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Rahul unites 18 Opp parties; chinks in MVA over Savarkar

Uddhav asks Rahul to refrain from 'insulting' Savarkar; Opp leaders in black robes protest in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha last week has brought under one umbrella 18 Opposition parties whose leaders attended a strategy meeting late on Monday evening at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul too were present in the meeting.

However, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Sanjay Raut said the party did not attend the meeting at Kharge's residence in protest against Rahul's "unacceptable" remarks against VD Savarkar.

The Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) said Rahul's attack on freedom fighter VD Savarkar will lead to ebbing of sympathy he has gained due to his disqualification as a Lok Sabha member.

An editorial in party mouthpiece "Saamana" said the truth, which Rahul is fighting for today, will not win by making defamatory statements against Savarkar.

At a rally on Sunday, Uddhav Thackeray said he considers Savarkar as his "idol", and asked Rahul to refrain from "insulting" him.

Leaders of TMC, AAP and BRS attended the meeting. The TMC, which has so far stayed away from the Opposition's protests, joined the sit-in at Vijay Chowk in the morning.

TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will hold a dharna in Kolkata. BRS, earlier known as TRS, too expressed their solidarity with the Opposition which has so far been making attempts for a third front of its kind eyeing TMC, DMK, Shiv Sena, JD(U) on its side.

To keep up its charge against the Government, the Congress has decided to hold Press conferences across the country on March 28 and 29.

"Senior Congress leaders will address Press conferences in 35 cities on March 28 and 29 on 'Democracy Dis'Qualified'. Among other issues, the reality of 'Modani' and the Modi Government's clean chit to Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi will also be highlighted," party general secretary Jairam Ramesh said.

Opposition MPs, wearing black over the disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha, protest over the Adani Group issue at Parliament House complex, in New Delhi on Monday — Ranjan Dimril Pioneer

Rahul asked to vacate house; Cong insulting judiciary, alleges BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Housing Committee of the Lok Sabha on Monday served a notice on Rahul Gandhi, asking the disqualified Member of Parliament to vacate the Government bungalow allotted to him by April 22, official sources said on Monday.

Rahul, who enjoys Z-plus security, has been living in the 12 Tughlaq Lane bungalow in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi since 2005. The Housing Committee of the Lok Sabha, headed by BJP MP CR Patil, comprises 11 members from different parties.

Meanwhile, the BJP launched a multi-pronged attack on the Congress, Rahul and Priyanka Vadra, accusing them of being "arrogant" and "disrespectful" to the judiciary.

Commerce Minister and senior BJP leader Piyush Goyal Goyal asked the Congress MPs whether they came to attend the Parliament session dressed in black and staged protests to insult the "temple of democracy" and the country's law and order to justify Gandhi's remarks against the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). "Was it a protest against the court that convicted Rahul Gandhi or against the Supreme Court which ruled that anyone sentenced to two years (in jail) becomes disqualified (from Parliament or a state Assembly) automatically?"

Information & Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur hit out at Priyanka, saying it was out of "arrogance" that she compared the Gandhi family with the dynasty of Lord Ram.

Block Amritpal's escape, arrest him: India to Nepal

Continued on Page 2

Fugitive radical leader is likely to be hiding in Himalayan nation

PIONEER NEEWS SERVICE / AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / KATHMANDU

As Amritpal Singh continues to escape the police dragnet, India has requested the Nepal Government not to allow the fugitive radical leader, believed to be hiding there, to flee to a third country and arrest him if he escapes using Indian passport or any other fake passport.

In a letter sent to the Department of Consular Services on Saturday, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has requested the Government agencies to arrest Singh if he tries to flee from Nepal, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported on Monday.

"Singh is currently hiding in Nepal," the paper said, citing a copy of the letter obtained by it. "The esteemed Ministry is requested to inform the Department of Immigration not to permit Amritpal Singh flee Nepal for any third country and arrest him if he attempts to escape using Indian Passport or any other fake passport under intimation to this mission," it said.

Khalistan supporters in Canada burn Tricolour

In Ottawa protesters reach embassy, breaching security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE / AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / TORONTO

Stepping up their protests, alleged Khalistan supporters have burnt the Indian flag outside its consulate in Toronto and came close to the boundary wall of the Indian embassy in Ottawa. More protests are expected in the coming days causing concern about security of the Indian diplomats there. Another protest was held outside the Indian consulate late Sunday in Vancouver. The protesters late on Saturday staged a demonstration in front of the consulate in Toronto and the Tricolour was burnt with several in the gathering shouting "Khalistan Zindabad" in the presence of local police, reports said.

Two days earlier, on Thursday, protesters from Montreal and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) gathered outside the High Commission in Ottawa.

Gangster Atiq, brother shifted to Prayagraj jail; 'verdict' today

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ (UP)

Gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed was brought to the Naini Central Jail in Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh on Monday evening amid tight security arrangements.

The police cavalcade bringing him from a prison in Gujarat reached the Naini Jail at 5.30 pm. Hours after Atiq was escorted to the prison from Gujarat, his brother Khalid Azim, alias Ashraf, was also brought to the Naini Central Jail in Prayagraj amid tight security arrangements.

Ashraf and Atiq will be produced before a court on Tuesday, when it is likely to pass an order in a 17-year-old kidnapping case against them. The former MP is an accused in the case.

Ashraf, lodged in the Bareilly District Jail since July 2020, was brought to the Naini Central Jail Monday evening amid tight security arrangements, officials said.

Put off harvesting, shield crops from unwanted rain, IMD advises N-E farmers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday advised farmers in Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh to postpone harvesting of matured crops, and keep already-harvested produce in safe places or cover them in the field with tarpaulin sheets to protect it from likely fresh spell of rainfall and thunderstorm over North-East from March 29.

For farmers in Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana and a few other States from northern India, the IMD suggested resumption of harvesting of matured crops during clear weather.

"A fresh spell of rainfall and thunderstorm beginning from March 29 will impact Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh," the IMD said.

"Strong wind/hail may damage plantation, horticulture and standing crops," the IMD said in its advisory to farmers.

In its bulletin, the IMD advised to postpone sowing of maize in Arunachal Pradesh and drain out excess water from crop fields.

"Provide mechanical support to horticultural crops and staking to vegetables," it added.

According to the Union Ministry of Agriculture, India's wheat production in 2023 is expected to be a record 112 million tonnes as good weather pushed the acreage under the staple to 34.1 million hectares, 12 per cent higher than the 5-year average of 30.4 million.

SC OK's UP civic body polls with OBC reservation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday paved the way for holding the urban local body polls in Uttar Pradesh as it allowed the State Election Commission to issue a notification in this regard in two days with an OBC quota in terms of a report of the UP Backward Classes Commission.

"This court, in an order dated January 4, 2023, noted that in view of the decisions of this court, the Government of Uttar Pradesh issued a notification for setting up the Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission in December 2022. Though the tenure of the commission was six months, it was to complete its task by March 31, 2023," said the SC.

It further said, "The solicitor general informs that the report has been submitted on March 9, 2023 to the cabinet. The process of notifying the local body elections is going on and will be done in two days. The plea is disposed of. The direction in this order is not to be used as precedent."

CAPSULE

TN IPS OFFICER SHUNTED OVER TORTURE CHARGES
Tirunelveli: An IPS officer in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu has been placed on compulsory wait for torturing at least 10 arrested men by removing their teeth using cutting pliers and crushed the testicles of two.

SVB TO BE ACQUIRED BY FIRST CITIZENS
New York: First Citizens will acquire much of Silicon Valley Bank, the tech-focused financial institution that collapsed this month, setting off a chain reaction that caused a second bank to fail and tested faith in the global banking sector.

PAK POLICE DEMOLISH AHMADI WORSHIP PLACE
Lahore: Police in Pakistan's Punjab province demolished minarets of a 70-year-old worship place of minority Ahmadi community allegedly on the pressure of radical clerics, a spokesman for the minority community said on Monday.

Cheetah dies 6 months after translocation from Namibia

PNS ■ BHOPAL

File photo of Sasha

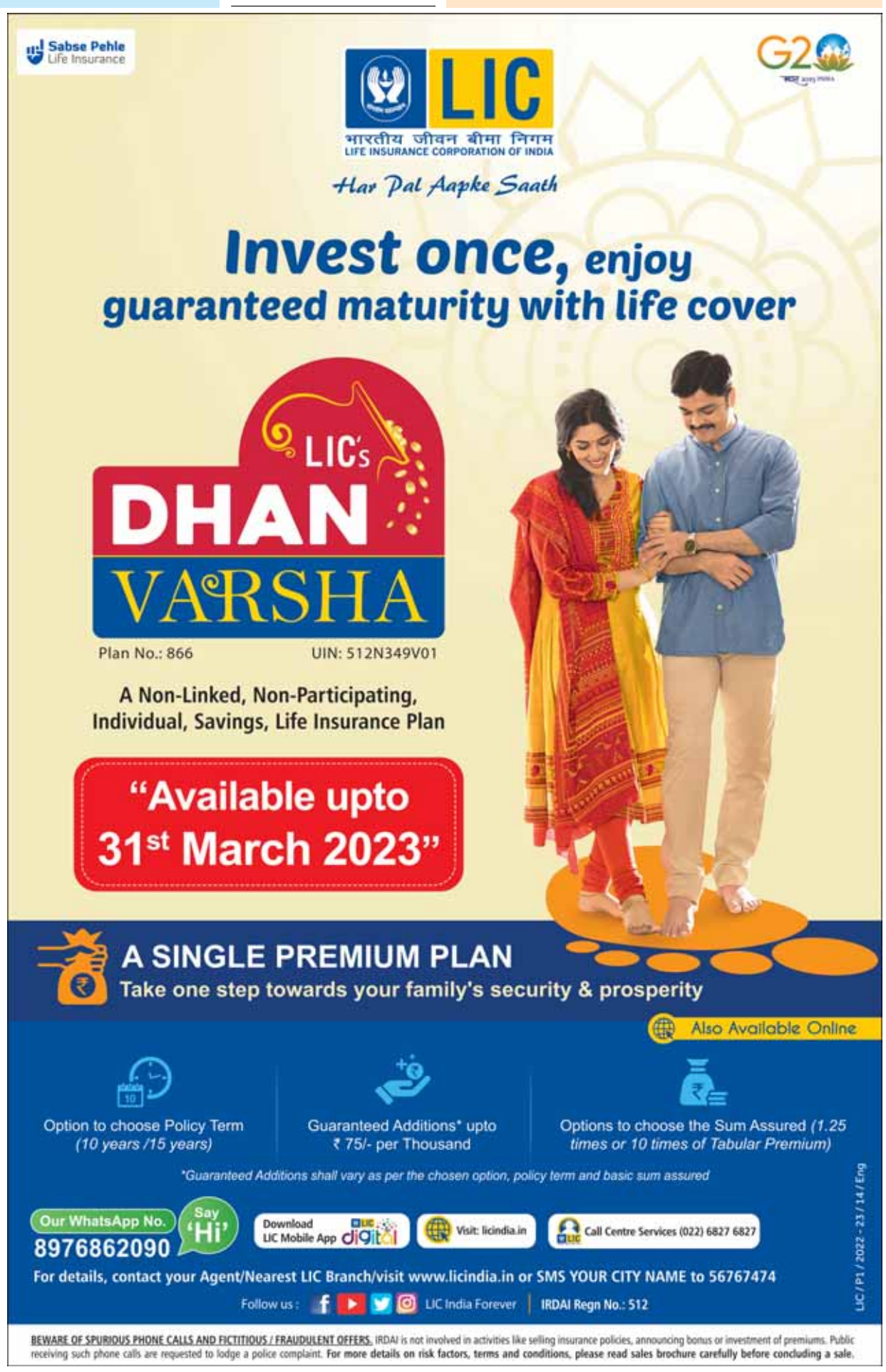
One of the eight cheetahs translocated from Namibia in mid-September last year died of kidney failure at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on Monday. The death of the more than four-and-a-half-year old female feline Sasha is being seen as a setback to Project Cheetah, aimed at reviving the population of the world's fastest land animal in India, seven decades after they became extinct.

Sasha was suffering from a kidney ailment even before her translocation from Namibia, said Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF-Wildlife) JS Chauhan.

"A monitoring team found Sasha lazy on March 22, following which they decided to take her to a quarantine enclosure for treatment," he said.

Her blood sample was collected the same day and examined. A wildlife expert armed with a portable ultrasound machine went inside the KNP to examine the ailing cheetah and it was found that Sasha's kidneys were infected, said Chauhan.

Later, senior Wildlife Institute of India (WII) scientists and KNP management contacted the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Namibia, to know the treatment history of Sasha.



Ensure public participation in MNREGA like schemes: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that it is necessary to ensure public participation in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of development and public welfare activities like the MNREGA scheme, construction of Amrit Sarovar, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. People's representatives will also have to fulfill their responsibility in this.

The DISHA committees constituted at the state and district level for monitoring and review of various schemes by the Union Ministry of Rural Development also have an important responsibility. Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the meeting of the State-Level DISHA Committee at Mantralaya. Union Minister of State for Rural Development Faggan Singh Kulaste, State Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Minister of State for Panchayat and Rural Development Ramkhelavan Patel, MP K.P.S. Yadav, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, and other officers were present.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that special efforts should be made to increase the number of man-days created under MNREGA. It is necessary to ensure transparency in the implementation and payment of community works. The effort should be that 100 percent of payment should be Aadhaar based. Road construction works should be started only based on budget availability. It should be ensured that the road construction that has started should not be left incomplete, and people should not face problems due to incomplete roads. The Chief Minister said that we aim to extend the roads to the farms. For this purpose, there is a plan to construct roads in remote areas. The construction of ponds should be taken as a priority to save rain water in dry areas. Ensure 100 percent compliance with the norms given by Prime Minister Modi in the construction of Amrit Sarovar.

It was informed that Madhya Pradesh is among the leading states in the country in employing Scheduled Tribes under MNREGA. Since the inception of the scheme, 68 lakh 84 thousand works have been completed. There is a target of constructing 75 Amrit Sarovars in each district of the state. Till now the work of 2 thousand 657 Amrit Sarovars has been completed. 63 Amrit Sarovars built in the state is dedicated to freedom fighters and martyrs. In addition, 116 Sarovars have been constructed at places of historical importance and 231 Sarovars in places of religious importance. Activities like fish and water chestnut production have been linked to Amrit Sarovars for multipurpose economic benefits.

The Ministry of Rural Development of the Central Government has arranged for the formation of DISHA committees at the district and state levels for monitoring and review of various schemes. The Chief Minister is the chairman of the state-level committee and the chairman of the district-level committee is the Lok Sabha MP elected from the district area. State-level committee meetings should be held every 6 months and district-level committee meetings should be held every 3 months. From the year 2015-16 till now, 445 meetings of the DISHA Committee have been held in the districts. 43 schemes of various departments are reviewed by the committee.

Madhya Pradesh Congress Schedule Caste cell activists detained by the police during a demonstration against the rise in crime against SC women and anti-tribal policies of the State Government, in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

MPIDC Indore invites bids for purchase of 97k RECs

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Industrial Development Corporation (MPIDC), Indore, has invited bids for the purchase of 97,000 renewable energy certificates (RECs) through power exchange or bilateral trade for the power project in the special economic zone (SEZ) of Pithampur in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh.

The last date to submit the bids is March 28, 2023. Bids will be opened the following day.

The trader member should bid on behalf of MPIDC for REC purchase and pay to the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) as per bid rate inclusive of REC amount, IEX transaction fee, and applicable taxes.

Also, the payment toward the purchase of RECs from IEX, along with transaction charges of IEX and professional charges of the bidder, will be paid by MPIDC.

To participate in the bidding process, the trader member should be a registered power trader with the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) or a power consultant who can execute the bilateral trade of RECs for MPIDC.

Additionally, the bidder having a mandate from the seller, will be allowed by providing details of its associated trader to complete the transaction as per the National Load Despatch Center.

The bidder should provide certificates as per the CERC REC Regulations 2022.

As per the tender documents, within the time stated in the contract data, the contractor should submit to the engineer for approval a program showing the general methods, arrangements, order, and timing for all the activities.

The program should be supported with all the details regarding key personnel, equipment, and machinery proposed to be deployed for its execution. The contractor should submit the list of equipment and machinery being brought to the site, the list of key personnel being deployed, the list of machinery and equipment being placed in the field laboratory, and the location of the field laboratory along with the program.

16th Vigyan Manthan Yatra commences

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The 16th Vigyan Manthan Yatra started from Monday with the aim of creating interest in science among the school students of the state and introducing them to new innovations in science.

More than 1,000 students from classes VIII to XII from 52 districts of the state participated in this yatra organized by the Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology. On the inauguration of the Yatra, Dr. Vivek Katare, Head of Mission Excellence, said that it is a matter of great pleasure that the students of the state will get an opportunity to meet the eminent institutions, scientists and researchers of the country.

Dr. Anil Kothari, Director General, Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology, present in the programme, explained the importance of science and technology to the school students and said that India's scientific journey has been very authentic. Whatever steps have been taken by India in the field of science, they have been appreciated in the world.

Show toys to children in the session

During this, R&D Synopsis Scientist Manish Jain taught the children to make various types of toys virtually.

Manish Jain said that toys should continue to be a source of wonder and joy for children to embark on a new journey.

In the second session, Dr. Alok Chowdhary, Principal Scientist, MPCST, gave detailed information about Space Based Information Support to the children.

He said that this technology is not of today. It was used many years ago by Tipu Sultan during his war. With this, he attacked the enemies by making a cannon. Dr. Chowdhary told the children about the first meeting of India.

He said that when we send any of our missiles into space, there are many reasons for that. Through this, we do research about the activities happening in space and know about the lifestyle there.

Agriculture is very important in India

Present in the program, Babusaheb Khade of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research Center National Center for Grapes, Pune, talked to the children about agriculture and the new developments taking place on it.

He said that our India is an agricultural country. Here about 50 percent of the population depends on the income from agriculture. Think how this society would be if there were no farmers, without them our life would be very difficult.

Three members of a gang involved in cheating nabbed

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Arriving at the spot, the three accused were nabbed and confessed to have committed the crime with both the old women

The police have arrested three members of the gang who were involved in cheating old women in Bhopal.

The police have also arrested a minor involved in the gang. The gang used to flee after cheating old women by duping them of jewellery and handing them cash which used to be paper bundles. The leader of the gang is a resident of Delhi.

According to the police, on March 3, a 60-year-old woman was duped by a gang in Mangalwara and on March 23 by a 55-year-old woman in Hanumanganj area. In return, by giving them a bundle made of pieces of paper by telling them a bundle of notes, they ran away. The police formed a team to nab the gang.

Meanwhile, the police came to know that the gang was roaming in Obaidullaganj toll naka Narmadapuram road. Arriving at the spot, the three accused were nabbed and confessed to have committed the crime with both the old women. Gang leader Dhaniram Solanki alias Suraj JJ Colony, New Delhi. The police have taken him on remand to recover the stolen jewellery. The police will take him to Delhi.

The accused were identified as Ramesh Silavat (40), Dhaniram Solanki aka Suraj, Rahul Solanki aka Rahul and a minor.

Members of the Balai Community participate in a procession during Gangaur festival celebrations in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Lokayukta police nab two clerks of Naib tehsildar office for taking bribe

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

On finding the complaint correct, the team laid a trap to nab Babu. On Monday, as soon as the complainant gave Rs 50 to Babu, the team caught him red-handed

The Bhopal Lokayukta team has caught two clerks of Naib Tehsildar's officer taking bribe of Rs 50000.

Lakshmi Narayan Mishra clerk and Aditya Jhangale were caught taking Rs.50000. Both had demanded bribe to get the land renamed. They had asked for money after talking about bribing the Naib Tehsildar. The Lokayukta team will also investigate the role of Naib Tehsildars.

Lokayukta SP Manu Vyas said that Misrod resident Sachin Sen had complained to the office of Superintendent of Police, Lokayukta Organization, Bhopal. He told that his acquaintances Omprakash Meena and Bablu Meena are residents of Kolar. He got the case of death of both of them transferred from his acquaintance lawyer.

Both the cases were pending in the court of Naib Tehsildar Shivangi Khare for 6 months. Babu Lakshminarayan Mishra, who was posted in the office of Naib Tehsildar, had demanded a bribe of Rs 50,000 for a file in the name of giving it to Naib Tehsildar, to get orders in these cases. Without taking bribe, they are keeping the file pending.

SP Manu Vyas got the complaint verified by Inspector Rajni Tiwari. On finding the complaint correct, the team laid a trap to nab Babu. On Monday, as soon as the complainant gave Rs 50 to Babu, the team caught him red-handed.

On March 24, Omprakash Patidar, a resident of Patle Sadan, Misrod, made a written complaint that he practices law apart from farming. Through the applicant, advocate Pankaj Srivastava got the case of land transfer of Meena Visht resident Nayapura Kolar in the office of Naib Tehsildar Bairagarh Chichli Aditya Jhangale. Bisht's nomination, Fauti's nomination and Batan's file were pending in this office.

Dr Anand Rai dismissed from services

Bhopal: Being absent from duty and posting comments on social media, which tarnished image of state government's welfare schemes, proved costly to Dr Anand Rai, the medical officer at Hukumchand Hospital in Indore.

Dr Rai has been dismissed under MP Civil Services Act, according to health department order. He shot to limelight after highlighting Vypam scam and alleged unethical trial of medical drugs.

As per order, Dr Rai was to inspect four health care facilities – civil dispensary (Residency, Indore), Hukumchand Hospital (Indore), PC Sethi Hospital (Indore) and civil dispensary (Vrindavan Colony, Indore) - on March 29 and March 30, 2022. He did not go but his attendance was marked in attendance register.

BALCO creating Inclusive workplaces for the LGBTQIA+ Community

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

One of the biggest challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals when seeking employment is discrimination during the hiring process. This discrimination can take many forms, from outright refusal to hire someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity to more subtle forms of bias, such as asking inappropriate questions during job interviews or giving preferential treatment to heterosexual or cisgender candidates.

Even after securing a job, LGBTQIA+ employees may face ongoing discrimination and harassment in the workplace. This can take many forms, including bullying, exclusion from important meetings or opportunities, and even physical violence. Such harassment can have a profound impact on LGBTQIA+ employees, leading to decreased job satisfaction, poor mental health, and decreased productivity.

According to Subhadeep Khan, CHRO, BALCO, these challenges are essential for companies to work towards creating more inclusive workplaces that welcome and support members of the LGBTQIA+ community. In doing so, businesses can reap numerous benefits, including increased employee satisfaction and retention, better diversity of ideas and perspectives, and improved reputation and public perception.

