

**OPINION 6**  
MYANMAR NIGHTMARE  
CONTINUES UNABATED**WORLD 9**  
US CARRIES OUT AIRSTRIKES  
IN SYRIA**MONEY 10**  
INDIA'S FOREX KITTY JUMPS BY  
USD 12.8 BN TO USD 572.8 BN

CHANDIGARH, SATURDAY MARCH 25, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹



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# Rahul disqualified from LS

**Cong to launch nationwide strike, Opp rallies around Rahul, accuses BJP of doing 'vindictive politics'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was on Friday disqualified from the Lok Sabha, nearly 24 hours after a Surat court convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his "all thieves have Modi as the common surname" remark.

The disqualification will bar the 52-year-old former Congress president, a four-time MP, from contesting elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction or lowers the sentence to below two years.

Soon after Rahul's disqualification, the Congress leadership got into a huddle at the party headquarters and deliberated on the way forward.

Late on Friday evening, the Congress announced a nationwide agitation against Rahul's disqualification, alleging that the Government has acted at lightning speed to "gag" him, and called for taking forward the efforts for the Opposition unity in a systematic manner.

Announcing Rahul's disqualification, the Lok Sabha

Secretariat in a notification said following his conviction by the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat, Rahul, Member of the Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of the House from the date of his conviction i.e. March 23, 2023.

The Congress said it will fight the matter politically and legally. Hitting out at the Government, the Congress said it is "a black day for Indian democracy" and alleged that the action was driven by "political vendetta".

Hours before the notification was issued, Rahul attended the Lok Sabha proceedings in the morning session.

Before the proceedings commenced, he also participated in a meeting of party MPs in Parliament complex. Rahul said he is fighting for the voice of India and is ready to pay any price, hours after he was disqualified from the Lok Sabha.

Later, Rahul tweeted, "I am fighting for the voice of



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaves Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Friday

India. I am ready to pay every price."

However, the disqualification ostensibly has come as a blessing in disguise for the ragtag unity in Opposition, including TMC, AAP, SP, BRS which have been toeing a different line. On Friday, they echoed concern over the vindictive kind of politics and alleged that the Rahul was not given 30 days appeal space.

Some of them who had quit the Congress and are now part of other outfits too expressed their solidarity with Rahul.

Rahul is the second member of the Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP PP Mohammed Faizal of the NCP, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction.

The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faizal, to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case. Following the conviction, Faizal was disqualified.

However, the Kerala High Court later suspended his conviction and sentence. According to the MP, the Lok Sabha Secretariat is yet to issue a notification revoking his disqualification.

## Lies, slander part of Rahul's politics: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Friday claimed Rahul Gandhi has a habit of levelling fabricated allegations having no connection with facts while alleging the Congress leader has a "huge arrogance but little understanding".

In a series of tweets amid a political fight between the BJP and the Congress following Rahul's conviction in a defamation case, Nadda alleged that "lies, personal slander and negative politics is integral" to his politics.

People's "punishment" to him will be more severe in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls than in 2019 when he lost in Amethi and the Congress was routed nationally, the BJP leader said.

He said, "By comparing OBC communities to thieves, Rahul has shown a pathetic and casteist mindset. However, his latest tirade is not surprising. For the last many years, he has always reduced levels of political discourse."

# UK's security obligations not met: Jaishankar

**We want action, not assurance: EAM; UK MPs slam Khalistanis for vandalism**PIONEER NEWS  
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■  
NEW DELHI/LONDON

In the first high-level strong reaction by India to the attack on its High Commission in London by alleged Khalistan supporters, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said it is the responsibility of that country to provide security and "these obligations were not met".

A day after UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly condemned vandalism AT the Indian High Commission in London, the issue was raised in UK Parliament with MPs demanding action against "Khalistani hooligans". They also called for safety of India's diplomatic staff.

Taking exception to the attack on the Indian High Commission, Jaishankar when asked about the security of Indian Missions following vandalism in the UK said, "It is the obligation of the receiving country to provide security for a diplomat to do their work, to ensure embassy or High Commission's premises are respected. These obligations

were not met. We have had conversations with the British Government on this."

Jaishankar also said, "Many countries have a different view of their own security and a different view of other people's security. We will not accept this differential status." He made these observations at an event in Bengaluru.

Echoing similar views, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here on Friday, "We hope host Governments provide full and adequate protection to our Missions and to the personnel working there...We are not interested in just assurances, I think we would like to see action."

He also said "at least in London and San Francisco, we have strongly taken up the matter of vandalisation. You would have also seen the statements that we have put out in this regard. We expect that host Governments will take action to identify and prosecute all those involved and also take necessary actions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents."



## CAPSULE

### K'TAKA ABOLISHES 4% QUOTA FOR MINORITIES

**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka Government on Friday announced its decision to scrap the four per cent quota for minorities and added it to the existing quota of two dominant communities of the poll-bound State.

