

WORLD 5

4 KILLED WHILE COLLECTING
FREE FLOUR IN PAK

MONEY 6

PARL PANEL TO GOVT: FRAME
POLICY ON E-VEHICLES

SPORT 7

I HAVE PLANNED SPL
DELIVERY FOR IPL: SHIVAM

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Even if jailed, will fight on: Rahul

‘I am not scared of threats, disqualifications, allegations, prison sentences’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Addressing his first Press conference after his disqualification from the Lok Sabha, a combative Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said he would continue to defend democracy in the country even if he is disqualified from Parliament for life or jailed and claimed that a “panic-stricken” Government has handed the Opposition a “big weapon” by disqualifying him.

Rahul claimed that the action against him was taken because Prime Minister Narendra Modi was “scared” of his next speech in Parliament on the Adani issue and alleged that the “whole game” is to distract people from the issue and the panic the Government is feeling over the matter.

Rahul was disqualified from the Lok Sabha on Friday, a day after a court in Gujarat’s Surat convicted him in a 2019 defamation case.

The disqualification will bar Rahul (52), a four-time MP, from contesting polls for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction.

He said he would continue to ask questions on the Adani issue, adding the moot questions remain that who invested ₹20,000 crore in Adani shell firms and what is the businessman’s relationship with the prime minister. He vowed he will keep raising these questions.

Asserting that “democracy has finished in this country”, the former Congress chief claimed that he never sought foreign intervention in his remarks made in the UK and accused Union Ministers of “lying” against him in Parliament to which he said he wanted to respond but was not allowed.

He also said the BJP is trying to divert the issue by alleging that he had insulted OBCs and he would continue to ask what is Modi’s relationship with businessman Gautam Adani.

“I am here defending the democratic voice of the Indian people, I will continue to do that. I am not scared of these



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a press conference at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

threats, of these disqualifications, allegations, prison sentences. I am not scared of them. These people don’t understand me yet, I am not scared of them,” he said, attacking the BJP.

“Disqualify me for life, put me inside jail, I will keep going. I will not stop,” he said, noting that it makes no difference to him. “I have been disqualified because the Prime Minister is scared of my next speech. I have seen it in his eyes. So he is terrified of the next speech that is going to come and does not want that speech to be in Parliament,” the former Congress chief alleged at the 30-minute Press conference, flanked by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and party general secretaries Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal.

He claimed that his attack on Adani was the reason for distraction through allegations and now disqualification. Rahul, when asked if he was worried, quipped, “Do I look worried. I am excited, I am happy that they have given me the best gift that they could give me.”

Legal recourse or paint Rahul as martyr? Cong mulls cash-in-on plan

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

Several theories within the Congress are doing the rounds on how to “encash” the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi as Lok Sabha member in elections. While a section of the party think tank is of the opinion that let “Rahul be allowed to become a ‘political martyr’ and lead the 2024 Lok Sabha” another group has been contemplating to field Priyanka Gandhi from Wayanad which Rahul represented till Friday morning.

“Another theory working is to fight back legally and retain the Lok Sabha berth as it is, and simultaneously dig out similar statements or speech by BJP leaders and get cases registered at least in the Congress and its alliance State Governments,”

said senior party leader and a member of the Rajya Sabha.

Congress legal luminaries led by team like Abhishek Manu Singhvi, P Chidambaram, Vivek Tankha, Pramod Tiwari, have done a few round of deliberations in the last 48 hours over the prospect to deal with the conviction ruling in Surat court in Gujarat. Sources said the Congress is also working to rope in their former party colleague and a legal eagle Kapil Sibal now in the Rajya Sabha backed by the Samajwadi Party.

Sibal took a swipe at two BJP Ministers for accusing Rahul of insulting OBCs with his “Modi surname” remark in 2019, saying they were “insulting” people’s intelligence by making such an “absurd allegation”.

Rahul lies, defames PM: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP spokesperson Ravishankar Prasad on Saturday alleged that the Congress did not press into service its battery of lawyers to immediately obtain a stay on Rahul Gandhi’s conviction by a court in Surat with a view to portray the Congress leader as “martyr” and “encashing” the issue in the upcoming Assembly polls in Karnataka.

Talking to reporters here soon after Rahul’s Press conference alleging that he has been targeted by the BJP to divert attention from the “Modi-Adani” row, Prasad accused the former Congress president of “lying” and “defaming” Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The BJP leader gave a list of projects which the business tycoon Gautam Adani had signed in many countries, including in Australia and Indonesia, “when the Congress under Manohan Singh was in power at the Centre”.

Reminding Rahul that he and his mother are on bail in the National Herald case, Prasad alleged that Rahul is trying to tarnish the fair name of the Prime Minister.

“Doesn’t he feels ashamed?”, the BJP said.

Prasad said Rahul has been accusing businessman Adani “without any proof”. He was, though, also quick to add “we are not defending Adani”.

He said Adani “has bagged Rs 65,000 crore projects in the Congress-ruled Rajasthan and that of Rs 15,000 crore in West Bengal.”

Prasad said Rahul has become “frustrated” as “people are not voting for his party”. “He is not respecting peoples mandate,” said Prasad.

Nitu, Saweety world boxing champions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) and the seasoned Saweety Boora (81kg) etched their names in Indian boxing history as they were crowned world champions after notching contrasting wins at the marquee tournament here on Saturday.

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Nitu put up a stupendous performance to see off Mongolia’s Lutsaikhana Altansetseg 5-0 and claim the title in the minimum weight category in front of a packed crowd, with Beijing Olympics bronze medallist and Nitu’s idol Vijender Singh also present.

Saweety made it two out of two for the hosts as she warded off a challenge from two-time medallist China’s Wang Lina. In the first bout, Nitu started off aggressively and used her combination of punches to land jabs and hooks effectively.

The 22-year-old Bhiwani boxer was able to take the first round 5-0. She began the second round with a series of straight jabs.

When Altansetseg attacked, the Indian south-paw countered with right hooks. The two boxers played from a close range and indulged in a lot of holding in a fast-paced bout with Nitu being given a penalty deduction for clinching towards the end of the second round.

Despite Altansetseg’s strong comeback in the round, Nitu managed to take it 3-2. In the final three minutes, Nitu started from afar but soon ditched the strategy and reverted to playing from a close range, as Altansetseg was also given a point deduction for clinching.

Nitu has been in indomitable form in the tournament, winning her first three bouts by RSC (referee stops contest).

Against Alua Balkibekova, who knocked her out in the last edition in the quarterfinal stage, she skilfully adapted to negate the Kazakh’s strong suit.

“I had decided to play aggressively today before the bout and I feel very happy (after the victory). I am proud of myself and my family and would like to thank my coaches, especially my head coach Bhaskar sir,” Nitu said.

“This medal means a lot to me. I have worked for this for 12 years. My family’s financial problems will be solved after this victory. We will use the prize money to pay off our loans,” added Nitu, whose father took three years leave from work to support his daughter.

Fighting the last bout of the day, Saweety, the 2014 silver medallist, was able to change the colour of her medal.



Saweety Boora celebrates her win over China’s Wang Lina during the final match in 81 kg category at the 2023 IBA Women’s Boxing World Championships, in New Delhi on Saturday. (Bottom) India’s Nitu Ghanghas poses with Gold medal during award ceremony, after winning the final match over Mongolia’s Lutsaikhana Altansetseg in 48 kg category at the 2023 IBA Women’s Boxing World Championships, in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

FM reviews PSBs’ financial health amid US banking failure

Asks bankers to be vigilant of rate risks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday reviewed the performance of public sector banks (PSBs) on various financial health parameters and their resilience in the wake of the current global financial scenario emanating from the failure of some international banks in the US and Europe.

She urged the banks to remain vigilant about the interest rate risks and regularly undertake stress tests.

During the two hours meeting with MDs and CEOs of PSBs, an open discussion was held on the global scenario amid the failure of the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank (SB),



along with the issues leading to the crisis in Credit Suisse. The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi and other senior officials, an official statement said. She also discussed the developing and immediate external global financial stress from both short and long-term perspectives.

During the PSB review meeting, she emphasised that the banks should undertake due diligence and adhere to the regulatory framework by focusing on risk management and diversification of deposits and assets base.

Usha, Mithali, Rawat’s daughter to witness Agniveers’ passout

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Queen of Indian track and field PT Usha, former Indian women team captain Mithali Raj and daughters of late General Bipin Rawat, the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) will be present on the historic day on March 28 when the first ever batch of Agniveers pass out from Navy’s training institute INS Chilka.

As first reported in *The Pioneer* on Friday, the Passing Out Parade (POP) of the first batch of Agniveers is scheduled at INS Chilka on March 28.

The POP marks the successful completion of training

of close to 2,600 Agniveers including 273 women. In another first, the parade will take place post sunset unlike in the morning as done earlier.

Navy chief Admiral Hari Kumar will be the chief guest and the Reviewing Officer of the Passing out Parade, navy officials said here on Saturday. The successful trainees would be deployed on frontline warships for their sea training.

The Agnipath recruitment scheme to transform the armed forces to fight modern day war was launched on June 14 last year. The Navy selected 2,600 Agniveers and their training commenced in November last year.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes metro ride in Bengaluru on Saturday

PTI

Cong sees K’taka as ATM to fill its leaders coffers: Modi

PTI ■ CHIKKABALLAPURA/
DAVANGERE/BENGALURU

In poll-bound Karnataka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made a strong pitch for the return of the ruling BJP, and lashed out at politics of manipulation and addressed a public rally at Davanagere after getting yet another rousing reception in his seventh visit to the State.

The PM wrapped up a busy day of public engagements that also included a tribute to the legendary Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya and a Metro rail ride on a new route that Modi inaugurated.

In yet another stinging attack on the Congress, he

said it looks at Karnataka as an “ATM” to fill the coffers of its leaders.

Seeking a resounding mandate for a successive stint for the BJP in Karnataka, Modi said a stable government led by the saffron party was the need of the hour for the State’s fast paced development.

Stressing that Karnataka should be brought out of the “politics of manipulation”, he said BJP wants to make the State a driving force of developed India, while the Congress looks at it as “an ATM that fills the treasury of its leaders”.

This visit of the Prime Minister – his seventh to Karnataka this year – gains significance as the Election Commission is expected to

announce the poll schedule for Assembly elections, due by May, in the next few days.

On Saturday, the PM also inaugurated Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Chikkaballapura district, and Whitefield (Kadugodi) to Krishnarajapura Metro Line of Bangalore Metro in Bengaluru. He took a Metro ride after buying a ticket.

“Karnataka has seen a long period of opportunistic and selfish coalition governments, Karnataka has faced losses due to such governments So, for the fast paced development of Karnataka, BJP’s full majority, stable government is needed,” Modi tol a mega rally in Davanagere headquarters.

Land-for-jobs: CBI quizzes Tejashwi, ED grills Misa

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investigation agencies on Saturday questioned Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav and his MP sister Misa Bharti in connection with the railways land-for-jobs case here, officials said.

While Tejashwi was quizzed by the CBI for more than eight hours, the ED questioned Bharti for over six hours, they said.

Slamming the BJP over the questioning of the two RJD leaders, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged the ruling party wants to finish off the

Opposition and expressed solidarity saying, “We are all united against the attack on democracy.”

See P4



RJD leader Misa Bharti arrives at the ED office for questioning in connection with the land-for-jobs case, in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

Indian-Americans march against Khalistani vandals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE /
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI /
SAN FRANCISCO

Putting up a show of solidarity against Khalistan extremists, several Indian Americans carried a support march and waved the tricolour. The march late on Friday was undertaken to condemn the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco. The alleged Khalistani supporters had vandalised the consulate last Sunday.

Regretting the violence, many Indian-American community members attended the support march outside its consulate in San Francisco for



India’s unity against Khalistan movement.

A huge crowd of Indian Americans turned up for the peace rally. Criticising the destructive elements of Sikh separatism, the Indian-American community chanted “Vande Mataram” and other slogans while dancing and holding the US flag along with tricolour. Local police ensured there were no incidents of violence as few Khalistani supporters were

also in the crowd chanting separatist slogans.

On Sunday last, Khalistani sympathisers vandalised the consulate building and installed flags in support of the separatist movement, which were later removed by the consulate staff. The incident evoked sharp reactions from the NRIs who called for strict action against the guilty.

The Indian diaspora in London, too, had registered a strong protest against the pulling down of tri colour by the Khalistani supporters at the Indian High Commission in UK by gathering outside the office demanding strict action on Tuesday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah woos voters in Chhindwara

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday slammed the Congress for its treatment of tribals and the downtrodden and said only the Bharatiya Janata Party can provide security and prosperity to the country and also ensure welfare of the poor.

Speaking at a gathering in Chhindwara, the bastion of Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath for almost 50 years now, Shah asked people to vote overwhelmingly for the BJP in the Assembly polls to be held in the state later this year and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Training his guns on Nath, the Union minister said the former did nothing for the people of the state when he was

chief minister between December 2018 and March 2020 but "indulged in corruption".