By creating a more inclusive workplace, we can contribute towards the nation's economy while making a positive impact on people's lives.Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), India's Iconic Aluminium producer and a subsidiary of Vedanta Aluminium, has made significant strides towards inclusivity in recent years. The company has voluntarily included sexual orientation and gender identity in their nondiscrimination policies, offered domestic partner benefits, and enacted other LGBTQIA+-friendly practices.

Additionally, BALCO has implemented policies to ensure that the working environment is free of discrimination towards transgender individuals and has made necessary infrastructure improvements to ensure that new hires are comfortable, welcomed, and have a sense of belonging to the team.

Death anniversary observed at hospital

Gwalior: The death anniversary of late Ram Rekha Devi was celebrated at the charitable hospital run by Lokhitkari Trust, situated at Lohamandi area of Gwalior city. The celebration was attended by his family members Swatantra Kumar, Ajay Kumar, Vijay Roshan, Abhay Kumar, Vinay Kumar and Bhavna Shah along with the office bearers of the trust, Keshav Pandey, Prakash Narayan Sharma, Ganesh Chaturvedi, Subhash Ojha, Usha Chaturvedi and Deepak Tomar. During the program Swatantra Kumar offered floral tributes to the goddess.

Fruits and sweets were distributed to the patients, their attendants and needy children from the surrounding areas. Speaking at the function, Bhavna Shah, daughter-in-law of late Ram Rekha Devi said that the charitable hospital being run by Lokhitkari Trust is proving to be a boon for the needy. Along with health checkup, free medicines, fruits and sweets and other gifts are also distributed to the patients coming to the hospital.

She added that human beings wander here and there in search of happiness in life, but real happiness can be found in the service of the poor and the needy.

UP based man booked for molesting woman professor

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

When the professor reprimanded him, he started threatening to take revenge. Not only this, he also threatened to kill. police have registered a case against the accused

The TT Nagar police have booked a UP based man for molesting a woman professor posted in the Government College of Bhopal has been harassed by a miscreant from Uttar Pradesh for 20 years.

Accused used to send obscene messages on her mobile. He sent 250 obscene messages to the woman's mobile within 24 hours on March 3, 2023. When the professor reprimanded him, he started threatening to take revenge. Not only this, he also threatened to kill. TT Nagar police have registered a case against the accused.

A 48-year-old woman resident of Tulsi Nagar opposite Narmada Mandir is a professor in Government College. She told the police that a relative of hers lives in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh. He gave my phone number and home address to one of his relatives, Rajinder.

Not only this, aunt has been telling information about her and family to Rajinder. Family does not know Rajinder.

She came to know from Mami that Rajinder is a resident of village Mon Thana Maharajganj. He has been troubling me for the last 20 years by different mobile numbers. Harassing by sending obscene messages.

Initially he used to make blank calls on our home landline phone, after that he started making blank calls, missed calls, obscene messages on my mobile continuously. Threatens for refusing to call. Between March 3 and March 4, he sent 250 obscene text messages.

Rajinder threatens to kill her if she opposes it. The female professor has told the police about a serious threat from Rajinder. Police have registered a case against the accused. He has not been arrested yet.

Conference on RAMMAT- 23 organised at SISTec

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two-day International Conference on "Recent Advances in Materials, Manufacturing, Automobile and Thermal Engineering (RAMMAT-2023)" (March-27, 28 2023) was organized by the Department of Mechanical Engineering, SISTec-Ratibad Campus.

This conference was inaugurated today by Dr. Sunil Kumar Vice Chancellor RGPV Bhopal in presence of Mr. Rudolf Schacher (from Austria) and Mr. Jonas Peter (from Germany). Dr. K. K. Jain, NITTTR Bhopal, Dr, Vishesh Mahere Andritz Bhopal, Dr. Hitesh Panchal and Dr. Vijay Kumar Gupta graced the occasion as the keynote speakers.

Dr. Sunil Kumar motivated the participants in an inspirational talk and emphasized the need for global conferences to upgrade and update knowledge on the recent advances in mechanical engineering emerging fields. The conference was attended by more than 150 UG/PG Students, Research Scholars and faculties. In next two days, the conference will witness the presentation of more than 70+ papers.

Siddharth Agrawal Managing Director Sagar Group congratulated team SISTec for organizing the conference for a global exposure. Dr. Jyoti Deshmukh Group Director SISTec and Principal Dr. Manish Billore, Convenor C. K. Pardhi and Co-covenor Dr. Rahul Agrawal were also present on the occasion.

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the pioneer
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Clean streets and mohallas with main roads

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Environment Minister Hardeep Singh Dang has said that the urban administration should pay special attention to the cleanliness of the streets and mohallas along with the cleanliness of the main roads of the city. It has a great impact in pollution control.

Most of the literature related to environment is in English language. Explain the importance of environment, conservation and measures to the people in their language in a simple way. Minister Dang said this on Monday in a one-day workshop under the Central National Clean Air Programme by the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board in Bhopal. Municipal commissioners of 7 cities of Madhya Pradesh – Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Sagar, Ujjain and Dewas, District Superintendents of Police, stakeholders of City Level Implementation Committee and officials of various departments are participating in this.

Minister Dang said that an amount of Rs 36 crore has been given by the Environment Department to the municipal corporations for environmental protection.

This amount can be hiked on doing good work. Municipal Corporations should make joint efforts to improve air quality in coordination with various departments. Raise awareness in cities as well as villages and towns.

Over 5 crore saplings have been planted so far in the Ankur programme for environmental protection launched under the leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, it will provide huge benefits in the coming times.

Principal Secretary Environment Gulshan Bamra said that air pollution in cities is caused by industrialization, construction works, dust particles and burning of wood-waste and smoke of vehicles etc.

Efforts are being made to control them. He said that the amount received by the municipal corporations, which will not work to improve the air quality of the city, will be reduced. At the same time, the amount of those who do good work can also be increased.

In the workshop presentations were given by subject matter experts Mukesh Sharma from IIT Kanpur on "National Clean Air Programme in India", Mauktik Bawse from ARAI Pune on "Source Apportionment Study and Emission Inventory of Bhopal City" and Shikhar Jain from CII New Delhi on "Airshed Basin and Source Apportionment Study of Indore City". Municipal commissioners of all the 7 cities shared their experiences and work being done to improve the air quality of their area.

Member Secretary Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board Chandramohan Thakur, Director A Mishra, Additional Commissioner Municipal Corporation Bhopal Awadhesh Sharma, senior officers of Pollution Control Board and of various departments were present.

We are Rahul Gandhi's army: Vikrant Bhuria

Bhopal: State Youth Congress President and MLA Vikrant Bhuria, who was arrested for stopping the train in the capital, made several serious allegations against the government during a discussion with the media on Monday.

During a press conference at the state Congress office on Monday, Bhuria said that we are not Savarkar's army but Rahul Gandhi's army. Don't be afraid of arrest.

Democracy was murdered when Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as MP. Therefore, the train was stopped so not to disturb the public but to convey its message to the public.

At the behest of the government, the police took an unconstitutional step. Now a petition will also be filed in the court against this action.

Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress President Vikrant Bhuria talking to media persons at PCC headquarters in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Preparations underway ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to flag off State's first Vande Bharat Express train at Rani Kamlapati railway station in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Complete restoration work on priority: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Jal Jeevan Mission is an ambitious scheme. This mission, which will be implemented with the resources of the central and state governments, will ensure the availability of tap water in every household. Successful implementation of the scheme is the collective responsibility of all public representatives and officers and employees.

It is necessary to be aware of the construction works being done in the scheme and to ensure quality work within the time limit. Water sources should be identified in such a way that continuous water supply can be ensured in the summer season. The restoration work of the excavation done for laying the pipeline in the mission should be completed immediately on priority. District and state-level officers should ensure that the works are completed with quality and time limit by visiting them at regular intervals. All the restoration works should be compulsorily completed before the rainy season.

Chouhan was conducting a state-level review of ongoing works under the mission. All the districts participated virtually in the meeting. Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah, Water Resources Minister Shri Tulsi Silavat, Minister of State for Public Health Engineering Brijendra Singh Yadav, Minister of State for Urban Development and Housing OPS Bhadoria, Minister of State for School Education (Independent Charge) Shri Inder Singh Parmar, Chief Secretary Shri Iqbal Singh Bains along with officers and representatives of construction agencies were present.

Chouhan said that the districts should prepare a roadmap for their works and fix week-wise targets, speed up the work, and get the works completed by June-July on priority. For the smooth operation and maintenance of the schemes, the members of Gram Panchayats, Village Water and Sanitation Committee should be made aware of and entrusted with the responsibility.

For the smooth operation and maintenance of the schemes, the members of Gram Panchayats, Village, Water, and Sanitation Committee should be made aware and entrusted with the responsibility. Firms that have been entrusted with the work, including L&T, should not give major technical work to petty contractors.

Guv holds discussion with officials of Tribal Affairs Department

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that equal development of tribal community is the basis of an inclusive society. The benefits of government schemes and availability of facilities in tribal dominated areas should be like other areas.

He said that the Tribal Affairs Department should focus more on efforts for better health, education and uplifting the standard of living for the special backward tribal group. In this regard, a special proposal should be prepared and presented before the Central Government.

Patel was discussing with the officials of Tribal Affairs Department on Monday. A presentation of information regarding the complete health programme pilot project was given before him by the Commissioner, Tribal Affairs and Health Department.

Patel said that he has visited all the 52 districts of the state. There is a need for better implementation of government schemes, public welfare programmes and works of public convenience in tribal-dominated areas. Tribal Affairs Department should take special initiative for this.

He said that the department should work with the target of spending more than the approved budget. Quarterly review of the utilization of funds should be conducted. He directed the Tribal Cell to continuously monitor all concerned departments in this regard.

Chairman of Tribal Cell, Deepak Khandekar said that information should be taken about the status of drop outs in schools in tribal areas. The reasons for drop out should be studied seriously.

Those who reduce the drop out should be encouraged and those who do not give expected results should be guided. Initiative should be taken to guide tribal children and youth in the efforts for better education and employment for the tribal community.

The speed of construction works should be further increased by the department which will maximum utilization of the amount received from the Central Government.

Principal Secretary Tribal Affairs Pallavi Jain Govil informed that the Akanksha Yojana for providing coaching to the children of tribal community is being implemented in a big way by the state government.

Under the Chief Minister's Special Project Funding Scheme, 8 projects have been approved under the new scheme of giving grant up to Rs. 2 crore for basic facilities.

He told that the process of recruitment of teachers in the schools of tribal areas of the state is going on at a fast pace. Before the next academic session, the work of appointment to all the posts of teachers in primary schools will be completed.

Bring laurels to MP in Japan: Minister

Bhopal: Minister of State for Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Ramkhelawan Patel has said that the state government has launched an innovative scheme to provide employment in foreign countries to the youths belonging to backward classes. Through this scheme, better opportunities will be available to the youths to get employment in other countries including Japan.

He called upon the youths receiving training to bring laurels to the state in Japan by becoming brand ambassadors. Minister of State Patel was addressing the first training session of the scheme in Bhopal today.

Patel said that employment opportunities are being made available to the youths in Japan under the scheme. After this, efforts will be made to send OBC youths abroad for the purpose of employment in other countries including Germany, United Kingdom. He said that the interests of the youths seeking employment abroad will be fully taken care of.

Additional Chief Secretary Backward Classes Ashok Varnwal said that in order to be successful in the scheme, the youths will have to make efforts to understand the language and culture of Japan.

कार्यालय नगर परिषद तरीचरकलॉ, जिला- निवाड़ी (म.प्र.)

क्रमांक/1201/तक/निविदा/न.प./2023 **ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना** तरीचरकलॉ, दिनांक :-15/03/2023

म.प्र.शासन लोक निर्माण विभाग में नवीन केन्द्रीयकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली के अंतर्गत अथवा केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग में सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ई-टेण्डरिंग के माध्यम से तालिका में वर्णित कार्य हेतु नगरीय प्रशासन एवं विकास विभाग में प्रचलित आईएसएसआर दिनांक 02 अगस्त 2021 से प्रभावशील लमसम दर के आधार पर ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

टेण्डर आईडी	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलन राशि	धरोहर राशि	समय अवधि	निविदा फार्म का शुल्क	ठेकेदार की श्रेणी
2023_UAD_261791_1	a) Survey,, Design, drawing and Providing, laying, Jointing, testing, commissioning of distribution network having length of 7051.0m of dia 90 to 160mm and of hdpe pipe (PE- 100) PN-6 in Taricharkalan ULB Including excavation, refilling, road cutting/ dismantling, restoration, providing valves, specials and fittings all complete. b)Providing 1641.0 nos house service connections.	Rs. 124.57	62500	12 माह	12500/-	श्रेणी 'स' या अधिक

उक्त कार्य के निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 20/03/2023 को प्रात: 10 :30 बजे से दिनांक 20/04/2023 को शायं 5 :30 बजे तक वेबसाईट पर ऑनलाईन भुगतान कर प्राप्त हो सकेगें विस्तृत निविदा सूचना तथा अन्य जानकारी वेबसाईट https ://mptenders.gov.in वेबसाईट पर देखी जा सकती है।

मुख्य नगरपालिका अधिकारी
नगर परिषद तरीचरकलॉ,
जिला - निवाड़ी म.प्र.

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POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas the Authorised Officer/s of **Housing Development Finance Corporation Limited,** under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section'13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of the said Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) and Legal Representative(s) to pay the amounts mentioned against their respective names together with interest thereon at the applicable rates as mentioned in the said notices, within 60 days from the date of the said Notice/s, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc till the date of payment and / or realisation.

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) and Legal Representative(s)	Outstanding Dues	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Description of Immovable Property (ies) / Secured Asset(s)
1.	Mr. Yogesh Dhiman & Mrs. Usha Dhiman	₹ 17,21,023/- as on 31.07.2019	16-08-2019	24.03.2023 Physical Possession	Flat no. F, First floor, forming part of building Shri Ramchnadra Heights, Block A, located on Land bearing S. no. 113/2/7, Village - Narela Shankari, Tehsil - Huzur, District - Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Comprising Built up area of 72.11 Sq. mtr., **Boundaries:** East: Open Area, West: Corridor, North: Flat no. E and South: Open Area

*with further interest as applicable, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc incurred till the date of payment and/or realisation.
However, since the borrower/s / Legal Heir(s) and Legal Representative(s) mentioned hereinabove have failed to repay the amounts due, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s / Legal Heir(s) and Legal Representative(s) mentioned hereinabov in particular and to the public in general that the Authorised Officer/s of HDFC have taken **physical possession** ofthe immovable property (ies) / secured asset(s) described herein above in exercise of powers conferred on him/them under Section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned above.
The borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) and Legal Representative(s) mentioned hereinabove in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the aforesaid Immovable Property(ies) / Secured Asset(s) and any dealings with the said Immovable Property (ies) / Secured Asset(s) will be subject to the mortgage of Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd.
Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) attention is/are invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset/s.
Copies of the Panchanma drawn and Inventory made are available with the undersigned, and the said Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) is/are requested to collect the respective copy from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

Place : Bhopal
Date : 28.03.2023

Sd/- Authorised Officer
For Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of Manav Samadhan Party. The office of the party is located at 21, Sukhi Sevaniya, Post Sukhi Sevaniya, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal M.P. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of people Act, 1951-Names/address of the office bearers of the party are as follows: President-Sanjay Kumar Saroj S/o Shri Brij Bihari, 21, Sukhi Sevaniya, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal M.P., Vice President-Smt. Babli W/o Shri Munna, H.No. 164, Badi Gwaltoli, Tehsil Indore, District Indore M.P., General Secretary-Amit Upadhyay S/o Shri Akhilesh Upadhayay, 56, Nagar Nigam Colony Chhola, Huzur, District Bhopal M.P., Treasurer-Savita Saroj, W/o Shri Sanjay Kumar, 21 Sukhi Sevaniya, Tehsil Huzur, District Bhopal M.P. If any one has any objection to the registration of Manav Samadhan Party they may send their objection with reasons there of, to the Secretary, (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

Celebrating the life and legacy of sculpture artist Saroj Jain

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As a tribute to sculptor Saroj Jain and her contributions to the world of art, a retrospective exhibition of her works of the past 4 decades is being organised at the Shridharani Gallery & Sculpture Court at Triveni Kala Sangam from 26th March to April 03, 2023.

The exhibition aims at showcasing a wide range of Jain's sculptures, including her most iconic works, to provide an opportunity to experience a unique style of cubism that she created through her very own language in modern sculpture. 85-year-old Saroj Jain passed away in February 2022.

Artists from across the nation will gather to pay their tributes to Saroj Jain, who is known for her simple, unpretentious, and spiritual life dedicated to her art and inspired several generations of aspiring sculptors to pursue their passion. "Saroj was an artist of immense talent, who has carved a niche for herself with her language in cubism. I have very good memories of her as a tireless artist who practiced sculptures everyday and I never heard about a mood block from her, unlike most artists.

Each of her sculptures is full of aesthetical essence and every composition, thought about and idea unique," said Biman Das (Chairman, AIFACS), who was chief guest and inagurated the exhibition.

Payal Jain, Ace Fashion Designer who organised the exhibition in memory of her Aunty Late Saroj Jain said, "My masi dedicated her life to Art and put all her love into creating a unique language of her own in sculpture. Her family, friends, students and colleagues all remember her as the quiet, simple, committed, passionate, spiritual and loving person, who shared the love in her heart with everyone around her," said Payal Jain.

"Throughout her career, Saroj Jain was dedicated to sharing her knowledge and expertise with her students, fostering a new generation of sculptors who are poised to carry on her legacy. And with this thought, we have also started the Saroj Jain Sculpture Awards in three of the most prominent art universities of India this year, namely Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai, Viswa Bharti, Shanti Niketan, and Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi," said Kiran Chopra, Curator, Writer & Sculptor.

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NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF SARFAESI ACT 2002, (hereinafter referred to as Act) r/w Rule 3(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.

(1) Shri Hira Singh Thakur, S/o Shri DeviSingh,
(2) Smt. Mangu Bai w/o Shri Hira Singh Thakur
Village Gunawad, Post Bangred, Tehsil Badnagar, Ujjain District, Madhya Pradesh-456771.
Alternate address for both 1 & 2 : 104 K, Mahatma Gandhi, Margapurana Hospital Road, Depalpur Tehsil, Depalpur, District Indore,Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Hira Singh Thakur as principal borrower and SmtMangu Bai as co obligant availed of from our Bank's Badnagar branch credit facilities i.e. **Federal Agri Mobile Loan A/c No 22256600000451of Rs.7,35,000/- (Rs. Seven Lakh Thirty FiveThousand Only) sanctioned on 28.03.2019 and disbursed on 29.03.2019**after executing necessary security agreements / loan documents in favour of the Bank.
Towards the security of the aforesaid credit facilities availed from the Bank, Shri Hira Singh Thakur has created security interest in favour of the Bank by way of hypothecation in respect of the following movable security.

DESCRIPTION OF MORTGAGED MOVABLE PROPERTY
Brand New Diesel car Hyundai Xcent 1.2 CRDLS, Year 2019 Model, Bharat Stage 4, Having Registration Number MP 13 CC6026,Saloon body, Polar WhiteColour,Chasis No.MALA741ELKM361216 Engine Number D3FBJM698022– Registered under of office of RTO, Ujjain on 16.04.2019

The aforesaid hypothecated security hereinafter referred to as 'the secured assets'. The undersigned being Authorised Officer of the Federal Bank Ltd. hereby inform you that a sum of **₹7,34,426.00 (Rupees Seven Lakh Thirty Four Thousand Four Hundred TwentySixonly)** is due from you as on **16.03.2023** under your **Federal Agri Mobile Loan AccountNo. 22256600000451** with Badnagar,MPbranch of the Bank. In view of the default in repayment, your loan account/s is/are classified as Non-Performing Asset on **29.05.2022** as per the guideline of RBI.
You are hereby called upon to pay the said amount with further interest **@ 10.75 %** and penal interest **@ 4%** per annum with monthly rests from **17.03.2023** till the date of payment and costs within 60 days from the date of this notice, failing which, the Bank will exercise all the powers under section 13 of the Act against you and the above mentioned secured assets such as taking possession thereof including the right to transfer them by way of lease, assignment or sale, or taking over the management of the secured assets for realising the dues without any further notice to you .
It is informed that, you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of the above-mentioned secured assets without the Bank's written consent. In the event of your failure to discharge your liability and the bank initiates remedial actions as stated above, you shall further be liable to pay to the bank all cost, charges and expenses incurred in that connection. In case the dues are not fully satisfied with the sale proceeds of the secured assets, the bank shall proceed against you personally for the recovery of the balance amount without further notice. Your attention is also invited to the provisions of section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets (security properties).
This notice is issued without prejudice to the other rights and remedies available to the bank for recovering its dues. This notice was issued on **16.03.2023** and the same was served to you but seems not received by you which necessitated this publication as per SARFAESI Act, 2002.

Dated this the 27th Day of March 2023
For The Federal Bank Ltd., Associate Vice President
(Authorised Officer under SARFAESI Act)

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER PWD SAGAR ZONE SAGAR
PHONE No. 07582-220840 E-Mail :- cepwdsagar@mp.nic.in

NIT No. 29/2022-23 SAGAR DATE 20.03.2023

Online bids for the following works are invited from registered contractors registration criteria :

S. No.	Tender Portal No.	Name of Work	District	Probable Amount Contract (Rs. lakh in)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (in Rs.)	Period of completion (in month i/c Rainy Season)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2023_PWDRB_261673_1	1. APPROACH ROAD FROM SOJNAVAR ROAD TO GANESHGANJ ASHRAM ROAD LENGTH=1.00 KM 2. APPROACH ROAD TO SAPERA BASTI (WARD NO. 13) FROM GANESHGANJ STATION ROAD (TADA BORE TIRAHA SASA ROAD) LENGTH=1.00 KM 3. TALSEMRA GAUSHALA APPROACH ROAD LENGTH=1.00 KM 4. PACHARA PIPARIYA KACHYANA MOHALLA TO BAIRAGI BABA TEMPLE ROAD LENGTH - 0.68 KM 5. KACHHI PIPARIYA TO HANUMAN TORI ROAD L 0.90 KM 6. CONSTRCUTION OF SUKAD NALA (1 NO. SLAB CULVERT) 7. CONSTRUCTION OF TARA DEVI MANDIR TO BELAI MAFI ROAD L-4.00 KM	Sagar	974.15	974150	20000	12 Month Including Rainy Season

1. All details relating to the Bid Document (s) can be viewed and downloaded free of cost from the website. https://mptenders.gov.in
2. Bid Document (s) can be purchased after making online payment of portal fees though Credit/Debit/Cash Card/Internent Banking.
3. The Bid Document (s) can be purchased only online **from 21.03.2023 (time) 10.30 to 05.04.2023 time 17.30** Other key dates may be seen in Bid Data Sheet.
4. Amendment (s) to NIT, if any, shall be published on webiste only, and not in newspaper.

