says. Yellen’s remarks come after a series of troubling bank developments this month. Silicon Valley Bank, based in Santa Clara, California, failed on March 10 after depositors rushed to withdraw money amid anxiety over the bank’s health. It was the second-largest bank collapse in U.S. history. Regulators convened over the following weekend and announced that New York-based Signature Bank also had failed.

IMF approves \$3 billion in financial assistance for debt-ridden Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO/ WASHINGTON

The IMF has approved a USD 3 billion bailout programme to help debt-ridden Sri Lanka overcome its economic crisis and catalyse financial support from other development partners, a move welcomed by Colombo on Tuesday as a “historic milestone” in the critical period. International Monetary Fund’s Executive Board approved on Monday a 48-month extended arrangement under its Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with an amount of SDR 2.286 billion (about USD 3 billion), according to a statement. Special Drawing Rights (SDR) are supplementary foreign exchange reserve assets defined and maintained by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Sri Lanka has been hit hard by a catastrophic economic and humanitarian crisis.

The economy is facing significant challenges stemming from pre-existing vulnerabilities and policy missteps in the lead-up to the crisis, further aggravated by a series of external shocks, the IMF said. The EFF-supported programme aims to



People arrive for their daily work in the central market area in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Tuesday.

PTI

restore Sri Lanka’s macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, mitigate the economic impact on the poor and vulnerable, safeguard financial sector stability, and strengthen governance and growth potential, said the statement. The Executive Board’s decision will enable an immediate disbursement equivalent to SDR 254

million (about USD 333 million) and catalyse financial support from other development partners, it said. Sri Lanka in April declared its first-ever debt default in its history as the worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948 triggered by forex shortages sparked public protests. Months-long street protests

led to the ouster of the then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in mid-July. Rajapaksa had started the IMF negotiations after refusing to tap the global lender for support. Sri Lanka has introduced painful economic measures such as tax hikes and utility rate hikes to unlock the programme. Trade unions and opposition groups have organised protests against such measures. President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Tuesday welcomed the decision announced by the IMF. The programme will allow Sri Lanka to access financing of up to USD 7 billion from the IMF, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and multi-lateral organisations, a statement said. “This is a historic milestone for the country as the government seeks to restore macroeconomic stability and achieve debt sustainability. Earlier this month, Sri Lanka received IMF-compatible financing assurances from its official creditors, including Paris Club members, India and China, allowing the IMF to convene an Executive Board and consider Sri Lanka’s request for a loan,” the statement said.

‘Unlike global economy, India would not slow down’

We remain optimistic about India, whatever odds: RBI article

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Unlike the global economy, India would not slow down and maintain the pace of expansion achieved in 2022-23, an RBI article said on Tuesday.

“We remain optimistic about India, whatever the odds,” said the article on the state of the economy published in the March edition of the Reserve Bank bulletin.

The NSO’s end-February data release indicates that the Indian economy is intrinsically better positioned than many parts of the world to head into



a challenging year ahead, mainly because of its demonstrated resilience and its reliance on domestic drivers, it said.

Even as global growth is set to slow down or even enter a recession in 2023 as global financial markets wager, India has emerged from the pandemic years stronger than initially thought, with a steady gathering

of momentum since the second quarter of the current financial year, it said.

“Year-on-year growth rates do not reflect this pick-up of pace because by construction they are saddled with statistical base effects, and instead suggest a sequential slowing down through successive quarters of 2022-23 to an unsuspecting

reader,” said the article.

The article has been authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. The authors further said India’s real GDP can go up from Rs 159.7 lakh crore in 2022-23 to Rs 170.9 lakh crore against the current projection of Rs 169.7 lakh crore in 2023-24.

“This is simple arithmetic; hardly a hurray at half-time. Also, unlike the global economy, India would not slow down — it would maintain the pace of expansion achieved in 2022-23. We remain optimistic about India, whatever the odds,” the article said.

Currently available forecasts of India’s real GDP growth for 2023-24, including those of the RBI, settle between 6 and 6.5 per cent.

The central bank said that views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

Sensex, Nifty rebound nearly 1% on firm global trends

Buying in Reliance

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent on Tuesday amid firm trends in global equities and buying in index major Reliance Industries and banking stocks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 445.73 points or 0.77 per cent to settle at 58,074.68. During the day, it rallied 504.38 points or 0.87 per cent to 58,133.33.