"Previous Congress governments did not care for the tribals, the poor and those from the Other Backward Classes. Only the BJP can provide security, prosperity and ensure welfare of the poor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi cares for the respect of tribals, whom the Congress has neglected for years," Shah said.

"A woman from a poor tribal family, Droupadi Murmu, is now the honourable President of India after 75 years (of Independence) due to the efforts of PM Modi," he said.

The PM had also announced nationwide celebration of legendary tribal leader Birsa Munda's birth

anniversary on November 15 last year as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas', the Union Home Minister said.

"The Congress has always talked about the downtrodden but did nothing for them. PM Modi gave constitutional status to the OBC Commission after coming to power in 2014 and laid the foundation for their respect. Only the BJP has cared for the respect of tribals and OBCs," Shah asserted.

After the formation of the NDA government in 2014, PM Modi said the BJP's regime was that of the poor, the downtrodden, Dalits, tribals and OBCs, while the Congress, which gave the slogan of 'garibi hatao', (eradicate poverty) did nothing for them, Shah claimed.

"In the last nine years (of NDA rule), the Union gov-

ernment has worked to transform the lives of 80 crore poor people. Bank accounts had been opened for 60 crore citizens, 13 crore persons got gas cylinders and 10 crore families saw toilets getting built in their homes. Three crore people got their own houses. More than 60 crore people are reaping the benefits of Ayushman Bharat health scheme, which has a coverage of Rs 5 lakh," Shah said.

"PM Modi got 130 crore people vaccinated for free to protect them from coronavirus. Modiji has ensured the poor get five kilograms of rations free every month at their doorsteps," he added.

Attacking Nath, the Union Home minister said, "Instead of doing something new (during his tenure as CM), Kamal Nath indulged in corruption."

Shah alleged several crore rupees were paid in advance without following laid down procedures in a dam construction work in which names of people close to the Congress leader cropped up.

"He had promised to give allowance to unemployed (youth) during the last Assembly polls but no one got it. Instead, he abandoned the welfare schemes launched by Shivraj Singh Chouhan," said Shah, who listed many "unfulfilled promises" of Nath.

Shah said the BJP government had made a budgetary allocation of Rs 34,000 crore for Chhindwara and spoke of multi-crore central projects sanctioned for the region. Some 35-40 per cent of people from the Chhindwara region are from the tribal communities.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with students during his visit to a school in naxal hit area at Potkapalli Forwarding Operating Base Camp in Sukma, Chhattisgarh on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Health Society in Gwalior leads to over all development

PNS ■ GWALIOR

Doctors, officers, journalists and social workers came together on World TB Day to take a pledge to eradicate TB from the country.

On the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day, Family Planning Association of India, Aapki Apni Awaaz Sanstha and International Center of Media Excellence (ICOM) organized a public awareness program in the auditorium of Cancer Hospital today.

GRMC Dean Dr. Akshay Nigam, ICOM Director Dr. Keshav Pandey, TB Campaign Nodal Officer Prabal Pratap Singh, IMA President Dr. Rahul Sapra, FPAI Branch Manager Dr. Neelam Dixit, Cancer Hospital Director Dr. BR Srivastava, Director of Goonj Dr. JS Sikarwar and Additional SP Rajesh Dandoutia were the speakers during the program.

Dr. Gunjan Srivastava pre-



sented a presentation about TB disease, its various symptoms and remedies of it. TB and Chest specialist Dr Rishi K Mangal said that according to WHO, TB is one of the deadliest killer diseases in the world right now.

Every day 4100 people lose their lives from TB. He added that while it is true that about thirty thousand people fall in its grip every day, there is no need

to panic as the disease can be prevented and cured through proper treatment.

Senior journalist Dr. Pandey said that the special purpose of celebrating TB Day is to tell people about TB and also inform them about the impact of TB on their health, society and the country's economy. Pandey added that the campaign will be meaningful only if it is brought

to the ground level by involving everybody. He also said that only a healthy society can pave the way for a developed nation.

Additional SP Shri Dandautia said that any disease can be avoided by awareness. He added that proper awareness, especially among the economically weaker section is the need of the hour.

Director of Cancer Hospital, Dr. Srivastava said that TB is a serious infectious disease which first affects the lungs. The bacteria that causes tuberculosis can spread through the air through coughs and sneezes and infect other people as well. In such a situation, it becomes necessary that this disease should be stopped by making people aware about it.

The program was coordinated by RJ Kalpana while the vote of thanks was expressed by Akshendra Kushwaha of FPAI. Harish Pal of Good patient Care was the chief organiser of the program.

SISTech organises annual cultural fest

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Sagar Institute of Science and Technology, Gandhi Nagar organized its two-day Annual Techno Cultural Fest - Sagar Fiesta with great fervor at its campus. The two fest witnessed a series of tech - cultural events and competitions showcasing rich talent of SISTecian's.

Sagar Fiesta witnessed the presence of over 1500 + students at its campus participating in grand tech competitions of clash of codies, battleground mobile mayhem, quiz competition civiq, aakar, electro spark, electro buzz, the tech act, robo race, best from waste - junkyard, business and start-up ideas shark tank, treasure hunt the rummage, rubik cube competition abhikalp and many more. The cultural fiesta competitions attracted students on Sagar Sahitya, samwaad - the all-political

party meet, singing competition at Ninaad, Dance-pe-Chance, the choreographed Ojas along with the distinct event on Calligraphy Workshop by Shubha Madvaiya, Freelance Artist and Art Educator, Art fusion connecting all socially with Nukkad Natak spreading the message of Water Conservation and highlighting Women@G20. The main attraction of Sagar Fiesta was the Vionnet the fashion show in which students participated in ramp walking redefining the colors in attractive attires. The vionnet theme was expressions with color in which students in colorful traditional, Ethnic, Western, Indo-Western, Greek, Egyptian, Tribal art etc. attire in different colors indicated various messages of women empowerment, friendship, peace, love, happiness, sustainability etc. to the audience.

Sagar Fiesta witnessed the presence of Shri Sudhir Kumar Agrawal Founder Chairman Sagar Group inaugurating the event with 56 felicitating the students. Addressing the gathering he guided students to remain focused on whatever they do and to have a never give up attitude to rise in life. The delicious and sumptuous food brought down the rising temperature of the annual fest. The fest concluded with an award distribution ceremony to all the winners of the competitions with Akhlesh Chaudhury of the Electronics Engineering Branch bagging the Student-of-the-Year Trophy.

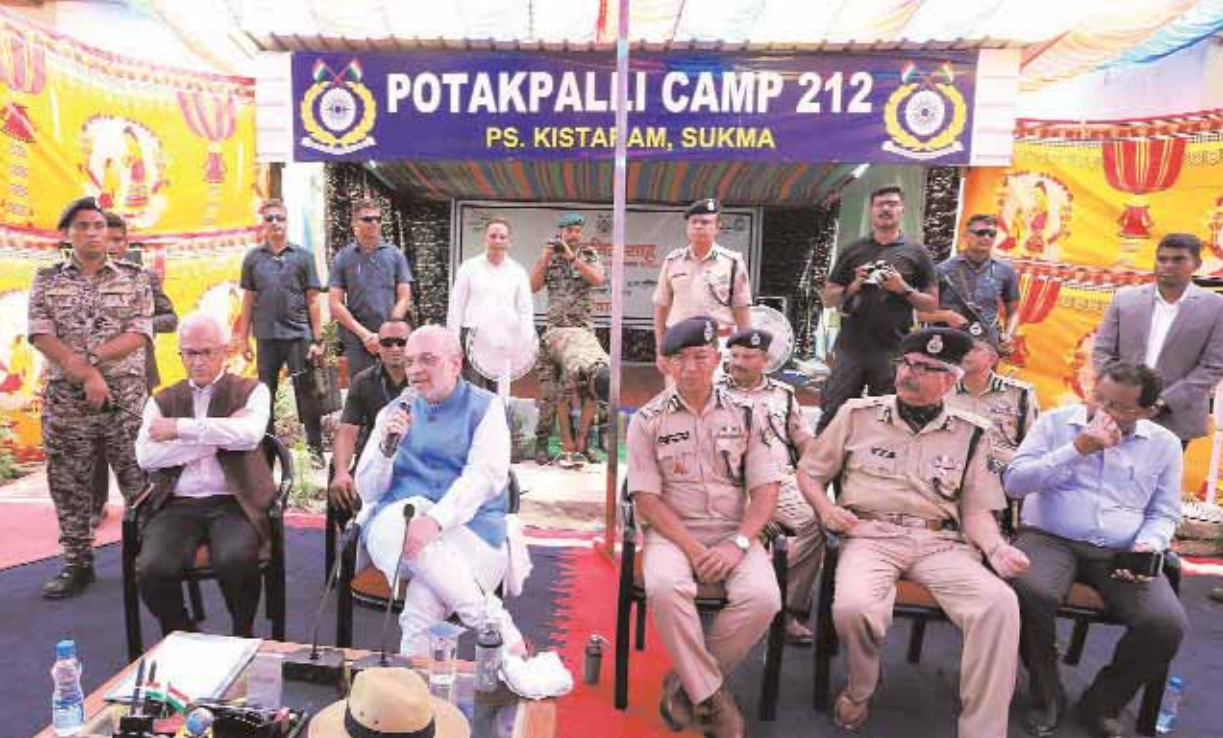
Shri Siddharth Sudhir Agrawal, Managing Director, Sagar Group, said that "Congratulations to the entire team of SISTec for the successful execution of Sagar Fiesta - Annual Techno Cultural Fest.

CM plants saplings of Peepal, Guava

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan planted saplings of peepal, guava and jamun in the garden located at Shyamala Hills. The organizer of Swarna Kranti Malvi Kalyan Samiti, Bhopal, P.L. Soni, besides Pramod Soni, Lachhiram Soni, Rajesh Soni, Babulal Soni, Anil Soni, Surendra Soni, Lakhan Lal Soni, Swati Soni, Neha Soni and Varnika Soni participated in the plantation.

Along with Chief Minister Chouhan, Sanatan Dagdi, Vimal, Deepak, Imran Khan and Umesh Yadav of television channel Khabar Madhya Pradesh also planted saplings. Abhay Sharma and Jitendra Sharma of television channel News State MP-CG planted saplings on completion of 5 years of the channel.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah interacts with CRPF personnel of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh during his visit to Potkapalli Forwarding Operating Base Camp in Sukma, Chhattisgarh on Saturday. Pioneer photo

A BSc student girl allegedly raped by her Insta friend

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Ashoka Garden police have booked a youth who sexually assaulted and exploited a BSc student in Ashoka Garden area; the accused is yet to be arrested.

According to police a 21-year-old girl originally from Sehore is pursuing B.Sc from Bhopal. She lives in the Ashoka Garden area with a rented room. About two years ago, she had befriended an ID made on Instagram by the name Chetan Sharma.

Chetan had described himself as a businessman. Both started talking on the phone and later developed a relationship. On October 20, the accused was staying at Leela Hotel Ashoka Garden area. He called the girl student to meet.

After some time the student reached the hotel, the accused found her alone and raped her. On protesting, she was silenced by promising to get married soon.

After this he met the girl several times and continued to sexually exploit

Chetan had described himself as a businessman. Both started talking on the phone and later developed a relationship

her. Recently the girl called him and asked him to marry her. On this the accused refused and started abusing the student on the phone.

The student reached the police station and lodged a case against the accused. The girl student does not even know from which place the accused is a resident. In such a situation, the arrest of the accused could not be done and investigation has been started.

The police suspect that the details on the ID made over Instagram was fake and other details shared by the accused with the victim was also fake. The mobile number used by the accused could help in tracking the accused.

CM pays tributes to Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tributes to freedom fighter and doyen of Indian journalism, respected Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi on his death anniversary. Chief Minister Chouhan offered garlands on his portrait in the auditorium located at the residence office and paid obeisance.

Reverend Ganesh Shankar 'Vidyarthi' was born on 26 October 1890 in Allahabad. He was a fearless-fair journalist, social worker and freedom fighter. His name is immortal in the history of the freedom movement.

Vidyarthi ji gave sleepless nights to the British rule in India with the power of his writing. With his pen and speech, he supported and seconded non-violent ideas and revolutionaries alike.

In his short life, he raised his voice against the inhuman system. He joined revolutionary newspapers like 'Karmayogi' and 'Swarajya' and also wrote his articles in them. He was the editor of 'Pratap'. He had to suffer a lot due to his revolutionary journalism.

Street dog brutally beaten, pet lovers report to Kolar police

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A case of brutally beating a street dog (stray dog) was reported by pet lover with Kotwali police after two men thrashed street dogs with sticks and kicks.

Due to the beating the dog's back broke after which pet lovers have complained to the police station after the video surfaced of the beating.

A demand has been made to register an FIR against the culprits.

Pet lover Kavita Bhavnani has complained in Kotwali police station. Kavita told the police that on the evening of March 24, a video came on her mobile. In which the street dog was mercilessly thrashed. When she went to the spot with his companions, it was found that the dog's back was broken after being kicked and it was badly injured.