CHIEF ENGINEER
PWD SAGAR ZONE SAGAR

G-25072/22

BJP-Cong stand-off touches new low in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The stand-off between the ruling party and the Opposition members on Rahul Gandhi's disqualification and the Adani issue touched a new low in Lok Sabha on Monday with the Congress members trooping into the Well of the house wearing black clothes with two of its MPs throwing papers towards the Chair, leading to adjournment of proceedings in less than a minute till 4 pm.

Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day by the BJP MP Rama Devi who was in the chair after the house resumed its proceedings and passed the finance bill amid the repeat bedlam.

The trouble started right from the word go in the lower house as Congress members wearing black scarves trooped into the Well shouting slogans.

Two Congress members, T N Pratapan and Hibi Eden, who were in the Well holding placards, hurled order papers towards the Chair along with their scarves.

"Dear ED daro mat, Adani per raid karo (ED don't be scared, raid Adani)," read one of the placards.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was seen wearing a black scarf while other members of her party wore black shirts. National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah was wearing a black kurta.

Amid the ruckus by Opposition members, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned proceedings of the House in less than a minute after it assembled for the Question Hour.

"I want to run the House with dignity," Speaker Birla said, adding that "proceedings are adjourned till 4 pm."

Lok Sabha has been derailed since the second leg of the Budget Session commenced on March 13 with Opposition members demanding a joint parliamentary committee probe into the alleged Adani share manipulation issue.

The Lok Sabha could hardly conduct any business in the second part of the budget session with a number of bills waiting to be passed.

However, Parliament on Monday approved the Union Budget for 2023-24 with the Lok Sabha clearing the Finance Bill as amended by the Rajya Sabha, amid continuous uproar by the Opposition over the Adani issue. The amendment to the Finance Bill 2023, which sought to correct an error with regard to the tax rate on Securities Transaction Tax , was moved by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The passage of the Finance Bill completes the budgetary exercise for 2023-24.

Khalistan supporters take out car rally in New York

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/NEW YORK

Continuing their protests in the US, alleged Khalistan supporters have taken out a car rally in New York. However, there was no violence reported. The rally in support of Amritpal Singh took place late Sunday a day after the Khalistan backers staged a demonstration outside the Indian embassy in Washington.

A large number of Khalistan supporters staged a protest at the iconic Times Square in New York to express support for the fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh.

The protesters took out a car rally that originated from the Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center in the Richmond Hill neighbourhood and culminated at Times Square in the heart of Manhattan city on Sunday afternoon amid tight security.

With blaring music and loud horns, a multitude of cars with Khalistani flags and LED mobile billboard trucks displaying photos of Singh crisscrossed the streets near the venue.

Men, women and children gathered in large numbers at the popular New York destination, carrying the Khalistan flags and raising slogans at the rally.

The protesters, carrying placards reading 'Free Amritpal Singh', held up photos of Singh as they raised anti-India slogans. Singh's photo was also displayed on one of the billboards at Times Square.

There was a heavy police presence in the area with several New York City Police Department (NYPD) vans and cars manning the area.

The car rally came a day after Khalistan supporters gathered outside the Indian Embassy in Washington on Saturday, where many of their speakers tried to incite violence, but timely intervention by an alert US Secret Service and local police prevented a repeat of London and San Francisco incidents of vandalism at the Indian missions.

India on Friday last week said it expects to see action against the perpetrators of vandalism at its missions abroad and hoped the host governments would prosecute those involved in these incidents instead of holding out assurances.

Addressing the weekly briefing, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said New Delhi also expects the host governments to take measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

"I think we are not just interested in assurances, I think we would like to see action," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said.

Cong experts deciphering Guj court order; Rahul's appeal to take more time

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Four days have elapsed since Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction by a trial court followed by disqualification from Lok Sabha but the appeal at a higher judiciary system which he is not entitled is to take some more time as legal experts of the grand old party are still deciphering the translation of the Gujarat court order despite its top leaders like Shakti Sinh Gohil, Amee Yajnik, are big lawyers in the State and represents party as Rajya Sabha members.

While Congress workers have taken to streets and sported black attires calling Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP a 'death of democracy', party is yet to move higher court to appeal against the conviction because the court order is in Gujarati and the translation is taking time. "There is a procedural delay that's all we can say this time," said a party office bearer.

Party's top legal eagle Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, P Chidambaram, Vivek Tankha are coordinating while also in consultation with its former colleague and currently Rajya Sabha MP backed by Samajwadi Party, Kapil Sibal as the latter has been espousing the cause of Congress, particularly for Rahul Gandhi, through his social media platforms. Sibal had also expressed his dismay over the way Delhi police questioned Rahul over his certain political remarks during Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Congress is also waiting for the outcome of the NCP leader Mohammed Faizal's plea against the Lok Sabha Secretariat for not withdrawing a notification disqualifying him as an MP stayed by the Kerala High Court, now listed for Supreme Court for Tuesday.

CPR urges Govt re-look at Heat Action Plans

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a public policy think tank, on Monday picked holes in the Heat Action Plans (HAPs) in 18 states stating that most of them are not only underfunded but also do not target the 'actual' risks faced by local populations. It has recommended the Government to re-look these plans and work on their improvements in keeping with requirements at the ground level.

This is the first critical assessment of the HAPs formulated by the Government over the last ten years as a primary policy response to economically damaging and life threatening heatwaves. They prescribe a variety of preparatory activities, disaster responses, and post-heatwave response measures across state, district, and city government departments to decrease the impact of heatwaves.

The CPR's report "'How is India adapting to heatwaves?," a review of 37 heat action plans in the city (nine), district (13) and state (15) levels across 18 states showed that most of them do not explicitly carry out vulnerability assessments, leaving the authorities with little data on where to direct their scarce resources.

Though the exact number of HAPs in India is unknown, some estimates claim the existence of well over 100 HAPs nationwide.

"India has made considerable progress by creating several dozen heat action plans in the last decade. But our assessment reveals several gaps that must be filled in future plans.

Israel's embassy in India takes part in labour union strike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of political events in Israel, its embassy in India is taking part in a strike called by its labour union. The protest is against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's push to overhaul the justice system.

"The Histadrut, Israel's largest labour union, instructed all government employees to go on strike, including Israel's diplomatic missions around the world. The embassy of Israel will be closed today until further notice and no consular services will be provided," Israel's embassy in India said in a statement on Monday evening. Officials of all Israeli missions in India and around the world will remain on strike until it is called off.

IIL announces DCGI's, State admin's approval to manufacture MR vaccine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad-based Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), a vaccine manufacturer has announced receipt of approval from Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) and State Drug Control Administration for manufacture of Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine.

This is the outcome of the Indo-Vietnam partnership, where IIL partnered with the Center for Research and Production of Vaccines and Biologicals, also called Polyvac, Vietnam.

Under an exclusive agreement, Polyvac, Vietnam will supply the Measles vaccine component to IIL. Rubella Vaccine components will be produced by IIL to manufacture a combined MR vaccine. This Live Attenuated MR vaccine adds to the list of several other vaccines that IIL supplies to Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) of India. This vaccine has been proven through extensive human clinical trials to be immunogenic and safe for people of 9 months to 49 years.

Dr K Anand Kumar, Managing Director, IIL said, "We have successfully completed all phases of Product development to the satisfaction of the regulatory authorities in India. Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccine is listed in the UIP of India and is an important vaccine for our country. IIL's collaborative effort will help in the immunization of several million children against Measles and Rubella and thereby saving lives' '.

NCERT textbooks for 2024-25 session revised in accordance with NEP: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Education Ministry on Monday said the new NCERT textbooks to be introduced in secondary schools from the 2024-25 academic session has been revised in accordance with the new National Education Policy (NEP) and textbooks is to be developed in accordance with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). "The new textbooks are likely to be introduced from 2024-25 academic session. It is a tall task but we are aiming for that. The textbooks will be revised as per the new NCF, work on which is already going on. Developing textbooks is a laborious task," said a senior official of the Ministry of Education.

All the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks developed as per the revised NCF will also be available in digital format. "Since COVID-19 has taught us that there is an appetite for digital learning, all the new textbooks will simultaneously be made available digitally so anybody can download them," he added.

Noting that textbooks should not be "static", the official said an institutional framework will be developed to ensure that the textbooks are updated on a regular basis.

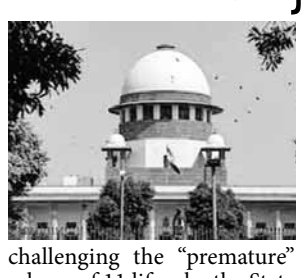
The NEP 2020 envisages a "5+3+3+4" curriculum pedagogical structure. According to the new school education system outlined in NEP 2020, children will spend five years in the foundational stage, three years each in the preparatory and middle stages, and four years in the secondary stage.

The Centre had in 2020 started the process to revise school textbooks by appointing former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K Kasturirangan as the head of a 12-member steering committee responsible for developing a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

The four NCFs being prepared are -- NCF for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECCE), NCF for School Education (NCFSE), NCF for Teacher Education (NCFTE), NCF for Adult Education (NCFAE).

SC issues notice to Gujarat Govt in Bilkis case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Observing that Bilkis Bano's gangrape and murder of her family members during the 2002 Godhra riots as a "horrendous" act, the Supreme Court on Monday asked the Gujarat Government whether uniform standards, as followed in other cases of murder, were applied while granting remission to 11 convicts in the Bilkis case. The top court, which at the same time clarified that it would not be overwhelmed by emotions in the case and would only go by the law, also directed the Gujarat Government to present all the relevant documents on April 18, the next date of hearing.

Bano had moved the apex court on November 30 last year challenging the "premature" release of 11 lifers by the State Government, saying it has "shaken the conscience of society". The 11 men convicted in the case walked out of the Godhra sub-jail on August 15 last year, after the Gujarat Government allowed their release under its remission policy. They had completed more than 15 years in jail.

A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna issued notice to the Centre, Gujarat government and the convicts on the plea filed by Bano and asked the parties to complete the pleadings by the next date of hearing. "It is a very horrendous act. We have an experience of people coming to this court saying they have been languishing in jails for ordinary cases of murder and their remission is not being considered. So is this a case where the standards have been adopted uniformly as in other cases? the bench remarked orally.

As the hearing commenced, the bench said there is a gamut of issues involved and it needed to hear the matter in detail. "What is the broad line of submission that you will take? Since power under section 432 (remission) of CrPC has been exercised by State of Gujarat, was there a direction by this court directing Gujarat to take a decision? We would like to know before hand what is the gamut of issues and the framework within which you will operate because I am retiring on June 17. I need time to understand the matter," Justice Joseph observed.

Advocate Shobha Gupta, appearing for Bano, submitted that the State where the trial is held is to decide the remission application and Gujarat did not have jurisdiction to grant remission to the convicts. She also stated that the impact of the crime on the society is to be taken into consideration while granting remission. "The jurisdiction with the State here was Maharashtra and not Gujarat. Here please look at the impact of the crime on society," she said.

Bank's decision to classify account as fraudulent must be reasoned order: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that a decision by a bank classifying a borrower's account as fraudulent must be a reasoned order and such an order should be passed only after giving an opportunity to the borrower. A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and Justice Hima Kohli upheld an order of the Telangana High Court in this regard.

SC to hear on Tuesday Lakshadweep MP Faizal's plea against LS Secretariat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

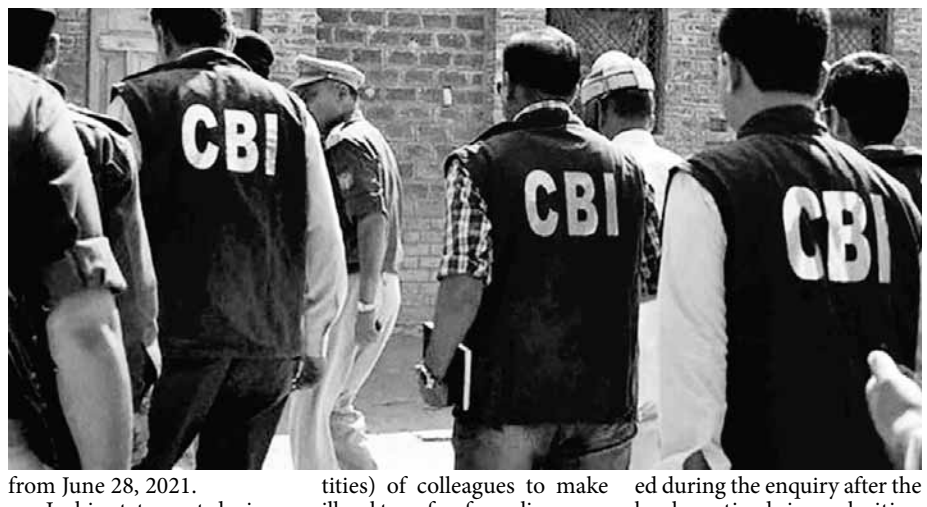
The Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faizal's plea against the Lok Sabha Secretariat for not withdrawing a notification disqualifying him as an MP upon his conviction and 10-year sentence that was later stayed by the Kerala High Court. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices S Narasimha and JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions of senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for the former Lakshadweep parliamentarian, that the person has not been reinstated as an MP despite his conviction and sentence being stayed by the high court.

Singhvi said the appeal of the Union Territory against the High Court order is coming up for hearing before another apex court bench on Tuesday. "Tag this with the SLP (of Lakshadweep)," said the bench. The Lok Sabha was "prompt to disqualify Faizal as an MP immediately after he was convicted and sentenced by a local court in January this year, but his membership has not been restored yet despite the high court staying the conviction", Singhvi, appearing for the Nationalist Congress Party leader, said.

Faizal stood disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from January 11, the date of his conviction in an attempt to murder case by a sessions court in Kavaratti, according to a notification issued on January 13 by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. In his petition filed in the apex court through advocate K R Sasiprabhu, Faizal said the Lok Sabha Secretariat failed to withdraw the notification despite the fact that his conviction was stayed by the high court on January 25.

CBI chargesheets bank officer for embezzling ₹55 cr from public sector bank accounts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The CBI has charge-sheeted a bank officer and his accomplice whose vulgar greed for online gaming lured them to allegedly embezzle over Rs 55 crore from various accounts of a public sector bank here.

The agency alleged that accused officer Bedanshu Shekhar Mishra and his accomplice Shailesh Kumar Jaiswal committed forgery in Punjab & Sind Bank, where Mishra was employed, to channel funds from various bank accounts into different betting games online, officials said.

Mishra was posted at the North Campus branch of Punjab & Sind Bank at Khalsa College of Delhi University from June 28, 2021.

In his statement during a bank enquiry, Mishra admitted that he used banking IDs (identities) of colleagues to make illegal transfers for online gaming bids, they said.

His statement was recorded during the enquiry after the bank noticed irregularities, forgery, siphoning and misappropriation of funds in various accounts such as RTGS, Inward Parking Account amongst Deposits Customers, primarily of Khalsa College.

The CBI probe revealed that Mishra was found to have "illegally and without any authority" encashed 32 fixed deposits receipts belonging to Khalsa College, maintained at the bank, amounting to Rs 48.76 crore, while also siphoning Rs 6.74 crore from various Mudra Loan accounts, they said. "During the investigation aforesaid original FDRs are said to have been seized from the Principal of Khalsa College, Jaswinder Singh, out of which 12 FDRs were found to be issued in the name of the Principal, SGTB Khalsa College and rest in the name of student fund, SGTB Khalsa College," the CBI has alleged.

Mishra used the official IDs allotted to the officer of Khalsa College Branch for transferring the funds into 29 different bank accounts without any supporting vouchers, according to the CBI findings.

"It is further alleged that...Mishra along with an unknown person has carried out these unauthorised forgery and fraudulent transactions by using system ID's of other staff members without their authorities," the chargesheet revealed.

Mishra has a penchant for online games such as Monopoly and CrazyTimes offered on the web site "Goa247.Live," registered in Curacao in the Caribbean and managed in India by individuals based in Dubai, the probe has revealed.

Between May 12 and September 14 in 2022, Mishra regularly played online games and transferred the liquidated amount of the FDRs, to the tune of Rs 10.81 crore, in the four accounts provided by the gaming website, the agency alleged in the charge-sheet.

Dubai-based individuals Rajat Muralidhar, Nishanth, Rahul Kumar, A Rajath, and Nishanth were managing the gaming website in India.

Rahul Kumar and A Rajath, allegedly lured individual current account holders to offer their bank accounts in lieu of commission. These personal bank accounts were used to accept deposits from the customers of the gaming website.

Mishra allegedly sanctioned and opened 48 Mudra loan accounts during the period from June 2021 to November 2022. Jaiswal managed eight of these accounts through his relatives and employees.

The proceeds of the loan amount were allegedly funnelled into the gaming business site GameKing11, and the rest of the amount was allegedly utilised for illegal purposes other than those for which the loans were sanctioned.

Alleged fraudulent transactions to the tune of Rs 6.74 crore in seven bank accounts were made by Mishra on the directions of Jaiswal.

the pioneer
BHOPAL | TUESDAY | MARCH 28, 2023

Pro-Khalistan body makes threat calls ahead of G-20

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

A banned pro-Khalistan organisation has made threat calls to hundreds of people including journalists ahead of a crucial three-day G-20 meeting to be held in Uttarakhand's Ramnagar with an aim to "internationalise" the issue, officials said.

They said those who received the calls on Sunday night heard pre-recorded messages by Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, head of the organization 'Sikh for Justice', in which he said they will raise flags at airports, railway stations and other areas during the meeting days.

"Ramnagar is not a part of India and it will be made a part of Khalistan after Punjab is freed," Pannu said in the message, according to Uttarakhand Special Task Force's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Senthil Abudai Krishnaraj S. The Chief Scientific Advisors' Roundtable (CSAR) of G-20

countries will be held in Uttarakhand's Ramnagar from March 28-30 with its focus on harnessing the benefits of traditional knowledge in healthcare.

Krishnaraj S said all the numbers from which such recorded calls were received are being traced. The DIG said the Special Task Force is probing the matter. It seems that Pannu is trying to gain "publicity" on the Khalistan issue through the G-20 meeting. However, the Uttarakhand police is fully prepared and "we will not allow the purpose of these separatists to be fulfilled", he said. "There is a full security arrangement for the G-20 meeting. Our senior officers are keeping a watch there," he said.

Meanwhile, the police in Udhamsinghnagar district which has a sizeable Sikh population are on alert over the absconding Khalistan separatist preacher Amritpal Singh and his associates. Following intelligence received from the Punjab Police and central agencies, the district police has tightened security especially in areas bordering Uttar Pradesh districts of Rampur, Pilibhit and Bareilly, and Nepal.

All government and private vehicles are being checked and religious places are also being monitored, officials said. City Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Katyal said religious places near the international border are also being searched, and a special vigil is being kept on the people passing through the India-Nepal border. The police have also pasted posters of Amritpal and his associates at various places, and running a "verification campaign", he said.

The Punjab Police has alerted their Uttarakhand counterpart suspecting that absconding Amritpal Singh might have taken a shelter in Uttarakhand and might flee to Nepal. The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the state police in Pithoragarh are also keeping a close watch in areas near the India-Nepal border, officials said.

Pvt doctors protesting against Rajasthan Right to Heath Bill

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Private doctors protesting against the Rajasthan Right to Heath Bill took out a massive rally in Jaipur on Monday in a show of strength and to press their demand for its withdrawal. Thousands of doctors, their family members, and people associated with the medical profession including medical shop owners took part in the rally which started from the resident doctors hostel ground of the SMS Hospital.

The rally passed through Suchna Kendra Tiraha, Maharani College Tiraha, Ashok Marg and Paanch Batti on MI Road. Private hospitals and nursing homes have been closed for several days due to a strike of private doctors, leading to a rush of patients in government hospitals.

Medical services in government hospitals were also affected as doctors across the state boycotted work for two hours in solidarity with the protesting private doctors. Chief Secretary Usha Sharma and other senior officials of the state government held a meeting with a delegation of the agitating private hospitals on Sunday and assured them to hold a discussion on their suggestions regarding the bill.

However, the doctors were adamant and said any discussion would be possible only after the bill was withdrawn. The bill was passed by the Assembly last week. Private doctors say that the bill will increase bureaucratic interference in their functioning.

According to the Rajasthan Right to Health Bill, passed by the Assembly on Tuesday, every resident of the state will have the right to emergency treatment and care "without prepayment" at any "public health institution, health care establishment and designated health care centres".

Countrywide Covid mock drills planned on April 10-11

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Alert at the fast spreading new recombinant variant XBB1.16 of SARS-CoV-2 which is believed to be behind the fresh surge of Covid infections in the country, the Center has asked the States to conduct mock drills in hospitals to ensure operational readiness of hospital infrastructure including oxygen cylinders, PSA plants, ventilators and human resources. Countrywide mock drills have been planned to be conducted on April 10-11.

According to the INSACOG data, a total of 610 variant XBB1.16 samples have been found across 11 states and Union Territories with the highest number found in Maharashtra and Gujarat at 164 each, followed by 93 Telangana and 86 in Karnataka.

In yet another advisory issued on Monday, the Centre after reviewing public health preparedness for management of Covid-19 and Covid-19 vaccination progress with States asked them to strengthen surveillance with focus on whole genome sequencing of positive samples and increase testing with higher proportion of RT-PCR tests.

On their part, States are gearing up to meet any emergency in case the infections spurt. For instance, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday reviewed the Covid-19 and influenza situation at a high-level meeting with officials and directed them to identify covid-dedicated hospitals in all 75 districts.

He directed officials to test preparations by conducting mock drills in hospitals across the state on April 11-12 and ensure that all the oxygen plants in the state are functional and ventilators provided to hospitals and medical colleges are active.

Cong seeks to placate Sena UBT over Rahul's Savarkar comment

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After the Shiv Sena (UBT) announced its decision to skip the dinner meeting of the Opposition parties hosted by the Congress over Rahul Gandhi's repeated comments on Veer Savarkar, the Maharashtra Congress on Monday sought to mend fences with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena by saying that his party and Sena had come together to fight the BJP despite the fact that the two parties had different views on Savarkar.

A day after Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray said that his party would not any tolerate insult heaped on Savarkar, his party MP Arvind Sawant said that no one from his party would attend the dinner meeting convened by the Congress and that the grand-old party has to understand Savarkar first. Resorting to a damage control exercise, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president Nana Patole said: "It is a well-known fact that Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress have different views as far as Savarkar issue is concerned... Considering the political situation in the country, Congress, Shiv Sena and NCP have come together at least through a common program for a larger battle. Currently, the battle to save country, democracy and constitution is important. This battle is big and we are fighting together against the BJP".

