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EQUITY CAPITAL IN 2018-22’

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BY TOTTENHAM
HOTSPUR
11 SPORT

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



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

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 Disqualified’. 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.

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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.

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

Fugitive radical leader is likely to be hiding in Himalayan nation

PIONEER NEWS 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.

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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.

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See P5: Pro-Khalistan outfit makes threat calls before G-20 meet in Uttarakhand

Gangster Atiq, brother shifted to Prayagraj jail; ‘verdict’ today

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ (UP)

Gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed was brought to the Naiini 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 Naiini 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 Naiini 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 Naiini Central Jail Monday evening amid tight security arrangements, officials said.

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2 Plus II students drown, one missing in JSpur

Another narrowly escapes
KAHNU NANDA
■ JAGATSINGHPUR

Two teenage boys drowned and one was missing while taking bath in the Devi river near Machhagaon under Balikuda block on Monday.

The deceased were identified as Styabrata Barik [15] and Kanha Barik [17], hailing from Ambasala village and the missing boy, Subham Patra, is from Bhubaneswar. Meanwhile, police have detained another teenager, Tapan Marth, in Balikuda

police station, a resident of Ranpur village under Nayagarh district, who was also accompanying the trio during the mishap.

Reports said that both the deceased and missing teenager were Plus II students, reading at Maharshi College, Bhubaneswar. They had come to Kanha Barik’s residence in Ambasala. On Monday afternoon, Kanha along with three of his friends went to the Devi river near Machhagaon Ghat for bathing, but sadly, three of them were swept away by strong current and Tapan narrowly escaped.

On being informed, Balikuda police, fire brigade personnel, and an ODRF team, including local villagers, rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation. Later, two bodies were retrieved from the river on Monday evening and another one was still missing till the filing of the report.

Meanwhile, the Balikuda police seized the bodies and sent them for post-mortem in the District Headquarters Hospital after registering an unnatural death case. Tapan was being questioned in the police station. The rescue operation was deferred till Tuesday due night.

‘Don’t allow minors to drive’

Parents warned of Rs 25K fine

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Transport Authority (STA) on Monday said it would penalise parents of the minor children who are caught driving two-wheelers. The move is aimed at curb-

ing the growing menace of underage driving and checking road mishaps. Action would be taken against the violators under Section 19A of the MV Act.

“Special enforcement drive to check school students riding vehicles will start from Tuesday across the State. A fine of Rs 25,000 will be imposed if

anyone below 18 years is found driving vehicle. The owner of the vehicle or the minor’s parent may also face jail term,” said the Transport (Enforcement) Additional Commissioner. “Further, violators can’t avail licence till they attain 25 years and vehicle owners will be forwarded to court,” the official added.

Race for elections

BJD appoints observers for all districts

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amid anticipation for holding early elections in Odisha, the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Monday appointed its observers for all 30 districts.

As per the list, BJD’s organisational secretary and Jajpur MLA Pranab Prakash Das has been made observer for as many as four districts while controversial MLA Dibya Shankar Mishra has been appointed as the observer for two districts.



Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak has been given the charge as observer for two districts.
Pranab Prakash Das has

been assigned the districts of Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar and Sambalpur. Dibya Shankar is put in charge of Koraput and Malkangiri and Atanu in charge of Gajapati and Rayagada.

The rest of the list runs as follows:

Baleswar: Pratap Keshari Deb, Bargarh: Sudhir Kumar Samal, Bhadrak: Pratap Jena, Balangir: Sushanta Singh, Deogarh: Amresh Jena, Cuttack: Prafulla Mallick, Jagatsinghpur: Arun Kumar Sahoo, Kandhamal: Bijay

Nayak, Kendrapada: Pramila Mallick, Khordha: Rabindra Kumar Jena, Nabarangpur: Iswar Panigrahi, Nayagarh: Padmanav Behera, Nuapada: Snehangini Chhuria, Puri: Ranendra Pratap Swain, Sundargarh: Pritiranjana Ghadai, Kalahandi: Pranab Balabantray, Ganjam: Pradip Kumar Amat, Boudh: Soubhagya Nayak, Jajpur: Ashok Chandra Panda, Jharsuguda: Sarada Prasad Nayak, Mayurbhanj: Prashant Muduli, Subarnapur: Debesh Acharya.

10 more virtual High Courts opened in State

PRADIP DAS ■ CUTTACK

Encouraged by the results of virtual High Courts at the district level, the Orissa High Court on Monday opened another ten virtual courts in ten other districts of the State.

With this, 20 of the 30 districts of the State now have virtual High Courts functioning

from each district headquarters. The remaining ten districts would soon have this facility, informed High Court Chief

Justice Dr S Muralidhar here after inaugurating the second phase of virtual courts in videoconferencing mode. The ten districts, which had their virtual courts from the day are Angul, Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur,

Keonjhar, Kendrapada, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh and Sundargarh.