The broader NSE Nifty advanced 119.10 points or 0.70 per cent to settle at 17,107.50.

“Global markets recovery ushered in gains in domestic equity indices as both the benchmarks ended above the psychological levels on the back of strong gains in financials. However, the optimism may face hurdles as the recent turmoil in large banks in the US and Europe has shaken investors’ sentiment,” Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd. said.

The US FOMC meeting on Wednesday on interest rate decision would be keenly eyed as any hike surpassing street expectations could unsettle investors, he said,



adding that falling crude oil prices at a faster pace is raising concerns over the weakening global economic health.

Among the Sensex stocks, Reliance Industries climbed the most by 3.11 per cent, ending its eight-day slide.

Bajaj Finance, Titan, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro, HDFC Bank, HDFC and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the other major winners.

Power Grid, Hindustan Unilever, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and Asian Paints were among the biggest laggards.

In the broader market, BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.66 per cent and smallcap index gained 0.50 per cent.

Among indices, consumer durables jumped 1.57 per cent, energy zoomed 0.99 per cent, power rallied 0.74 per cent, commodities jumped 0.71 per cent and telecommunication (0.63 per cent).

FMCG, IT, realty and tech were the laggards.

“Gaining buoyancy from a slew of measures to shield the banking sector, global markets witnessed recovery ahead of the US Fed policy announcement on Wednesday. The momentum was passed onto domestic equities, which were led by large-cap banks,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

However, the gains were capped by IT stocks on caution over muted deal wins from the BFSI segment in the western markets.

In Asia, Seoul, Hong Kong and Shanghai markets ended higher.

European markets were trading in the green during afternoon trade. The US markets ended in positive territory on Monday.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.65 per cent to USD 74.27 per barrel.

Housing sector seeing biggest boom in last 15 years: Roongta

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India’s housing sector is witnessing probably the “biggest boom” in the last one and half decade driven by various factors such as affordability and customers aspiration to own homes, HDFC Capital Advisors Managing Director and CEO Vipul Roongta said on Tuesday.

Addressing a real estate summit organised by FICCI, he noted that the residential real estate segment has revived strongly after going through a lot of pain due to new realty law RERA and demonetisation.

“In the last one and half decade, I think this is probably the biggest boom I am personally seeing as an organisation on the residential segment, whether it is affordable mid-income and premium housing properties,” said Roongta, who is also Co-Chairman, FICCI Real Estate

Committee.

He said the real estate developers have been made accountable under the RERA for completion of projects and they would be behind bars in case of default.

Post-Covid pandemic, Roongta said the customers are upgrading their homes, in terms of quality as well as size.

He said the housing demand is mainly centred around affordable and mid-income in the country.

When asked about the reasons for the boom, Roongta said, on the sidelines of the event, the demand is driven by “aspiration and affordability” besides demand-supply mismatch.

He said this is the right time to develop housing projects in affordable and mid-income categories.

Roongta said the demand is buoyant despite an increase in



the mortgage rate in the last one year. HDFC Capital Advisors has launched USD 3.2 billion real estate fund for affordable

housing, Roongta said, adding that 85 per cent of the capital has already been committed.

Addressing the event,

Kuldip Narayan, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, said the size of the urban sector will double in the

next 25 years.

He said the requirements for facilities, residential spaces, commercial spaces, and urban infrastructure would double, adding, “we have a lot of catching up to do in infrastructure”.

“With increasing urbanisation from 12 to 30 per cent, the next 20 years could see more development than in the last 50 years,” Narayan said.

Narayan also alluded to changes in construction technologies, highlighting the governments’ “consistent stand on reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency” and encouraging the industry to “adopt better and resource-efficient construction technology”.

He asked the developers to adopt new construction technologies for faster completion of projects.

Raj Menda, Joint Chairman at FICCI Real Estate Committee

and Corporate Chairman at RMZ Corp, said, “after consecutive years of slowdown in the sector, last year witnessed unprecedented growth by reaching a new historical height in the commercial office segment”.

He added the extraordinary demand of flex space from medium and large enterprises further propelled the sector growth.

Arun Chawla, Director General at FICCI, said, “with an increase in urbanisation and household incomes, the demand for residential real estate has seen an unprecedented surge. As a result, India is now among the top 10 price-appreciating housing markets internationally”.

According to property consultant Anarock, housing sales hit an all-time high last year to nearly 3.65 lakh units across seven major cities, beating the previous high of 2014.