"The Congress' stand towards Savarkar is clear right from the beginning. There is nothing new in it. But ruling BJP and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena are trying to drive a wedge between Congress and Shiv Sena.

JUSTICE FOR DHANGRI ATTACK VICTIMS

'We are still waiting to see perpetrators behind bars'

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Saroj Bala, who lost two sons — Prince and Deepak — in the Dhangri terror attack on January 1, 2023 in the frontier district of Rajouri on Monday has threatened to return the ex-gratia amount and migrate from her village to a 'safer' place if State Government fails to identify the terrorists and bring them to justice.

Five people were killed in the firing by terrorists on January 1, while two minor children died in the IED explosion next morning. As many as 14 villagers were injured in the twin attacks.The attackers are still at large. Addressing a joint press conference inside Rajouri Press club premises, Saroj Bala flanked by other aggrieved family members of the Dhangri terror attack victims thundered, " We don't need jobs.

We don't need money. We need justice.We are still waiting to see perpetrators behind bars. Dhangri village sarpanch Dheeraj Kumar said that money will be returned back to same account where from it was credited if justice is not provided to families. Expressing their displeasure over recent statement of DGP Dilbagh Singh that terrorists, who were behind Dhangri killings, belonged to Pakistan family members of Dhangri attack victims said same police officer had claimed that 80 percent of the case has been solved on day 3 of attack but till date 90 days have passed and still no one has been identified or arrested.

Suvendu meets Shah, slams Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari on Monday said that only a 'double engine' Government could pull his out of the muck that the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government had pushed it into.

Emerging from a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah — the content of which he refused to divulge — Adhikari said the Bengal Chief Minister was running a government of corruption and appeasement and could be rescued by only a (BJP-led) double engine government at the Centre and the State. "Bengal's future is bleak under this (TMC) government... The State's debts have gone up by three times whereas unemployment has doubled" after Banerjee came to power, Adhikari said alleging how "the State's condition is worse than a jangule Raj." Adhikari"s meeting with Shah and his double engine claim statement comes barely weeks ahead of the declaration of the State's panchayat elections.

Alleging how the central schemes were being hijacked by the State Government he said "the names of the central schemes are being changed by the TMC rulees to usurp their credit." Apparently in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's suggestions to win over the minority votes too Adhikari alleged how the Bengal Chief Minister had decided to stage a 2-day dharna in Kolkata on days when Ramanavami and Ramadan coincide.

Adhikari also attacked the State Government for its alleged discriminatory policies alleging how he being the Leader of the Opposition was kept out of the facilitation programme of President Droupadi Murmu. "This is the way how the Leader of the Opposition is treated in Bengal," he said.

Kavitha's plea against ED summons, arrest rejected

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BRS leader K Kavitha on Monday failed to get any interim relief from the Supreme Court on her plea, seeking protection from arrest and challenging the summons by the Enforcement Directorate in the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, and tagged her petition with others.

A bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi said it will hear the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader's petitions and other pleas after three weeks.

Appearing for Kavitha, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said,"whether she needs to be interrogated at home or in the ED office is the issue which is seized of by this court and notice has been issued in petitions filed by Nalini Chidambaram and Abhishek Banerjee. I have more to say than tagging the matter".

He informed the bench that the plea filed by Nalini Chidambaram, a senior advocate and wife of Congress leader P Chidambaram, deals with a similar issue of summoning women accused by the ED.

2 women,1 teen commit suicide in Rajasthan's Kota in 24 hours

Kota: Two women and a 17-year-old allegedly committed suicide by hanging themselves at their houses in Rajasthan's Kota within 24 hours, police said on Monday. In Bambulia village, 28-year-old Mamta hung herself at her home on Monday, two months after her husband Murarilal died in a road accident, SHO Dhanraj Meena said.

The woman was depressed after her husband's death. Her 4-year-old son sustained serious leg injuries in same mishap, he said. On Sunday night, 17-year-old Krishna, a student of 12, died after hanging herself with a 'dupatta' at her home in Itawa town here, SHO Meena said.

The reason behind extreme step by the minor was yet to be ascertained as no suicide note was recovered from the spot, he said. According to family members, the deceased minor was good at studies and was currently appearing for board exam. Janki (35), a resident of Brijraj Colony in Kota city, also hung herself at her home on Sunday noon, The woman was mentally challenged and was undergoing treatment for her illness, Circle Inspector (Nayapura) Dayaram said.

BJP MLA arrested after his bail plea rejected in graft case by K'taka HC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Lokayukta police arrested BJP MLA Madal Virupakshappa hours after the Karnataka High Court dismissed his bail petition in a bribery case relating to Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) on Monday.

The Channagiri MLA had got bail days after his son Prashant M V, who was caught while receiving a bribe of Rs 40 lakh from a contractor on March 2.

Subsequent raids led to the detection of unaccounted cash of Rs 8.23 crore from Virupakshappa's house, sources said.

"We arrested him in Tumakuru when he (the MLA) was on the way to Bengaluru," Lokayukta Inspector General of Police A Subramanyeshwara Rao told PTI.

The High Court had reserved its judgment in the matter last week. The case pertains to the alleged demand and receipt of bribes for allotting contract for supplying chemicals to the state-run company. Subsequent raids by the Lokayukta unearthed cash to the tune of Rs 8.23 crore.

Osmanabad, Aurangabad renamed due to history, Maha Govt tells HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government on Monday told Bombay High Court that Aurangabad and Osmanabad were renamed Sambhaji Nagar and Dharashiv, respectively, due to history and not for political reasons.

The government filed its affidavits in response to two public interest litigations challenging the decision to change the names of these cities. The petitions claimed the decision was politically motivated. The government in its affidavits denied the name change was being effected for any such reason as alleged in the petitions.

"The state government has complied with all the necessary procedures involved in effecting change of name. The decision to change the name of Osmanabad to Dharashiv neither leads to any religious and communal hatred nor creates any rift between religious groups," the state government said. The affidavit said a majority of the people celebrated the name change.

The affidavit added that various records showed previously Osmanabad was known as Dharashiv.

Literary festival with a difference in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPA ■ KOCHI

A collective of literary figures and artists in Kerala have given shape to a festival with a difference, the first edition of which was staged on Sunday in Kasaragod district.

Nearly 100 writers, artists and craftsmen assembled at the residence of social activist Rajamani and presented their literary works that included

poems, novels, short stories, paintings and sculptures. The programme titled GRIHANKANAM (the courtyard of the house) was held in Karat village and was marked by bonhomie and solidarity of the writers. This is a new experience," said Shaji Thalor, a young poet, whose collection of poems was one of the books that was released during the programme.

"This is different and distinct from the Literary Festivals staged in star hotels in cities. GRIHANKANAM stood out for its simplicity and the dedication of the participants. The five-hour long programme turned out to be an event of creativity were the participants opened up their hearts without any inhibition," said Simi Perumpilli who travelled all the way from Ernakulam to the village in north Kerala.

Illikkettu Nampoothiri, well known actor, who inaugurated event said that villages should host literary events.

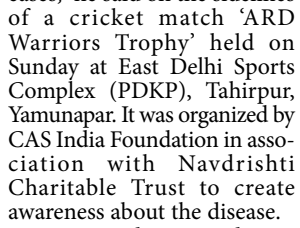
Ankylosing spondylitis may lead to permanent disability, reveals study

New Delhi: Back pain due to exertion, bad posture and poor lifestyle could actually be Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS), a type of auto-immune rheumatic disorder (ARD), doctors have said here flagging concerns that it is hitting young in the 20s and 30s and can possibly lead to permanent disability According to them, 3 percent of the total population of the country is suffering from some ARD.

If not taken seriously, its consequences can be serious in future, they warned. Dr Ranjan Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of Rheumatology, AIIMS talked in detail about ARD and Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS). "AS, a form of the ARD, is a serious challenge for the health of the youth.

He emphasized that creating awareness about this disease should be the prime objective as timely diagnosis of such diseases reduces the chances of further disability.

"Even patients with severe disease can lead a normal life."Prof Jugal Kishore, Director and HOD of Community Medicine Department, Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi stressed on creating awareness at the social level regarding these diseases. "Awareness can play a big role



in the prevention of such diseases," he said on the sidelines of a cricket match 'ARD Warriors Trophy' held on Sunday at East Delhi Sports Complex (PDKP), Tahirpur, Yamunapar. It was organized by CAS India Foundation in association with Navdrishti Charitable Trust to create awareness about the disease.

CAS India Foundation head Ankur Sharma, who has the AS, said that the disease has been taking a toll on the youth at an age when they dream of education, career and better future. "But this disease leaves them disabled. It is disappointing that patients are not covered by health insurance.

For a long time, even experts have been demanding to include it in the list of serious diseases and provide health insurance facilities," he said. Dr Gaurav Sharma, Orthopedic Surgeon at Delhi-based Swami Dayanand Hospital, explained that the AS is a joint fusion in patients and it also creates possibilities of joint replacement surgery. ***PNS***

Transgressions may trigger escalation along LAC with China, says Army chief

PTI ■ PUNE

Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande on Monday said transgressions remain the potential trigger for escalations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China and asserted India has adequate reserves and was prepared to deal with any contingency.

He said China has accrued significant capacities for force mobilization, application, and sustenance of military operations and maintained the long-pending boundary issue can not be divorced from bilateral relations between the two Asian giants.

General Pande said Chinese attempts to carry out transgressions across the LAC in violations of past agreements/protocols remain a matter of concern for India, but the Army's preparedness remains of a high order, comments coming in the backdrop of the border standoff in eastern Ladakh that started in May 2020.

He was speaking at the 2nd Strategic Dialogue on 'Rise of China and its Implications for the World', organised by the Savitribai Phule Pune University and the New Delhi-based Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.

"I think the most important aspect of our operational environment remains our legacy challenges of the unsettled and disputed borders. Pockets of dispute and contested claims to the territory continue to exist due to differing perceptions of the alignment of the Line of Actual Control. Transgressions remain the potential trigger for escalations," the Chief of Army Staff cautioned.

Hence, Sino-Indian border management requires close monitoring as infirmities can lead to a wider conflict, General Pande said.

"As we all knew we have agreements/protocols —(signed in) 1993, 1996, 2005, and 2013 — in the military domain to maintain peace and tranquillity on the LAC. Of concerns remain the violations of these by China — with their attempt to carry out — transgressions across the LAC," he said.

The decades-old boundary issue can not be divorced from bilateral relations, General Pande asserted and went on to quote External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who had said, "for (India-China) ties to return to the positive trajectory and remain sustainable - they must be based on three mutual sensitivity, respect, and interest." New Delhi has repeatedly maintained that its ties with Beijing cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

TMC MLA Soham Chakraborty felicitates President Droupadi Murmu during her civic reception at Netaji Indoor Stadium in Kolkata on Monday PTI Photo

BHOPAL | TUESDAY | MARCH 28, 2023

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Opinion 06

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Girl power

Four boxing gold medals, beginning of Women's Premier League — women's sports have arrived

The last few days witnessed a huge fillip to the cause of women emancipation; and the best part of it was that it didn't come from young girls, not from the pompous speech of some politician or some hyped welfarist measure. Boxers Nitu Ghanghas and Saweety Boora won gold medals in Women's World Boxing Championships in their respective weight categories on Saturday; the next day, Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain became world champions. Quite deservedly, India won the best team award at the tournament. This is not the first time that India have won more than one gold medal in a single year. In 2006, MC Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, Jenny RL and Lekha KC won a gold medal each in their categories. On Sunday, women also made their presence felt in another sport. Harmanpreet Kaur-led Mumbai Indians also won the inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL). The way all teams played in the tournament made the WPL very successful. While men's cricket is immensely popular in our country, the same cannot be said about women's cricket. Neither test matches nor one-day internationals nor T-20 games have been big draws till recently. In the beginning, WPL also had its anxious moments with concerns regarding filling up stadiums. The Board of Cricket Council of India (BCCI) was keen on audience attendance, so it kept entry free for women and girls.

The BCCI did a lot to promote the WPL, so there were giant outdoor hoardings with women cricketers, something India is not much familiar with. A seven-storey wallpaper featuring the Mumbai Indians' trio Harmanpreet Kaur, Pooja Vastrakar and Nat Sciver-Brunt covering part of a 20-storey skyscraper near the busy Haji Ali Junction announced that women's cricket has arrived. There were other billboards as well. The point that needs to be underlined is that a lot of effort has gone into making women excel in sports. While it is true that Indians like cricket (cricket, it has been said, is an Indian game accidentally invented by the English), it was not making progress in our country till recently. The BCCI took a number of steps to promote WPL. Similarly, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) in particular and other sports bodies in general put in a lot of effort to make our pugilists successful. Just before the four girls won gold medals, BFI's Bernard Dunne told a newspaper, "We are not just 'attack, attack and attack.' There is a thought process involved. India has never lacked heart, never lacked hard work. We are trying to bring those little changes within the programme, in terms of reducing the load. If you speak with the athletes, they would see they feel a lot fresher. Our performances demonstrate that. We have got very clear goals now." It is not just the government but also the private sector whose initiatives have ensured that women's sports have made a giant leap. The endeavour must go on.

PICTALK

An artist makes paintings depicting the Uttarakhand cultureas part of preparation ahead of the G-20 meeting PTI

Disqualification and aftermath

KALYANI **SHANKAR**

What is the future of Rahul Gandhi after his disqualification from Parliament? It is not over yet if we are to go by the history of politics in India

Is Congress leader Rahul Gandhi politically finished after the recent court verdict and his subsequent dismissal from Parliament? Is it an advantage or a setback for him and his party? It is too early to predict as it is an evolving story. But experience says that no politician is finished until he is finished.

The BJP is happy that the court has fixed Rahul and believes he is politically finished. However, the Congress claims Rahul is in a win-win position. It will be advantageous if a higher court stays or overturns the verdict. If it does not, Rahul is prepared to pay 'any price' and even go to jail, which might give him more political mileage.

Why did the court punish Rahul? Gandhi said at a campaign rally in Karnataka in April 2019: "Why do all these thieves have Modi as their surname? Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi?" In response, a BJP politician Purnesh Modi filed a criminal defamation complaint accusing Gandhi of defaming the "Modi community."

The ruling could have been milder. The court pronounced a two-year sentence on Thursday. The court also gave him bail immediately and suspended the sentence for a month. This allowed him time to appeal against the punishment. The defamation provisions used against Gandhi date back to the 1860s, when India was a British colony. Section 500 of the IPC makes the crime punishable by up to two years in prison.

Rahul will also be unable to contest the Lok Sabha elections for the next eight years apart from losing his present membership in the lower house. According to a historic Supreme Court decision in 2013, the membership of an MP or MLA sentenced to two years or more ends immediately after the court convicts them. The Lok Sabha announced Rahul's dismissal the next day. Rahul needs three layers of support to escape the situation: the strong backing of the united party, the united Opposition and the support of the public.

Congress responded that the conviction was to divert the Adani issue in Parliament. Congress has demanded a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani-Henderson report. Rahul Gandhi said he would not "back down" from asking questions on the Adani stocks issue or be intimidated by threats, disqualifications, and prison sentences. Refusing to apologize for the remark, Rahul said: "My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi. Gandhis don't apologize to anyone."

> RAHUL WILL BE UNABLE TO CONTEST THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS FOR THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS APART FROM LOSING HIS PRESENT MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOWER HOUSE

Secondly, the judgment united the Opposition against the ruling dispensation. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and other Opposition leaders, like Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin, Former U.P .chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, and former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray joined the condemnation of the act. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was the first to condemn the action while opposing Congress for years.

Thirdly, though the public is shocked at the punishment, the complete response is yet to come. The Congress is yet to take it to the streets to involve the people. As a result of Rahul's punishment, other contentious issues, such as Rahul's controversial Cambridge speech, have become more prominent. The BJP has stalled business in Parliament, demanding an apology from him.

Even though the conviction was a psychological blow to Rahul, his party, and the entire Opposition, it all depends on how it is communicated to the people. This is because they must handle the situation, translate it into public sympathy, and sustain it until the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Critics are skeptical about this. Given the BJP's increasing popularity and tight control over the media, it might not be easy. But Gandhi will still be news.

In the coming months, before 2024, the Congress will face its first significant test in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. This will be a direct contest with the BJP. If the party wins the elections in these states, it will cheer the opposition. If the party loses, it will be a setback before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the party will have to reconcile itself with Modi completing the hat trick.

Rahul's success depends on many ifs and buts. This includes whether he will get a higher court order to stay his verdict and how the public reacts. Congress must also change the poll narrative for the 2024 polls. In short, the BJP cannot wish away Rahul. No politician is finished until he is finished. Rahul is no exception. The BJP probably realizes that it's best not to bring your opponent to the forefront of your campaign. The moral of the story is that politicians, whatever high positions they occupy, should have tight control over their tongues.

(The author is a senior journalist)

Role of technology in developing digital art

SAKSHI **SETHI**

Technology has greatly impacted the art world. It has added a number of techniques artists can use to express their creativity

Digital space thrives in almost every sphere. You name it and it's there. With a vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy by ensuring easy access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment and bridging the digital divide, the Government of India launched the Digital India programme on July 1st, 2015. Since then, there has been no turning back.

Art is a broad category that incorporates creativity with the goal of expressing aesthetic, emotional depth or intellectual concepts. Today, companies hire web designers and graphic designers who can create designs and art as per society's requirements. This is unlike the traditional form which required pen, paper, lots of money and time. Today, the traditional form of art is almost out of range. The world of art has always played a significant part in everyone's life. Anyone can express information, ideas, feelings, such as love, happiness, sorrow, or boredom through art. Art is everywhere and can be experienced anywhere and at any point of time be it walking through the city, listening to the radio or even while driving a car. Behind every art there is a message that makes an individual aware of the world around them and how one reacts to each other.

We are living in a world where technology has provided artists with new tools of expression. Art and technology have allowed artists to cross over into new perspectives, thus giving birth to the booming term 'Digital Art'. Digital art is a growing creative evolution in which traditional painting techniques such as watercolour, oil pastel, impasto and acrylic are combined with powerful digital tools such as Coral Draw, Canva, Adobe Photoshop and much more. It encompasses a wide range of techniques from digital drawings to paintings and illustrations, photos, videos and many more.

Technology has greatly impacted the art world and the artists. It has not only opened numerous opportunities for artists but expanded the number of techniques they can access. Digital styles such as dynamic painting, digital photography, pixel art, 2D and 3D computer graphics are among the most in demand. Artists can paint or draw on an iPad or tablet with a stylus just as they can on canvas with a paintbrush and paint by quickly switching between tools and colours in just a few clicks thereby having access to a wealth of colours, effects, layers and tools unlike traditional artists worrying about refilling colour palettes. Art has no universal definition, but perspectives evolve over time. Artists are often tempted to implement new media technologies and interpretations. Today, artists from across the globe can display their art virtually and viewers can access it at their convenience. The world is going through a digital revolution, India being one of them, thereby stretching the bounds of conventional media and generating a strong presence that aptly describes general societal perspectives on social, cultural, and other elements of existence.

Soon, its advancement in art will be worth observing considering the huge talent the country possesses. Also, it will be a great opportunity for artists both existing and aspiring in terms of employment and available in non-accessible geographical locations. Digital art will benefit India.

(The writer is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Sir — Small steps can bring big changes. The Uttarakhand government has chosen the Char Dham Yatra route that includes temples at Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri. This is to implement the first waste-disposal system in the Himalayas, Uttarakhand tourism secretary Sachin Kurve has confirmed. Hemkund Sahib and the Valley of Flowers will also see the implementation of a QR-code-based system that will streamline waste collection and reduce the amount of garbage along the route. Visitors will scan a QR code on each plastic bottle and multi-layer plastic bag (of chips or biscuits) and pay a deposit over the maximum retail price (MRP). They can claim this amount back as a refund when they deposit the waste at a point at the end of the yatra. Up to 45 lakh QR codes are expected to be printed this year.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | *Mumbai*

APPLY 'SOUND WAVE GIVING'

Sir — When a bat touches the ground, within the crease (when stump out or runout occurs), the snick-o-meter "sound wave giving" technique should be used. Many times, in slow motion TV images, it is unclear whether the batsman's bat touches the ground or is slightly above the ground. Solution is, more microphones / sound sensors must be placed in the area near the crease and wickets (to enable a snick-o-meter to give a more powerful sound wave, if the bat is on the ground). Double benefit is snick- sound- waves (of bat and ball) can also be captured with greater clarity.

Madhu Nivriti | *Secunderabad*

RAHUL GANDHI DISQUALIFICATION

Sir — With lightning speed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi lost his position as a parliamentarian. The Lok Sabha secretariat moved in indecent haste and ensured Rahul Gandhi's removal from the house. This was before a higher court could stay the conviction.Rahul acquired the credentials of a Pan-India mass leader after the Bharath Jodo Yatra.. Rahul Gandhi was a consistent critic who highlighted Modis role in Adanis issue. He was the biggest thorn in Narendra Modi's flesh. Now the Narendra Modi Government has taken unethical measures tosilence Rahull Gandhi.

Because of disqualifying Rahul Gandhi as a parliamentarian, his voice is unlikely to be heard in Parliament. Rahul Gandhi is a thorn in many because he is straight forward, fearless and speaks from his heart. Now the voice that had pierced the iron curtain installed by the BJP Government and told the nation the story of crony capitalism of how a industrialist has jumped from 609th position to second spot on the global rich list earning lakhs of crores in a couple of years was silenced in Parliament. The voice has raised and roared against the Government on the progressive land acquisition, their farm laws on Demonitisation, on the price rise, unemployment, the flawed GST, the Rafael deal, covid mismanagement, the Chinese encroachment on Indian territory, attacks on Dalits and Muslims has been silenced in Parliament. The voice without fear has brought the story of 700 farmers were killed during the farmers agitation. The voice roared like a Lion on how different institutions of our country, the press, the judiciary, the Parliament, the Election commission are under pressure. RSS is a fundamentalist, fascist organization, which he never hesitated to mention. The voice which said and called a thief a thief is sent to prison, whereas people like Anurag Thakur who is accused of chanting " desh ke Gaddaron ko Goli maaro salonko " are having no cases and now calling shamelessly Rahul Gandhi an offender. People like Pragya Thakur who is accused of terrorism are allowed to move freely in Parliament. Nearly 50 percent of Parliament members have criminal records and are in Parliament. The absence of Rahul means a dramatic change in Parliament. He was the most powerful voice on many issues. Now the Rahul Gandhi issue has brought to the foreground to the nation that the defamation laws are being misused in India to stifle free speech and settle scores and used as a weapon of vendetta politics and politics of witch hunt and harassment.