Earlier in February this year, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud had inaugurated the virtual courts of Balangir, Baleswar, Bhadrak, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Khordha, Puri, Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts. There has been a significant increase in the num-

ber of cases filed in the first phase of virtual courts which have been in operation since February. At least 132 e-cases were filed over the past two months at different virtual courts.

During the same period, 295 virtual hearings were conducted by the ten virtual courts and at least 500 lawyers were trained for the purpose.

In State Assembly

Cong MLAs wear black, protest Rahul disqualification

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Wearing black outfits, Congress MLAs on Monday staged protest in the State Assembly against the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha.

As the pandemonium prevailed, Speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha adjourned the House till 4 pm.

As soon as the House had assembled for the day, the Congress members trooped into the Well and raised anti-Narendra Modi slogans.

The Speaker appealed to the Congress legislators to go back to their seats as there were dis-



cussions on important departments like finance, home and mines. However, the Congress members continued their protest. As the chaotic scenario

continued, the Speaker adjourned the House.

“We are observing the day as a black day for our democracy. So, we all are wearing

black clothes. They (the BJP Government at the Centre) have murdered democracy. If democracy will survive, the country will survive,” senior Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati told reporters outside the Assembly.

However, Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra (BJP) said, “Those who put all behind the bars during the Emergency period are advocating for democracy today. Which kind of democracy are they talking about? Whatever decision was taken, it was as per the law, which was enacted by the then Congress Government in 1951.”

Says Minister in State Assembly

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been moved seeking assistance of the American agency Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in Health Minister Naba Kisore Das’ murder case, informed Minister of State for Home Tusharkanti Behera in the State Assembly on Monday.

Replying to a query by Congress MLA Narasingha Mishra, the Minister stated that as per the guideline on

the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in criminal cases, such a request can be made through the MHA. So, the Odisha Government has sought assistance of the FBI. However, the MHA is yet to make a reply in this regard.

Mishra sought details from the State Government as regards its request to the MHA for support of FBI in investigation.

“Is there any information with the State Government about the FBI having either investigated or provided support, guidance to any State police in the country during police investigation into a

criminal offence/case in the concerned stated. If so, will the Govt furnish details of cases being investigated by police of different States with support from FBI? If not, how the CM declared in the House to request MHA for support of FBI in investigation of killing of ex-Minister of Health? Will the Govt furnish the letter submitted to the MHA in this regard?” Mishra asked.

In reply, the Minister stated that information about any other State seeking help of the FBI during police investigation into a criminal offence is not available.

“As per information received from CID, CB, Odisha, the Ministry of Home Affairs has shared with all the States a comprehensive guideline for investigation abroad and issue of letters Rogatory (LRs), Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA). The Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) is a mechanism whereby countries operate with one another in order to provide and obtain formal assistance in prevention, investigation and prosecution of crime. India has MLA treaties/bilateral agreements with many countries including US,” he informed.

In Balangir Fake certificate racket busted; 19 held

Rs 3.67L cash also seized
SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR

The Balangir police on Monday arrested as many 19 persons, including kingpin of a fake certificate racket Manoj Mishra along with his key associate Alok Udgata.

More than 1,000 fake certificates of different schools, colleges and universities of various States like Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were seized during the raid at a coaching centre 'Reliance Education Complex'.

Besides, cops also seized cash of Rs 3,67,600, four personal computers, two laptops, three printers, a scanner, an external hard disk and a Xerox machine, said Balangir SP Nitin Kusalkar.



Police officers inspecting seized items, including a large stack of fake certificates.

The raid was conducted after publication of reports in media about the fake certificate racket and after getting a written complaint from the Postal Superintendent regarding the use of fake certificates in recent recruitment of Gramin Dak Sevaks and other posts. The police registered a

case under Sections 420/465/467/468/471/and Section 34 of the IPC, added Kusalkar.

Main accused Manoj was running the Reliance Educational Complex from 1999 and providing coaching to students of different classes and aspirants to different competitive examination, said the SP.

However, from 2016,

Manoj along with his associate Udgata started providing fake and forged academic certificates of different boards and universities by using forged seals and stamps and collecting between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 5 lakh per certificate.

Police investigation so far has revealed that the racket was operating in Balangir, Bargarh, Kalahandi and Boudh districts.

'Modi Govt attacking democratic institutions'



Odisha opposition parties submit memo to Prez

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Different non-BJP parties of Odisha on Monday submitted a memorandum to President Droupadi Murmu alleging continuous onslaught on

democracy and democratic institutions by the Narendra Modi Government.

Leaders of political parties like Congress, CPI, Samajwadi Party, AAP and others said the Constitution which is the only source of Parliamentary democracy is attacked by the BJP Government and its leaders for their own vested interests. The

fundamental rights which are the cornerstone of democracy are being curtailed.