Rupee falls 10 paise to 82.66 against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated by 10 paise to 82.66 against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a rise in crude oil prices and unabated foreign fund outflows from the domestic equity market.

Positive sentiments in the equity markets across the globe failed to address the concerns of investors who are awaiting the interest rate decision by the US Federal Reserve due on Wednesday.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened strong at 82.54 against the dollar. During the day, it went as high as 82.53 and hit the lowest level of 82.70. It finally settled at 82.66 (provisional) against the American currency, registering a fall of 10 paise against its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee settled at 82.56 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent higher at 103.30.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose by 0.98 per cent to USD 74.51 per barrel.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed 445.73 points or 0.77 per cent higher at 58,074.68 points while the broader NSE Nifty jumped 119.10 points or 0.70 per cent to reclaim the 17,100-level and ended at 17,107.50 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) remained net sellers in the domestic capital market on Monday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,545.87 crore, according to exchange data.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

J&K LG LAYS FOUNDATION FOR FIRST MALL OF SRINAGAR
Srinagar: J&K Lieutenant Governor laid foundation stone for Kashmir’s first international mall, to be operational by 2026. The initiative will generate nearly 13,500 jobs. TATA Sons, TATA Consulting, Lulu International, Apparel Group, Titan Company, EaseMyTrip, Reliance Retail and PVR Group have signed MOUs with Emaar for Mall of Srinagar.

FHRAI ELECTS SUDESH PODDAR IT’S PRESIDENT
New Delhi: The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India elected the new Executive Committee; a twenty-four member team. The Executive Committee elected Sudesh Poddar as the new President of FHRAI.

INSTINCT 3.0 LAUNCHED
New Delhi: The Federation of Power and New & Renewable Energy K Singh on Monday launched INSTINCT 3.0 through a curtain raiser at the plenary session of the National Dialogue on “Smart-Metered India for a Digitalised & People-centric Power Sector”, jointly organised by IntelliSmart and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water. IntelliSmart Infrastructure is India’s leading smart metering and digital solutions company that unveiled the third edition of its flagship innovation challenge and hackathon INSTINCT.

WORLD DOWN-SYNDROME DAY ORGANISED
New Delhi: Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), New Delhi, celebrated the World Down-Syndrome Day by organising a free Webinar for about 1.5 hours, open for all, in association with Down-Syndrome Federation of India.

PACT INKED FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS
New Delhi: NGEL, a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited, signed a Joint Venture Agreement on 20th March, 2023 with IOCL for setting up of renewable energy projects to meet Round the Clock power requirement of IOCL Refineries.

500+ STUDENTS ATTEND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
New Delhi: Lloyd Group of Institutions, Greater Noida organised an International Conference for its Management and Pharmaceutical students on 18th March 2023 (Saturday) at the campus in Greater Noida 2. A total of more than 500+ students attended the International Conference from various colleges of Delhi and NCR.

CFA INSTITUTE EXPANDS ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTSE
New Delhi: CFA Institute, the professional body for excellence and thought leadership in finance, has opened registrations for November 2023 CFA exams. With the rising demand for CFA Programme, the organisation has added seven new test centres in Coimbatore, Nagpur, Noida, Raipur, Ranchi, Surat and Visakhapatnam to improve accessibility and convenience for candidates.

DRONE BASED TRANSMISSION LINE PATROLLING
Gurugram: Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSE of Ministry of Power and India’s largest electric power transmission utility is at the forefront of deploying state of the art cutting edge technologies. POWERGRID has initiated use of drones for EHV (Extra High Voltage) transmission line patrolling to identify defects using high resolution cameras.

GOLD PLUNGES ₹470; SILVER DECLINES ₹420
New Delhi: Gold price plunged by Rs 470 to Rs 59,480 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid weak global trends, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at Rs 59,950 per 10 grams. Silver also declined Rs 420 to Rs 68,550 per kilogram. “Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 59,480 per 10 grams, down Rs 470 per 10 grams,” Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In overseas market, gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,967 per ounce and USD 22.39 per ounce, respectively. Comex gold prices traded lower in Asian trading hours on Tuesday. Gold prices have corrected almost 2 per cent after prices hit a fresh 52-week high of USD 2,010 per ounce on Monday.