### HC SETS ASIDE DELHI BJP MLA'S HOUSE BAN

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court on Friday set aside the one-year suspension of BJP MLA Vijender Gupta from the Delhi Legislative Assembly and permitted him to attend the remaining Budget Session of the Assembly while directing him to maintain the dignity of the House.

### COVID RELIEF OVER, NOW SURRENDER, ORDERS SC

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the Covid-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days.

### TAXPAYERS WITH INCOME OVER ₹7L TO GET RELIEF

**New Delhi:** In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of ₹7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the Government amended the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a marginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

# Mere membership of banned outfit makes persons criminal: SC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict having wider ramifications, the Supreme Court on Friday reversed its 12-year-old verdict of two-judge bench and said that mere membership of a banned organisation will make a person criminal and liable to be prosecuted under provisions of UAPA.

The top court said its three verdicts of 2011 pronounced by two-judge benches, which held that mere membership of a banned organisation will not incriminate a person unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence and does an act intended to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resorting to violence, "is not a good law".

It restored Section 3(5) of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act,

1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967, which made the membership of a banned outfit an offence, liable to be punished with two years imprisonment along with fine.

A bench of Justice MR Shah, Justice CT Ravikumar and Justice Sanjay Karol allowed the petitions filed by the Centre and the Assam Government seeking a review of the three 2011 verdicts of the apex court on the ground that it will impact the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

"We hold that the view taken by this court in the cases of State of Kerala versus Raneef, Arup Bhuyan versus Union of India and Indra Das versus State of Assam (all 2011 verdicts) taking the view that under Section 3(5) of Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967... and reading down the said provisions to mean that over and above the membership of a banned organisation there must be an overt act and/or further criminal activities and adding the element of mens rea are held to be not a good law", it said.

# Pak hecklers shown door at Kashmir event in US

PNS/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
WASHINGTON

Scores of Pakistanis tried to disrupt a discussion on Kashmir in prestigious Washington DC National Press Club and some of them were later forcibly removed from the venue. The incident took place late on Thursday. The same day India slammed Pakistan for raising the issue of Kashmir in the United Human Rights Council (UNHCR).

Six separatist loyalists were forcibly removed from the National Press Club in Washington as Pakistanis tried to heckle and repeatedly interrupt the discussion in the Press club.

The panel discussion titled "Kashmir: From Turmoil to Transformation" was held on Thursday. It was moderated by columnist Se Hoon Kim and addressed by president of the

Jammu & Kashmir Workers Party Mir Junaid, and Touseef Raina, president of the Municipal Council of Baramulla.

"The whole audience has seen your real face today. What we have seen in Kashmir, we saw in Washington today, and thank you for showing the world how cruel, and indecent these people are. You have seen it all," Junaid said as the separatist sympathisers were taken out of the room.

They tried to disrupt the discussion while Junaid was responding to a question on the reasons why the Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders were in jail.

"They (Hurriyat leaders) are in jail because of their mistakes. They misled the people of Jammu & Kashmir for their vested interests and gains. They spoiled our ecosystem of education. They were the spoilers of our economy. They were

glorifying terrorism. They are in jail for their hate speech. They are in jail for their war crimes," Junaid said.

Referring to the disruption caused by the protesters, Raina said all these years this is what the separatists sponsored by Pakistan have been doing in Jammu & Kashmir.

"What these gentlemen did, the same thing they did in Kashmir. Whosoever was speaking, right, or for the people, was silenced by the gun," he said. "I wish I get a chance to visit Pakistan. I want to meet the policymakers to stop funding terrorism," said the Baramulla Municipal Council president.

# 45 Defence JVs with foreign firms OK'd for faster weapons production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

With the objective of faster development and production of weapons to maintain operational readiness of the armed forces, the Government has given approval to "45 companies/joint ventures" operating in the defence sector with foreign OEMs (original equipment manufacturers).

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt informed this to the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The Centre has taken several policy initiatives in the past few years and brought reforms to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacture of defence equipment in the country, thereby reducing dependency on imports in coming years, he said.

"These initiatives, inter

alia, include according priority to procurement of capital items from domestic sources under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)-2020; notification of three Positive Indigenisation Lists (PILs) by the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence, with a timeline beyond which they will only be procured from the domestic industry," the Minister said.

# India's first ropeway transport in Varanasi: Modi sets project in motion

**'UP rising from hopelessness and moving towards hope, aspirations'**

PNS ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday gifted his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, 28 projects — including the first of its kind 3.75-kilometre ropeway transport that will ease traffic congestion in the city.

He laid the foundation of Rs 645-crore ropeway project adding a new chapter in the history of public transport in India.

"The ropeway project will take the city's internal connectivity to a new level. It will further increase the economic opportunities as well as the stay of visitors and their spending here," Modi said while address-

ing a public meeting after laying the foundation stone of nine projects and inaugurating 19 development projects.

The ropeway will cover the distance between Varanasi Cantt Railway station and Kashi Vishwanath Dham in a few minutes. The ropeway system will have five stations and facilitate the ease of movement for tourists, pilgrims and residents.