The opposition leaders are vilified, coerced by using Central institutions like ED, CBI and Income Tax. For no reason, the opposition leaders are being put in jails, they alleged.

Those leaders who could

not sustain the threats joined the BJP, following which the charges against them are being suspended. Rahul Gandhi who raised the relationship between Modi and Gautam Adani, was expelled from the Lok Sabha membership within 24 hours of the pronouncement of judgement in a defamation case, they said.

CM asks Centre to evacuate surplus rice

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday wrote to Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal for evacuation of surplus rice from Odisha.

Patnaik stated that during this Kharif season, a record 14,94,320 farmers have sold paddy to the Government at MSP. The paddy procurement for Kharif season (KMS 2022-23) is going to be closed by March 31. About 65.23 LMT of paddy equivalent to 44.23 LMT Kharif CMR has been procured as on March 22.

In the ensuing Rabi (2022-23), it is expected that about 10 lakh MT of CMR would be procured in the State. Thus, total 54 lakh MT CMR is likely to be procured during 2022-23. Odisha's own consumption would be 24 lakh MT of rice under NFSA, SFSS and other welfare schemes.

So, the State would be left with approximately 20 lakh MT of surplus rice. Non-evacuation of above quantity of surplus rice from the State would severely affect the State's paddy procurement operations in the coming seasons as well as it would adversely impact the livelihood of lakhs of famers, Patnaik stated.

'BJD's autocratic rule won't be tolerated'



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJD is destroying democracy and carrying an autocratic rule. But this won't last long. To hide one fault, the BJD is committing 100 mistakes. Besides, it is suppressing the opponents by using muscle and official machinery, said new BJP State president Manmohan Samal on Monday.

Samal said the voice of youth leaders can't be throttled by using police. This is not healthy for democracy. The

State Government's policies have led to the deterioration of law and order.

'More than two months has passed since the murder of Minister Naba Das. We have demanded unraveling of the mystery behind the incident. But more than 22 BJP youth leaders were arrested and jailed illegally while holding a demonstration on February 28. But our functionaries' morale is high and the agitation against the Government would be intensified,' said Samal while meeting the jailed BJP youth leaders.

Mural on Odisha heritage installed at Raj Bhavan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

FLO Bhubaneswar, the women wing of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), under the leadership of FLO Bhubaneswar chairperson Namrita Chahal and other core committee members installed a mural at the Raj Bhavan here on Monday as homage to the beautiful land of Odisha prior to Utkal Divas. The mural that depicts the majesty of Odisha was unveiled by Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal.

Prof Lal said, "Odisha is the land of heaven as its people are free from greed and are satisfied from within; hence,



this gift is close to my heart." Namrita Chahal said, "Odisha is a land of rich his-

tory heritage and culture and we at FLO Bhubaneswar are proud of the land we call our

own. The mural is a symbol of beauty of Odisha, the hidden gem of the Mystic East."

'Don't allow AI to be more intelligent than you'

Seminar on future of accounting held at Utkal Varsity

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A national seminar on "The Future of Accounting in Increasingly Complex Business Environment" was held in the Department of Commerce, Utkal University, in collaboration with the Indian Accounting Association on Sunday under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor Prof Sabita Acharya.

Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra said, "Since 1,000 years, accounting has been a value-added profession and it will



continue for another 1,000 years. But the challenge in this digital era is the technological revolution and how to protect the businesses from the technological/cybercrime/errors. Be it Block Chain, BSE, NSE, Stock Market, Cloud Computing is developed on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and it may be the future of accounting. But do not allow AI to be more intelligent than you,

because it is manmade and operated. Knowledge is most important not AI; you must have an appetite of learning; he urged. He also focused on the virtual decision making by learning this age which is led for growth in businesses."

Prof Ranjan Kumar Bal, Vice-Chancellor, ASMB University and president of IAA, Bhubaneswar Branch, shared his last four decades' experience on the accounting field. "We have to navigate the complexities of the future of accounting as the change is the constant in recent time," he said.

Prof Ashis Kumar Sana, a faculty from the Department of Commerce, University of Calcutta, lent his views on this topic.

A research cell on commerce was inaugurated on the occasion. A total of 86 research papers were presented by academics, industries and professional bodies.

Prof Sabita Acharya emphasised on interdisciplinary research and to devise a course based on the changing business environment.

Film producer held for duping woman of Rs 85L

Victim is Ravenshaw Asst Prof

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Twin City Commissionerate Police on Monday arrested Ollywood producer Ajitav Mallik for allegedly duping a woman Assistant Professor of the Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, of Rs 85 lakh on the pretext of selling her a duplex house.

As per reports, the accused had received the amount from the victim in multiple installments for providing her the duplex worth Rs 1 crore located at Kolathia in Bhubaneswar.



However, he then remained untraceable and didn't sell the property to her.

The woman had lodged a complaint in this regard with the Khandagiri police. Investigating into the case, police arrested the accused.