Reliance Jio’s True 5G now available in 406 cities

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio on Tuesday said that its True 5G services have gone live in 406 cities, thus becoming the first and only telecom operator to reach such a wide network in a short span of time. The company announced the launch of its True 5G services in 41 new cities in 16 states/union territories — Adoni, Badvel, Chilakaluripet, Guduvada, Kadiri, Narsapur, Rayachoti, Srikalahasti, Tadepalligudem (Andhra Pradesh), Margao (Goa), Fatehabad, Gohana, Hansi, Narnaul, Palwal (Haryana), Paonta Sahib (Himachal Pradesh), Rajouri (Jammu & Kashmir) Dumka (Jharkhand), Robertsonpet (Karnataka).

Other cities include — Kanhangad, Nedumangad, Tali-paramba, Thalassery, Thiruvalla (Kerala), Betul, Dewas, Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh) Bhandara, Wardha (Maharashtra), Lunglei (Mizoram), Byasanagar, Rayagada (Odisha), Hoshiarpur (Punjab), Tonk (Rajasthan), Karaikudi, Krishnagiri, Ranipet,



Theni Allinagaram, Udhagamandalam, Vaniyambadi (Tamil Nadu) and Kumarghat (Tirupura).

“Jio is expanding its True-5G reach at a rapid pace and has already rolled out a large portion of the planned True-5G network in this country. Covering majority of the nation is a matter of immense pride for us,” a company spokesperson said. Starting Tuesday, Jio users in these 41 cities will be invited to try the Jio Welcome Offer, to experience unlimited data at up to 1 Gbps+ speeds, at no additional cost.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, Akash Ambani, has said that Reliance Jio is on the path to achieving the declared goal to increase the Jio 5G footprint to cover every town, taluka and tehsil across the country by December this year.

‘Office space leasing may fall 25-30% this yr in top 6 cities on slow demand’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leasing of office space across six major cities may fall by 25-30 per cent this calendar year to 35-38 million square feet on subdued demand, according to Colliers India and FICCI.

Property consultant Colliers India and industry body FICCI released a report ‘Emerging Trends and Opportunities in Office Sector — 2023’.

Gross office space leasing rose to 50.3 million square feet in 2022 across six cities from 32.9 million square feet in the previous year on better demand.

These six cities are Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Pune.

The report said that in an optimistic scenario, India’s office sector is likely to see about 35-38 million square feet of gross leasing in 2023.

The consultant expects that the economic headwinds would ease and not cause a significant dent to overall occupiers’ confidence.

It expects a significant



increase in leasing in the latter half of this year with corporates likely to close leasing decisions that were put on hold temporarily.

On the contrary, the Colliers-FICCI report pointed out that in a pessimistic scenario, the impact of economic headwinds would be prolonged, delaying a recovery in demand.

In the optimistic scenario, Colliers expects 2023 leasing to 30-33 million square feet at a gross level.

The report suggested that while the office market in 2023 looks uncertain currently, it

might bounce back with relative ease despite the global headwinds and other externalities.

Leasing activity is likely to pick up in the second half of the year, led by global capability centres, BFSI companies and startups with sound business models, the report said.

“The growth in traditional and flex spaces has been robust in 2022 as occupiers were more upbeat about leasing space and expanding their footprint. In 2023, despite the office market being riddled with uncertainty, the office sector is poised for growth, provided the economic environment remains bright,” Push Jain, Managing Director (Office Services) at Colliers India, said.

“We do not expect the leasing numbers to fall below the peak-pandemic levels of leasing even in a pessimistic scenario,” Jain said.

The key fundamentals of the office market will follow the trajectory of demand and supply to maintain a balance in the market, he added.

India misses RE capacity target due to low solar rooftop: Par panel

PTI N NEW DELHI

Parliamentary panel has attributed low installation of solar roof-top and wind energy projects as key reasons for the shortfall in achieving India’s renewable energy capacity target of 175 GW by 2022.

India set an ambitious target of installing 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022, which included 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydro-power.

However, a renewable energy capacity of 120.90 GW has been installed in the country as of 31st December 2022 which is about 69 per cent of the overall target, the Standing Committee on Energy said in a report.

“Keeping in view the fact



that renewable energy installed capacity has increased by more than 236 per cent since 2014, this is indeed a commendable achievement. However, it should also be mentioned that whatever shortfall has occurred in achievement of the target that is because of low installation of solar roof-tops and wind energy projects,” the committee said.