Jabran Khan's men beat up the dog. After investigation, strict action should be taken against the guilty. Kavita is associated with Pet Lovers organization.

Due to the beating the dog's back broke after which pet lovers have complained to the police station after the video surfaced of the beating

Many pet lovers including Veena Srivastava, Dushyant, Paras were also with them during the complaint.

The video of beating of street dogs has come to the fore, which is being told near Iqbal Maidan at 10.22 pm on March 23. This video was captured in the CCTV camera installed in a nearby shop. In this, a young man with a cloth wrapped around his face beats the dog with kicks. He fell while hitting. Apart from this, another young man is seen running after the dog with a stick.

Excise Commissioner visits Indore flying squad



STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The excise commissioner of MP OP Shrivastava visited Indore Divisional flying squad office on Saturday and reviewed the preparation and disposal of liquor shops in Indore and ujjain division. DCE Indore Division Mukesh Nema DCE Ujjain Division Sanjay Tiwari and ACE Indore Manish Khare were also

present.

Excise commissioner O P Shrivastava also met with the liquor contractors and listened to their problems. Later he visited the foreign liquor warehouse at Nemawar road and country made liquor warehouse at lasudia area.

When The Pioneer brought in his knowledge about the information received from the public about the liquor smuggling

being going on from GGL and J K distilleries without permit in trucks from pithampur Dhar and going to Dhar Jhabua and Alirajpur district the excise commissioner OP Shrivastava said he will get it checked and also the junior officer of ADEO rank Devesh Chaturvedi is Posted as DEO since 5 years of GGL distilleries while the senior officers of DEO level are not given chance.

It is necessary to progress with tolerance for society: Guv

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that the youth should progress with tolerance along with career building. Along with their career, they should also develop the society. Use your education for your own progress as well as for the progress of the society and the country.

Governor Patel said that the scope and responsibility of the youth should be much wider than career, because the main aim of education is to become a better human being. The Governor said that being big in life is a good thing, but being good is even bigger. Governor Patel was addressing the con-vocation ceremony of Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya in Indore today.

Patel said that he is feeling happy by participating in the convocation ceremony of the university. This convocation ceremony is a joyous occasion for all the students, teachers and family members. It is a matter of great pride for us that this university is named after Lokmata Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar, who attained divinity by sacrificing everything for the welfare of the people. I remember and bow pay homage to her.

The Governor congratulated all the students who received the degrees, gold and silver medals and also wished the students a bright future.

Governor Patel said that the number of girls among the recipients of research, degrees and medals is more than boys is a reflection of the developed and inclusive New India under the leadership of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. It is a matter of happiness and pride for all. In the National Education Policy, Prime Minister Modi has given students the opportunity to touch the eternal heights of success with enthusiasm by giving them the opportunity of education free from any restriction.

The Governor said that the students should dream big for building a new India and a new world. He said that universities should become centres of thought for resolving the present problems and future challenges of the world community. He said that due to today's consumerist concept of development and civilization, the challenges of pollution, climate change and life style diseases are taking a more formidable form. Students and teachers should be alert, active and present solu-

tions for many problems and challenges before the human society like war, unrest, terrorism, insecurity of women and inequality. Governor Patel said that our country is a country that adopts new and deep thoughts, where the thoughts of the oldest Vedas and Upanishads, Lord Mahavir and Buddha are still alive. That is why even today, from Silicon Valley to Sydney and even in modern work areas, Indians have made a respectable place all over the world. Youths should respect and welcome different languages and cultures, but always stay connected to their roots. Because, staying connected with your roots is the lifeline of the future, it gives creativity.

Chairman of All India Council for Technical Education T.G. Sitaram said

that research and exploration are very important in today's era and the universities of the country are paying special attention in this direction. He called upon the youth to pay special attention to research and exploration in their education. He said that it is a great pleasure to participate in the con-vocation ceremony of the country's prestigious Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya. This university is constantly making new achievements in the academic field.

Member of Parliament Shankar Lalwani said that in the coming times, India will once again attain the status of world guru. Youth will play an important role in making India a world leader again. The Vice Chancellor of Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya Renu Jain gave the welcome address.



Preparations are underway at Motilal Nehru Police Stadium ahead of the visit of BJP National President JP Nadda in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo



Noted playback singer Tarannum Malik Jain performs at a cultural event 'Vihaan-2023' at Radharaman Group of Institutions, in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

Shivraj attacks Cong leader Rahul Gandhi over his disqualification

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

After Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from Parliament in a defamation case, the issue has heated up the political circles across the country. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has made a big attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on this issue.

Chouhan said on Saturday that today the problem of the country is the Congress and the problem of the Congress is Rahul Gandhi.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was talking to the media in the regular press briefing on Saturday. Chauhan has also tweeted in this regard. Chouhan said that today the Congress people are sitting with their mouths locked. Rahul Gandhi ji, why didn't you restrain yourself when you said derogatory things about Modi ji, Modi caste? You insulted OBCs. Who



gave you the right to insult OBCs? Is it a sin to be born in a backward class?

The Chief Minister said that Rahul Gandhi ji, this lock should be put on your mouth when you insulted the judiciary. You said that I am unfortunately an MP. Insulted the Parliament. The whole of India saw the manner in which you winked after saying something while being a Member of Parliament. Is this the dignity of an MP?

Shivraj Singh said that Rahul ji, you have been giving controversial statements earlier

also. You made fun of the youth of Punjab and UP, calling the temple goers molesters. You also raised questions on the surgical strike and the army. When Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister, you had insulted him by tearing the ordinance.

The CM said that Rahul ji, why didn't you and the Congressmen face this lock? Today they are doing the gimmick of locking their mouths in a demonstration. The right thing is that today Congress is the problem for the country and Congress's problem is Rahul Gandhi.

Here, in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal, Congress workers performed a unique demonstration by locking their mouths. Many women were also involved in this. Along with this, a black band was also tied on the face. The woman activist questioned that when Rahul Gandhi was given a month's time by the Surat court, why was there such a hurry to cancel the membership?

60-year-old man hit by speeding train, dies at Habibganj crossing

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 60-year-old man died after being hit by speeding train at Habibganj railway crossing on Friday; man committed suicide or it was an accident is under investigation.

The deceased identified as Ramesh Chandra Verma was found dead at railway tracks and on the receipt a police team reached the spot and started investigation.

Ramesh used to work as a house contractor and left home in search of work in the afternoon, said the family.

After the preliminary investigation the body was sent for the post mortem and the police have registered a case under section 174 of the CrPC and have started further investigation.

The circumstantial evidences suggests that the deceased died accidentally but to ascertain it at the moment is not possible and could be confirmed after receiving the post mortem report.

Advertisement for North Central Railway G2E tender notice. It includes details about the tender for the Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Distribution) North Central Railway, Jhansi, and mentions the estimated cost of Rs. 575,000.00.

Advertisement for North Central Railway G2E tender notice. It includes details about the tender for the Divisional Electrical Engineer (Gen) North Central Railway, Jhansi, and mentions the estimated cost of Rs. 99,400/-.

Advertisement for North Central Railway G2E tender notice. It includes details about the tender for the Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Distribution) N.C. Railway, Jhansi, and mentions the estimated cost of Rs. 120,800.00.

Advertisement for North Central Railway G2E tender notice. It includes details about the tender for the Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction Distribution) North Central Railway, Jhansi, and mentions the estimated cost of Rs. 1,28,700/-.

Advertisement for Vippy Spinpro Ltd. It includes details about the company, its registered office, and a notice regarding the share certificate(s) issued by the company.

Advertisement for Indian Bank. It includes details about the bank, its branches, and a notice regarding the possession of immovable properties.

Covid surge: Centre raises concern at low testing by States, UTs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the Covid cases are climbing up gradually in some parts of the country, States and UTs seem to have lowered their guard with the Centre on Saturday raising concern at low level and insufficient testing by States and UTs compared to the standards prescribed by WHO ie 140 tests per million. It also asked them to keep a close watch on the evolving etiologies (causes of diseases) of Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases.

In an advisory issued jointly by DG, Indian Council of Medical Research, Dr Rajiv Bahl and Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, the Centre pointed out that India usually sees a seasonal rise in influenza cases from January to March & again from August to October. Presently, the most



prominent subtypes of influenza in circulation in the country seem to be influenza A (H1N1) and influenza A (H3N2). “The States must keep a watch on these causes of diseases.”

“A gradual but sustained increase in the trajectory of Covid-19 cases in the country has been witnessed since mid-February 2023. As on date, most of the active cases in the country are largely being reported by a few states like Kerala (26.4 per cent), Maharashtra (21.7 per cent),

Gujarat (13.9 per cent), Karnataka (8.6 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (6.3 per cent).

“While the rates of hospitalisation and death due to the disease remains low, largely because of the significant coverage achieved in terms of Covid-19 vaccination rates by all states/UTs, this gradual rise in cases needs reinvigorated public health actions to contain the surge,” said the advisory. The states have been told that Covid and influenza share a number of similarities in terms of mode of transmis-

sion, high risk population, clinical signs and symptoms. While this may present a clinical dilemma for the attending doctors in terms of diagnosis, this also renders both these diseases easily preventable by following simple public health measures like avoiding overcrowded and poorly ventilated settings, wearing a mask in crowded & closed settings, advisory reads.

The States have also been advised to take a stock of hospital preparedness including drugs, beds including ICU beds; medical equipment, medical oxygen, capacity building of human resource on existing guidelines as well as vaccination coverage.

“Testing at the level of districts & blocks also varies, with some states heavily relying on the less sensitive rapid antigen tests. Hence it is critical to maintain optimum testing for Covid-19, equitably distributed across the states,” said the advisory.

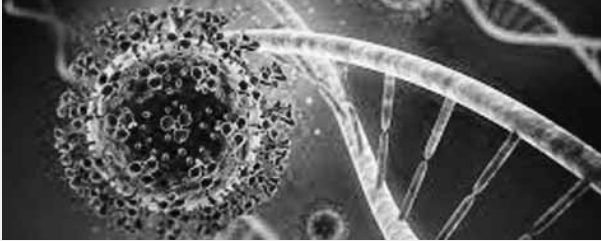
‘Virus may alter DNA in infected patients’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The virus that causes Covid-19, may alter DNA in the patients it infects. This not only explains immunological symptoms after infection, but also potentially links to long Covid, researchers have said.

In a study published in the Nature Microbiology, they said that the genetic materials in the cells of the human body are stored in a structure called chromatin. Some viruses of other categories have been reported to hijack or change our chromatin so that they can successfully reproduce in our cells.

But SARS-CoV-2’s effect on chromatin was not known. “This particular finding is quite unique and has not been seen



in other coronaviruses before. “What we found here is a unique mechanism of SARS-CoV-2 that is associated with its severe impacts on human health,” said Wenbo Li, Associate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the McGovern Medical School at University of Texas-Houston.

In this study, researchers used leading-edge methods and comprehensively characterised the chromatin archi-

ture in human cells after a Covid-19 infection. They found that many well-formed chromatin architectures of a normal cell become de-organised after infection.

For example, there is one type of chromatin architecture termed A/B compartments that can be analogous to the yin and yang portions of our chromatin. “After SARS-CoV-2 infection, we found that the yin and yang portions of the chromatin lose their nor-

mal shapes and start to mix together. Such mixing may be a reason for some key genes to change in infected cells, including a crucial inflammation gene, interleukin-6, that can cause cytokine storm in severe Covid-19 patients,” Li said.

In addition, the study published in the journal found that chemical modifications on chromatin were also altered by SARS-CoV-2. “The changes of chemical modifications of chromatin were known to exert long-term effects on gene expression and phenotypes. Therefore, our finding may provide an unrealised new perspective to understand the viral impacts on host chromatin that can be associated with long Covid,” added Xiaoyi Yuan, from the McGovern Medical School.

Army Chief presents ‘President’s Standards’ to 4 Armoured Regiments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Saturday presented the prestigious ‘President’s Standards’ or ‘Nishan’ to four Armoured Regiments of the Indian Army, namely 49 Armoured Regiment, 51 Armoured Regiment, 53 Armoured Regiment and 54 Armoured Regiment during an impressive Standards Presentation Parade held at Suratgarh Military Station in Rajasthan.

The Armoured Corps is one of the premier combat arms of the Indian Army. Since Independence, the valour, courage and fortitude shown by the Armoured Regiments during the wars have been exceptional, officials said here.

Pande reviewed the Standard presentation parade and appreciated the rich lega-



cy of valour, sacrifice and traditions displayed by the Armoured Corps in war and in peace.

The Army Chief in his address commended the Regiments who received the prestigious President’s Standards, for their exemplary

service and conveyed his best wishes to the ranks and families. He also brought out that the modern and professional Indian Mechanised Forces are always ready to meet the future challenges and stand committed to guard the nation against all threats.