Zakir Hussain | *Kazipet*

Far from over

The major concern for convening a high-level COVID-19 task force meeting is necessitated by an increase in Covid-19 cases in the country. This is the first time this year that such a meeting has been convened, with the last such meeting. As in the past Kerala reported the first death and that is worrisome. By all metrics, COVID-19 cases have increased over the past few weeks. As of March 23, India officially reported 1,300 newly reported Coronavirus cases over a 24-hour period bringing the overall tally of active cases to 7,605. In the previous few weeks, an average of 800 cases were recorded weekly. The death toll climbed to 5,30,813 with five deaths, one each recorded in Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Kerala, as of March 22. The number of daily deaths has been in the single digits in the past few weeks. Globally, about 1 lakh cases are reported daily. In 2023, far from being the end of pandemic, there is another dangerous phase that requires urgent attention.

CK Subramaniam | *Mumbai*

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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FIRST COLUMN

HARD SELTZERS ARE REPLACING ALCOHOL

Hard seltzers are healthier alternative to traditional alcoholic beverages

VIMAL **CHAND**

As the Indian alcohol industry continues to evolve, we are witnessing the rise of the latest category of beverages — Hard Seltzers. Compared to other alcoholic beverages, hard seltzer has an unusual taste and is often described as refreshing and fruity. It is also relatively new, having only gained popularity in the past decade. It has seen significant growth in the US, Canada, and Australia. While still in its nascent stage in India, the global success of Hard Seltzers can be attributed to its low-calorie, low-carb, and gluten-free nature, making it an attractive option for the health-conscious consumer.

As the majority of India's population is under 40, consumer preferences are rapidly evolving and favoring innovative products that fit with their active and health-conscious lifestyles. Additionally, brands have leveraged the power of social media, collaborating with influencers and celebrities to increase their visibility and popularity. This has helped them create buzz around their products amongst younger consumers. In the United States, the Hard Seltzer market has grown unprecedentedly, with sales skyrocketing. It is estimated that by 2025, the global Hard Seltzer market will be worth $14.5 billion, with the Asia-Pacific region being the fastest-growing market.

India, being a young and rapidly evolving market, presents a significant opportunity for Hard Seltzers to disrupt the traditional alcohol industry. Hard seltzers are low-calorie, low-carb, and lightly flavored alcoholic beverages marketed as a healthier alternative to traditional alcoholic beverages. Unlike beer, wine, or spirits, true seltzer has a low ABV (alcohol by volume) content, typically ranging from 4% to 6%. Hard seltzers are a brew of simple sugars, commonly known as Sugar Brews in the industry. Most of the natural sugars are converted into alcohol, resulting in low calories and carbs. A brewed hard seltzer is also far apart in taste from infused seltzers, leaving no taste of alcohol or artificial sweeteners. It also is incredibly light on the stomach compared to beers as there is no malt base.

Consumer preferences have steadily shifted toward low-calorie and low-sugar beverages. As health and wellness become increasingly a priority to consumers, traditional alcoholic beverages, which are high in calories and sugar, are losing their appeal. Hard Seltzers, low in calories and carbs, appeal to this new generation of active, health-conscious consumers. Historically, beer and other alcoholic beverages have been marketed primarily toward men, while wine and cocktails have been marketed toward women. However, true seltzer is marketed as a gender-neutral and inclusive drink. Its light and refreshing taste appeals to both men and women. Its packaging is often unisex, which allows it to appeal to a wider range of consumers.

While the Indian market is still in its early stages of adoption, we can draw comparisons from other countries that have already experienced Hard Seltzer disruption. In the United States, Hard Seltzers have replaced beer and wine as the preferred beverage choice for many consumers. Furthermore, the wide range of flavors available in Hard Seltzers has made it a popular choice for those looking to experiment with various tastes.

The rise of Hard Seltzers in the US can be seen as a glimpse of what is to come in India. With the launch of Hard Seltzers in India, we expect a similar shift in consumer preferences toward low-calorie and low-alcohol beverages. Seltzers are not just another alcoholic beverage. They are a revolution in the making, disrupting the traditional alcohol industry with its low-calorie and low-carb profile.

(The writer is Co-Founder and CEO of SPYK, the first hard seltzer in India)

Fine tune PM-KISAN to be efficacious

UTTAM **GUPTA**

The inclusion of ineligible persons on the beneficiaries list of PM-KISAN raises concerns and undoes the very purpose the scheme was launched for

A significant decline in the number of farmers receiving income transfers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme from 104 million during 2021-22 to 80 million during 2022-23 and a corresponding reduction in payment from Rs 67,032 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 57,646 crore in 2022-23 has caused much consternation.

Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 24, 2019, and made effective from December 1, 2018, PM-KISAN is a Central Sector Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme under which the Union Government. It provides an income support of Rs 6,000 a year to farmers with a valid enrolment, paid in three equal cash transfers of Rs 2,000 each every four months. The money is credited to their account via the DBT mode.

Any landholding farm household is eligible for cash transfers, provided they don't pay income tax, hold government posts, or are retirees receiving pensions above Rs 10,000. The cutoff date for beneficiary identification based on Agriculture Census 2015-16 estimates is February 1, 2019. The total number of beneficiaries intended to be covered under the scheme was about 140 million.

Since the launch of the scheme, Rs 250,000 crore has been given to nearly 110 million farmers spread over 13 installments. Having decided who should be eligible to receive income transfer, with time, the number of beneficiaries can only increase as more farmers are added to the list. There is no reason for the number to go down. Unlike other schemes such as NREGA, where the number of beneficiaries covered and payments made thereof is linked to the availability of work, under PM-KISAN, all farmers in the beneficiaries list once decided are entitled to receive the money.

It is only plausible that the farmers (24 million) were incorrectly identified and, therefore, ineligible to receive assistance if there was a reduction. Their names have now been dropped from the list. This has ensured that they haven't received payments during 2022-23 and will not in the future. What about the money already given to them during 2021-22 and even before that?

> PM-KISAN WAS DESIGNED TO SUPPLEMENT THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS

(The writer is a policy analyst)

The Centre claims it has a 'smooth' and 'transparent' recovery mechanism in place. This is whereby the ineligible beneficiaries are identified and the money is auto-transferred from the state nodal department's account to the Central Government account. Hopefully, it would have recovered all the excess payments made during the relevant years. The process should be expedited in cases where it hasn't been done yet. But the inclusion of 'ineligible' persons in the beneficiaries list raises concern. This is all the more relevant since the Centre has adopted a robust and foolproof IT-based process for beneficiary identification. Let's look at the steps involved.

The farmer registers on the PM- KISAN portal and the State validates her eligibility; after eligibility verification, the State uploads farmer details on the portal; the portal validates the records for junk data or duplicity; accepted data is forwarded to the public financial management system (PFMS) for account number and type validation; the list is sent back to States for the final approval; eligible records are available for generation of Request for Fund Transfer (RFT); signed RFTs are submitted to PFMS for generation of Fund Transfer Order (FTO); creation of sanction orders by agriculture ministry for approved FTOs; payment is processed and the beneficiary list is made available on the portal.

At all levels of authentication, the rejected data is sent back to the States for correction. At the foundation of this fintech architecture is 'confirming the genuineness of beneficiaries'; States have the sole responsibility of doing this. In particular, it is important to know which documents they used for this purpose.

On a close scrutiny, it turns out that in the initial years, neither States used Aadhaar for validation nor the Centre made it compulsory; it was required to do so a year after the scheme's commencement. In such circumstances, a large number of 'ineligible' persons making their way to the beneficiary list was inevitable. Other issues related to the implementation of the scheme also deserve attention.

When launched, PM-KISAN was designed to supplement the financial needs of small and marginal farmers (SMFs), those with land holding less than 2 hectares, in procuring various inputs such as fertilisers, suitable quality seeds, pesticides, etc. To ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with farm income at the end of each crop cycle.

The scheme was meant to protect poor/vulnerable farmers (read: SMFs). Yet, within six months, from June 01, 2019, its scope was extended to cover all landholding farmers. In other words, the Government decided to give Rs 6,000 even to farmers with large landholdings who didn't deserve it. This meant an increase in beneficiaries by 25 million and expenditure by Rs 15,000 crore.

The Government should exclude better-off farmers from the beneficiaries' list. The money saved (Rs 15,000 crore annually) should be used to increase SMF support. Within this group, it may also consider giving more to marginal farmers, i.e., those with land holding less than 1 hectare in sync with PM Modi's philosophy of using national resources for the poorest of the poor.

Farmers in certain States don't benefit from the scheme. For instance, in Bihar, against a total of around 16 million potential beneficiaries, the state has uploaded only 6 million. West Bengal hasn't joined the scheme, thereby denying access to about 7 million farmers in the State; the Centre is now encouraging those farmers to apply directly on the portal. In other jurisdictions, coverage in some districts is poor. To address it, the Centre has taken some initiatives.

States that have achieved 90 per cent coverage are required to verify 100 per cent 25 randomly selected villages in districts where the coverage is low. In States where the coverage is less than 80 percent, they need to verify 25 villages even in districts that are relatively high. These efforts should be vigorously pursued to ensure that all SMFs get income transfer in every nook and corner of the country.

There are millions of farmers who cultivate the land but don't own it. But, under the current arrangement for income support under PM-KISAN, they are not eligible; instead, the money is sent to the account of the person who owns the land. This anomaly should be corrected by securing data on all such tenant farmers and transferring the money to their accounts.

Finally, PM-KISAN is meant to meet the small SMF needs. It can't replace assuring them of a reasonable income on a sustainable basis. This won't be possible unless they get a reasonable price for their produce. This in turn, will require the resurrection of the now junked three Central farm laws. Unless this is done, episodes similar to that of a farmer from Maharashtra's Solapur getting a measly Rs 2.49 from the sale of over 5 quintal onions will continue to reverberate.

Have a positive mind and a healthy lifestyle

The key to success is to harness the power of human mind and tap its true potential

RAVI **VALLURI**

(The writer was the Principal Chief Commercial Manager, Southern Railway. He was decorated with the Chief of Army Staff award)

Recently, I watched a web series, Taj–Divided by Blood. I also read an Instagram post by a woman who had had two Caesarean operations. I also read another post about a woman who was extremely depressed yet emerged triumphant in life. The common reference point in the cases mentioned is the power of the human mind, how to harness and tap its potential.

The web series is all about the darker side of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Emperor Akbar. It is a riveting story about Shah Salim (later Jehangir), Daniyal Mirza and Murad Mirza, among the eleven children of the Mughal emperor.

Salim, despite all his talent, became a heavy drinker, an opium addict and spent most of his time in the harem satisfying his carnal instincts. Murad Mirza could never overcome his anger, arrogance and haste, though he was blessed with remarkable military acumen and craft. Daniyal Mirza, who was extremely obedient and religious, grappled with his demons. He grappled with his fears, sexuality and tried to be a worthy son, always searching for his mother. The three princes were all subsumed in the cesspool of negativity since they did not possess robust minds to reflect efficacious thoughts. They suffered immensely in life.

Now the hardy woman who had to undergo the Caesarean operation has become a master of her mind and runs half marathons regularly. She began with baby steps—first walking, then brisk walking, and finally running. Running a half marathon of twenty-one kilometres was certainly an arduous task, but she accepted the challenge and began practising. On a few occasions even after adequate training, she ran only fifteen to eighteen kilometres, but her legs and body caved in and she could not breast the tape. But she eventually reached the goal of completing the marathon through sheer will power and a positive thought process.

Then there is the story of a certified yoga instructor, who helps individuals live their most fulfilling lives by staying physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually fit. Before she became an instructor, she suffered from repeated migraine attacks. The intensity of the migraines was enormous which drained her completely.

Finally, in desperation she joined the Art of Living Foundation and was immensely helped by the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya—proper vision process, pranayama, yoga and meditation. She spends quality time five days a week imparting yoga to a large number of candidates and inspires several thousand others through her LinkedIn posts.

In a succinct manner she puts it: to learn yoga one needs a willing, positive mind, the desire to pause and self-connect and a yoga mat. What you do not need is expensive equipment, eye-catching gym wear, protein shakes/drinks or an extremely flexible body. A healthy and positive lifestyle is a way of living where the human mind has a significant role to play. Research has proven that the human mind is bombarded by 60,000-70,000 thoughts a day and most of them are antipathetic in nature. Consequently, we become slaves of our minds and become lethargic or destructive.

By nature, the human mind gravitates towards the past or the future. This is true of most people, successful people and even achievers. When the mind constructs a nest in the past, it is full of regrets; when it builds a home in future, the tendency is to become anxious. In both the situations it is not at peace and or in harmony with the self. Only when the mind is in the present does it find the sanctuary of happiness and peace.

There are some simple ways to train the mind to remain in the present. A regular regime of prayer, chanting, working out, meditating, planning the day in a systematic manner, practising gratitude and giving back to society, prioritising self-care, focusing on self-improvement, listening to our own gut feelings and appreciating each day as a fresh challenge and focusing on it are some methods.

A healthy and balanced lifestyle makes us grow and glow from within and the aura spreads. Without a doubt, the principle of the Law of Attraction plays a significant role in rejigging our persona. If we emit positive thoughts we attract positive thoughts, feelings, emotions and people. Unfortunately, the contrary is also true.

Therefore, it would be sagacious to look at the positive side by making our minds strong and lead a healthy lifestyle. And if nothing works, just surrender to the Almighty (if you believe) or surrender to your wishes and desires. Certainly, the mind will transfigure, and life and lifestyle will metamorphose for the better, nay the best. Like Buddha said, "To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance."

Embattled Netanyahu appeals for peace

Israeli President asks PM to halt judicial overhaul

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Ahead of a much-anticipated announcement to freeze his plan for a judicial overhaul, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday urged protesters "to behave responsibly and refrain from violence" as Israelis from all over the country started descending into Jerusalem and workers from a range of sectors joined a protest movement against the government's contentious plan.

Netanyahu's appeal came hours after President Isaac Herzog Monday appealed to him to immediately halt his controversial judicial overhaul, warning that the move has put the country's security, economy and society under threat.

Prime Minister Netanyahu in his first public statement since widespread demonstrations erupted in reaction to his sacking of the defence minister has urged protesters, from the left and right, "to behave responsibly and refrain from violence."As Israelis from all over the country started descending into Jerusalem, in a tweet Netanyahu appeared to address fears of violent clashes this evening between opponents and supporters of the government's judicial overhaul plan. "All of us are brothers and sisters," Netanyahu stressed in his tweet.Unverified reports in the local media, quoting sources in Netanyahu's Likud party, have said that the Prime Minister is going to freeze the Judicial blitz that has completely paralysed the nation with widespread strikes across all walks of life.

President Herzog's remarks came after Prime Minister Netanyahu sacked Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for opposing his judicial reforms, sparking widespread street protests. The president also called on the government to put aside political considerations for the sake of the nation.

"Last night we witnessed very difficult scenes. I appeal to the Prime Minister, members of the Government, and members of the Coalition: there are harsh and painful feelings. The entire nation is rapt with deep worry," Herzog said."Our security, economy, society — all are under threat. The whole people of Israel are looking at you. The whole Jewish People are looking at you. The whole world is looking at you," the ceremonial president in a statement.

Israeli police use a water cannon to disperse demonstrators blocking a highway during a protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to overhaul the judicial system in Tel Aviv, Israel on Monday. AP/PTI

'Diplomats strike against govt plan'

Tel Aviv: The spokesman for Israel's largest trade union says diplomats at Israeli missions abroad are also striking against the government's plan to overhaul the judiciary.

Yaniv Levy, the Histadrut spokesman, said the missions were providing only emergency services. Ambassadors and consuls-general were among those on strike. Workers from across a range of fields went on strike Monday, in a bid to ramp up pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to scrap the overhaul plan. ***AP***

China silent on reports of skipping G20 meet in Arunachal Pradesh

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Monday declined to react to reports that its officials skipped a "confidential" G20 meeting held in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as part of the mainland.

When asked about reports that China has abstained from the meeting held on Sunday at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here "I am not aware of what you said". "I have to check it with my colleagues," she said. The question and her reply did not figure in the official transcript of the media briefing posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry website hours later. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet. India firmly rejects China's claims and asserts that the state is an integral part of the country.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang visited New Delhi earlier this month to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.Qin also met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on March 2. The meeting was the first between Jaishankar and Qin after the latter became the Chinese foreign minister in December.

Taiwan's former leader Ma begins China visit

Taoyuan (Taiwan): Former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou departed for a tour of China on Monday, in what he called an attempt to reduce tensions a day after Taiwan lost one of its few remaining diplomatic partners to China. The ex-president is visiting in a private capacity, bringing a delegation of academics and college students for exchanges, as well as members of his family, but the trip is loaded with political meaning.

Ma's policies brought Taiwan and Beijing to their closest relationship ever, but his exit from office was overshadowed by massive protests against a trade deal with the mainland and his successor has focused on bolstering ties with the US and defending the autonomy of the democratically governed island that China claims as part of its own territory.Current President Tsai Ing-wen is expected to launch a 10-day diplomatic tour of her own Wednesday, ostensibly to visit the island's remaining allies in Latin America. She will stop in the US, Taiwan's biggest unofficial partner and supplier of arms.

Ma's visit comes amid rising tensions. Beijing has stepped up pressure against Taiwan in recent years, poaching its diplomatic allies while also sending military fighter jets flying towards the island on a near daily basis. On Sunday, Honduras established diplomatic relations with China, leaving Taiwan with only 13 countries that recognise it as a sovereign state. Ma, a member of the opposition Nationalist Party (Kuomingtang), will land in Shanghai before starting his visit in nearby Nanjing. He is expected to tour the mainland from March 27 to April 7, stopping in Wuhan and Changsha, as well as other cities. He is bringing college students from Taiwan to meet with fellow students from Shanghai's Fudan University and Changsha's Hunan University. Ma has framed the visit as a bid to lower the tensions in cross-strait relations through people to people exchange. ***AP***

Streets seethe with protest in France

AP ■ PARIS

A big day has come for French high school student Elisa Fares. At age 17, she is taking part in her first protest. In a country that taught the world about people power with its revolution of 1789 — and a country again seething with anger against its leaders — graduating from bystander to demonstrator is a generations-old rite of passage. Fares looks both excited and nervous as she prepares to march down Paris streets where people for centuries have similarly defied authority and declared: "Non!".

Two friends, neither older than 18 but already protest veterans whose parents took them to demonstrations when they were little, are showing Fares the ropes. They've readied eye-drops and gas masks in case police fire tear gas — as they have done repeatedly in recent weeks.

"The French are known for fighting and we'll fight," says one of the friends, Coline Marionneau, also 17. "My mother goes to a lot of demonstrations ... She says if you have things to say, you should protest." For French President Emmanuel Macron, the look of determination on their young faces only heralds deepening crisis. His government has ignited a firestorm of anger with unpopular pension reforms that he railroaded through parliament and which, most notably, push the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Furious not just with the prospect of working for longer but also with the way Macron imposed it, his opponents have switched to full-on disobedience mode. They're regularly striking and demonstrating and threatening to make his second and final term as president even more difficult than his first. It, too, was rocked by months of protests — often violent — by so-called yellow vest campaigners against social injustice.

Fares, the first-time protester, said her mother had been against her taking to the streets but has now given her blessing. "She said that if I wanted to fight, she wouldn't stop me," the teen says. Critics accuse Macron of effectively ruling by decree, likening him to France's kings of old. Their reign finished badly: In the French Revolution, King Louis XVI ended up on the guillotine. There's no danger of that happening to Macron.

But hobbled in parliament and contested on the streets piled high with reeking garbage uncollected by striking workers, he's being given a tough lesson, again, about French people power.

Zelenskyy meets UN atomic agency chief

Zaporizhzhia: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Monday with UN atomic energy chief Rafael Mariano Grossi in southern Ukraine where they discussed the precarious situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The plant, which is Europe's biggest, has lost several of its power transmission cables during Russia's war, and on multiple occasions has had to switch to emergency diesel generators.

Grossi, who is director-general of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, plans to visit the plant, which is held by Russian forces, this week. The agency has permanent staff stationed at the plant.

In the meeting, covered exclusively by The Associated Press, Grossi expressed his concern to Zelenskyy that the situation at the plant "isn't getting any better." He stressed that the situation at the plant remains tense because of the militarisation of the area around it and the recent blackout at the plant. It wasn't the first time that has occurred since Russian forces last year took it over.

The two met in the the city of Zaporizhzhia, which is in Ukrainian-held territory, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of the nuclear plant with the same name. Elsewhere, two people were killed and 29 wounded Monday when Russian forces shelled the Ukrainian city of Sloviansk, in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region, local officials said. Video footage of the aftermath showed damaged residential buildings, debris in the streets and vehicles on fire.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack as "terrorism." Russia has denied targeting residential areas even though artillery and rocket strikes have hit Ukrainian apartment buildings and civilian infrastructure daily during the war. ***AP***

Suicide bomber kills 6 in Kabul

Islamabad (AP): A suicide bomber struck on Monday near the foreign ministry in Kabul, killing at least six people and wounding several, according to officials. It was the second time this year that there has been an attack near the ministry. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing but the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group has increased attacks since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in mid-August 2021. IS has targeted Taliban officials and patrols, as well as members of the country's minority Shiites.

According to Khalid Zadran, a spokesman for the Kabul police chief, Taliban security forces spotted the bomber before he was able to reach a checkpoint at the Malik Asghar intersection, near the ministry. The attacker then detonated his explosives, killing at least six civilians. Three members of the Taliban security forces were among those wounded in the attack.

The Kabul hospital run by the EMERGENCY non-governmental organisation said it received two fatalities from the explosion and 12 wounded, including a child. In mid-January, an IS attack near the ministry killed at least five people and wounded several others.

Checkpoints line the fortified route to the ministry, which is on one of the roads leading to the presidential palace. Guards stop and search vehicles and people along the way.

The Islamic State group has also claimed other recent attacks in Kabul, including a bombing near a checkpoint at the city's military airport that killed and wounded several people and also an assault on a Kabul hotel in mid-December.

Prince Harry in court as privacy case against newspaper begins

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Prince Harry, who now lives in the US, made a surprise appearance at the High Court in London on Monday as his legal action against a newspaper group for breach of his privacy began. The 38-year-old Duke of Sussex is among a group of celebrity claimants, including singer Elton John and actor Liz Hurley, who are suing the Associated Newspapers Limited (ANL) for "abhorrent criminal activity" and "gross breaches of privacy" as part of alleged phone-tapping.

ANL, the publisher of 'Daily Mail' newspaper, denies the allegations as "preposterous smears" and Monday's preliminary hearing will consider their legal arguments for a judge to decide whether the case will go further to a full hearing. A spokesperson for ANL also said the allegations were "unsubstantiated and highly defamatory claims, based on no credible evidence". The four-day preliminary hearing is set to include ANL's bid for the claims to be dismissed without a trial.