Keeping in view India’s

commitment to increase our non-fossil fuel based energy capacity to 500 GW by the year 2030, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy must ramp up its pace for timely achievement of targets, it suggested.

A strict timeline should be imposed for approvals/rejection of applications, installation of net-meter, inspection of the system, etc. By the discoms and reasons should mandatorily be provided by them in case of rejection of application on the national portal, the committee said.

Discoms may be incentivized so that their apprehensions regarding losing their high-paying consumers because of the installation of solar rooftops are addressed and they positively participate in the programme.

6,199 Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process started, 611 successful: Govt



FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Since the provisions relating to Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) came into force on December 1, 2016, a total of 6,199 CIRPs have started, as on the end of December 2022, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

As of December 2022, 611 CIRPs have

resulted in resolution, where the creditors have recovered 30.40 per cent of their admitted claims, Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, Rao Inderjit Singh told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question seeking to know the number of companies which have utilized the provisions of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 since it came into force.

On a question whether there is a delay in the completion of the process within stipulated time, he said that the average time taken (after excluding the time excluded by the Adjudicating Authority) for resolution of the 611 resolved cases is 482 days. Insolvency resolution process under the IBC is a market driven process and the outcome depends on market forces. Further, the time taken for resolution depends on several factors, including the nature of business, business cycles, market sentiments, litigations and marketing effort, he added.

To the question on the list of defaulters who have availed ‘haircuts’ above Rs 10 crore, the Minister said: “As of December, 2022, out of the 611 resolved CIRPs, in 477 cases there is a difference of more than Rs 10 crore in realisation amount of creditors against their admitted claim.”

INDIA EYE SERIES WIN AGAINST OZ

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The prima donnas of Indian batting will have to put their best foot forward while tackling the lethal in-dippers from Mitchell Starc when they face Australia in the series-deciding third ODI here on Wednesday.

If Starc is giving sleepless nights to the batters, the other 'Mitchell — Mitchell Marsh — has sent the Indian bowlers on a leather hunt by hitting nearly a dozen sixes (11) across two games. Tackling 'Mitchell The Menace' will be topmost on the Indian team's agenda.

The series is locked at 1-1 and the starry quartet of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav will have to bat out of their skins to stop the left-arm pacer, who is gearing up to once again bring the ball back viciously into the right-handers while taking a few away.

A sea change on the technical aspect, as well mental make-up, will be the need of the hour, and Starc has exposed their frailties pretty badly.

The white ball games in India are mostly played on flat decks, where one can get away by hitting through the line, where one doesn't need too much of feet movement. A batter can plonk the front-foot and hit deliveries across the line with a fair degree of success.

But Starc, blessed with better skill sets, changed the questionnaire with deliveries that would either straighten in the off-middle line or cut back sharply towards leg-middle after a fair amount of deviation in the air.

The Indians have known what Starc has done for the longest time but they failed to factor in that conditions in Mumbai and Visakhapatnam would assist his bowling a bit more. In Mumbai, there was

help off the surface but in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam, the ball did more in the air than off the surface.

The refurbished Chepauk, with all its stands being open for public viewing, will be hosting an international game after quite some time and the re-laid pitch will attract a lot of attention.

Normally, Chepauk produces a track that is effective for slow bowlers and run-scoring in the middle overs might be difficult.

However, an interesting aspect of this year's pitch preparation will be keeping Chennai Super Kings' strength in mind and one might see some initial nip off the surface for the fast bowlers.

SURYA'S PROBLEMS

Suryakumar Yadav in T20s can do no wrong with his aggressive shuffling inside the crease but that exaggerated movement across the crease has led to a couple of identical first-ball dismissals for him in both ODIs.

To play swing and seam, one needs to maintain perfect balance and play the ball as late as possible. Surya always tries to play late in T20s and hence it is a bit surprising that he is trying to meet the ball early in this format. With no Shreyas Iyer for sometime, this is actually Surya's best time to grab the opportunity and seal an ODI World Cup berth, but he has been far from convincing so far.

"Of course, we have seen and he knows that he needs to do well in the slightly-longer format of the game as well. Things are there in his mind as well. Guys with potential will have enough run so that they don't feel like 'okay I wasn't given enough chances in that particular slot," skipper Rohit had said after the last game.

"Surya got out in the last two games and in the series before



that as well. He needs that consistent run, like back-to-back games, 7, 8 and 10 games like that. So that he feels more comfortable," the skipper had assured.