Notably, Ajitav has produced Odia film 'Arundhati' and also acted in the movie.

ORHDC scam: Ex-MD, 4 others get 3-yr RI

7h conviction of Vinod Kumar in graft case

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar on Monday convicted Orissa Rural Housing Development Corporation (ORHDC) former Managing Director (MD) Vinod Kumar, former Company Secretary Swasti Rajan Mohapatra, former Loan Recovery Assistant Umesh Chandra Swain and Bhubaneswar-based Home Lives Housing partners Rashmi Patnaik and Rattan Kumar Sahoo in a corruption case and sentenced them to three years rigorous imprisonment (RI).

The court also ordered the

convicts to pay a fine of Rs 50,000 each and in default to undergo another six months RI.

The aforesaid officers of the ORHDC had committed criminal misconduct by entering into criminal conspiracy and showed undue official favour to the Home Lives Housing partners in the matter of sanction and disbursement of loan amounting to Rs 50 lakhs without conducting proper documentation, pre and post sanction inspection and without obtaining adequate security.

This is the seventh conviction of former ORHDC MD Kumar in a graft case.

Earlier, the Vigilance police had submitted the charge-sheet of the case in the Special Judge, Vigilance court.

CONTEMPORARIES

What law says on Rahul's disqualification

Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as a Member of Parliament following his conviction and sentencing in a criminal defamation case is continuing to dominate the headlines across the country. The Lok Sabha Secretariat by its notification stated, "Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat in CC/18712/2019, Shri Rahul Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction ie. 23 March, 2023 in terms of the provisions of Article 102(1)(e) of the Constitution of India read with Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.



S JYOTIRNANJAN

says that a lawmaker sentenced to not less than two years upon conviction will be disqualified, it further provides that the disqualified lawmaker stands disqualified even after their release from the jail. According Section 8 (3) of the Act, A person convicted of any offence and sentenced to

imprisonment for not less than two years other than any offence referred to in sub-section (1) or sub-section (2) shall be disqualified from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further period of six years since his release."

"This makes Rahul ineligible for 2024 general elections if he is unable to get the conviction stayed by the higher courts. Rahul was convicted under Sections 499 and 500 for defamation of Indian Penal Code (IPC). Section 500 of IPC extends imprisonment of up to two years, fine, or both, as punishment for defamation for his alleged comment while speaking at a rally in Karnataka in April 2019, where he said, "Why do all these thieves have Modi as their surname Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi."

Therefore, from the very moment Rahul was sentenced to two years

in jail, he was disqualified. Therefore, the notification of the Lok Sabha Secretariat is a mere ministerial work. This is the reason the Lok Sabha Secretariat notification mentions March 23 as the date from which the disqualification is effective and not March 24, i.e., the date of issue of the notification.

But does this mean Rahul is out of electoral politics now? The answer is, in case Rahul fails to get any relief from the higher courts in the context of his conviction, then he is supposed to be out of electoral politics for the next eight years. This is because Section 8 (3) of Representation of People Act, 1951 says any lawmaker sentenced to at least two years in jail remains disqualified for six years upon their release, which means Rahul's disqualification will continue till 2031 as the six-year period will commence in 2025 when his two-year sentence

ends. Initially, there was confusion over the disqualification of Rahul. And there were divergent opinions on this. While some said it would be immediate, the other opinion was that it would not be so. The rule of immediate disqualification in the event of sentencing for two years or more on a lawmaker's conviction was laid down by the Supreme Court in Lily Thomas Vs Union of India and Ors (2013), wherein Section 8 (4) of the Representation of People Act was ruled as unconstitutional.

Before 2013 that means before the judgement in Lily Thomas case was delivered, Section 8 (4) of the Representation of People Act, gave relaxation to MPs and MLAs facing disqualification as it provided that the disqualification would not take place for three months from the date of conviction. It further

provided that the disqualification would remain suspended until a petition or revision application for the conviction is decided by the higher courts.

The immediate disqualification in the event of conviction as ruled in the Lily Thomas case and other cases address the issues of criminalisation of politics and aims towards large scale electoral reforms like removing corrupt practices and disclosing criminal cases by candidates.

Under such circumstances, the political hysteria surrounding disqualification is unnecessary as the law is pretty clear and there is no denying that Rahul Gandhi has both the scope and opportunity to approach higher courts to get stay on conviction which will put him back to his old position as MP as the Supreme Court in Lok Prahari

Vs Union of India (2018) had held that in case of stay of conviction under Section 389 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), the disqualification under Section 8 of Representation of the People Act would not operate.

However, be it as it may, politicians should understand that while the Constitution provides for free speech, it also imposes reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) and the conviction in this defamation case should be an eye opener for the entire political clan.

(The writer is an Addl. Central Government Standing Counsel, CAT, Cuttack Bench, Consulting Editor-Legal Affairs and Public Policy, The Pioneer, Bhubaneswar and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies, KIIT University. Views are personal)

‘Increasing loss of green cover a big worry’

Thinkers’ Club holds seminar on pollution

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Thinkers’ Club here organised a webinar on pollution and water.