The legal action was announced in October 2022, when law firm Hamlins representing Prince Harry set out a number of allegations against the newspaper group, including hiring

of private investigators to secretly place listening devices inside people's cars and homes and commissioning of individuals to surreptitiously listen into and record people's private telephone calls, among others.

In a statement released at the time, the newspaper group said: "We utterly and unambiguously refute these preposterous smears which appear to be nothing more than a pre-planned and orchestrated attempt to drag the Mail titles into the phone hacking scandal concerning articles up to 30 years old. "These unsubstantiated and highly defamatory claims – based on no credible evidence – appear to be simply a fishing expedition by claimants and their lawyers, some of whom have already pursued cases elsewhere," it said.

Sunak launches crackdown on anti-social behaviour

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday llaunched a new Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan to crack down on illegal activities within communities by handing additional powers to the police to punish drug-related offences and criminal gang activity. Under the new Immediate Justice scheme, those found committing anti-social behaviour will be made to repair the damage they inflicted on victims and communities, with an ambition for them to start work as soon as 48 hours after their offence.

Offenders, who will be made to wear high-visibility vests or jumpsuits and work under supervision, could be made to pick up litter, remove graffiti and wash police cars as punishment for their actions.

Victims of anti-social behaviour from the local community will be given a say in offenders' punishments to ensure justice is "visible and fits the crime". "Anti-social behaviour undermines the basic right of people to feel safe in the place they call home," said Sunak. "The public have rightly had enough – which is why I am determined to restore people's confidence that those responsible will be quickly and visibly punished. This action plan maps out how we will tackle this issue with the urgency it deserves and stamp out these crimes once and for all – so that wherever you live, you can feel safe in, and proud of your community," he said.

Under the plan's "zero-tolerance approach", Nitrous Oxide or "laughing gas" will also be banned to send a message to intimidating gangs that hang around high streets and children's parks and litter them with empty canisters.

The drug is now reported as the third most used among 16 to 24-year-olds in England and both the police and public have repeatedly reported links between use of this drug and nuisance or anti-social behaviour. "The British public are fed up with crime and nuisance behaviour in their neighbourhoods inflicting misery on people," said UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman. "There is no such thing as petty crime – not only does antisocial behaviour leave people feeling unsafe, it can also be a gateway into serious criminality.

Two shot at in US gurdwara

New York (PTI): Two people were shot at in a gurdwara in the US state of California, with authorities ruling out the incident as a hate crime. The shooting took place on Sunday around 2:30 p.m. at the Gurdwara Sacramento Sikh Society, according to Sacramento County Sheriff's Office spokesman Sgt. Amar Gandhi. The shooting took place during the gurdwara's first Nagar Kirtan, a traditional neighbourhood celebration for Indian religions such as Sikhism.Gandhi said a fistfight had broken out between two men on the temple grounds, the Sacramento Bee newspaper reported.

One of the men, Gandhi said, shot a friend of the other combatant. The second man involved in the fight then fired upon the first man and ran off. That second man remains at large, Gandhi said.

Sacramento County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Gandhi said the shooting is not related to a hate crime and described the incident as a shootout between two men who knew each other, the Fox40.com portal reported.Gandhi said the confrontation between the two men started as a hand-to-hand incident and turned into a shootout. One of the suspects is described as an Indian male while the other suspected shooter is in the hospital, Gandhi said.

Asked if there was an imminent threat to the area, the Indian-origin police official said the situation "looks very contained.""It puts a small stain on this peaceful, very joyous day," he said.

Harris visits Ghana's Prez, promises aid, investments

Accra (Ghana): US Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday praised Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo for his "democratic principles" during a visit with the West African leader, who's facing rising discontent over inflation and fresh concerns about regional security. Harris is just beginning a weeklong trip to the continent that will also take her to Tanzania and Zambia, part of a concerted effort to broaden US outreach at a time when China and Russia have entrenched interests of their own in Africa.

On Monday, the vice president was welcomed into the Ghanaian presidential palace, called the Jubilee House, where she promised assistance with security in the nation and increased investments there.

"As president of Ghana, you have been very courageous and forward in terms of standing for democratic principles," Harris said to Akufo-Addo. "I thank you for the friendship you have offered the United States"

Akufo-Addo oversaw one of the world's fast-growing economies before the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the cost of food and other necessities has been skyrocketing, and the country is facing a debt crisis as it struggles to make payments.In addition, sporadic fighting has increased in Ghana's north, which borders the more tumultuous nation of Burkina Faso and the Sahel, a region where local offshoots of al-Qaida and the Islamic State group have been operating. Akufo-Addo called terrorism a "poison" that was spreading across West Africa, making the region unstable.

"We're spending a lot of sleepless nights trying to make sure we're protected here," he told the vice president as the two gathered in a conference room at the palace, their delegations seated on opposite sides of a long table. Akufo-Addo called for solidarity as countries like Ghana work to get their economies "back on track." He also expressed concern that private American investors tend to overlook the nation. ***AP***

Complex housing Wright Brothers plane factory gutted

Dayton (AP): An early morning fire damaged a commercial building complex housing an historic airplane factory founded by the Wright Brothers in Ohio on Sunday, authorities said. Dayton fire crews were sent to the site just before 2:30 a.m. and found heavy fire throughout the complex. Fire crews used hoses to spray water on the flames and used aerial ladders to get water into openings in the roof.

The Dayton Daily News reports that crews were still on the scene nearly 12 hours after the fire was reported. Black smoke continued to stream from a collection of multiple hangar buildings, including historic Wright Brothers airplane factory hangars, and flames could be seen on the backside of the hangars, the paper reported.

Capt. Brad French said in a news release that the structure involved is listed on the National Historic Register as the first aircraft manufacturing facility founded by the Wright Brothers. Mackensie Wittmer, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Area, said in a Facebook post that the group was "deeply saddened by the fire that damaged our historic Wright Company airplane factory, the first-purpose built buildings for the aviation industry." Officials were working to assess the damage, Wittmer said.

Jack Ma returns to mainland China

Hong Kong (AP): Alibaba founder Jack Ma has resurfaced in China after months of overseas travel, visiting a school Monday in the city where his company is headquartered and discussed topics such as artificial intelligence. Ma founded e-commerce firm Alibaba in the 1990s and was once China's richest man.

He has kept a low profile with few public appearances since Nov. 2020, when he had publicly criticised China's regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai.

Shortly afterward, authorities put the brakes on the initial public offering of Alibaba's financial affiliate Ant Group, which had been set to raise $34.5 billion in what would have been the world's largest share offering at the time. Alibaba was later investigated and fined $2.8 billion for breaching antitrust rules as Chinese authorities cracked down on the once-freewheeling technology industry.

In the past year, Ma has been travelling, with reports of sightings in Europe, Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong. His itinerary has been closely watched as a barometer of Beijing's attitude towards private businesses.

On Monday, Ma visited the Yungu School in Hangzhou, in eastern China, that was established by Ma and other partners of Alibaba, according to a WeChat post by the school. Ma discussed technologies such as the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT, and spoke of his passion for learning. Alibaba did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Pak begins talks on SCO participation

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has begun in-house consultations to decide whether to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings of the defence and foreign ministers in India, a report said on Monday. New Delhi has already extended invitations to Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. The defence ministers' meeting is scheduled in April in New Delhi while foreign ministers would meet in May in Goa, according to the Express Tribune.

India, the current president of the eight-nation SCO, is holding a series of events. Barring one event where Pakistan was denied entry over a map controversy, Islamabad has attended all other events, including the chief justices' conference and meeting of energy ministers via video link. However, a three-member Pakistan military delegation headed by a Brigadier attended the meeting of an expert working group under the Council of Defence Ministers in person in New Delhi on Thursday.

The presence of the Pakistani delegation in New Delhi has raised the possibility of defence and foreign ministers travelling to India. While the Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson insisted that the final decision would be taken closer to the events, sources said that in-house consultations are already underway.

The authorities are currently divided over attending the high-profile meetings hosted by India. One view is that given the current state of the bilateral relationship, Pakistan, if required, would only send junior officials to the SCO meetings. However, other officials do not agree with this. They believe that Pakistan must not leave such key regional forums unattended, and since SCO comprises powerful countries, including Russia and China, Pakistan must use this opportunity to advance its interests.

The ties between India and Pakistan came under severe strain after the Indian Air Force fighter jets pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Balakot in Pakistan in February 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack. The relations further deteriorated after India in August 2019 scrapped the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two union territories.

The Express Tribune quoted sources as saying that a lot will depend on China, Pakistan's closest ally. If China, being the founding member of SCO that played a key role in making Pakistan its full-time member, asks Islamabad to attend the meetings it would be difficult for the government to ignore the advice, the report said. Pakistan and India were accepted as full members of the SCO after both sides committed not to undermine regional focus by bringing up their bilateral issues.

Sources told the newspaper that foreign minister Bilawal was keen to go to India for the SCO meeting. If Pakistan attends the defence and foreign ministers' meetings, it is possible that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif may also go to India in July for the SCO summit. Sources said the final decision about Pakistani participation in SCO ministerial meetings and a summit would be taken after due diligence. It would also depend on the political situation in Pakistan, they added.

Imran gets interim bail in 7 cases

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Monday granted interim bail to Imran Khan in seven different cases registered against him following clashes at the federal judicial complex here earlier this month when the former prime minister arrived from Lahore to appear in a corruption case hearing.

A two-member division bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, heard the bail applications. Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, sought interim bails in seven cases registered against him in Golra, Bara Kahu, Ramna, Khanna and CTD police stations.

Barrister Salman Safdar, Khan's counsel, who filed the pleas, stated that the former prime minister would suffer "irreparable loss" if he was arrested. "Furthermore, being head of the single largest political party, there is an apprehension that his political adversaries and opponents would be able to further their nefarious designs and political ambitions if pre-arrest bail is not granted to the petitioner," according to the petition.

Security personnel with bulletproof shields escort Imran Khan as he arrives to appear in a court in Islamabad on Monday AP/PTI

The court after hearing arguments granted interim bail to the former premier. Intense clashes erupted outside the judicial complex on March 18 when Khan arrived from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana case.

During the confrontation between PTI workers and police, over 25 security personnel were injured, prompting Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal to defer the court hearing in this case till March 30. A video posted on PTI's official Twitter on Monday showed Khan entering the court premises with Islamabad police guarding his bullet-proof vehicle.

Pak-origin Humza Yousaf declared leader of Scottish National Party

London (PTI): Pakistani-origin Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) Humza Yousaf on Monday won the Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership contest and is set to be named as Scotland's new First Minister, replacing Nicola Sturgeon.

The 37-year-old MSP served as the Health and Social Care minister in Sturgeon's Cabinet until she announced her resignation last month, triggering a leadership contest within the governing party for the devolved region.

Yousaf defeated his closest rival finance minister Kate Forbes, who spent some of her formative years in India, where her parents worked as Christian missionaries, and now faces a vote at the Scottish Parliament of Holyrood on Tuesday before being formally confirmed as the region's First Minister.

"It is hard for me to find the words to describe just how honoured I am to be entrusted by our membership of the SNP to be the party's next leader and to be on the cusp of being our country's next First Minister," Yousaf said in his victory speech in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh.

Yousaf said he felt "like the luckiest man in the world" as he thanked his wife and children for their support. "I feel like the luckiest man in the world to be standing here as leader of the SNP, a party I joined almost 20 years ago and that I love so dearly," he said.

Yousaf said he would serve "in the interests of all party members" and "lead Scotland in the interests of all of our citizens, whatever your political allegiance". He vowed to be a First Minister "for all of Scotland". The Glasgow-born and bred politician is the son of Pakistan-born Muzaffar Yousaf, whose family migrated from Mian Channu to Glasgow in the 1960s. Yousaf's mother, Shaaista Bhutta, was born in Kenya and migrated with her family to Scotland too.

N Korea test-fires 2 more missiles as US sends carrier

A US Navy aircraft Hawkeye and crew members are seen on the flight deck of the USS Nimitz off the coast of Busan, South Korea, on Monday AP/PTI

AP ■ SEOUL

A nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier and its battle group began exercises with South Korean warships on Monday, hours after North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles in an apparent protest of the allies' expanding drills.

The seventh missile test this month underscored heightening tensions in the region as both the North's weapons tests and the US-South Korea joint military exercises have intensified in a cycle of tit-for-tat. The launches may have been timed for the arrival of the USS Nimitz and its strike group, including a guided missile cruiser and two destroyers, which engaged in air defense exercises and other drills with South Korean warships in waters near Jeju island.

Jang Do Young, a South Korean navy spokesperson, said the drills were aimed at sharpening joint operational capabilities and demonstrating the U.S. commitment to defend its ally with the full range of options, including nuclear, in face of the North's "escalating nuclear and missile threats." The Nimitz strike group was expected to arrive in the South Korean mainland port of Busan on Tuesday.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the two North Korean missiles were fired from a western inland area south of the North's capital of Pyongyang from around 7:47 am to 8 am and travelled around 370 kilometers (229 miles) before landing at sea. Japan's military said the missiles, which landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, flew on an irregular trajectory and reached a maximum altitude of 50 kilometers (31 miles).

Japan has previously used similar language to describe a North Korean solid-fuel missile apparently modelled after Russia's Iskander mobile ballistic system, which is designed to be maneuverable in low-altitude flight to better evade South Korean missile defences. North Korea also has another short-range system with similar characteristics that resembles the US MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said North Korea may dial up its testing activity further with more missile launches or even conducting its first nuclear test since September 2017. The South Korean and Japanese militaries denounced the latest launches as a serious provocation threatening regional peace and said they were working with the United States to analyze the missiles further.

Pak's electronic media watchdog bans live coverage of rallies

Islamabad(PTI): Pakistan's electronic media watchdog banned the live coverage of rallies and public gatherings in the federal capital on Monday, hours before former prime minister Imran Khan was scheduled to appear before a top court here seeking interim bail in seven cases.

The PEMRA issued this communique after law enforcement agencies said Khan's appearance before the Islamabad High Court could lead to a possible law and order situation in and around the federal capital. The watchdog observed that satellite television channels run live footage/images of violent mobs attacking police and law enforcement agencies.

"Such footage or images were seen on TV without any editorial oversight during the recent standoff between political party workers and law enforcement agencies in Lahore and Islamabad wherein, the violent mob used petrol bombs, injuring armless (sic) policemen and blazing (sic) police vehicles," it observed. It said that airing footage on different satellite TV channels "created chaos and panic" among viewers and the police. "Such activism by mob not only jeopardises law and order situation but also makes public properties and lives vulnerable," it warned. PEMRA said airing such content would be tantamount to the violation of several Supreme Court judgments. Earlier, PEMRA banned satellite television channels from broadcasting live and recorded speeches of Khan with immediate effect, hours after the former premier dodged arrest and made "provocative statements against state institutions."

Pak ex-PM moves court against Interior Minister

Islamabad (PTI): Imran Khan filed an application in a Pakistani court here on Monday against Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah for calling the former premier an "enemy" of his party. Sanaullah, who is very close to former premier and London-based PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, said when the ruling party feels that its existence is under threat, it will go to any extent against its chief political rival.

In an interview with a private TV channel, the senior leader of PML-N termed the ex-PM and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief an "enemy" of his party and said Khan will be "treated like that". "Either he will be eliminated from the political arena or us. He has now taken the country's politics to a point where only one of the two can remain — PTI or PML-N," Sanaullah said on Saturday.

The PTI said it has never witnessed in the past that a ruling party openly declared eliminating a popular leader of Pakistan. Seeking the Islamabad High IHC's intervention on this issue, Khan has requested the court to block his arrest and prevent the respondents from acting on their "plans", according to The Express Tribune newspaper.

No atmosphere found at faraway Earth-sized world

Cape Canaveral (US): The Webb Space Telescope has found no evidence of an atmosphere at one of the seven rocky, Earth-sized planets orbiting a nearby star. Scientists said on Monday that doesn't bode well for the rest of the planets in this solar system, some of which are in the sweet spot for harbouring water and potentially life.

The NASA-led team reported little if no atmosphere exists at the innermost planet in the Trappist system, 40 light-years away. The researchers used a special technique geared toward a warm planet like this one. Results were published on Monday in the journal Nature.

Strike paralyses rail, air travel in Germany

AP ■ BERLIN

Trains, planes and public transit systems stood still across much of Germany on Monday as labour unions called a major one-day strike over salaries in an effort to win inflation-busting raises for their members.

The 24-hour walkout — one of the biggest in decades — also affected cargo transport by rail and ship, as workers at the country's ports and waterways joined the strike.

Many commuters opted to drive to work, causing some delays on the roads, while those who could worked from home. Unions are seeking a pay increase of at least 10.5% and have dismissed offers from employers of about 5% over two years plus one-off payments.

High inflation also seen elsewhere last year has hit many workers hard, said Ulrich Silberbach of the Civil Service Federation. "We have recorded drops in real wages and these need to be balanced out," he told reporters in Berlin, adding that some of his union's members in larger cities are having to apply for state benefits to afford rent.

Trains parked near the central train station in Frankfurt, Germany, on Monday AP/PTI

Silberbach said that he hoped employers would increase their offer in upcoming talks — otherwise, unions might have to consider an open-ended strike. His colleague Martin Burkert from the EVG rail union lamented that workers' pay is a fraction of what some top managers earn.

But rail company Deutsche Bahn called the union's demands exaggerated and warned that millions of commuters would be affected. "Thousands of companies that normally send or receive their goods by rail will also suffer," Deutsche Bahn spokesman Achim Strauss said.

"The environment and the climate will also suffer in the end. Today's winners are the oil companies." Three days of talks are scheduled between the two sides. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, who represents the federal government in the negotiations, said her side would engage in the discussions in a "tough but also fair and constructive" fashion. Faeser said she was confident that a good solution can be reached.

Labour strikes are a regular occurrence in Germany and normally end in a compromise deal between unions and employers. The walkout already caused disruption and delays Sunday, as travellers scrambled to reach their destinations early.

Controversial vote law amendments passed by Iraqi parliament

Baghdad (AP): Iraqi lawmakers passed on early Monday controversial amendments to the country's election law that could undermine the chances for smaller parties and independent candidates to win seats in future polls. The amendments increase the size of electoral districts, a move widely backed by the Coordination Framework, a coalition of Iran-backed parties.

The coalition forms the majority bloc in the current parliament, which brought Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to power last year. The bill passed in a 206-12 vote in the 329-seat assembly, according to media reports. The remaining lawmakers were absent from the hourslong session, which started on Sunday night. The amendments also reverse key articles passed ahead of the 2021 federal election and redraw the electoral maps to have Iraq return to one electoral district per each governorate.

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Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
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UN-backed probe cites crimes against humanity in Libya

Geneva (AP): UN-backed human rights experts said on Monday there is evidence that crimes against humanity have been committed against Libyans and migrants in chaos-stricken Libya, including women being forced into sexual slavery.

The investigators commissioned by the UN-backed Human Rights Council also faulted the European Union for sending support to Libyan forces that they say contributed to crimes against migrants and Libyans, and called on EU authorities to review their policies toward Libya. The findings come in an extensive new report, based on interviews with hundreds of people, including migrants and witnesses, that wraps up a fact-finding mission created nearly three years ago to investigate rights violations and abuses in the North African country. The mission shared its findings with the International Criminal Court.

Oil-rich but largely lawless Libya has in recent years emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants seeking a better quality of life in Europe. Activists have long decried horrible conditions faced by migrants who were trafficked and smuggled across the Mediterranean.

Spokespersons for the government in the capital of Tripoli, which works in western Libya, and the forces of a powerful commander that controls eastern and southern Libya, were not immediately available for comment. The investigators found "reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity were committed against Libyans and migrants throughout Libya", said Mohamed Auajjar, the head of the fact-finding mission. Speaking in Arabic through a translator at a news conference in Geneva, he said his team unearthed "numerous cases of arbitrary detention, murder, torture, rape, enslavement, sexual enslavement and enforced disappearance." The Libyan coast guard, which has received training and equipment from the EU, has worked "in close coordination" with trafficking networks in Libya, the report said.

France 24 suspended for interview with jihadi

Dakar (Senegal): Burkina Faso's military junta has suspended French broadcaster, France 24, for interviewing a top jihadi rebel, a government spokesman announced on Monday. The broadcasting of France 24's programmes will be blocked throughout Burkina Faso because of an interview the outlet did with the leader of an al-Qaida aligned group, Jean-Emmanuel Ouedraogo said in a statement.

"It is with regret that the government discovered two weeks ago an interview with the chief of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb' on France 24, part of the France Medias Monde group. Without contesting the freedom of the channel's editorial choices, the government nevertheless questions the ethics that govern the professional practice of journalism on France 24," he said. By describing the views of the head of the rebel group, France 24 had acted as a communication agency for the jihadis and gave them space to legitimise their actions, he said. *AP*

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client, HERO HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED is mortgaging one property bearing address third floor, with roof rights, plot bearing no. 21, admeasuring 168 sq. yds. out of rect. no.9, killa no.27-30, and rect no.9 killa no.3 "Shiv Puri", village Khureji Khas, Illaqa Shahdara Delhi-110051 currently owned by Sh. Rajesh Chawla, Sh. Sanjay Kumar, Sh. Deepak Gulati and Smt. Lalita Chopra virtue of sale deed 25.06.2022 doc. no. 5445 SR-VIII, Delhi. This property was trasferred by legal heir of Leela Wanti Khanna namely Ramesh Chander Bagga who became owner by virtue of reliquishment deed executed by Arvind Bagga, Sudesh Bajaj, Shashi Bala, Prem Bagga, Amit Bagga And Neeraj Bagga doc. no. 3540 dated 04.05.2022. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/ Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

Vishal Mehan (Advocate)
E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092
Mobile No. 9811215181

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles.

VEHICLES FOR SALE

1) ASHOK_LEY_AL_1214
UP37AT2456 -YOM 2019
MINIMUM RESERVE PRICE 774876.6

UNDER HYPOTHECATION WITH M/S KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK IS UNDER SALE IN ITS "AS IS WHERE IS CONDITION" INTERESTED PARTIES CAN GIVE THEIR QUOTATIONS (ONLINE/ OFFLINE) WITHIN 15 DAYS FROM THIS PAPER PUBLICATION I.E. ON OR BEFORE 12.04.2023 (PLEASE NOTE THAT CLOSING AUCTION DATE WOULD NOT BE A WEEKLY OFF / HOLIDAY).