India, US will boosting ties, says Indian envoy to US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

India and US will work towards further strengthening their bilateral ties, Indian Ambassador to Washington Taranjit Singh Sandhu said soon after meeting the new US ambassador to New Delhi Eric Garcetti. He was sworn in as the next envoy to India late Friday.

The meeting between the two envoys took place hours after Garcetti’s oath taking ceremony in Washington. Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

“Congratulated @eric-garcetti on his swearing-in as



the Ambassador of America to India,” Sandhu tweeted after the meeting.

“As he prepares to depart for India, we discussed some immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral partnership, in line with our Leaders’ vision,” Sandhu said. He said he looked forward to working with Garcetti.

The US Embassy in India has been without an ambassador since January 2021, the longest stretch in the history of US-India relations that the

post has sat vacant, since Kenneth Juster, the last US envoy in New Delhi, stepped down after the change of government in America.

The US Senate confirmed Garcetti’s nomination earlier this month, ending a protracted hiatus of over two years to fill the key diplomatic position. Garcetti’s nomination was pending before the US Congress since July 2021 when he was nominated by President Joe Biden.

Garcetti’s daughter Maya held the Hebrew Bible during the swearing-in ceremony. The ceremony was attended by his close family members, including wife Amy Wakeland, father Gil Garcetti, mother Sukey Garcetti and mother-in-law Dee Wakeland.

“I cannot wait to serve,” Garcetti said, when asked about his new diplomatic assignment.

USBRL project will be completed by Jan-Feb 2024: Vaishnav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav Saturday announced the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Line (USBRL) project will be completed by Jan-Feb 2024.

The Union Minister also said after connecting with the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla train service, a specially built Vande Bharat train will be introduced in the rail section.

Addressing media persons



at Srinagar Railway Station the Union Minister said that the budget allocation for USBRL was about Rs 800 crore per year before 2014, which has been increased to Rs 6,000 crore in the year 2022-23.

The Minister also visited Budgam Railway Station and inquired about various procedures related to the maintenance of trains at Carriage & Wagon Depot, Budgam.

Ashwini Vaishnav also undertook a journey from Budgam Railway Station to Baramulla Railway Station by special inspection car. He also made a detailed overview of the safety and security of

the railway section and took stock of the passenger amenities at Baramulla Railway Station. The Minister discussed with the concerned railway officers the development works to be done at Baramulla Railway Station. He also interacted with Railway employees and inspected the dry fruit stall of “One Station One Product”. He appreciated the local dry fruits of Baramulla and purchased them using the digital mode of payment.

The Parcel Office was also inaugurated at Srinagar Railway Station in the presence of the Union Minister.

India pushing for TB vaccines to eliminate infection by 2025

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Faced with the target to achieve Tuberculosis (TB) elimination by 2025, India is pushing for expediting, manufacturing and introduction of potential TB vaccines at the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) slated September this year.

“TB vaccine is needed urgently”, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said while highlighting the crucial importance of TB vaccine in the global fight against the disease. Speaking at the 36th Board Meeting of STOP TB Partnership on Saturday, he urged its officials to take up the matter of need for TB vaccines at the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September this year.

“We have seen the unwavering commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to end TB in India. We are ready to lead from the front and be the voice of the Global South in the collaborative fight against TB,” said Mandaviya.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Mandaviya stated that “India has identified 3 impor-

tant health priorities under the G20 Presidency. All of these are focused on universal health coverage and relevant to our response for TB elimination”.

Dr Mandaviya emphasized that effort is on not only to rebound from Covid but also bring innovative strategies like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan which has become a one-of-a-kind movement in the world.

Executive Director of the Stop TB Partnership Dr Lucia Ditiu emphasized that “India has a pivotal role in eliminating TB because India’s progress will drive the world.”

She also praised India for “doing very sophisticated modelling with their Ni-kshay data.”

“Their innovations, ideas and strategies for bringing healthcare closer to people is something that the whole world can emulate”, she stated.

The Stop TB Partnership Board also appreciated India’s estimation of TB burden developed with in-country evidence.

An “Accountability Report of TB-affected Communities & Civil Society: Priorities to Close the Deadly Divide” was also launched at the event.

Septuagenarian’s odyssey in law knows no bound

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

While the youth of the country study for earning a livelihood, S D Parameswaran, the septuagenarian from Ernakulam is engaged in studies for the sake of studying. Seventy two year old Parameswaran did his college, Government Law College, Thrissur, proud by passing out in the three-year LLB course with all As and enrolling as a lawyer in Kerala High Court early this week. The fact that all his classmates were young enough to be his grandchildren did not deter him from waking up at 3 in the morning, complete his studies and homework for the day and travel 80 km to Thrissur by train to attend daily classes.

For Parameswaran, who had retired from the Department of Atomic Energy as General Manager of Indian Rare Earths Ltd, life itself was a challenge. Though he passed out of the matriculation class with top honors, his poor parents could not afford to send him for higher education.

“Those were the days when typists and stenographers were very much in demand. I managed to excel in stenography and with the meagre income from that job, joined in the higher secondary class and then in Regional Engineering College, Kozhikode.

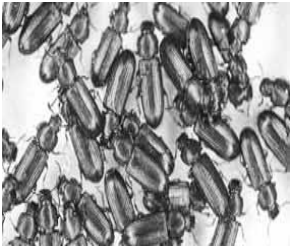
Secrets of beetles’ survival revealed

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ever wondered how beetles, commonly found pests like grain weevil and red flour beetles which eat their way through thousands of tons of food globally, manage to survive even in extremely dry environments? Scientists have now found that secrets lie in their rear ends as they have the ability to open their rectums and take up water from food and moist air and convert it into fluid.

“Besides being able to suck water out of the air, beetles are also extremely effective at extracting liquid from food. Even dry grain, which may consist of 1-2 percent water, can contribute to a beetle’s fluid balance,” said the researchers after investigating the molecular and physiological processes underlying the ability of beetles to survive their entire lives without drinking any liquid water whatsoever.

The new collaborative study by researchers from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Edinburgh explains just how. Beyond helping to explain how beetles thrive in environments where few other animals can survive, the knowledge could eventually be used for more target-



ed and delicate control of global pests such as the grain weevil and red flour beetle.

Insect pests eat their way through thousands of tons of food around the world every year. Food security in developing nations is particularly affected by animal species like the grain weevil and red flour beetle which have specialized in surviving in extremely dry environments, granaries included, for thousands of years.

“We have shed new light on the molecular mechanisms that allow beetles to absorb water rectally. Insects are particularly sensitive to changes in their water balance. As such, this knowledge can be used to develop more targeted methods to combat beetle species which destroy our food production, without killing other animals or harming humans and nature,” says Associate Professor Kenneth Veland Halberg of the Department of Biology, who led the research.

Differences between Govt, judiciary doesn’t mean confrontation: Rijiju

PTI ■ MADURAI

Denying any clash between the government and judiciary as speculated in the media, Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday contended that differences were inevitable in a democracy but they should not be construed as confrontation.

The Minister inaugurated the Chief Judicial Magistrate court, Mayiladuthurai, in the presence of Chief Justice of India Justice D Y Chandrachud, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and Acting Chief Justice of Madras High Court Justice T Raja here.

“We have differences, but it doesn’t mean there is confrontation. It sends a wrong message across the world.

“I want to make it clear that there is no problem between different organs of the State. There are signs of robust democratic actions, which are not a crisis,” he emphasised.

Pointing to some media reports of alleged differences between the government and the Supreme Court or the legislature and judiciary, the Union Minister said, “we must understand that we are in a democracy. There are bound to be certain differences in terms of some outlook but you can’t have conflicting posi-



tions. This doesn’t mean confrontation. We are the largest democracy in the world.”

The Centre would support the Indian judiciary to be independent, he said, and called upon the bench and the bar — being two sides of the same coin — to work together to ensure that the court complex is not divided. “One can’t exist without the other. Court must have proper decorum and conducive atmosphere.”

He further said, “everybody can’t think alike.”

“We are not ruled by a dictatorial king, so the difference of opinion can’t be termed as a crisis in Indian democracy. We can criticise each other but when it comes to national interest we must be one,” he stressed.

His Ministry was involved in developing a common core vocabulary where Indian languages will have certain common usages, purely technical in nature, soon, to ensure that common people receive orders

in their respective languages. Lauding the courts in Tamil Nadu for their excellent performance during the pandemic in delivering justice to the people, he said judicial infrastructure in Tamil Nadu was comparatively better than in many States in India.

Recently, he visited Puducherry and found that the kind of work being done to improve the judicial infrastructure was possible only when the judiciary and government worked together in understanding the issues and tried to solve them.

Talking about fund allocations, he said last year the government had allotted Rs 9,000 crore for district and other courts in the State, and his department was pushing hard for utilisation of funds so that more could be sought.

“In some States, I realised that requirement of court and understanding of government has some shortcomings,” Rijiju said.

Pro-Khalistan groups protest at London’s Parliament Square

PTI ■ LONDON

A small group of protesters carrying pro-Khalistan flags and banners in support of Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh gathered at Parliament Square here on Saturday, as part of similar protests in Canada and the US.

Banners for the so-called “Protest against the discriminatory actions by Indian police forces against Bhai Amritpal Singh and other innocent Sikhs” had been circulating on social media, along with similar protests called in the cities of Toronto, Vancouver, Indianapolis and Fresno.

The protest in London comes days after a planned demonstration outside the Indian High Commission in London on Wednesday when protesters hurled coloured flares and water bottles towards the mission.

They have since taken to social media to allege that the objects were hurled by the Indian mission instead, allegations which have been countered by India House. It comes in the wake of violent disorder at the Indian mission last Sunday, when pro-Khalistan extremists smashed windows and also attempted to pull down the Tricolour from its flagpole at the mission. India has registered a strong protest with the UK government and the issue was also raised in the House of Commons earlier this week.

“We strongly condemn the vandalism and violent acts that took place outside the Indian High Commission in London. It was a completely unacceptable action against the High Commission and its staff,” Leader of the Commons Penny Mordaunt told MPs.

“There is ongoing work with the Metropolitan Police to review the protection measures around the High

‘Canada closely following developments in Punjab’

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canada is “very closely” following the developments in Punjab and will continue to address the concerns of the community, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly has said amid Punjab Police’s crackdown on radical preacher Amritpal Singh.

Joly was answering a question from Indo-Canadian MP Iqinder S Gaheer in the House of Commons on Thursday.

“We are aware of the evolving situation in Punjab, and we are following it very closely. We look forward to a return to a more stable situation,” she said.

“Canadians can always count on the Government of Canada to make sure that we will continue to address the concerns of many members of the community,” she added. Gaheer said he had heard about the ongoing mass suspension of Internet services in Punjab and asked Joly to update the House about the situation in India.

Responding to questions about foreign leaders and parliamentarians commenting on the action against Amritpal Singh, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi urged people residing abroad not to believe “inaccurate and motivated narratives” that are being circulated by some elements on

Commission, and any changes will be made to ensure the safety and security of its staff so that they can go about their business, serving both this country and India,” she said.

social media.

“Authorities in Punjab are undertaking operations to nab a fugitive. Information regarding that operation is being shared by authorities concerned on a regular basis,” the spokesman said in New Delhi. Authorities in Punjab last week suspended internet and SMS services in the state following the police crackdown against elements of ‘Waris Punjab De,’ headed by the radical preacher. Police in Punjab are still searching for Amritpal Singh.

Earlier on Wednesday Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in the House of Commons: “We are looking forward to a swift return to a more stable situation.” Canada has also seen a rise in anti-India activities recently by Khalistan supporters who have vandalised some Hindu temples. A Ram Mandir in Mississauga was defaced by ‘Khalistani extremists’ with anti-India graffiti on February 13, drawing a strong reaction from the Indian Consulate in Toronto.

“We strongly condemn the defacing of Ram Mandir in Mississauga with anti-India graffiti. We have requested Canadian authorities to investigate the incident and take prompt action on perpetrators,” India’s Consulate in Toronto had tweeted.

It followed UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly’s statement to condemn the unacceptable acts of violence and an assurance to conduct a security review at the Indian mission in London.

Eric Garcetti sworn in as US Ambassador to India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Eric Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

Garcetti’s daughter Maya held the Hebrew Bible during the swearing-in ceremony on Friday, which was presided by Vice President Harris.

Garcetti raised his right hand while Harris performed the ceremony, and family members cheered when the two longtime friends shook hands.

The ceremony was attended by his close family members, including wife Amy Wakeland, father Gil Garcetti, mother Sukey Garcetti and mother-in-law Dee Wakeland.

“It feels great. Can’t wait to serve,” Garcetti, 52, said when asked about his new diplomatic assignment.

“I’m so honoured the vice

Indian envoy talks partnership

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India’s envoy here Taranjit Singh Sandhu met the newly-appointed US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, and discussed with him immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral strategic partnership. The meeting took place soon after Garcetti was sworn on Friday in as the next US envoy to India.

Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

president did this,” he said.

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff also attended the event.