Scientist Dr Jayakrushna Panigrahi joined as the chief speaker who said vehicular emission is the biggest contributor of CO2 gas in the environment. There is also considerable shrinkage of forests over the planet. Nature has given the green plants a unique capacity to split CO2

into oxygen and carbon, but the fast loss of forest cover is a big worry, he added.

Dr PK MK Das joined as another speaker who emphasized on monitoring spending by the Government to check pollution. Citing an example he said, the Central Government has spent Rs 36,000 crore to clean the river Yamuna but there is no significant result. There should be development of consciousness on the topic among the general public, he stressed, and advised people to change their lifestyle to a c c o m m o d a t e

environmental care. He also advised keeping ducks in the water bodies to maintain balance in the ecosystem.

Dr Nihar Ranjan Sahoo, as guest of honour, spoke on restricting the use of plastic materials for packaging. He said the plastic materials thrown here and there go to the sea ultimately. The plastics have a shelf-life of 12 years and in the natural process they turn to micro and nano particles. Ultimately, these particles go to the stomach and body of aquatic animals. He said, fortunately, the Freon gas is

presently not used as refrigerant gases. This gas was making a hole in the protective ozone layer surrounding the atmosphere. The present use of Propane and IsoButane is more environmentally friendly. There is a target to replace the Freon gas by 2030, he informed.

Club president Barada Prasanna Das wanted the present cities to be free from pollution. While he managed the meet, Prabashi Odiya Bikash Parishad president Surya Narayan Mishra gave the welcome address.

1st lady prez of Ganjam lawyers’ body



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The election for office bearers of Ganjam Lawyers Association was conducted on March 25. Against the Bar Council approved strength of 1,516 eligible voters, 1,338 voters participated in the election.

Minati Rath won as the president and became the first woman to win the post of the

lawyers' body. While Siba Narayan Sahu was elected as secretary, M Chandra Shekhar won as vice president and Tapas Ranjan Sahu was elected as assistant secretary.

Six candidates contested for the post of president, while the real contest was between Rath and Sudhanshu Shekhar Panda. Rath got 423 votes, while Panda finished second with 335 votes.

Odisha Parba concludes amidst great fanfare



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The three-day-long cultural extravaganza Odisha Parba 2023 concluded at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi on Sunday. About one lakh visitors spent their weekend enjoying the traditional Odia ambience and the rich heritage and delectable cuisine from the land of Jagannath.

The closing ceremony was attended by chief guest Chhattisgarh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan. Odia Samaj president Sidhartha Pradhan delivered the welcomed address and trustee Haranya Mohanty gave a vote of thanks.

Harichandan said time has come to awaken the identity of Odisha in the mind of the Odia community. Odisha's contributions from the Paika Rebellion to art, culture,

history, literature, etc., are unique.

In a message, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw congratulated the festival organisers.

Delhiites were enthralled by the evening's cultural programme which included Odishi by Guru Saswat Joshi and group titled "Chira Namasya Parampara"; Swarjya Gatha "Ananya Odisha", a fusion of Chhau and Paika dances performed by Guru Arni Ruddha and troupe; Mahanadi "Odisha 'N' Culture" by Ashwini Patel and group; "Tala Badya by Sandeep Mohanty and group and song "Swara O Spandana" by young singer Ananya Sritam Nanda.

The last leg of the conclave had a topic of discussion 'Swablambi Odisha' featuring many eminent personalities like Prof Damodar Acharya.

Docudrama ‘Jeevan Sangeet’ quiz winners feted



By UNICEF

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The UNICEF in collaboration with the Directorate of State Institute of Health and Family Welfare (SIH and FW) and the All India Radio (AIR) felicitated the winners of a quiz competition conducted under the Jeevan Sangeet radio docudrama programme in Bhubaneswar on Saturday. Twenty-four winners from across Odisha were felicitated.

The Jeevan Sangeet initiative was kick-started in 2022 and a series of 10 docudramas on various health issues like immunisation, tuberculosis, anaemia, diarrhoea and other childhood preventable diseases were broadcast on AIR thrice a week. A quiz session was held on each of the topics for the listeners. The programme reached more than one million radio listeners across Odisha. Out of the 20,000 quiz entries received, 24 listeners were

felicitated in a lucky draw system.

Congratulating the efforts of the stakeholders, Director, SIH and FW, Odisha, Dr Amarendranath Mohanty said, "Radio plays a vital role in communicating information to a wider audience. We will be designing more such programmes on health issues which will inform, educate and entertain the people."

Owing to the success of the first edition, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF,

Bhubaneswar Dr Sugata Roy announced the launch of Jeevan Sangeet 2.0 this year. "Radio is an inclusive and powerful medium and can play a major role in behavioural change. We are pleased to announce that we will soon be starting with Jeevan Sangeet 2.0 by June or July with more such content for our listeners."