The next run of ODIs will only be in June-July and there is a possibility that Iyer could be fit by then to reclaim his place and Surya might find it difficult to get his share of chances.

BOWLING ATTACK

The Indian bowling attack needs to take its workload management seriously but, truth be told, the bowlers haven't had much work to do as they have bowled a total of 47 overs (36 and 11) across the two games. That is not even half of the 100 allocated overs.

Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj wouldn't mind making first use of the Chepauk surface if Rohit happens to win the toss.

The key question is if Shardul Thakur, or Jaydev Unadkat for his left-arm variation, will be used as third specialist seamer, or both spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel will get another game alongside Ravindra Jadeja.

TEAMS

India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, KL Rahul (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan, Jaydev Unadkat, Yuzvendra Chahal, Umran Malik.

Australia: Steve Smith (captain), Mitchell Marsh, Travis Head, Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Marbnus Labuschagne, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis, Mitchell Starc, Sean Abbott, Adam Zampa, Ashton Agar, David Warner, Alex Carey, Jos Iglis.



Want to try out various combinations so that we aren't surprised during WC: Dravid

PTI ■ CHENNAI

He is more than happy with the takeaways from the nine home ODIs that Indian team has played and has already narrowed his World Cup core team to 17-18 players, head coach Rahul Dravid said on the eve of the series decider against Australia.

India are going into the decider having already played eight home games — three versus Sri Lanka, three versus New Zealand and three against Australia finishing on Wednesday.

Did he achieve what he had set out to in nine home ODIs, keeping World Cup in mind? "We have to a large extent. We have got a lot more clarity at the end of these nine games irrespective of what happens tomorrow. We need to keep building on that clarity.

"For us it is now the different playing XI combinations and just ensuring that we play different combinations at times just to ensure that we are able to do that in the World Cup and we are not surprised by anything in the World Cup," Dravid told mediapersons here on Tuesday.

The head coach rued the absence of an injured Shreyas Iyer, who had been earmarked to bat at No. 4 in the World Cup. The coach at the same time was sympathetic towards Suryakumar Yadav, who hasn't yet set the ODI stage on fore unlike T20 format.

"Obviously. It is unfortunate for Shreyas to get injured. He is probably one of those guys who would bat at No.4 and given a lot of time at that position. If you notice we have stuck to the people in positions. For two years leading into this run, there is a lot of T20 cricket played and we did not have a lot of one-day cricket and if there are injuries and all that, we do have options."

But does Surya's first-ball ducks isn't really worrying Dravid.

"Not really concerned about Surya. He got two very good balls. One of things about Surya is that he is learning the 50-overs game. The T20 is slightly different. In T20, he has played 10 years of IPL.

"He (Surya) has played a lot of T20 cricket. He has played a lot of high pressure T20 games. Even though he has played a lot of t20 cricket

I think he has not played a lot of one-day cricket. We need to give him some time and be patient with it. We certainly see the upside of him doing well."

HAVE NARROWED CHOICE

This leg of home ODIs were very important as the players will now get into IPL and after that there is the big WTC final, followed by a tour of West Indies and a possible Asia Cup in Dubai. "Probably not going to get too many more games in our conditions. We had the opportunity to play in these conditions which is great. Yeah, coming out of the IPL to a large extent we are pretty clear about the kind of squad and the players we want. We have narrowed it down to 17-18 players."

Injuries to Jasprit Bumrah, Iyer, Prasodh Krishna, Deepak Chahar does remain a concern but Dravid insisted that the team is in a good head space.

"We have some guys who are recovering from injuries and will come into the frame based on their recovery. All in all, we are pretty much in good space. We are able to give those who we have zeroed in on as many playing opportunities."

"There are a couple of different combinations that we would like to try. It is a big tournament, a long tournament in India, we want to have that flexibility in our squad. Some times four fast bowlers, sometimes three spinners. Within the squad we will like to keep the options. Just to ensure that we have covered all our bases for all conditions."

KULDEEP WILL GET LONGER RUN

Consistency in selection has always been key for Dravid and right now, if there is one wrist spinner, who will get a long rope, it will be Kuldeep Yadav and not Yuzvendra Chahal.

"We are always presuming that the wickets will spin in India. We just actually presume. I don't think the last 2 spun at all. We never know what we are going to get in the World Cup," Dravid said.

"In the league phase, nine cities, it is in October, the wickets won't be as tired as they probably are in the IPL and (that too) at the back-end of our summer. You just have to get all your bases covered."