Former Mayor of Los Angeles Garcetti’s nomination was pending before the US



“Congratulated @eric-garcetti on his swearing-in as the Ambassador of America to India,” Indian Ambassador to Washington Sandhu tweeted after the meeting on Friday. “As he prepares to depart for India, we discussed some immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral partnership, in line with our Leaders’ vision,” Sandhu said.

He said he looked forward to working with Garcetti.

The US Embassy in India has been without an ambassador since January 2021, the longest stretch in the history of US-India relations that the post has sat vacant, since Kenneth Juster, the last US envoy in New Delhi, stepped down after the change of government in America.

Tornadoes kill 23 in Mississippi

AP ■ ROLLING FORK

Emergency officials in Mississippi said 23 people have been killed by tornadoes that tore through the state on Friday night, destroying buildings and knocking out power as severe weather that produced hail the size of golf balls moved through several southern states.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency confirmed there had been 23 deaths as of 6:20 am on Saturday with dozens of injuries and four people missing throughout the state.

The agency said in a Twitter post that search and rescue teams from numerous local and state agencies were deployed along with personnel to assist those impacted by the tornadoes. The National Weather Service confirmed a tornado caused damage about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northeast of Jackson, Mississippi.

The rural towns of Silver City and Rolling Fork reported destruction as the tornado swept northeast at 70 mph (113 kph) without weakening, racing towards Alabama through towns including Winona and Amory into the night.

Pennsylvania chocolate plant blast kills five, six missing



Smoke rises from an explosion at the RM Palmer Co. plant in West Reading

WEST READING: An explosion at a chocolate factory in Pennsylvania on Friday killed five people and left six people missing, authorities said.

Several other people were injured by the explosion at the RM Palmer Co. plant, said West Reading Borough Police Department Chief of Police Wayne Holben, who did not confirm the exact number of injured.

The explosion just before 5 pm sent a plume of black smoke into the air, destroying one building and damaging a neighbouring building that included apartments.

“It’s pretty levelled,” West Reading Borough Mayor Samantha Kaag said of the explosion site. “The building in the front, with the church and

the apartments, the explosion was so big that it moved that building four feet forward.”

The cause of the blast in the community about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia was under investigation, Holden told reporters.

Eight people were taken to Reading Hospital Friday evening, Tower Health spokeswoman Jessica Bezler said.

Two people were admitted in fair condition and five were being treated and would be released, she said in an email. One patient was transferred to another facility, but Bezler provided no further details.

Kaag said people were asked to move back about a block in each direction from the site of the explosion but no evacuations were ordered. (AP)

Four killed while collecting free flour in Pak

PTI ■ LAHORE

At least four elderly people have died in the last few days while trying to collect free flour from the government distribution points in Pakistan’s Punjab province, officials said on Saturday.

The deaths were reported after several people flocked to the government distribution points after the cash-strapped Pakistani government introduced a free flour scheme for the poor especially in Punjab province to beat the sky-rocketing inflation.

Four elderly people died and several fainted in a bid to

collect free wheat flour in Multan, Muzaffargarh and Faisalabad cities during the last few days,” a Punjab government senior officer told PTI.

He said the incidents occurred due to the huge rush of people and lack of facilities at the distribution points set up by the government to distribute free flour among the citizens.

“Two of them died due to stampede and the other two died after getting exhausted while standing in queue for long hours,” he said.

Police on the other hand also baton-charged the people

seeking free flour to force them to stand in the queue.

The people have criticised the lack of proper arrangements by the district administration at these distribution points and the short supply of flour.

Most of them arrive at the flour points early in the morning and have to wait for a long time in queues.

Former prime minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has condemned the deaths and criticised the policy.

“This is today’s Pakistan where the people are losing their lives to get free flour.

And this is because of the bad policies of this government of looters and thieves,” PTI Punjab president Dr Yasmin Rashid told PTI.

Seeing the gross mismanagement at the free distribution of flour points, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has started visiting such points.

On Saturday he visited Sargodha city and inspected the free flour points.

Sharif checked the quality and weight of the flour bags and talked to people.

He also directed the district administration to facilitate especially elderly people at the flour distribution points.

GLOBE TROTTER

GAEKWAD REAPPOINTED FLORIDA UNIV TRUSTEE
WASHINGTON: A prominent Indian American businessman and community leader was on Friday reappointed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to the board of trustees of the prestigious University of Florida. “Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the reappointment of Digvijay ‘Danny’ Gaekwad to the University of Central Florida Board of Trustees,” the Governor’s office said in a statement.

MAN ATTACKS THREE WITH GRENADE, KNIFE IN BERLIN
BERLIN: German police said on Saturday that they have arrested a 61-year-old man after three people were wounded in a hand grenade and knife attack in Berlin. Police said the attacker detonated the grenade in the entrance of an apartment building in the Reinickendorf neighborhood of the German capital on Friday night, wounding two women, aged 42 and 48, and a 61-year-old man.

KING CHARLES HONOURS QUEEN’S PALLBEARERS
LONDON: Britain’s King Charles III on Saturday recognised in a special Demise honours list the eight pallbearers who carried the late Queen Elizabeth II’s coffin at her funeral last year. The British soldiers, who were selected to be pallbearers from the King’s Company of 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards – known as the Queen’s Company previously – have been awarded the silver Royal Victorian Medal.

INTEL CO-FOUNDER MOORE DIES AT 94
SAN FRANCISCO: Gordon Moore, the Intel Corp. co-founder who set the breakneck pace of progress in the digital age with a simple 1965 prediction of how quickly engineers would boost the capacity of computer chips, has died. He was 94. Moore died on Friday at his home in Hawaii, according to Intel and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Biden: Will protect our personnel in Syria

AP ■ OTTAWA

President Joe Biden said Friday that the US would respond “forcefully” to protect its personnel after U.S. forces retaliated with airstrikes on sites in Syria used by groups affiliated with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard following a suspected Iranian-linked attack Thursday that killed a US contractor and wounded seven other Americans in northeast Syria.

“The United States does not, does not seek conflict with Iran,” Biden said in Ottawa, Canada, where he is on a state visit. But he said Iran and its proxies should be prepared for the US “to act forcefully to protect our people. That’s exactly what happened last night.” Activists said the US bombing killed at least four people.

While it’s not the first time

the US and Iran have traded strikes in Syria, the attacks and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to deescalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

The Pentagon said a drone attack on a US base Thursday killed a contractor and injured five US troops and another contractor. That was followed by two simultaneous attacks on US forces in Syria on Friday, according to US officials.

The officials said that based on preliminary information, there was a rocket attack Friday at a Conoco plant, and one US service member was injured but is in stable condition. At about the same time, several drones were launched at Green Village, where US troops are also based. One official said all but one of the

drones were shot down, and there were no US injuries there. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

Two Syrian opposition activist groups reported a new wave of airstrikes on eastern Syria that hit positions of Iran-backed militias after rockets were fired at a Conoco gas plant that has a base housing American troops. Several US officials, however, said the US did not launch any attacks late Friday, and it wasn’t clear if the activists were referring to the attack on US forces at Green Village. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the American intelligence community had determined the drone in Thursday’s attack on was of Iranian origin.

US officials said that conclusion was based on recovered debris and intelligence threat streams.

Harris’ Africa trip to strengthen US ties

WASHINGTON: Vice President Kamala Harris will try to deepen and reframe US relationships in Africa during a weeklong trip that is the latest and highest profile outreach by the Biden administration as it moves to counter China’s growing influence.

Harris, who is traveling with her husband, Doug Emhoff, plans to visit Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia, focusing on economic development, climate change, food security and a rising youth population. She is scheduled to arrive in Accra, Ghana’s capital, on Sunday.

“For too long, the US foreign policy establishment has treated Africa like some kind of extra credit project and not part of the core curriculum,” said Michelle Gavin, an Africa expert at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former US ambassador to Botswana. “I see a big effort to change that thinking now. But it takes time.”

In Africa, Harris will be closely watched as the first person of color and first woman to serve as America’s vice president.

Her mother was born in India and her father was born in Jamaica; Harris was raised in California.

“Everybody is excited about Kamala Harris,” said Idayat Hassan, director of the Centre for Democracy and Development in Abuja, Nigeria. “You can be anything that you can think of — that’s what she represents to many of us.”

कार्यालय अधिकांशी अभियन्ता, केन्द्रीय भण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, जल भवन, बी ब्लॉक, नेहरू कालोनी, देहरादून									
पत्रांक-1197 / ई-निविदा / 2022-23									
ई-निविदा सूचना									
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान की ओर से केन्द्रीय भण्डार, देहरादून द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा, दू-बिदा सिस्टम (तकनीकी बिड एवं कॉमिशियल बिड) आधार पर निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।									
निविदा क्र.	कार्य विवरण	घरोहर घनराशि रु.	ई-निविदा प्रपत्र खोलने के लिए तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा प्रपत्र खोलने के लिए तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा प्रपत्र खोलने के लिए तिथि एवं समय	कै.सं. 7 अनुसार मूल प्रपत्र विवरण में जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय	तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की वेबसाइट	ई-बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	9
वार्षिक दर अनुबंध पर, Tamper proof water meters (inferential type) as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 with ISI or EEC/MID certification mark shall be with protection class of IP68 with 2 years warranty anywhere in Uttarakhand की आपूर्ति।									
26/22-23		26,000,000.00	28.03.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	06.04.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	10.04.2023 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 11:00 a.m.	120 days	03.04.2023 11:00 a.m.
अर्हता:- 1. ISI or EEC/MID certification mark license for water meters and factory as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 certificate holder or dealers authorized by the manufacturer are allowed to participate in this tender. The Joint Venture are also allowed in this tender.									
2. Authorised dealer should have MOU with manufacturer with assured minimum quantity.									
3. The preference will be given to the water meter manufacturers. Manufacturer must have supplied minimum 50,000 water meters to government/semi gov/PSU in last seven years i.e 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22.									
4. Production unit of the manufacturer should be established in India.									
वार्षिक दर अनुबंध पर, Tamper proof bulk water meters (voltman type) as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 with ISI or EEC/MID certification mark shall be with protection class of IP68 with 2 years warranty anywhere in Uttarakhand की आपूर्ति।									
27/22-23		5,000,000.00	28.03.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	06.04.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	10.04.2023 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 11:00 a.m.	120 days	03.04.2023 11:00 a.m.
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4. Production unit of the manufacturer should be established in India.									
ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारीयें व शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in एवं विभागीय वेबसाइट http://ujs.uk.gov.in पर ऑन लाइन देखी / प्राप्त की जा सकती है। अधिशासी अभियन्ता									

AP ■ BEIJING

New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta has expressed concern to China over any provision of lethal aid to support Russia in its war against Ukraine during a meeting with her Chinese counterpart.

Her press office on Saturday detailed Mahuta’s cautionary remarks in Beijing, days after Chinese President Xi Jinping concluded his trip to Moscow, a

warm affair in which Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin praised each other and spoke of a profound friendship.


Mahuta’s four-day trip, which began Wednesday, was the first made by a New Zealand foreign minister to Beijing since 2018 but it came at an awkward time as Xi visited Moscow the same week to give Putin a diplomatic boost after the International Criminal Court said it wants to put him on trial for alleged war crimes.

On the Ukraine war, Mahuta reiterated her government’s condemnation of Moscow’s “illegal invasion” to her counterpart Qin Gang.

She also told Qin’s predecessor Wang Yi, now the Chinese Communist Party’s most senior foreign policy official, that peace and prosperity are the expectations of all parties, according to China’s official news agency Xinhua. New Zealand supports political settlement of disputes through dialogue, she was quot-

ed saying in the report.

Wang said the pressing task is to achieve a ceasefire and resume peace talks, and that China would continue to play a constructive role to promote a political settlement, the agency added. During the meeting with Qin, Mahuta also raised concerns over the human rights situation in Xinjiang, the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong, disputes in the South China Sea and increasing tensions in the Taiwan Strait, her press office said.