Director, Family Welfare, Dr Bijay Kumar Panigrahi also commended the efforts of UNICEF, AIR and the listeners for their active participation.

In Jagatsinghpur Woman teacher axed for fake cert for job

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

A primary school teacher identified as Sandhyarani Swain was suspended by the district education officer (DEO) here following an allegation that she had furnished a fake BED certificate during her appointment.

Reports said the accused teacher works in Anakhia primary school under Biridi block. An allegation was lodged against her that her BED certificate she was fake.

Based on the charge, the District Education

Department conducted an inquiry into the authenticity of her certificate from Kakatia University in Warangal district in Telangana and found the same to be fake.

Later, an FIR was lodged against the teacher in Biridi police station on Saturday. The police visited the Anakhia primary school on Saturday but found the accused teacher to be absent. A search operation was launched to trace the teacher. A police team would visit Telangana for further investigation of the case, informed Biridi police station IIC Niranjana Mallick.

Thousands join BJD Mahila meet in Bhapur



PNS ■ BHAPUR

A Mahila Samabesh was organised at Somenath Deb temple\ near Banamalipur in Bhapur under Nayagarh district on March 26 to mark the 107th birth anniversary of legendary Biju Patnaik. Due to Holi, the event which falls on March 8, had been

postponed in the area.

About 4,000 women from Bhapur and Khandapada blocks congregated on the occasion. While Khandapada BJD women wing president Minati Sahu presided, among others Bhapur Block BJD women wing president Kabita Maharana, Khandapada Block Chairperson Upama Behera,

Bhapur Block Chairperson Sabitri Pradhan, Nayagarh ZP vice chairperson Bishnupriya Behera, Golapokhari Sarpanch Rash ita Pradhan, besides all women Sarpanches and Samiti members from the two Blocks attended.

Khandapada MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik joined the meet as the chief guest and said

that a big rally of the women of the area would be held in coming days and various competitions among them would be organised. He advised the women to be educated and encourage education of their girls in family, besides fighting against female foeticide and child marriage.

‘Instead of big hydropower units, focus on smaller ones’

The development of the green energy sector in India and Odisha, in particular, is facing lots of hurdles and challenges. In an interview, energy sector expert Er Miraj Kumar Mishra talks to Sunil Kumar Mishra about the scenario in Odisha.

Q: What is the status of green energy?

A: At present, India has a capacity of around 174 GW of renewable energy (RE), from which Odisha needs to develop around 10 GW of capacity by 2030. Till date, Odisha has developed only 700 MW (approx) RE leaving aside large hydro power. As a whole, Odisha has utilised 11.5% of its available potential in the State. So, the question is whether it will be a reality to



Miraj Kumar Mishra

achieve the estimated target of RE by 2030 or still it will remain a pipedream.

Q: What is RE policy in Odisha?

A: The Government of Odisha notified the RE Policy 2022, which engrosses various energy technologies, like large and small hydro, all types

of solar, wind and biomass etc. The Government provides facilities for promoting RE projects in Odisha, extending various incentive programmes as in land, stamp duty, wheeling charges etc. Here I want to point out that the main driver behind this is the Renewale Purchase Obligation set by the Central Government. I hope a serious note of it is taken by organisations to meet the RPO.

Q: Who are the major players in the development of green energy in Odisha?

A: The Green Energy Development Corporation of Odisha Limited (a subsidiary of OHPC Ltd) and the Odisha Renewable Energy Development Authority, and

some private players are currently developing RE power. Big players like BHEL, NHPC, TATA Power, Reliance power and Jaiprakash Energy should be persuaded in consultation with the Central Government to develop green energy in Odisha.

Q: In which way the Green Energy Policy of India is helping Odisha?

A: The global power sector is undergoing an accelerated transformation due to climate change and India is keen to fight climate change through renewable energy. The Central Government is always pushing Odisha to develop green energy giving positive motivation and clearance including environmental and pollution etc. it is even giving enormous

sources like funding.

Q: How do you look at the scope and resources of RE in Odisha?

A: Odisha has lots of resources in solar, floating solar, and small hydro. The barren lands in hydro projects and on the river side, solar power can be installed. Odisha has lots of canals for irrigation purposes, so floating solar projects can be installed. Though Odisha has failed in wind power in the past, still there is a silver lining to set up projects, with better technology. We have enough resources for biomass which can be utilised for RE power generation. In a recent industrial conclave, players like Adani, JSW and others have shown interest in developing

RE power. However, it is a fact that Odisha lags behind other States in developing green energy to the required target due to insufficient vision, improper blue print and lack of controlled execution and motoring.

Q: It is seen that not a single MW has been added in new hydro projects, in recent years?