Kerr powers MI to four-wicket win over RCB



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians on Tuesday reclaimed the top spot in the points table with a four-wicket victory against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Women's Premier League, riding on Amelia Kerr's allround heroics.

Chasing a modest 126 to win here at the DY Patil Stadium, Mumbai Indians stuttered post a fiery start and also failed to knock off the target in 11.3 overs — a condition that would have helped them improve net run rate over Delhi Capitals.

Mumbai Indians eventually finished at 129 for 6 in 16.3 overs.

RCB, however, signed off from the competition with their

sixth loss in eight league matches.

All-rounder Kerr was at top of her game with figures of 4-0-22-3 and an unbeaten 31 from 27 balls (4x4s) to take Mumbai Indians over the line.

Kerr added 47 runs for the fifth wicket with Pooja Vastrakar (19) to revive Mumbai Indians who were rocked twice in quick succession.

Sobhana Asha halted Nat Sciver-Brunt's charge by dismissing her for 13, while captain Harmanpreet Kaur (2) fell for her first single-digit score in the competition.

Kanika Ahuja claimed two wickets in one over to finish as the pick among the bowlers for RCB.

At the start, the opening pair

of Hayley Matthews (24 from 17 balls, 2x4s, 1x6s) and Yastika Bhatia (30 off 26 balls, 6x4s) laid the foundation with a 53-run stand.

Delhi Capitals will face UP Warriorz in the final league game later in the day at the Brabourne Stadium, post which the WPL points table would be finalised.

While the team finishing at the top will get a direct entry into Sunday's final, the second and third-placed teams will battle in the eliminator on Friday to fill up the second slot of the summit clash.

Earlier, Kerr snapped three wickets as Mumbai Indians produced a disciplined effort to restrict RCB to 125 for nine.

Kerr (3/22) validated MI

captain Harmanpreet Kaur's decision to bowl first, taking full advantage of a spin-friendly track, while Matthews (4-0-18-0) and Saika Ishaque (1/30) were also on the money.

Both Kerr and Ishaque joined Sophie Ecclestone of the UP Warriorz for most wickets (13) in WPL.

Mumbai made an early breakthrough when a horrible mixup between Devine (0) and Smriti Mandhana culminated in the former being run out.

Mandhana continued to drive herself back into form, hitting a few exciting shots to make 24 from 25 balls with three fours and a six, before her innings was ended by Kerr off a mistimed stroke.

Ellyse Perry (29 from 28 balls, 3x4s) took time to settle down and opened up only in the 10th over, hitting Ishaque for consecutive fours. At the halfway stage, RCB were 56 for 2.

Heather Knight perished for 12 in the 11th over with Kerr bagging her second wicket and the slide continued for RCB with the Kiwi spinner striking again, getting Kanika Ahuja (12) stumped by Yastika Bhatia.

Nat Sciver-Brunt returned for her final over to finish at 4-0-24-2, dismissing Perry and Shreyanka Patil (4) to mark yet another poor show for RCB with the bat. Isabelle Wong (2/26) also chipped in, removing Richa Ghosh and Disha Kasat in the last over.

Ghosh cracked three fours and two sixes to make 29 off 13 balls, with her innings helping RCB move past the 100-run mark.



MI need David, Green to fill shoes of Pollard and Pandya in IPL: Harbhajan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh feels Tim David and Cameron Green will have to fill in the shoes of Kieron Pollard and Hardik Pandya for Mumbai Indians, if the five-time champions want to taste success in the upcoming Indian Premier League.

Stressing on the fact that a positive start to the tournament is paramount for success, Harbhajan told Star Sports: "Well, they (David and Green) will be successful if Tim David can do the same thing that

Pollard was doing and whether Green can do what Hardik was doing." But yes, they do have the potential, but IPL is such a tournament that if you start to get going from day one, you will have a good season. If you don't get going, and you have to find that rhythm, it gets very difficult," he added.

Mumbai Indians will be looking for redemption in this edition's IPL after finishing at the bottom of the table in 2022.

Mumbai Indians will open their campaign against Royal Challengers Bangalore in Bengaluru on April 2.

Delhi Capitals qualify for WPL final

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Alice Capsey produced a fabulous all-round display, snaring three wickets and smashing a 31-ball 34 as Delhi Capitals thrashed UP Warriorz by five wickets to directly qualify for the final of the Women's Premier League here on Tuesday.