BRANCH ADDRESS: KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD., PLOT NO.7 INSTITUTIONAL AREA, SECTOR-125 NOIDA NEAR DELL CAMPUS NOIDA (U.P) UP-201313 OR CONTACT :GUNJAN SINGH KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD. CONTACT / 918510032426 EMAIL-gunjan.singh1@kotak.com

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
(Through e-tendering)

Name of work with its location	Provision of four Terminals of FOIS Connectivity and 30 Nos. of Connection for Railnet at ETC/GZB.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 54,42,625.57/- only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 1,08,900.00/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time - **26.04.2023** up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website **www.ireps.gov.in** & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-968 Dated: 27.03.2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 933/23

GUJARAT WATER SUPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
TENDER NOTICE NO- SK/ RC / 02 of 2022-23
(2nd Attempt)
Annual Rate Contract

Sr. No	Item	Tender ID
1.	Manufacture, Supply and Delivery of Various Sizes of 3 Core Flat PVC Copper Cable for Submersible Pumps as per IS 694/2010 [Class-5] with ISI Mark (only Indian manufacturer)	582962

Pre-bid meeting on Dtd. 03/04/2023 at 11.00 Hrs. at GWSSB
Last Date of Online Submission of Tender:- 10/04/2023
Bid Opening Date:- 11/04/2023 at 15.05 Hrs
Contact Office:- Executive Engineer, Public Health Mechanical Store Division, "A" Block, Patnagar Yojana Bhavan, 2nd Floor, Near GH-4, Sector-16, Gandhinagar-382 016, Gujarat State. Tel/fax. No. (079) 23222844, 9978493321
The detailed tender notice and tender documents are available on **www.nprocure.com**
For Village Level Drinking water Complaint Please Contact our Toll Free No : 1916

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
P.H. Mech, Store Division
Guj. W.S. & S. Board
Gandhinagar.

No/INF/VPN/2023/G/2760

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender No.: 39-TRD-NDLS-2022-23 Dated 27.03.2023

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

1	Name of Work with its location	Design, Supply, Erection Testing & commissioning of 25Kv ac OHE in connection with "Conversion of line no 4 into common loop line with provision of cross over at JHL end of Tohana station" on DLI-BTI section
2	Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 6460665.73/-
3	Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 129200.00
4	E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	10.04.2023
5	E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	24.04.2023 (15.00 hrs.)
6	Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	**www.ireps.gov.in**

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 934/23

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi for & on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:

1	**Name of Work with its location**	Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 25Kv ac OHE for electrification of DLT Washing Line no. 1 & 2 & Rajdhani Washing Line no. 11 & 12 at New Delhi Yard under "Mission Raftar Project".
2	**Approx. Cost of work**	Rs. 8449001.69
3	**Earnest Money Deposit**	Rs. 169000.00
4	**E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period**	10.04.2023
5	**E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time**	24.04.2023 (15.00 hrs.)
6	**Fund Allocation**	43424103
7	**Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen**	**www.ireps.gov.in**

E-Tender No.: 16c-TRD-NDLS-2022-23 Dated: 27.03.2023 936/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

'Real estate gets $32 bn equity capital in 2018-22'

Likely to garner $12-13 billion in 2023-24: CBRE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate sector has received an equity capital of $32 billion during the last five years and is expected to attract $12-13 billion during 2023-24 with office assets likely to garner maximum fund, according to CBRE.

Real estate consultant CBRE has estimated that equity flows in real estate sector will remain steady with expected investment at around $12-13 billion over the next two years with an average $6-7 billion flow per year.

Equity investments include those by private equity funds, pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, institutional investors, real estate developers, investment banks, corporate groups, and REITs, etc.

CBRE expects that office assets would continue to garner a majority share of total institutional inflows, followed by Industrial & Logistics (I&L) and sites/land parcels. In addition, alternative investments, particularly in data centres, may take off.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO — India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, "India's strong underlying economic and demographic fundamentals, coupled with the evolving global trade landscape across sectors, builds a strong case for higher investments in real estate in 2023."

"China+1 strategy being adopted by many global corporates to de-risk supply chain requirements and mitigate production challenges is expected to benefit India. This would lead India to capture an increased market share in the global supply chain over the next 5-6 years," he added.

This would trigger the economy to grow at a higher CAGR, outpacing the world average and making India one of the attractive real estate investment destinations, Magazine said.

During the next two years, in terms of locations mainly metros and tier-1 cities are likely to continue to be the major recipients of equity inflows.

According to CBRE data, the equity flow in real estate stood at $5.9 billion in 2018, $6.4 billion in 2019, $6 billion in 2020, $5.9 billion in 2021 and $7.8 billion in 2022.

During the 2018-22 period, Mumbai followed by Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru dominated cumulative investments accounting for 63 per cent share since 2018. This translates to about $20 billion worth of equity capital deployed across these cities out of $32 billion equity flows in the last five years.

Sensex snaps two-day losing streak on gains in RIL, Maruti

Nifty tests 17k level

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex snapped two-day losing streak to close 126 points higher on Monday, propped up by buying in index heavyweights Reliance Industries, Maruti and SBI amid a higher opening in European equities.

However, investors remained cautious amid stress in the US and European financial systems, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 126.76 points or 0.22 per cent to finish at 57,653.86. During the day, the index witnessed a high of 58,019.55 and a low of 57,415.02.

The broader NSE Nifty advanced 40.65 points or 0.24 per cent to end at 16,985.70, with 27 of its scrips ending in the green.

Reliance Industries emerged as the biggest gainer in the Sense pack, rising 1.54 per cent, followed by Maruti, Sun Pharma, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and HDFC Bank.

On the other hand, Power Grid, Axis Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors were among the major laggards.

A strengthening rupee bolstered sentiment, even as relentless foreign capital outflows restricted the gains, according to traders.

"...The market ended mixed with marginal gains in large caps while mid and small caps had losses. Some certainty was seen in domestic banks and large caps due to ease in the US and European markets aided by reports on the acquisition of SVB by US lender First Citizens Bank.

"However, investors continue to remain cautious as stress in the US and European financial systems makes their central banks' actions complex," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge ended 1.50 per cent lower while the midcap index dipped 0.37 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, healthcare, FMCG, bankex, metal and teck were the gainers.

All 10 Adani group firms end lower; Adani Power, Adani Transmission fall nearly 5%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All the ten listed firms of the Adani group ended the day in the negative territory on Monday, with Adani Power, Adani Transmission, Adani Wilmar and Adani Total Gas falling nearly 5 per cent each.

Shares of Adani Power tanked 4.98 per cent, Adani Transmission tumbled 4.98 per cent, Adani Wilmar dived 4.93 per cent and Adani Total Gas slumped 4.91 per cent on the BSE.

The stock of NDTV went lower by 4.60 per cent, Adani Green Energy fell by 4.40 per cent, Adani Ports dropped 1.43 per cent, ACC dipped 1.01 per cent, Adani Enterprises declined 0.99 per cent and Ambuja Cements (0.59 per cent).

Many of the group firms hit their lower circuit limits during the day.

In the equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 126.76 points or 0.22 per cent to finish at 57,653.86 after a volatile trade.

Out of the ten listed firms of the Adani group, seven companies ended the day in the negative territory on Friday. Stocks of eight Adani group companies out of the 10 listed entities closed in the green on Wednesday. On Thursday, five group stocks ended higher, while five of them finished lower.

The group stocks have taken a beating on the exchanges since the report by the US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research came in January this year.

The report had made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share-price manipulation, against it.

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

Meanwhile, the NSE and BSE on Friday said Adani Total Gas and Adani Transmission will move to the first stage of the long term additional surveillance measure framework from March 27.

On March 10, both exchanges put the two companies under the second stage of the long-term Additional Surveillance Measure (ASM) framework.

In two separate circulars, the bourses said these securities will continue in the framework but will be moved from respective lower stage ASM from March 27.

The parameters for short-listing securities under ASM include high-low variation, client concentration, number of price band hits, close-to-close price variation and price-earning ratio.

New debt mutual fund norms: AMCs open subscription for international schemes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Several asset management companies (AMCs) have opened up subscription for international schemes to maximise inflows ahead of new taxation rules for debt mutual funds kicking in from April 1.

The fund houses that resumed their international schemes are — Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund, Mirae Asset Mutual Fund and Edelweiss Mutual Fund.

Edelweiss Mutual has opened its all seven international funds for subscription from this Monday. It has started accepting switch-in or lumpsum transactions in these schemes.

"We had some limits, so we thought of letting investors take benefit of taxation by investing before March 31," Niranjan Awasthi, Head - Product, Marketing and Digital Business at Edelweiss AMC told PTI.

Mirae Asset has opened subscription in a lump sum manner for three international ETFs and three Fund of Fund (FoF) based on these ETFs from March 27 onwards.

The existing Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) and Systematic Transfer Plan (STP) will reopen from March 29 onwards. However, fresh SIP and STP will not be allowed.

"Since we have limited room available to take fresh inflows, these funds are likely to get closed again in future for subscription, in order to comply with the current regulatory limit and applicable guidelines for the overseas funds," Siddharth Srivastava, Head - ETF Product & Fund Manager at Mirae Asset Investment Managers (India) Pvt Ltd said.

Bullish on Indian market; continuing to invest through partners: Coca-Cola prez

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Global beverages major The Coca-Cola Company is bullish on the Indian market and is continuing to invest in the country through its partners, the company's President and Chief Financial Officer John Murphy said on Monday.

India's rapid progress in infrastructure, electrification and digitisation offer a long runway ahead for the economy to grow and it fosters confidence, he said at a media round table here.

A lot of development has taken place in urban and rural India, which has created an emerging middle class, ensuring growth for many years to come, he said.

"When you have an economy growing, our industry typically benefits from economic growth," he said.

"For us, there are tremendous ingredients to the growth equation that we are developing. And to manage growth, you have to invest. We are fortunate to have partners in India who believe in the opportunity they have and are investing in infrastructure and people," he noted.

A lot of investment is underway through franchise bottling partners in the country, who are investing while "believing the opportunity ahead", he said, adding that it is going to continue.

The cola major, which is divesting investments in bottling operations around the world, including the Indian market, would continue the exercise in a "thoughtful and very deliberate manner" as it plans to focus on building brands and being a good franchisor, he said.

About the reasons for the company's bullish outlook on India, he said infrastructure development that is taking place in a "systematic way" across India is a key driver.

Moreover, electrification in the rural parts has also transformed the landscape, which is an "extraordinary progress".

FCI stops wheat auction under OMSS for now as procurement of fresh crop begins next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) on Monday said wheat sale at discounted rates via e-auction to bulk consumers, institutions and state governments has been stopped for now as procurement of the fresh crop begins next month.

Under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), the FCI has sold 33 lakh tonnes of wheat till March 15 through e-auction, out of which, buyers have lifted 31 lakh tonnes of the grain so far. They have to lift the balance quantity by March 31.

"The last e-auction of wheat to bulk consumers was undertaken on March 15. The auction has been stopped for now as the procurement of the fresh crop will pick up in the coming days," FCI Managing Director Ashok K Meena told PTI.

Sale of wheat to institutions like Nafed and state governments under the OMSS has also been stopped. The wheat auction will resume only if there is a need to intervene in the market, he added.

The government in January had announced plans to sell wheat in the open market from its buffer stock under the OMSS in order to check rising wheat and wheat flour prices.

A total of 50 lakh tonnes of wheat was allocated for sale under the OMSS. Out of the allocated quantity, FCI was mandated to sell a total of 45 lakh tonnes of wheat to bulk users till March 15 through weekly e-auctions.

About 3 lakh tonnes of wheat was earmarked for state governments and 2 lakh tonnes for institutions like Nafed for converting it into wheat flour and then selling at ₹27.50 per kilogramme.

Under the OMSS, the reserve price of fair and average (FAQ) quality wheat was also fixed at a discounted rate of Rs 2,150 per quintal, while for Under Relaxed Specifications (URS) wheat at Rs 2,125 per quintal.

FCI is the government's nodal agency for procurement and distribution of foodgrains.

The government aims to procure 34.15 million tonnes wheat in the 2023-24 marketing year starting April, higher than 18.79 million tonnes purchased in the previous year.

Wheat procurement had declined last year due to a fall in domestic production and higher exports.

IDFC First Bank ties with Crunchfish to demonstrate offline retail payments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IDFC First Bank on Monday said it has partnered with Swedish company Crunchfish to pilot a project to demonstrate offline retail payments.

IDFC First Bank, is set to be a part of RBI's pilot project to enable offline payments, the private sector lender said, adding that the project will give access to digital payments even when there is no network.

The unique digital payment solution was designed by Crunchfish for merchants and customers under the RBI's Regulatory Sandbox Program, IDFC First Bank said in a release.

"This project will provide support for offline retail payments based on a Digital Cash platform to the payment ecosystem of India. IDFC FIRST Bank will be one of the first few banks to be a part of this pilot project by HDFC Bank," it said.

The application was approved by the RBI to demonstrate offline payments between two banks. The Development and Demonstration Agreement which is a non-commercial agreement has now been signed to give IDFC First Bank access to the Digital Cash SDK.

Commercial terms for deployment will be regulated in a Software License Agreement.

Larsen & Toubro arm bags new large orders in domestic, overseas markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) on Monday said its power transmission and distribution business has secured new orders in the domestic and overseas markets.

"L&T Construction wins large orders for its power transmission & distribution business," L&T said in a statement.

As per company's classification, orders ranging between ₹2,500 crore and ₹5,000 crore fall in the category of large orders.

In India, the company has bagged orders in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, while it has bagged the international orders in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, the statement said. Additional orders have been won in the ongoing substation and transmission line works in India and the Far East, it said.

T Madhava Das, whole-time director and senior executive vice president (Utilities), said, "The logical next step after 100 per cent electrification is to modernise our distribution systems with smart and intelligent elements. It is also heartening to facilitate evacuation and integration of renewable energy across multiple countries through timely and safe construction of high capacity transmission systems to speed up global energy transition".

Larsen & Toubro is an Indian multinational engaged in EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services.

Gold declines ₹640; silver tumbles ₹700

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price declined Rs 640 to Rs 59,220 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 59,860 per 10 grams on Friday.

Silver also tumbled Rs 700 to Rs 70,140 per kilogram.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi market traded at Rs 59,220 per 10 grams, down Rs 640 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas market, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,970 per ounce and USD 23.10 per ounce, respectively.

Rupee gains 3 paise to close at 82.37 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to close at 82.37 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, as a positive trend in domestic equities and a weak dollar supported investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.36 against the American currency and finally settled at 82.37 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 3 paise over its previous close of 82.40.

During the trading session, the rupee touched a high of 82.27 and a low of 82.42 against the dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.02 per cent to 103.09.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.68 per cent to USD 75.50 per barrel.

According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the Indian rupee appreciated amid positive domestic markets and a soft Dollar. However, positive crude oil prices capped sharp gains.

Sebi cancels registration of Capvision Investment Advisor for misleading investors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Monday cancelled the registration of Capvision Investment Advisor for promising assured profit to clients in the securities market and misleading investors.

Capvision Investment Advisor was registered with Sebi as an Investment Adviser in June 2014. It is a partnership firm with partners Ravi Prakash Mishra and Rekha Mishra.

In its order, Sebi found that Capvision was engaged in "non-genuine and deceptive activity" of obtaining payments from clients to third-party bank accounts.

Further, Capvision has made representations to its clients, promising such assured returns and thus failed in its responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity towards its clients. Accordingly, it has violated the code of conduct specified under the investment adviser (IA) rules.

Also, Sebi said that promising assured profit in the securities market amounts to misrepresentation and misleading investors. Such reckless conduct by Capvision intended to induce investors to deal in securities constitutes 'fraud' under the PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) Regulations.

The regulator noted that the entity being a registered intermediary has failed to appear in the proceeding and defend the allegation of violation of PFUTP Regulations.

In the past, two adjudication orders were passed against Capvision, levying penalties of Rs 75 lakh and Rs 8 lakh for flouting IA norms, however, these fines were not paid. Following this, recovery proceedings were initiated by Sebi in 2017 and 2018 and the bank accounts of Capvision were frozen.

Thereafter, Partner No 1 -- Ravi Prakash Mishra, who was the main proprietor of Capvision, engaged one P Chourasiya to open new bank accounts for receipt of money from the clients of his investment advisory business.

LG starts manufacturing of Dual Inverter Air Conditioner Compressors in India

New Delhi: South Korean consumer durables maker LG Electronics on Monday said it has started manufacturing Dual Inverter Air Conditioner Compressors at its plant in Greater Nodia. LG Electronics India, which is among the leading players in the residential air-conditioning market here, has invested around Rs 100 crore in the new facility in Uttar Pradesh.

The new line has a capacity to roll out one million units per year, the company said.

According to the company, it has 'become the first brand to manufacture its own Dual Inverter Air Conditioner compressor in India'. *PTI*

BMW plans to launch 19 car models in India this year; eyes double-digit growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury auto maker BMW plans to introduce 19 car models, including electric vehicles, in India this year as it looks to sustain double- digit sales growth in the country, a top company official said on Monday.

The car maker, which expects 2023 to be the best for it in terms of sales in the country so far, also aims for electric vehicles to account for about 15 per cent of its overall sales this year.

The group also plans to introduce three bike models under the BMW Motorrad business in India this year.

"We are going to launch 22 products which includes 19 cars and three bikes during this year," BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah told PTI in an interaction.

It would be a mix of all new product introductions and facelifts of existing model range, he added.

The company has been launching over twenty products a year for the last few years, Pawah said, adding, "two-third of our volume will be either new or refreshed products which is probably for the first time that so much of the product is changing in one year itself".

'RONALDO VERY IMPORTANT FOR PORTUGAL'

AP ■ LUXERBORG

Cristiano Ronaldo remains a "very important" player for Portugal, coach Roberto Martinez said on Sunday after the veteran striker scored a second successive brace in Euro 2024 qualifying against Luxembourg. The 38-year-old opened the scoring for the Euro 2016 winners by turning in Nuno Mendes' header and slotted home another in the 31st minute as Portugal won 6-0.

Ronaldo, who also netted twice against Liechtenstein on Thursday, increased his records of most men's international appearances and goals to 198 and 122 respectively.

"Cristiano is a unique player in the world, with the highest number of international caps," said Martinez, who has restored Ronaldo to the starting line-up after he was dropped during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"The experience he has for the dressing room is very important.

"All players have an important role. The younger ones due to their willingness to play and players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Rui Patricio and Bernardo Silva bring experience.

"It's important to have a complete dressing room."

Martinez joined Portugal after the World Cup, replacing Fernando Santos who had been in charge since 2014.

The Spaniard has enjoyed a fine start, with his team already two points clear at the top of Group J having scored 10 goals without reply. Joao Felix, Bernardo Silva, Otavio and Rafael Leao were all also on the scoresheet in Luxembourg.

Italy beat Malta 2-0 in qualifiers

AP ■ TA'QALI

Argentina-born striker Mateo Retegui is fast becoming the center forward Italy has been sorely lacking.

Retegui scored again in Italy's 2-0 win over Malta on Sunday to make it two goals in as many matches as the defending champion recorded its first win in European Championship qualifying.

The 23-year-old Retegui had scored on his international debut on Thursday, in a 2-1 loss at home to England in a rematch of the Euro 2020 final, which Italy won on penalties.

Retegui became the first Italy player to score in his first two competitive international matches in nearly 55 years.

Italy was looking to kickstart its campaign after losing a European Championship qualifier for the first time since 2006.

Coach Roberto Mancini made eight chances from that loss to England.

Italy was without injured forward Ciro Immobile and its problems up front continued when Wilfried Gnonto went off with an ankle problem midway through the first half.

It was already 1-0 up by then, however, as Retegui had headed in Sandro Tonali's corner in the 15th minute.

The Azzurri doubled their tally in the 27th when Matteo Pessina tapped in a low cross from Emerson.

Gianluca Scamacca almost scored an acrobatic third in the 69th but his overhead kick was well saved by Malta goalkeeper Henry Bonello.

Ukraine coach upbeat despite defeat against Eng

AP ■ LONDON

Ukraine interim head coach Ruslan Rotan said the "incredible" Wembley atmosphere during their 2-0 defeat against England on Sunday would inspire the team as they battle to qualify for Euro 2024.

The side from the war-torn nation were well beaten in their opening qualifier in London in front of a packed house including thousands of Ukrainian fans.

Despite the result, Rotan took positives from the contest against the beaten finalists at Euro 2020.

"I want to thank all the Ukrainian supporters for their incredible signals to the team, the incredible wave of support the Ukrainian team felt every minute of the game," said the caretaker manager.

"I'm also grateful for the support of the England fans because it was an atmosphere like no other international game I have ever experienced and this unique Wembley Stadium atmosphere will give an incredible boost to the Ukrainian players who experienced it first hand."

But Rotan said the current situation, in which Ukraine are forced to play their matches at neutral venues following Russia's invasion of the country last year, made it tough.

"The logistics of moving from A to B are incredibly hard," he said. "It takes us almost 24 hours to get together and move to our training camp before the games.

"Unfortunately we have a war on our backs and we can only be grateful to the Ukrainian armed forces who make it possible for us to play games and to participate in competitions.

Rotan bemoaned the lack of recent match practice — Ukraine had not played an international since facing Scotland in the Nations League in September.

"We knew the quality and the strength of the England team but the Ukrainian boys deserve better," he said. "It's a good team and it will progress."

Ukraine narrowly missed out on qualifying for last year's World Cup in Qatar, losing a play-off to Wales.

"We need time," said Rotan. "When you play a competitive game half a year after the last one it's a hard task to perform.

"The Ukrainian team is getting younger. We've got future stars and in the future I'm sure we'll get good results against anyone."

England have now picked up six points from their two qualifiers so far, with their win on Sunday following a 2-1 victory in Italy last week.

Conte leaves Tottenham 'by mutual agreement'

AP ■ LONDON

Antonio Conte has left Tottenham "by mutual agreement" after 16 months in charge, the Premier League club announced on Sunday.

His departure comes after the Italian's extraordinary post-match rant following a 3-3 draw at Southampton on March 18, a game in which they blew a 3-1 lead.

The 53-year-old, who took over in November 2021, will be replaced by his assistant Cristian Stellini until the end of the season.

"We can announce that head coach Antonio Conte has left the club by mutual agreement," a club statement read.

"We achieved Champions League qualification in Antonio's first season at the club. We thank Antonio for his contribution and wish him well for the future.

"Cristian Stellini will take the team as acting head coach for the remainder of the season, along with Ryan Mason as assistant head coach."

Spurs chairman Daniel Levy added: "We have 10 Premier League games remaining and we have a fight on our hands for a Champions League place.

"We all need to pull together. Everyone has to step up to ensure the highest possible finish for our club and amazing, loyal supporters."

Conte leaves with Spurs fourth in the Premier League, but only two points above fifth-placed Newcastle, who have two games in hand on the London side in the race for Champions League qualification.

Stellini previously stood in for Conte on the touchline this season when the Italian was recovering from gallbladder surgery.

Conte won league titles in his previous three spells in club management at Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan, but was unable to end Tottenham's 15-year wait to win a major trophy.