A: It is partially true, because we have added few MWs through renovation, modernization and uprating of old units and by developing some small hydro projects. Though there are resources of hydro projects in Odisha, it is difficult to develop it because of economic, rehabilitation and resettlement issues and above all, the major is political

INBRIEF

PURI SRIKRISHNA CINEMA HALL DEMOLISHED

Puri: The Srikrishna cinema hall, the second oldest in Puri was demolished by the local administration on Monday as part of



its drive against illegal constructions in the town.

HC CJ INAUGURATES KANDHAMAL VIRTUAL COURT

Phulbani: Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar on Monday inaugurated the virtual court centre in Phulbani through videoconferencing in the presence of Justice MS Sahoo and other judges. Kandhamal District Judge Satyapira Mishra, Judicial Officers, district bar association president Bijaya Mohanty, secretary DS Pattnaik and other bar members were present. The Chief Justice said the virtual courts are unique in the Indian judicial system. Litigants would find it less expensive. ASOs of the High Court would impart training to the district court staffs and lawyers on how to file cases, present the writ applications and other technical knowhow.



CHAKRAVARTY KEONJHAR BAR PRESIDENT FOR 3RD TIME

Keonjhat: Ashish Chakravarty has been elected as president of the Keonjhar District Bar Association for the third time. Previously, he was elected as president for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22. He is also a Zila Parishad Member and a former president of the District Biju Janata Dal. Sanjit Das has been elected as secretary of the bar association.



JAGATSINGHPUR BAR ASSN ELECTIONS HELD

Jagatsinghpur: The Jagatsinghpur Bar Association elections were held on Saturday. As many as 323 members out of 354 cast their votes. Debendra Nath Swain was elected as president of the association, Saroj Kumar Biswal vice-president, Naresh Das general secretary, Gyanaranjan Mohanty joint secretary and Duryodhan Rout treasurer.

IPL SEASON 16 TO BE STREAMED IN ODIA

Bhubaneswar: In what could be one of the most exhilarating experiences for cricket lovers across Odisha, Season 16 of the Indian Premiere League (IPL), in a first, will also be conducted in Odia in the current year. While anchor Loria Mohanty from Cuttack district will host the 'Match Centre Live' before the match, commentator Nishant Majithia will head the IPL Odia feed as the producer.



In Rourkela 3 killed, 4 injured as truck hits bus



PNS ■ ROURKELA

Three persons, including a minor girl, were killed and four others sustained critical injuries as a truck hit a bus by which they were travelling at Chandiposh here early on Monday morning.

The deceased were identified as bus driver Anupam Vivek Lakra, Satya Prakash Nayak of Rourkela, who was a bus owner, and a 12-year-old girl.

According to reports, the ill-fated vehicle was heading towards Rourkela from

Bhubaneswar. The bus was parked near a dhaba when the speeding truck hit it at around 4 am.

Satya Prakash and the minor girl died on the spot. The injured ones, including the mother of the girl, were initially rushed to the Rourkela Government Hospital and later shifted to the Jaiprakash Hospital here as their conditions deteriorated.

Anupam succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Q: What are your suggestions to overcome these challenges?

A: The big hydro projects can be split up to small hydro projects, in cascading manner and can be developed, though we may lose some MW apacity. Before installing any projects, there must be involvement of villagers and political people because they play a major role. The Tehri hydro Project is a good example of a better rehabilitation system, which can be followed in other regions. Organisations and private players should be given free hand and enormous opportunity, curtailing intervention of people and politics. The mafia raj which is going on in new projects should be controlled.

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 com-

mittee 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 Makhana 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 desti-



nation, 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 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 pre-garated are -- NCF for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECE), 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



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.

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

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 (iden-

titles) of colleagues to make illegal transfers for online gaming bids, they said.

His statement was record-

ed 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.

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 health-care.

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 Udham Singh Nagar 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 Health 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 Panach 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 agi-



tating 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 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 res-



cued 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 rules 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.

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 ded-

ication 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, Yamunapur. It was organized by CAS India Foundation in association with Navdriшти 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 Pandey 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 Pandey 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 Pandey 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 Pandey 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 it 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

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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 welfareist 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 culture as part of preparation ahead of the G-20 meeting

PTI

Role of technology in developing digital art

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 dig-

ital 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)



SAKSHI SETHI

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 over- turns 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."

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 pub-



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

lic 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)

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



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,

Far from over

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

Bharath Jodo Yatra.. Rahul Gandhi was a consistent critic who highlighted Modis thorn in Narendra Modi's flesh. Now the Narendra Modi Government has taken unethical measures to silence Rahul 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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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 pay-

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

(The writer is a policy analyst)

ments during 2022-23 and will not in the future. What about the money already given to them during 2021-22 and even before that?

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

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,



RAVI VALLURI

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

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

A head 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 demonstra-



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

tions 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

‘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

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.

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.

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) north-east 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 Hamblins 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 launched 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 com-



munity 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 fastest-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. AP

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. Mackenzie 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 to not 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.