Chasing 139-run target, built around Tahila McGrath's 32-ball unbeaten 58, DC romped home scoring 142 for five in 17.5 overs to finish at the top of the table, toppling Mumbai Indians on the basis of better net run rate.

With Delhi grabbing a direct spot in the final, Mumbai Indians and UP Warriorz will now face off in the eliminator for the other final spot.

MI had defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by four



wickets earlier in the day, leaving DC with the task of not only winning against UPW but also maintaining a better run-rate to directly book their final spot.

Meg Lanning and Co did just that as they restricted UPW to a modest 138 for six after winning the toss and opting to

bowl.

Chasing, the opening pair of Lanning and Shafali Verma then went on a boundary hitting spree as they knocked off 56 runs off 29 balls.

If Lanning set the ball rolling with three fours and a six in a 20-run first over off

Shabnim Ismail, Shafali had four hits to the fence in her 16-ball 21-run cameo.

Once Shafali was holed out to Soppadhani Yashasri off Sophie Ecclestone's bowling, Ismail returned to trap Jemimah Rodrigues and then removed Lanning, who was caught by Simran Shaikh in the deep, as suddenly DC slumped to 70 for three.

UPW tried to tighten the screws but Capsey produced three boundaries in four balls off Ecclestone to keep DC in the hunt. Marizanne Kapp (34 not out off 31) smashed another maximum as DC reached 130 for three in 16 overs.

Ecclestone managed to sent back Capsey after two balls, while a mix-up cost Jess Jonassen's wicket but Kapp kept her cool to hit the winning runs.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Being able to pick Mitchell Starc's brain, Bhavne has him as a "calming influence" during ups and downs are some of the perks of being an Australian cricketer that young Nathan Ellis is enjoying a lot.

Ellis, who got Virat Kohli in the second game spoke extensively as to how Starc's influence on him has grown over time.

"Starcy (nickname) has been huge for me. For me personally, he is someone I looked up to him a lot of time. He presented me my first Australia cap too. He is a big part of my Australia journey. Even the other day, speaking to him pre-game and post-game," Ellis told mediapersons ahead of third ODI against India.

"He (Starc) is a calming influence. He is also someone who has been there and done almost everything the game has to offer, whether it is the ups or down. Being able to rub shoulders with Starc and sort of bounce ideas off and de-brief games... It is something that I have cherished. It is invaluable," Ellis

Starc has already taken eight wickets in two games and Ellis termed his performance as 'amazing'.



"Starcy (Mitchell Starc) the other night was nothing short of amazing. It was great to watch. It was great to be a part of. Hopefully, he can repeat those tomorrow (Wednesday)," he added.

I ADJUST MY LINE

Ellis believes is being flexible and his tactics change as per conditions of the track.

If the track offers bounce then he has a different ace up his sleeve.

"For me, I am not necessarily a bouncy bowler as it is. As I said before, it is a matter of assessing the wicket on the day and adapting my sets of skills to the wicket. Whether it is adjusting my line, being a bit

straighter.

"If it is not as bouncy, slower balls if needed and changing my lengths. Tomorrow is about not going with any pre-conceived ideas," he added.

As for the pitch at Chepauk, he said, "I am not sure with the team selection or what the team will look like. Obviously, it is going to spin here. For me, the slower balls might come into play. I think it will be a matter of assessing the wicket if we are bowling first.

"We get a bit more information for the batters who will come out in the second innings and vice versa for batting first... relaying the message back on what the wicket is doing and adapting as the game sort of progresses. It has not been a high-scoring series so far, so we will have to adapt to the wicket and what is presented to us on the day.

He accepted that it was a great opportunity for the team members to play ODIs in India where the World Cup (50-overs) would be held later in the year.

"Yeah, I guess so. I mean, it is obviously a great opportunity for us as a squad to play one-day cricket in the place where we will be playing the World Cup at the end of the year.



भारतीय नववर्ष एवं चैत्र नवरात्रि पर्व के आरंभ पर

हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ

विक्रम संवत् २०८०



नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री



शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री

नूतन वर्षारंभ और चैत्र नवरात्रि का यह पावन अवसर
सभी के जीवन में सुख, समृद्धि और प्रसन्नता
लेकर आये और हमारा मध्यप्रदेश नित नए प्रगति के
शिखरों को छुए, यही मेरी कामना है।

शिवराज सिंह चौहान
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