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APPENDIX IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6) /r/w proviso to Rule 9(1)]

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMovable PROPERTY

Public Notice for E-auction sale of immovable property under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to rule 8(6) /r/w proviso to Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and Borrower & guarantor in particular that the immovable property described herein below ("**Secured Asset**"), mortgaged to Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited acting in its capacity as Trustee of EARC Trust SC- 30, ("**EARC**"), the physical possession of which has been taken by Authorised Officer of EARC on October 31, 2022, will be sold by way of E-Auction on **April 13, 2023 at 12:00 Noon** with unlimited extension of 5 Minutes each through e-Auction Agency M/s e-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger) on the website/portal <https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net> on "As is where is", "As is what is", "Whatever there is" and "No Recourse" basis for recovery of aggregate dues of **Rs. 505,29,95,872.25/- (Rupees Five Hundred Five Crores Twenty Nine Lac Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy Two and Twenty Five Paise Only)** being due as on August 23,2022, together with interest at contractual rates and other costs and expenses thereon to EARC from **KLG SYSTEL LIMITED (in Liquidation) ("**Borrower**")** and **Mr. Kumud Goel and Ms. Pushpa Lata Goel ("**Guarantors**").**

The Description of Secured Asset, Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit for the Secured Assets shall be as follows:

Description of Secured Asset			
All that piece and parcel of Industrial plot of land being Plot No. 24, admeasuring 1000 sq. mtr. in Sector 18, Electronics City, Gurgaon, Haryana along with all the building/structures being thereon (total built-up structure - 15,750 Sq. Ft.) and bounded as follows " North: Access Road, South: Plot No.22, East: Access Road West: Plot No. 23			
Reserve Price	Rs.11,47,50,000/-	Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.1,14,75,000/-

OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS

Site Inspection	29/03/2023 to 10/04/2023, between 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
Document Verification	On working days between 03/04/2023 to 10/04/2023.
Bid Document Purchase	On working days between 10/04/2023 and 11/04/2023.
EMD amount payment	By 2pm on 12/04/2023
Last Date of submission of bid document	By 5pm on 12/04/2023
Commencement of e-auction sale	12 Noon on 13/04/2023
Bank details	Ac No. 0004103000054719, IFSC No. IBKL00000004, IDBI Bank, Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Mumbai.
Officer contact details	7506642534 Meghraj.deshmukh@edelweissarc.in

For detailed terms and conditions of the auction sale, please refer to the link provided in the Secured Creditor's website i.e. www.edelweissarc.in/Property Sale

Date: 26.03.2023

Place: Mumbai

Sd/-

Authorized Officer

Frame policy on e-vehicles, Parliament panel tells Govt

■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary panel has urged the government to frame a comprehensive national policy on electric vehicles (EV) by incorporating the elements of successful state models and international best practices.

These best practices should be based on charging infrastructure, battery swapping, battery waste management and recycling, public awareness in addition to the demand and supply side incentives such as lower GST, waiving road tax, registration fee, hire-purchase scheme at discounted interest rates by financial institutions for buying EVs, it said.

This would serve as a guiding policy to all states and ensure a comprehensive and uniform growth of the EV sector. It has also recommended that a roadmap for setting up of solar charging stations should be prepared in a time-bound manner to reduce the dependence on electricity generated by using coal, to remain true to the green mobility objective. The Committee on Estimates, in its report on "Evaluation of Electric Vehicles Policy", which was tabled in Parliament on Friday, further noted that the "Removal of



government support would result in price escalation of EVs significantly.

"The committee finds that a large number of start-ups are also involved in this field, which may have to shut down once the FAME II (second part of the scheme on promotion of electric vehicles called Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) is closed.

It is therefore recommended that the government should extend the FAME-II scheme beyond its current March 31, 2024 timeline by an

additional two years to allow more time to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and to make necessary adjustments/modifications to promote the electric vehicles (EVs)."

The high level panel further suggested to the Heavy Industries Ministry (the nodal department for electric vehicles' promotion) that along with EVs and hybrid vehicles, it should also promote other technologies like flex fuel vehicles, hydrogen ICE, and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles among others with greater emphasis for mobility transition. The

committee has also recommended that the ministry should coordinate with other ministries and charging infrastructure operators, to frame a comprehensive plan for rollout of a nationwide public charging network.

It also urged upon the ministry to consider offering purchase subsidies and cash-incentive schemes for scrapping or exchanging petrol and diesel vehicles for electric vehicles, as it would not only lead to faster adoption of EVs but also have a major impact on controlling CO2 emissions.

Jio installs 1 lakh towers to roll out India's fastest, deepest penetration of 5G network

■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio has installed close to 1 lakh telecom towers, nearly 5 times of its nearest competition, to roll out India's fastest and deepest penetration 5G telecom network to provide ultra-high speed internet, according to latest DoT data.

The latest daily status report from Department of Telecommunications' (DoT) National EMF Portal shows Jio has installed 99,897 BTS (base transceiver station) across 2 frequencies it owns (700 MHz and 3,500 MHz). In comparison, Bharti Airtel has 22,219 BTS.

Additionally, for every base station, Jio has 3 cell sites while Airtel has 2, the March 23 report said.

The more tower and cell sites means faster speed. According to the February 28 report of Ookla, the global leader in network intelligence and connectivity insights, Jio's top median speed is 506 Mbps (megabytes per second) as compared to 268 Mbps of Airtel. "5G has been in place in India for over four months and already it's having a tremendous impact on the state of mobile in the country," Ookla said in the report.

"Speedtest Intelligence data shows that median download speeds across India increased



by 115 per cent since before the 5G launch, from a 13.87 Mbps median download speed in September 2022 to 29.85 Mbps in January 2023."

5G performance has increased across early 5G adopters in most of the telecom circles, Kolkata achieved the fastest median 5G download speeds in January 2023 at above 500 Mbps.

"Jio experienced a top median 5G download speed of 506.25 Mbps in Kolkata, while Airtel of 268.89 Mbps in Delhi," it said. Airtel and Jio have ambitious targets in terms of 5G network rollout. "From 5G

networks' inception, 5G availability across 5G-capable devices has steadily increased, reaching 8.0 per cent for Airtel and 5.1 per cent for Jio," it said.

India has over half a billion internet users, making it the second-largest online market worldwide, just behind China. 5G telecom services were launched in October 2022. "Jio's USD 25 billion investment seems to be paying off.

In January 2023 Jio achieved median 5G download speeds above 400 Mbps across ten telecom circles. Jio's True 5G network is based on a 5G Standalone (5G SA), which

doesn't rely on a 4G LTE network.

"While Jio's initial 5G speeds fluctuated massively - from low single-digit to speeds well above 800 Mbps, which pointed to the operator recalibrating its networks, Jio's 5G performance has stabilized over the past four months.

In January 2023, Jio's 5G early adopters experienced speeds ranging from 246.49 Mbps median download speed in Himachal Pradesh to 506.25 Mbps in Kolkata," Ookla said.

In comparison, "Airtel's 5G early adopters experienced speeds ranging from a 78.13 Mbps median download speed in Kolkata to 268.89 Mbps in Delhi," it added.

Last month, Akash Ambani, chairman of Reliance Jio, had at a post budget webinar of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology stated that India's largest telecom company will undertake the fastest 5G rollout in the world.

Reliance Jio is a step-down subsidiary of Reliance Industries which is helmed by his father, Mukesh Ambani. Bharti Airtel had on Friday stated that its ultra-fast 5G service is available to customers in 500 cities in the country. "Airtel added 235 cities to its network, making it one of the largest rollouts to date."

Climate change threatening tea sector globally: ITA

■ KOLKATA

Leading planters body Indian Tea Association (ITA) said climate change is threatening the industry globally which is resulting in lower yields and rise in production costs.

A spokesman of ITA said climate change is also threatening the long-term viability of tea industry, which is also causing increasing pest infestations making pesticide residue management surfacing as a major challenge.

To mitigate this, ITA said that the industry needs to adopt a multi-faceted to address the climate change issue by way of sustainable farming practices and reduc-

tion in carbon footprint. In this context, the association maintained the industry involving all the stakeholders to invest in research to come out with mitigating solutions. There has also been a decline in rainfall and increase in temperature in the tea cultivating regions for the last several years, ITA said.

According to the association, future projections indicate a substantial reduction in suitability in tea cultivation in areas where the crop is grown.

The other major area where work is needed to be done by the industry is that optimisation in the use of chemical fertilisers and greater use of renewable energy. In the latest data compiled by Tea



Board, production in January 2023 in the country was 13.43

million kilogramme as against 16.22 million kilogramme in

the same month of last calendar year.

Cabinet approves MSP for raw jute for FY 2023-24

■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for raw jute for 2023-24 season, based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

The MSP of raw jute (TD-3 equivalent to earlier TD-5 grade) has been fixed at Rs 5,050 per quintal for 2023-24 season. This would ensure a return of 63.20 per cent over the all India weighted average cost of production. The announced MSP of raw jute for



2023-24 season is in line with the principle of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times all India weighted average cost of

production as announced by the government in the Budget 2018-19. It assures a minimum of 50 per cent as margin of profit. It is one of the important and progressive steps towards ensuring better remunerative returns to the jute growers and to incentivise quality jute fibre, said officials.

The Jute Corporation of India (JCI) will continue as Central government nodal agency to undertake price support operations and the losses incurred, if any, in such operations, will be fully reimbursed by the Central government.

Speed up PDS staff selection for quality food grains: Parl Panel

■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary panel has desired the Food and Public Distribution Department to expedite the process of revival of posts and new recruitments to raise the number of inspection and sample analysis to ensure delivery of good quality foodgrains to the ultimate beneficiaries.

"The Committee, while reiterating their original recommendation, desire the Department to expedite the process of revival of posts and new recruitments to raise the number of inspection and sample analysis thereby ensuring delivery of good quality foodgrains to ultimate beneficiaries and preventing storage losses of foodgrains," said a Action Taken report by the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

Earlier, in their original report, it had observed that the



number of inspection and sample analysis should be increased to ensure good quality of foodgrains to beneficiaries and to prevent storage losses. "The Department in their Action Taken Reply has stated that increasing the frequency of inspections visits and sample analysis is subjected to availability of adequate staff. To achieve this, the Division is in the process of revival of posts, promotion and new recruitment on priority basis.

The Department has also informed that they have already formulated a SOP for storage loss/gain for stored goods. The Committee feel that raising

the number of inspections and sample analysis will have a significant effect on the quality of food grains," said the report. As per the report, the Ministry in its action taken reply has said: "The Storage & Research Division, D/o Food and Public Distribution has a mandate to ensure good quality foodgrains provided to the beneficiaries through various social security programmes.

"In pursuance to this, officer/official of QCC of S&R Division conducts inspection of various Food Storage Depots (FSDs) of FCI/state agencies, Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), State Warehousing Corporations (SWC), Rice Mills (RMs) Fair Price Shops (FPS), Rail Heads & Truck Heads, etc. Prior to 2018, the inspections of FPS were conducted only after receipt of any references/complaints. Presently, FPS inspections were included under targeted activities during 2020."

23K techies laid off in 82 desi startups

■ NEW DELHI

As layoffs continue to deepen amid recession fears, more than 23,000 employees have been laid off by at least 82 startups in India, and the list is only growing, the media reported.

According to a report in Inc42, 19 edtech startups, including four unicorns, have alone sacked more than 8,460 employees to date. The startups that lead the layoff tally include BYJU'S, Ola, OYO, Meesho, MPL, LivSpace, Innovaccer, Udaan, Unacademy and Vedantu, among others.

Home interiors and renovation platform Livspace this week laid off at least 100 employees as part of cost-cutting measures. Last week, SaaS platform for online stores Dukaan laid off nearly 30 per cent of its workforce, or around 60 employees — its second lay-off in about six months.

BPCL opens 19 EV fast-charging corridors in Karnataka, Kerala, TN

■ KOCHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) has announced that it has launched 19 EV fast-charging corridors along 15 highways in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

At approximately every 100 km on the corridors, one can find an EV fast-charging station, a top BPCL official said at an event here on Friday. "The fast-charging stations have been installed between 110 fuel stations which have been divided into various electric corridors."

BPCL Executive Director Incharge (Retail) P S Ravi said the company had launched three corridors with 19 fuel stations in Kerala, six corridors with 33 fuel stations in Karnataka and 10 corridors with 58 fuel stations in Tamil Nadu. "It takes just 30 minutes to charge an EV, giving a driving range of up to 125 km at our fuel stations. Therefore we have maintained a distance of

100 km between two charging stations," Pushp Kumar Nayar, Head of Retail in the South, said at the launch.

Ravi said the fast chargers were easy to use and could be self-operated without any manual assistance, even though support staff would be available if needed.

"BPCL has digitised the entire EV charger locator, charger operations and transaction process through the HelloBPCL app for an online hassle-free and transparent user experience," Ravi added.

The company has launched EV corridors connecting important religious and tourist destinations with cities, such as Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Bandipur National Park in Karnataka, Guruvayoor and Kadampuzha temples in Kerala, Vallarpadam National shrine of Basilica at Kochi, Koratty and Markaz Knowledge City in Thrissur, Kanyakumari and Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai among others.

ChatGPT has power to change healthcare: Report

■ NEW DELHI

OpenAI's ChatGPT, which can write original prose and chat with human fluency, holds the potential to completely change healthcare, according to a report on Thursday.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, said that the revolutionary technology is coming faster than most people in the industry currently recognise.

It estimates the total Artificial Intelligence (AI) market will be worth \$383.3 billion in 2030, with a robust 21 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2022 to 2030. "ChatGPT can be used to assist doctors with bureaucrat-



ic tasks such as writing patient letters so doctors can spend more time on patient interaction. More importantly, chatbots have the potential to increase the effectiveness and accuracy of the processes for preventive care, symptom iden-

tification, and post-recovery care," said Tina Deng, Principal Medical Devices Analyst at GlobalData, in a statement. AI integration into chatbots and virtual assistants can motivate and interact with patients. It can review a patient's symp-

toms and then recommend diagnostic advice and different options like virtual check-ins or face-to-face visits with a healthcare professional.