His contract was due to expire at the end of the season.

Conte labelled his players "selfish" and accused them of not being able to perform under pressure in an extraordinary tirade after the draw against Southampton.

He also took aim at Tottenham's long trophy drought and pinned the blame on a culture of repeatedly changing managers.

Conte arrived at Spurs in November 2021 with the reputation of a ruthless serial winner who could transform the fortunes of a club whose last English league title was in 1961.

There was an initial impact as an upturn in form in the second half of last season saw Spurs edge out north London rivals Arsenal to finish fourth and qualify for the Champions League.

However, there is a 20-point gap between the two this season as the Gunners close in on a first league title in 19 years.

Nikhat eager to use World C'ship experience to win Olympic quota

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Newly crowned world champion Nikhat Zareen is keen to use the experience gained in the recently concluded global event to qualify for the 2024 Olympics at the Asian Games scheduled later this year.

The Asian Games are the first qualifying event for the Paris Olympics for the boxers of the continent.

Nikhat, who won the 52kg world title last year, dropped down to the 50kg weight class as it is an Olympic category.

"This tournament was a good experience. Especially in the 50kg category, which is an Olympic category. I didn't get seeding also I had to fight six bouts. But in the end, I have won a gold medal here and I am happy," Nikhat said.

The World Championships was Nikhat's second international event in the 50kg event. She had won the gold at the Commonwealth Games in the same weight class last year.

"This is the first major competition in this category after the Commonwealth Games, which did not have much competition.

"But here countries from all over the world competed and had back-to-back matches also my body was a bit slow in some matches. I will learn from these experiences and try to become stronger."

Nikhat is now only the second Indian boxer to have two World titles, the first being the trailblazing MC Mary Kom, who has won six golds.

"I feel good that I have won back-to-back gold and I'm happy to continue this winning streak. The Asian Games are about to come soon and people will obviously have expectations but I will take the pressure in a positive. Whatever the result it will be a good learning lesson for me."

Moving down to 50kg has been a tough task for Nikhat, who has to shed 3 to 4kg from her natural weight to make the cut.

"This World Championships were tougher because last time I did not have to put in a lot of effort for weight management.

"But this time I had to follow a diet and I had to be disciplined and after the Nationals we did not get much time to prepare for the competition," she said.

Delighted by the Indian contingent's performance at the World Championships, Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh said the national governing body would try to identify the Olympic team as soon as possible.

World champions Nikhat and Lovlina Borgohain have already qualified for the Asian Games and thus have an opportunity to seal an Olympic berth at the continental event.

"The performance in this tournament has been historic. Next is the Asian Games, let's see how we fare there. Preparation will go on continuously," he said.

"We will try to identify our Olympic team as soon as possible-- all individuals in all categories — and focus on them, train them and study the opponents as well. Last time or preparation was left wanting."

Andreescu finds her joy for tennis again

AP ■ MIAMI

Canada's Bianca Andreescu heads into Monday's last-16 of the Miami Open brimming with confidence and feeling she has finally refound her love for tennis.

Andreescu burst onto the scene with a stunning US Open win as a teenager in 2019 and rose to number five in the world that year.

But then her career stalled.

Injury in 2020 sidelined her and then the COVID pandemic blocked any chance of regaining momentum and at the end of the following year she decided to take six months off.

In Miami, Andreescu has had a tough draw but has beaten two other former Grand Slam winners in Emma Raducanu and Sofia Kenin as well as seventh seed Maria Sakkari.

Those results leave her unsurprisingly in a positive mood, but she says one of the keys to her overall happiness and balanced approach to the sport has been how she handles setbacks and defeats.

"Obviously there were ups and downs, but for the most part, I was very, I guess, level throughout 2022, even with the losses.

"I was like, it's fine. I'll go have dinner with my team. I'll go watch a movie, whatever, and not lock myself in the room for three days like I used to," she said.

Alcaraz powers into last 16 at Miami, Ruud out

AP ■ MIAMI

World number one Carlos Alcaraz moved into the last 16 of the Miami Open after beating Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 6-0, 7-6 (7/5) on Sunday as he remains on track for tennis' "Sunshine Double."

The 19-year-old Spaniard, who beat Daniil Medvedev to win the title in Indian Wells last week, looked in top condition as he outclassed Lajovic in the first set to keep his Miami title defence on track.

But the Serb was able to provide some tension towards the end of the second set, breaking to make it 5-5 with Alcaraz paying the price for a sloppy return.

Alcaraz was 6-2 up in the tie-break, but Lajovic won the next three points before the Spaniard's big back-hand winner settled the 91-minute contest.

"Everything was under control or I thought it was but, you know, in the match it's never easy," Alcaraz said. "The nerves came out. I made a few mistakes that I hadn't done during the whole match. So it was tough to win the match. But I'm really happy with the level that I'm playing and it was a good match," he added.

Alcaraz will face Tommy Paul in the last 16 and the American goes into that game on the back of a 12-match winning streak against Spanish players including wins over Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal last year.

"I lost the first and only match that I played against Tommy. I know that he's a really talented and really tough player, so I have to play at my best and let's see what's going to happen," said Alcaraz.

With Nadal injured and Novak Djokovic barred from entering the US due to his refusal to take a COVID vaccine, Alcaraz is the face of this tournament and the crowd was noticeably bigger on the Hard Rock Stadium court for his game.

In the front row of the crowd was Miami Heat NBA star Jimmy Butler who embraced Alcaraz after the match. Alcaraz said that dealing with his magnified profile is something he has yet to get fully used to.

"I feel great seeing celebrities watching my matches. It's unbelievable. I feel a little bit nervous when I see a person like Jimmy and the celebrities when I was playing in the US Open," he said.

"In a certain way, I can't believe that these people enjoy watching my matches. For me, it's crazy," he said.

STRAIGHT SETS FOR FRITZ

American Taylor Fritz rolled into the fourth round for the third consecutive year after clinching a 6-4, 6-4 win against Canada's Denis Shapovalov.

In a hard-hitting encounter,

with both players blasting from the baseline, Fritz did not face a break point during the 81-minute encounter.

Fritz has already won one tournament in Florida this year, taking the title last month at Delray Beach and in the fourth round, the American will be up against 19-year-old Holger Rune in who beat Argentine Daniel Schwartzman 6-4, 6-2.

As always at Miami, there is a large contingent of Argentine tennis fans and they were vocal in their support for Schwartzman.

But Dane Rune converted all four break points he earned in the hot afternoon sun.

"My focus was really to step in every time I could and play my game. I think there were a few rallies where I didn't, but 95 per cent of the match was played on my terms, which was what I wanted," he said.

Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp triumphed for the third time in four meetings with Norway's world number four Casper Ruud, emerging with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

The tight encounter, with a 75 minute third set, turned decisively towards Van de Zandschulp when he held to go 5-4 up with Ruud going wide at the end of a long rally.

The Dutchman sealed victory, when on match point, Ruud's soft volley found the net.

Italian Jannik Sinner continued his strong start to the year, defeating Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-4.

It was an error-strewn match in which players hit double the number of unforced errors to winners but Sinner handled Dimitrov's second serve well as he seeks his second Miami final appearance.

Fourth-seed Daniil Medvedev moved into the fourth round after his scheduled third round opponent Alex Molcan of Slovakia withdraw from Monday's clash with a right hip injury.

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WINNING CRUCIAL MOMENTS KEY TO MI'S SUCCESS: HARMAN

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur feels that focussing on winning crucial moments of matches and not the ultimate prize worked well for her side, as they lifted the inaugural Women's Premier League trophy after a seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in the final here.

MI chased down the target of 132 with three balls to spare in the low-scoring but tense summit clash at the Brabourne Stadium on Sunday, with England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt playing sheet-anchor with an unbeaten 60.

"(Right from start) we were talking about winning the moments. We were not looking for the trophy, we were looking to win all the moments. (We thought) if we win the moments, the trophy will come automatically," Kaur told reporters after Mumbai Indians' title win on Sunday.

Kaur said she was waiting for this moment for a long time, to win a trophy as a captain.

"It feels very good personally also. I was waiting for this moment for a long time when I could win something as a captain. It is also very important for women's cricket," she said.

"Many times we were there but could not make it. But here the tournament was different, the teams were different. Every side is so balanced and did well in the tournament."

Kaur's run out on Sunday reminded of her dismissal in the T20 World Cup semifinal against Australia, but the MI captain said there was enough in her team's tank to overhaul the target.

"Both the run outs were quite disappointing. I was confident in the last match (India versus Australia) because we had so many wickets in hand. I thought we would be able to do it.

"But the scenario was a lot different here, we had Nat in the middle and she was well settled. I knew who was going to bowl and how. We were quite positive to finish the game one or two overs left. But when I got out we thought we had to go by the situation," she said.

She said playing the Eliminator against Gujarat Giants helped her side gain momentum into the final.

"When we were doing well, the only thought in mind was to not get into the elimination round. But after losing two matches we were in search of momentum. It went in our favour that we got one more match to play before the final and everybody got into the rhythm.

"It worked well in our favour. If you play after a long gap, it is tough to get back into momentum," Kaur explained.

The India captain was impressed with how Delhi Capitals players Shikha Pandey and Radha Yadav added 52 runs from just 24 balls for the unbroken 10th wicket, and asked them after the game to play similarly for the national team.

"I told Radha after the match that the way they were playing, I want to see the same approach when you come and play for India. She promised to come with the same approach."

Kaur said the inaugural WPL was an open tournament and all the five teams played well.

"This was not a one-sided tournament. The next season will be more exciting. People will be waiting for this. Every team did really well," she said.

Delhi Capitals coach Jonathan Batty lamented his side losing wickets in heaps against Mumbai Indians in the final.

"Losing three early wickets hurts you. The partnership between captain Meg (Lanning) and Marizanne (Kapp) got us back but then lost a flurry of wickets. That made it really hard but full credit (to the team) for going into the last over, (losing by) three balls left. We still had a chance of winning there at the end," he said.

Batty said Delhi Capitals respected the call made by third umpire against Shafali Verma, who fell off a full toss from Issy Wong.

"We could not tell, the third umpire is in the best position to adjudicate on that and gave what they thought was a fair dismissal and we just lost a wicket, it was just unfortunate timing," he said.

WPL 2023 ends with promise of changing Indian cricket for better

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Women's Premier League made a captivating debut and promised a bright future for the aspiring female cricketers in India but the hurriedly organised first season also left a lot of scope for improvement going forward.

The WPL, played entirely across two venues in Mumbai, witnessed special performances from some of the best cricketers in the world but leaving aside left-arm spinner Saika Ishaque, did not unearth a plethora of local talent like it was expected to.

The five-team competition culminated on Sunday with Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur finally leading her side across the line in the summit clash against a team captained by Australian legend Meg Lanning.

The tournament began with plenty of scores over 200 with boundaries as short as 42-44 metres, but pitches tired out eventually and became spin-friendly.

Mumbai's Hayley Matthews won the Purple Cap for her 16 wickets — including four in the final — but Nat Sciver-Brunt was the overall top performer with 10 wickets and 332 runs.

Apart from Mumbai Indians' Ishaque, who took 15 wickets, Shreyanka Patil and Kanika Ahuja of Royal Challengers Bangalore made their mark on the big stage but there was a clear gap between those from the Indian domestic circuit and the world's best.

While Patil lit up the field with her energy and enthusiasm, 20-year-old Ahuja showed tremendous promise at a young age with her explosive batting.

Harmanpreet acknowledged that little-known Indian players did not get many roles and opportunities to play, but added value to their teams with their fielding, citing the examples of MI's Amanjot Kaur and Jintimani Kalita.

The Indian skipper hoped that young and uncapped Indian players would emerge wiser from the experience, knowing what they need to do in order to bridge the gap.

Delhi's head coach Jonathan Batty left with the message, challenging young Indian players to work on their game and fitness for season two.

While Mumbai Indians achieved the high of recording five consecutive wins en route to the title triumph, a team led by another Indian star, Smriti Mandhana's Royal Challengers Bangalore, endured a five-game losing streak when the competition got underway and the tournament ended for them even before it began.

Mandhana admitted facing difficulties handling a team full of players with bigger stature and more experience than her.

Her own form with the bat failed to inspire RCB, who also had the likes of Ellyse Perry, Heather Knight, Sophie Devine, Megan Schutt and Renuka Singh to name a few.

No doubt Mandhana, a leadership prospect with the Indian team, will emerge better from her first WPL stint as captain and player but it remains to be seen how the team responds after a horrendous first season.

Lanning's Delhi Capitals did not instill fear in the opposition as Harmanpreet's MI did but the Australian Lanning led from the front and ended as the tournament's leading run-getter.

But if Lanning was consistent with the bat at the top, Shafali Verma blowing hot and cold remained an issue which Delhi Capitals could not do much about.

If RCB had to bear with Mandhana's poor run with the bat, Delhi Capitals experienced the same with their vice-captain Jemimah Rodrigues. The right-handed batter failed to score even a fifty, but entertained the crowd with her athleticism in the field taking some stunning catches.

Gujarat Giants began with losing their preferred captain Beth Mooney halfway into the first game and endured a largely disappointing campaign, but Deol's contributions mixed with Ashleigh Gardner's prowess give them hope for the future.

Sneh Rana did her best as stand-in captain, but overall, GG were not good enough to advance to the knockouts.

Alyssa Healy's UP Warriorz got outplayed in the Eliminator by Mumbai Indians, but they were the first side to beat the eventual winners and showed a lot of promise with Navgire, Grace Harris, Anjali Sarvani and Sophie Ecclestone — who took joint highest 16 wickets — in their ranks.

The 22-game competition spread over as many days this March was held entirely in Mumbai, and like many, both Healy and Ecclestone also wished for home and away games from next season onwards.

It remains to be seen if the BCCI decides to organise the next WPL in the home-away format like the Indian Premier League, as crowd support plays a big part in the success of teams and also helps in creating a much needed fan base.

Mayers or Hooda likely to open with KL Rahul in LSG's first two games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In absence of Quinton de Kock, either West Indies southpaw Kyle Mayers or the flamboyant Deepak Hooda is likely to open the innings with skipper KL Rahul during Lucknow Super Giants' first two games in this edition of the IPL.

With the South African team playing two ICC World Cup qualifier 50-over games against the Netherlands on March 31 and April 2, none of their top players will be available for their respective IPL sides in the first couple of games.

Hence, LSG will be missing their regular opener de Kock, while their first match opponents Delhi Capitals will be without the services of Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi.

LSG will take on DC on April 1 in Lucknow and then fly to Chennai for their next game against Chennai Super Kings.

"In case of De Kock, the best option is Kyle Mayers, who is also a left-hander and has a decent strike rate of close to 135 in T20Is. On Sunday, he was brilliant against South Africa during his 27-ball-51. So Mayers is favourite to partner Rahul in first two games," a source privy to developments in LSG camp said.

In case, LSG wants to beef up their middle-order or bowling arsenal with overseas recruits, then there is a case for talented Hooda to face the new ball alongside his skipper.

Hooda has already scored a century for India opening the innings in T20 cricket and has shown that he can be an enforcer in the Powerplay overs with his improvisation skills.

Mohsin Khan, who is currently doing his rehabilitation with LSG's strength and conditioning unit, is expected to miss at least first leg of the tournament but team think-tank feels he might be available for the second phase.

Jaydev Unadkat is the closest like-for-like replacement of Mohsin, although the Saurashtra veteran neither has the pace nor the lethal blockhole delivery like the UP man.

During the course of the tournament, Jammu and Kashmir's Yudhvir Singh Charak or Vidarbha's Yash Thakur, both of whom have made an impression at training sessions might be tried out depending on team's situation and pitch conditions.

DC TO MISS ALL FOREIGN PACERS IN 1ST 2 GAMES

In case of the Capitals, they are likely to miss their entire foreign pace unit during the first two games as Mustafizur Rahaman will also be unavailable due to Bangladesh's ongoing series against Ireland.

Nortje and Ngidi are in the Proteas squad to play the Netherlands, while Kagiso Rabada will also be absent for Kings XI Punjab as he will also be on national duty.

Sandeep replaces injured Krishna at Rajasthan Royals

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Veteran Punjab seamer Sandeep Sharma will replace injured Prasidh Krishna in the Rajasthan Royals squad for IPL 2023, the franchise confirmed on Monday.

Prasidh, a bowling mainstay for Royals, is out of action following a lower-back surgery. It was a lucky break for Sandeep, who has 114 wickets from 104 IPL games at an economy rate of 7.77, as he went unsold at the auction.

"Fast bowler Sandeep Sharma will represent Rajasthan Royals this season after being signed as a replacement for Prasidh Krishna.

RANA TO LEAD KKR

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday named left-handed batter Nitish Rana as the team's new skipper for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League.

Rana will replace Shreyas Iyer , who is likely to undergo back surgery and is in danger of missing the entire season.

In fact, KKR's statement was an indicator that Iyer's chances of an early return to play looks improbable at the moment.

"...Nitish Rana would captain the side in the absence of Shreyas Iyer, who is recovering from a back injury. While we are hopeful that Shreyas will recover and participate at some stage in the IPL 2023 edition, we feel fortunate that Nitish, with the captaincy experience having led his state side in white ball cricket and the IPL experience he has had with KKR since 2018, will do a great job,"KKR said in a statement.

"We are also confident that under head coach Chandrakant Pandit and the support staff, he will get all the support needed off the field, and the highly experienced leaders in the squad will provide all support that Nitish may need on the field. We wish him the best in his new role and Shreyas a full and speedy recovery," it further stated.

While Rana has captained Delhi in Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the results have been far from encouraging for the southpaw. It is understood that he would be asked to implement the strategy prepared by coach Pandit, who along with team boss Venky Mysore and former Mumbai Ranji stalwart Abhishek Nayar will be calling the shots.

It may noted that Rana was dropped by Delhi in this season's Ranji Trophy squad due to his poor show and inept technique in red-ball cricket.

Rana has captained Delhi in 12 T20s in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, with eight wins and four defeats. The 29-year old middle-order batter was bought by KKR ahead of the 2018 season and has been retained by the franchise ever since.

Rana 74 matches for KKR, scoring 1744 runs at a strike rate of 135.61.

KKR will open their campaign against Punjab Kings at Mohali on April 1.

Bangladesh beat Ireland in rain-hit 1st T20I

AP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Rony Talukdar hit his maiden half-century to help Bangladesh secure a 22-run win against Ireland by DLS method on Monday in the opener of a three-match T20I series.

Talukdar struck 67 off 38 with seven fours and three sixes as opener to steer Bangladesh to 207-5 before rain halted the innings with four balls remaining.

Ireland's revised target was set for 104 in 8 overs but it managed only 81-5.

Put into bat first, Bangladesh made a fluent start with Talukdar and Liton Das adding 81 runs in the first powerplay, eclipsing the previous high of 74 against Sri Lanka in 2018.

Paceman Craig Young, who claimed 2-45, broke through with the wicket of Liton in the eighth over. Liton hit four boundaries and three sixes in his 23 ball-47.

Talukdar slashed legspinner Ben White for a boundary through extra-cover to bring up his fifty off just 24 deliveries.

Shamim Hossain, who made 30 off 20, and skipper Shakib Al Hasan injected some spark as the side went past 200 runs for the fourth time in its T20 history.

Before the rain arrived, Shakib was batting on 20 off 13 with Mehidy Hasan Miraz on 4.

Paul Stirling, who is leading the team in the series after regular skipper Andrew Balbirnie was rested, and Ross Adair scored 18 runs in the first over of left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed to give the side a ray of hope. But pacer Hasan Mahmud rattled the stump of Adair (13) with a yorker and fast bowler Taskin Ahmed took the game literally away with three wickets in his first over.

He started with Stirling, who made 17, and then dismissed Lorcan Tucker and George Dockrell. Taskin then came back to get rid of Tector to finish with his career-best 4-16. Gareth Delany scored a team-best 21 not out.

Indore pitch rating changed from 'poor' to 'below average'

PTI ■ DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has changed the pitch rating of Indore's Holkar Stadium — the venue for the third Test between India and Australia — to 'below average' from 'poor' following a BCCI appeal.

The ICC also gave the Narendra Modi Stadium pitch in Ahmedabad, the venue for the fourth Test, an 'average' rating for the slow batting deck where both teams had one completed innings each. The match had ended in a tame draw, with India winning the series 2-1.

At Indore, Australia had defeated India by nine wickets inside three days of the Border-Gavaskar Test to secure a World Test Championship final berth.

The ICC appeal panel reviewed the earlier decision of the match referee Chris Broad and found that there was not enough excessive variable bounce to warrant the 'poor' rating.

The pitch, which had initially received three demerit points, will now get only one demerit point. The ICC match referee however gave 'very good' rating to the the Wankhede Stadium and Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam pitches, where the first two ODIs between India and Australia were played.

Afghanistan thump Pakistan to claim T20I series

AP ■ SHARJAH

Afghanistan overcame late nerves in the closing overs to beat Pakistan by seven wickets in the second T20I on Sunday and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-game series.

Needing 30 off the last three overs, and 22 from the last two, Najibullah Zadran and Mohammad Nabi hit a six each off pace bowler Naseem Shah in the penultimate over to reduce the target to five runs.

Zadran then hit the winning boundary off Zaman Khan's last over to chase down the 131-run target with one ball to spare.

"It's a great honour and pleasure to lead this wonderful team," said Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan.

"It was a great effort with the ball, and then we took it deep and finished it."

He added: "I think 130 was a good total. We tried our best to take it deep and finish it. Our strategy was to go out there and make sure you take responsibility. We have players to finish it like Nabi and Najib."

Pakistan's 130-6 in 20 overs was built around a sedate 57-ball 64 not out by all-rounder Imad Wasim — his maiden T20I half century.

This was Afghanistan's first bilateral T20I series against any of the top six teams — India, England, Pakistan, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia.

They have previously won a T20I series each against the West Indies and Bangladesh and five in five against Zimbabwe.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (44 off 49 balls) and Ibrahim Zadran (38 off 40 balls) set the platform during their 56-run second wicket stand.

However, their slow batting left Afghanistan needing to score 46 off the last 30 balls.

Najibullah (23) and Nabi (14) remained unbeaten to seal the victory.

"Our motive for this series was to check out talented young players and we have to back them in the future," said Pakistan captain Shadab Khan.

Earlier, Pakistan's recovery was led by Imad who hit two sixes and three boundaries to rescue Pakistan from 63-5 after winning the toss and batting.

Imad and Shadab (32) added 67 for the sixth wicket.

Pakistan had got off to a disastrous start with left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi claiming Saim Ayub and Abdullah Shafique, both for nought, in the first over of the innings.

Farooqi finished with 2-19 in his four overs.

Shafique has now been dismissed for nought on four successive occasions in five T20Is since making his debut in November 2020.