The court after hearing



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

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 spokesman, 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 communicate 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



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

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.

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.

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 questioned 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 188 sq. yds. out of rect. no. 9, kila no. 27-30, and rect no. 9 kila no. 3 Shiv Puri, village Khursji Khas, Ilaqa Shahdara Delhi-110051 currently owned by Sh. Rajesh Chawla, Sh. Sanjay Kumar, Sh. Deepak Gupta and Smt. Lajja Chandra viras of sale deed 25.05.2022 doc. no. 5445 SR-VIII, Delhi. This property was transferred by legal heir of Leela Vani Khanna namely Ramesh Chander Bagga who became owner by virtue of relinquishment deed executed by Anand Bagga, Suresh Bajaj, Shashi Bala, Prem Bagga, Amit Bagga and Veeraj 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 Mehra 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 Mehra (Advocate)
E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092
Mobile No. 9811213181

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-gunjansingh1@kotak.com

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
(Through e-tendering)
Provision of four Terminals of FOIS Connectivity and 30 Nos. of Connection for Rainnet 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-Tel-OT-968 Dated: 27.03.2023

GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY 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 Vojana 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.

G20
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 in connection with "Conversion of line no. 1 & 2 & Rajdhani Washing Line no. 11 & 12 at New Delhi Yard under "Mission Rafat 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

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.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client, Jullerton India Home Finance Corporation Limited, that Mrs. Saroj is owner of Residential Property bearing No. 429, area measuring 53.44 Sq. Yds., Situated in Kalash Nagar, in the area of Village Kalla, Pargana Loni, Tehsi & District Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh referred as the said property by virtue of Sale Deed dated 16.04.2019, executed by Mr. Suresh Sharma. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner want to sell the said property, and someone want to purchase the same by taking Home loan from Jullerton India Home Finance Ltd. If anybody has any objection/s upon the title of Mrs. Saroj of the said property, its ownership / Litigation/Title and any kind of objections kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants) 200, Ind Floor 23, Shivaji Marg, New Nagar, N. Delhi-15 Ph: 011-4112527-28 legal@knaegal.com
Sd/- (Mrs. K. Bablani) Aar Pee Apartments (P) Ltd., M-132, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001

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 & 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

G20
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 Rafat 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 lag-



gards.

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 mid-cap 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 for-



tunate 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".

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 sub-



station 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.

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 Noida. 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 'brought the first brand to manufacture its own Dual Inverter Air Conditioner compressor in India'.

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 dur-

ing 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".

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.



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.

'RONALDO VERY IMPORTANT FOR PORTUGAL'



AP ■ LUXEBORG

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.

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

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.

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.

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

Alcaraz powers into last 16 at Miami, Ruud out

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 withdrew from Monday's clash with a right hip injury.

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.

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

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.

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 Rahman 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.

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

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 Warriors 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.

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.

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar, Odisha dt. 03.03.2023, I, Sourav Routray S/o Kalpataru Routray At/Po-Samantrapur, Plot No.2019, Old Town, PS-Lingaraj, Bhubaneswar Odisha -751002 have changed my surname from "Routaray" to "Routray". Henceforth, I shall be known as Sourav Routray for all purposes.

Sourav Routray



Office of the Chief Engineer & Basin Manager,
Rushikulya Bahuda Vansadhara Nagavali Basin, Brahmapur – 760004
e-mail: ce_rvn@yahoo.co.in
e-Procurement Notice No. CEBM-RBVN- 12/2022-23

1. Type of Work

2. Total No of Works

3. Amount put to tender

4. Period of completion

> Irrigation Work.

> 01 (One) No.

> Rs 18200.00 Lakhs

> 24 (Twenty Four) Calendar months.

Procurement officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Availability & Submission of Bid On-line
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur, Ganjam.	CEBM-RBVN(CCD)-02/2022-23	18200.00	From 29.03.2023, 10.00 A.M. to 11.05.2023, 5.00 P.M.

Date of opening of the Technical Bid 12.05.2023 at 11.00 A.M.
Further detail can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur

OIPR-32459/11/0016/2223



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-mail : ceworldbankprojects@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-W.B.P. (O) - 45 / 2022-23

1. The Chief Engineer (World Bank Project), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road & Bridge work as detailed below :

2. Nature of work

3. No. of work

4. Tender cost

5. Class of Contractor

6. Available of bid document

7. Pre - Bid meeting

8. Date of opening of Bid

9. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tenderodisha.gov.in> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

: Road work

: 01 no.

: Rs.10,000.00 (on-line)

: Special/ Super Class Contractor

: From 10.00 AM of 28.03.2023 to 5.00 PM of 20.04.2023 in the website

: Dt.04.04.2023

: Dt.21.04.2023 at 11.30 AM

Chief Engineer
World Bank Project, Odisha

OIPR-34003/11/0091/2223