This can reduce the workload for hospital staff, increase the efficiency of patient flow, and save healthcare costs. During the Covid-19 pandemic, chatbots have been developed for contactless screening of Covid-19 symptoms in healthcare institutions and to help answer questions from the public.

Chatbots can answer patient queries about medical products and share brand news with customers. Pharmaceutical and medical device companies can benefit from using AI-enabled virtual

agents to automate customer service processes and give patients round-the-clock attention.

Additionally, chatbots can be used for social purposes, increasing patient engagement. Chatbots offer advice on how to maintain health after treatment. They send automated reminders to take medications and re-visit information.

Meanwhile, a recent study in the Journal of The National Cancer Institute Cancer Spectrum, showed that when it comes to answering people's questions about cancer, especially regarding myths and misconceptions, ChatGPT was found 97 per cent accurate in providing the correct information. The AI was so accurate

that the test subjects were unaware whether the answers came from ChatGPT or the National Cancer Institute. However, the usage of chatbots in patient care and medical research raises several ethical concerns.

As massive patient data is fed into machine learning to improve the accuracy of chatbots, patient information is vulnerable. The information provided by chatbots might be more inaccurate and misleading, depending on the sources fed into the chatbots. "Regardless of the risks, AI-powered chatbots will be used widely in the healthcare industry. More regulations are expected to govern the health uses of chatbots," Deng said.

Murgappa, Premji to acquire Lotus Surgicals for ₹348 cr

Chennai: Murugappa Group's engineering firm Tube Investments of India and (TII) Azim Premji's private equity fund Premji Invest announced on Saturday that together they would be acquiring Lotus Surgicals, a maker of wound closure products, for a sum of Rs 348 crore. Tube Investments will invest Rs 233 crore for 67 per cent stake, while Premji Invest will pick up the remaining 33 per cent at Rs 115 crore from the existing shareholders of Lotus Surgicals.

"Tube Investments and Premji Invest on Saturday signed a share purchase agreement to acquire 100 per cent equity capital of Lotus Surgicals Pvt Ltd from India Medical Consumables Holdings Ltd, a Samara Capital entity, and other shareholders," a statement released here said. The two companies are partnering for the acquisition with the objective of setting up a medical



technology platform, which aspires to become a global platform to design, manufacture and distribute innovative world-class medical products at affordable price points, the statement added. Plans for scaling up the platform include organic and inorganic acquisitions.

"The acquisition of Lotus Surgicals Pvt Ltd marks our entry into the med-tech business. We believe that the Indian medical industry is expected to be one of the fastest growing sectors driven by both demand and supply side factors," TII executive chairman M A M Arunachalam said. **PTI**

I HAVE PLANNED A SPECIAL DELIVERY FOR THIS IPL, SAYS SHIVAM

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Gujarat Titans fast bowler Shivam Mavi says he is developing a “special delivery” for the upcoming IPL. There is still some work left on it before it is executed.

“I have planned a special delivery for this IPL, will not mention here what it is but hopefully I am able to execute it and then I will talk about it. I am at 99 per cent with it, the work is still in progress,” he said.

Mavi also said the defending champions have overcome the challenge of having a weak bench strength in their maiden season last year, and is confident of a strong show with the bat late in the order.

“You would have witnessed that (lower order) batting has become very important for all teams in the last 1-2 years, irrespective of the teams whether it is your country or IPL or any domestic side.

“If you are able to execute 2-3 hits then it is very beneficial to your side. I am backing myself to score say 30-35 runs towards



the end with the tail-end batters,” Mavi told media during an interaction on Saturday evening.

The 24-year-old right-arm fast bowler Mavi, who was ear-

lier a part of the Kolkata Knight Riders camp, said Gujarat Titans have worked hard to bolster their bench strength this season. “Honestly there is no pres-

sure (on Gujarat Titans). The kind of cricket we played last year wherein everyone played their respective roles, similarly, this year too we would want to

play our roles. But this year we also have bolstered our bench strength, we felt we lacked on this front so we worked on it,” he said.

Mavi added that the fringe bowlers along with youngsters will look to impress in the IPL to earn a place in the national side.

“The bowlers aim to try and perform here and get a berth with the national side. My aim is to do whatever I can for the team in terms of my performance. I do not think of things too far ahead. I just focus on whatever is ahead of me,” he said.

Mavi said he has worked hard on his fitness to overcome some major issues, and his overall game has improved having played domestic cricket regularly.

“I have focussed a lot on my batting over the last two years, I have improved a lot as well. I am trying to work as hard as possible to be useful to my team. I have focussed on managing my workload. Since I am able to maintain that, I am

playing cricket regularly,” he said.

He added, “I have worked on my hitting. I always used to bat well but could not hit those sixes easily. I have worked very hard on that and have got some good returns too. I have also put in a lot of work on my fitness. My glutes and core were weak, but now I am feeling very strong.”

Heaping praise on his franchise and India T20I captain Hardik Pandya, Mavi said, “Hardik bhai never pressurises young players; he only backs them. There is a very light environment in the Gujarat camp and whenever a youngster comes in, he experiences a free setup. When the atmosphere is good then players are naturally able to perform.”

Mavi also praised Gujarat Titans coach and former India player Ashish Nehra for his policy of players-first.

“He gives you a free hand, you are required to go to the field and utilise your time well. If you want to rest then you take a rest. He is like a friend.



All-rounders will play big part because of ‘Impact Player’ rule: RCB’s Hesson

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore's director of cricket Mike Hesson likes the newly-introduced 'Impact Player' rule and feels all-rounders will have a bigger role to play this IPL because of the innovation.

Under the 'Impact Player' rule, a batter or bowler can be replaced in the middle of the game as per match situation, in order to make it more exciting.

“I think we heard about the Impact Player before the auction, so obviously we looked at it and thought about how can we maximise it. Potential for the all-rounder to play a big part. So actually there is some strategy involved in it,” Hesson said in a video posted on RCB's twitter handle.

“I quite like it... I actually thought it brought a little intrigue. You could introduce the player anytime. So whether the batter is being dismissed or not... It was a nice development.”

The Kiwi, however, was of the view that two different team sheets at the toss is set to negate the Impact Player rule quite a bit.

“It's a substitute rule. So you name at the toss whether you have a batting eleven which will obviously be stronger,” Hesson said.

“And if you bat first you will swap out a batter and bring in an extra bowler so vice versa and the other way around. So after the toss, you give them your bat-

ting 11 and bowling 11. So it's not an impact rule now it's a substitute rule.”

Teams can also review wide and no balls in the upcoming IPL, and Hesson said it's a welcome move.

“It is already being used in WPL. I think the more people become used to it the more instinctively they will look to challenge I think it's a good rule.

“I guess what you don't want is (for it to) be the umpire's decision to be the highlight of the game,” he said.

“It removes that (confusion) of whether it's a waist-high no ball or whether it's called a wide when flicked pads or vice versa actually. All the players and spectators want is as many decisions right as possible to take a bit of pressure off the umpire which I think is a good thing.”

Talking about other rules to be introduced in this year's IPL, Hesson said: “So if you don't complete your 19th over by the time you have to bring an extra fielder inside the circle.”

“That rule has been in place in other tournaments around the world and will be here for the first time in the IPL. There won't be as many discussions between the batter and the bowler. It is a good rule.”

RCB will open their campaign against five-time champions Mumbai Indians at the Chinnaswamy Stadium here on April 2.

My left leg has healed but will take months to be fit: Maxwell

PTI ■ BENGALURU

As Australia and Royal Challengers Bangalore all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has said that while the injury to his left leg had healed, it'll take a “number of months” before he is back to full fitness as he prepares for the upcoming edition of the IPL.

The RCB player had suffered a broken left fibula in a horrific mishap during a friend's birthday party days after Australia were knocked out of the T20 World Cup at home in November last year.

The grievous injuries required urgent surgery and a long period of rehabilitation. Maxwell returned to the ODI side, which won the three-match series against India 2-1 recently, and the cricketer is now looking forward to playing for RCB on its home turf, the Chinnaswamy Stadium, after nearly two years.

In a video posted by RCB on social media ahead of the IPL season, scheduled to commence on Mar 31, Maxwell, said, “The leg's okay. It's going to be a number of months before I'm 100 per cent.”

The 34-year-old added that he is hopeful of doing the job for RCB following his recovery from the injury.

“Hopefully it's (leg) good enough to get through the tournament and still do the job.”

With IPL 2023 set to return to the home-and-away format after two years of playing in bio-bubbles due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Maxwell said he was pumped up to play in front of the home fans.

“Finally getting back after a couple of years (of playing inside bio-bubbles). It's pretty exciting and I'm pretty pumped to play in front of our home fans,” added Maxwell, one of the three players retained by RCB ahead of IPL 2022.

He had contributed 301 runs and taken six wickets in 13 matches during the previous edition of IPL.

Players did not put boundary ropes, says Harmanpreet on short WPL boundary limits

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India and Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Saturday declined to comment on the issue of short boundary in the Women's Premier League (WPL), saying that administrators and not players should be deciding on such limits.

The inaugural WPL began earlier this month on the directive from the BCCI that the boundary limits should be brought in, five metres lesser than last month's T20 World Cup to a maximum 60 metres.

The decision was to facilitate more high-scoring games and entertainment for crowds in the stadiums and watching elsewhere in terms of more boundaries and sixes.

However, both the venues of WPL 2023 -- the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai and the Brabourne Stadium -- witnessed boundaries being brought in as close as 42-44 metres, with plenty of batters making most of the opportunity and scores in excess of 200 being notched up with ease at the start.

While the high scores did dry up as the pitches tired out gradually, becoming slow and assisting spin bowlers, batters still enjoyed success on shorter boundary limits.

At one stage, New Zealand and Royal Challengers Bangalore all-rounder Sophie Devine even made a plea for pushing back the boundary limits.

Ahead of the final on



Sunday here at the Brabourne Stadium, Mumbai Indians captain Kaur shot back when the topic came up, although in jest, saying that players are not the ones to decide if boundary limits should be increased from next season onwards.

“Ham logo ne thodi na

rope lagaya hai. Jinhone rope lagaya hai aap unko poocho na. (We did not put the boundary ropes in place. You can ask whoever has done that),” Kaur replied laughing during her joint media conference with Delhi Capitals' Meg Lanning ahead of the WPL final on

Ex-Australia skipper Paine hints at coaching role post retirement

PTI ■ HOBART

Former Australia Test skipper Tim Paine has indicated that he is likely to take up a coaching job following his retirement from all forms of cricket recently.

Paine, who captained Australia in 23 Tests following his elevation to the post in the wake of the 2018 ball-tampering saga in Cape Town, had stepped down as skipper days before the start of the 2021-22 Ashes series at home when he was accused of sending lewd text messages to a Cricket Tasmania official earlier on in his career.

Paine, 38, played his last domestic career game for Tasmania against Queensland in Sheffield Shield here last week.

“It's an emotional time when you move on from something that you love doing and you care deeply about, but I'll still be involved in the game of cricket,” Paine was quoted as say-



ing by cricket.Com.Au, hinting he would explore possibilities of making a career in coaching.

The wicketkeeper-batter, who had retreated into a shell for more than a year following the sexting scandal, had returned to play for Tasmania last year despite not having a state contract.

“I just wanted to have one more year with Tassie (Tasmania) and finish on a positive note with some good memories,” said Paine, who played 35 Tests and an equal number of ODIs for Australia.

New Zealand beat Sri Lanka by 198 runs in 1st one-day match

AP ■ AUCKLAND

Harry Shipley took 5-31 as Sri Lanka was bowled out for 76 on Saturday to lose the first one-day international against New Zealand by 198 runs.

New Zealand made 274 batting first on a drop-in pitch at Eden Park and Sri Lanka was dismissed for its lowest-ever ODI total against New Zealand, its fifth-lowest in all one-day internationals.

Sri Lanka lost its first two wickets at 14, its third at 20 and its fourth and fifth at 31 as its innings unraveled inside the first 10 overs.

When a break was taken after 14.2 overs to honor victims, rescuers and recovery workers involved in Cyclone Gabrielle which battered New Zealand's North Island on Feb. 14, Sri Lanka was 49-7.

Wickets continued to fall steadily and when Sri Lanka was all out after only 19.5 overs, it was for the second lowest one-



day international total at Eden Park. Angelo Mathews, who was playing his first ODI in two years, was one of only three Sri Lanka batsmen to reach double figures.

Sri Lanka's first wicket fell to a runout in the sixth over. Shipley took his first wicket in spectacular style when his angled delivery to opener

Pathum Nissanka jagged back through the batter's shot and uprooted his leg stump.

He also dismissed Kusal Mendis (0), Charith Asalanka (9), Chamika Karunaratne 11 and captain Dasun Shanaka for a first-ball duck. Shipley was playing his first match for New Zealand in New Zealand after making his debut in India late

last year.

“It was pretty cool, not what I was expecting to do when I came to the ground,” Shipley said. “The batters said there was enough there and the score we had on the board was going to be tricky so that gave us confidence to go out there and do that.”

Shanaka said his team went

out to bat confident that New Zealand's total was “chaseable” at Eden Park which is noted for its short boundaries.

“The way we started, I thought it was going to be a very good game,” he said. “The way Shipley bowled, the movement he got and the bounce was responsible for the things that happened tonight so credit should be given to him.”

New Zealand wouldn't have been confident when its innings ended at 274, not a massive score by Eden Park standards. Finn Allen top-scored with 51 and Rachin Ravindra made 49 on debut as New Zealand posted what seemed a moderate total.

South Africa-born opener Chad Bowes, on debut at 30, struck the first ball of the match and his international career for four to announce that intention. But after reaching 108-2 in the 19th over, New Zealand lost three wickets for 44 runs, its momentum slowed and couldn't be entirely recovered.

UP Warriorz rue Sciver-Brunt’s dropped catch after loss to Mumbai Indians

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Warriorz captain Alyssa Healy on Friday rued all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt's dropped catch early on in her innings as the batter went on to score an unbeaten 38-ball 72 to power Mumbai Indians to a 72-run win in the Women's Premier League Eliminator game.

Sophie Ecclestone spilled a regulation catch at mid-on when Sciver-Brunt was just starting out. The Mumbai Indians all-rounder made the most of the reprieve by striking nine fours and two sixes to guide her team to 182 for 4. UP Warriors were then dismissed for 110 in 17.4 overs, with Isabelle Wong taking a stunning hat-trick.

“We dropped her (Nat) on

six and she went on to make a 20-ball 50. I will back our decision to bowl first, it is something that we have done really well this whole tournament. I will back our ability in that regard,” Healy said after Mumbai Indians advance to the final.

“We have got a lot of spinners, it (wicket) was taking a lot of turn. So, I think defending on that wicket would have been even harder. I still back our decision there, it got a little bit away from us. At the end, I thought 170-odd was a par score, we just needed to bat well but we quite did not do that,” said the Australian.

Healy admitted the UP Warriorz needed to work on their fielding, which was an area of concern during the inau-



gural WPL season. She also pointed out inconsistency in the top order during their campaign.

“It has probably been the tale of our season, losing early wickets in clumps, you cannot get any momentum in your chase. They (MI) bowled pretty well and had better execution as a batting group. We will reflect on that, probably, as a top three or four. We were not consistently great throughout the whole tournament. If you are going to win a tournament you are going to bank on your top-three to make the heap of runs, and we were not able to do that,” Healy said.

The UP Warriorz captain said it was a difficult decision exclude a world-class fast bowler like Shabnim Ismail from the XI,

adding the team was hoping the spinners would get the job done.

“T-Mag (Tahlia McGrath) was probably a (pace bowling) option but I backed our spinners to do the job nine times out of 10. We probably did not execute quite as much at the back end. It is really hard to have someone like Shabnim Ismail sitting on the bench for us, but, at the moment, the way we are set up, we need the extra batting. I bet the six bowlers that we used tonight (Friday) to get the job done more often than not. They executed for 15 out of 20 overs and it got away from us towards the end,” Healy said. Wong, who returned figures of 4-0-15-4 including the first WPL hat-trick, said it was crucial for her to execute her plans well.

“It (hat-trick) will be up there (among the best),” Wong said. “When I'm not out bowling well, I look back at my 24 balls (and see) which ones I want to have a go at again. How many did I not execute and want to have a go at again? In terms of those balls, it (hat-trick) will be right up there,” she said.

“I made a conscious effort to execute it. There have been a few moments in the past when I have been in similar situations where I am too much in the moment or like you said, hyperactivity, to actually focus on it and execute. I was trying to become quite clear at the end of my bowling mark. I wanted to bowl a yorker and nail it, but missed it a little bit,” she said about her hat-trick.



नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

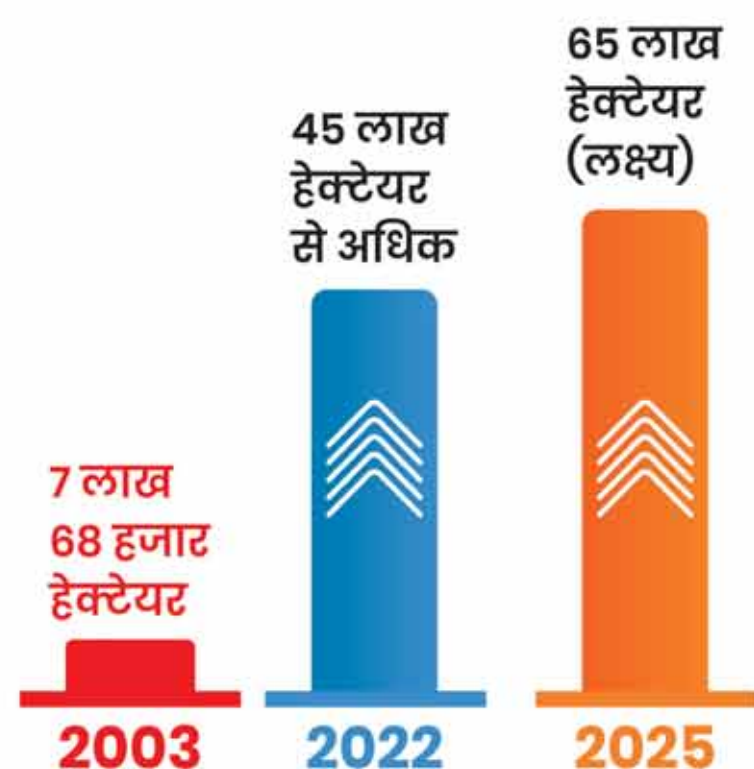
**3 साल
विकास के**



शिवराज सिंह चौहान
मुख्यमंत्री, मध्यप्रदेश

मध्यप्रदेश की सिंचाई क्षमता में अभूतपूर्व वृद्धि

- पिछले 3 साल में 6 लाख हेक्टेयर से अधिक की नई सिंचाई क्षमता विकसित
- नर्मदा कछार की ₹ 24 हजार 500 करोड़ से अधिक लागत की 5 लाख 50 हजार हेक्टेयर से अधिक की सिंचाई क्षमता वाली 12 परियोजनाओं के निर्माण की शुरुआत
- ₹ 44 हजार 600 करोड़ से अधिक लागत की केन-बेतवा लिंक परियोजना
- देश की पहली वृहद प्रेशराइज्ड पाइप सिंचाई परियोजनाएँ-मोहनपुरा, कुंडालिया। अनुमानित ₹ 8500 करोड़ की लागत (2,85,000 हेक्टेयर सिंचाई की क्षमता, इस वर्ष 1,25,000 हेक्टेयर में सिंचाई)



सिंचाई क्षमता





ROBOTS & RITUALS

Robots are performing rituals — some devotees fear they’ll replace worshippers, writes HOLLY WALTERS.

It isn’t just artists and teachers who are losing sleep over advances in automation and artificial intelligence. Robots are being brought into Hinduism’s holiest rituals – and not all worshippers are happy about it. In 2017, a technology firm in India introduced a robotic arm to perform “aarti,” a ritual in which a devotee offers an oil lamp to the deity to symbolise the removal of darkness. This particular robot was unveiled at the Ganpati festival, a yearly gathering of millions of people in which an icon of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, is taken out in a procession and immersed in the Mula-Mutha river in Pune in central India. Ever since, that robotic aarti arm has inspired several prototypes, a few of which continue to regularly perform the ritual across India today, along with a variety of other religious robots throughout East Asia and South Asia. Robotic rituals even now include an animatronic temple elephant in Kerala on India’s southern coast. Yet this kind of religious robotic usage has led to increasing debates about the use of AI and robotic technology in devotion and worship. Some devotees and priests feel that this represents a new horizon in human innovation that will lead to the betterment of society, while others worry that using robots to replace practitioners is a bad omen for the future. As an anthropologist who specialises in religion, however, I focus less on the theology of robotics and more on what people actually say and do when it comes to their spiritual practices. My current work on religious robots primarily centers on the notion of “divine object-persons,” where otherwise inanimate things are viewed as having a living, conscious essence.

My work also looks at the uneasiness Hindus and Buddhists express about ritual-performing automatons replacing people and whether those automatons actually might make better devotees. **RI**TUAL **A**UTOMATION **I**S **N**OT **N**EW Ritual automation, or at least the idea of robotic spiritual practice, isn’t new in South Asian religions. Historically, this has included anything from special pots that drip water continuously for bathing rituals that Hindus routinely perform for their deity icons, called abhisheka, to wind-powered Buddhist prayer wheels — the kinds often seen in yoga studios and supply stores. While the contemporary version of automated ritual might look like downloading a phone app that chants mantras without the need for any prayer object at all, such as a mala or rosary, these new versions of ritual-performing robots have prompted complicated conversations. Thaneswar Sarmah, a Sanskrit scholar and literary critic, argues that the first Hindu robot appeared in the stories of King Manu, the first king of the human race in Hindu belief. Manu’s mother, Saranyu – herself the daughter of a great architect – built an animate statue to perfectly perform all of her household chores and ritual obligations. Folklorist Adrienne Mayor remarks similarly that religious stories about mechanized icons from Hindu epics, such as the mechanical war chariots of the Hindu engineer god Visvakarman, are often viewed as the progenitors of religious robots today. Furthermore, these stories are sometimes interpreted by modern-day nationalists as evidence that ancient India has previously invented everything from spacecraft to missiles.

“DEBATES OVER USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND ROBOTIC TECHNOLOGY IN DEVOTION AND WORSHIP ARE INCREASING. SOME DEVOTEES AND PRIESTS FEEL THAT THIS REPRESENTS A NEW HORIZON IN HUMAN INNOVATION THAT WILL LEAD TO BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY, WHILE OTHERS WORRY THAT USING ROBOTS TO REPLACE PRACTITIONERS IS A BAD OMEN FOR THE FUTURE.”



MODERN TRADITIONS OR TRADITIONALLY MODERN? However, the recent use of AI and robotics in religious practice is leading to concerns among Hindus and Buddhists about the kind of future to which automation could lead. In some instances, the debate among Hindus is about whether automated religion promises the arrival of humanity into a bright, new, technological future or if it is simply evidence of the coming apocalypse. In other cases, there are concerns that the proliferation of robots might lead to greater numbers of people leaving religious practice as temples begin to rely more on automation than on practitioners to care for their deities. Some of these concerns stem from the fact that many religions, both in South Asia and globally, have seen significant decreases in the number of young people willing to dedicate their lives to spiritual education and practice over the past few decades. Furthermore, with many families living in a diaspora scattered across the world, priests or “pandits” are often serving smaller and smaller communities. But if the answer to the problem of fewer ritual specialists is more robots, people still question whether ritual automation will benefit them. They also question the concurrent use of robotic deities to embody and personify the divine, since these icons are programmed by people and therefore reflect the religious views of their engineers. **DOING RIGHT BY RELIGION** Scholars often note that these concerns all tend to reflect one pervasive theme — an underlying anxiety that, somehow, the robots are better at worshipping gods than humans are. They can also raise inner conflicts about the meaning of life and one’s place in the universe. For Hindus and Buddhists, the rise of ritual automation is especially concerning because their traditions emphasise what religion scholars refer to as orthopraxy, where greater importance is placed on correct ethical and liturgical behaviour than on specific beliefs in religious doctrines. In other words, perfecting what you do in terms of your religious practice is viewed as more necessary to spiritual advancement than whatever it is you personally believe. This also means that automated rituals appear on a spectrum that progresses from human ritual fallibility to robotic ritual perfection. In short, the robot can do your religion better than you can because robots, unlike people, are spiritually incorruptible. This not only makes robots attractive replacements for dwindling priesthoods but also explains their increasing use in everyday contexts: People use them because no one worries about the robot getting it wrong, and they are often better than nothing when the options for ritual performance are limited. **SAVED BY A ROBOT** In the end, turning to a robot for religious restoration in modern Hinduism or Buddhism might seem futuristic, but it belongs very much to the present moment. It tells us that Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions in South Asia are increasingly being imagined as post- or transhuman: deploying technological ingenuity to transcend human weaknesses because robots don’t get tired, forget what they’re supposed to say, fall asleep or leave. More specifically, this means that robotic automation is being used to perfect ritual practices in East Asia and South Asia – especially in India and Japan – beyond what would be possible for a human devotee, by linking impossibly consistent and flawless ritual accomplishment with an idea of better religion. Modern robotics might then feel like a particular kind of cultural paradox, where the best kind of religion is the one that eventually involves no humans at all. But in this circularity of humans creating robots, robots becoming gods, and gods becoming human, we’ve only managed, at once again, re-imagine ourselves. (AP/The Conversation)

(The writer has covered Russia and other former Soviet nations for The AP since 1992.)



Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 987328333



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