The Prime Minister praised the the Yogi Adityanath Government for turning Uttar Pradesh from hopelessness towards a state of hope and aspiration "Uttar Pradesh is rising from hopelessness and moving towards hope and aspirations. Where security and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 'One World TB Summit' at Rudrakash Convention Centre, in Varanasi, on Friday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also seen

facilities are made available, prosperity is certain," Modi said, appreciating the efforts of Yogi who completes the first year in office in his second term on Saturday.

During a programme at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University ground here, Modi termed himself a "sewak (servant)" and said, "The development of Kashi is being discussed all over the country and the world."

"Whoever is coming to Kashi is taking new energy from here. Nine years ago, people had apprehensions that there would be no change in Banaras, nothing would happen in Kashi. But the people of Kashi proved every apprehension wrong with their hard work," he said.

"Today, in Kashi, both the old and the new forms are

simultaneously seen," he said. Modi added that people in India and abroad appreciated the development of the Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor and the Ganga ghat.

In the past one year, over seven crore tourists visited Varanasi and brought employment opportunities for the local residents, Modi said.

He also announced that a big campaign to promote natural farming would start on both sides of the Ganga. "A big campaign is going to start on both sides of the Ganga river. Natural farming will be encouraged on 5km on both sides. Arrangements have been made in the Budget for this," he said.

Modi also laid the foundation stone of a 55 MLD (million litres per day) sewage treatment plant at Bhagwanpur under the Namami Gange

scheme. The project will be built at an estimated cost of ₹300 crore.

Under the Khelo India scheme, Modi laid the foundation stone of the Phase 2 and Phase 3 redevelopment work of Sriga Stadium.

He also dedicated 19 drinking water schemes that will benefit over three lakh people in 63 panchayats under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Earlier, while addressing the "One World TB Summit" on World TB Day, Modi said India's ideology of "Vasudev Kutumbakam" is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions.

Launching a series of initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis in India, Modi said the country is working to eliminate the disease by 2025 against the global target of 2030.

# J&K lithium to make India top in EV making, says Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said that if India can use recently discovered reserve of lithium in Jammu & Kashmir, it can become world's number one automobile manufacturer in electric vehicle segment.

The road, transport and highway minister said there is a need to encourage public transport, and electric buses are the future. "Every year, we import 1,200 tonnes of lithium. Now, in J&K, we got lithium. (If) we can use this lithium ion, we will be the number one automobile manufacturing country in the world," he said.



# Classifieds

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**I, Mohammad Yunus** S/o Samsher Ali R/O Ward no. 15 kharkhoda, Sonipat 131001 has disowned my daughter Khushi from my all movable-immovable property as she is out of my control. In future, if anybody deals with her, he/she will do at their own risk.

**I, Baljeet Kaur** W/O Jaimal Singh R/O 29, Modren Colony, Near O.C.M.Mill, Khandwala, Chihcharta, Amritsar Declare That My Daughter Kawaljeet Kaur Bajwa W/O Gurjit Singh Bajwa Is Out Of My Control. So, I Disinherit Her From My All The Moveable And Immovable Property. Any Body Deal With Her Is His Own Risk And Responsibility.

**I Ashwani Sharma** S/o Sh. Makhan Lal R/O Patiala Enclave Patiala Road Sanour Distt. Patiala declared that my son Ravinder Kumar and his wife Neesha Sharma are out of our control. So we disown them from our movable and immovable property. The person dealing with them will be responsible him/herself.

**I Amarjeet Kaur** W/O Harvinder Singh, R/O Flat No-403a, New Generation Extention, Dhakoli (Punjab), Declare That In My Some Documents My Father's Name Has Been Mentioned As Ram Singh Bhamber, Whereas His Actual Name Is Ram Singh.

**I Gamdur Singh** S/O Niranjan Singh R/O Kutwal Khurd, Tehsil Maur Distt Bathinda Declare That In My Son Sukdev Singh Sidhu Documents My Name Is Wrongly Recorded As Gamdhur Singh. My Correct Name Is Gamdur Singh.

**I Parvinderjit Singh** Chahal S/O Bhagwant Singh Declare That My Name Recorded In Aadhar Card As Parvinderjit Singh Chahal. In Pan Card Recorded As Parvinder Singh & In Revenue Record Recorded As Parminder Singh. I Known With All Three Names.

**I, Jc-522248m** Subedar Jaswinder Singh Resident Of Village Singhowal, Post Office Dagan, Tehsil Mukerian, Distt Hoshiarpur (Punjab) Declare That In My Service Record Date Of Birth Of My Wife Nirmala Devi Inadvertently Recorded As 10.08.1978. Her Correct Date Of Birth Is 10.08.1979. Concerned Note.

**I Kiran Saini** W/O Shyam Saini R/O 1378 B-1, Abdullapur Colony Near Bitna Road Kalka Pinjore Panchkula Haryana, Declare That My Son Mayur Saini And His Wife Pooja Saini Are Out Of My Control. So I Disown/ Disinherit Both Of Them From My Moveable- Immovable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Them Will Do So At His/ Her Own Risk.

**I Promila** W/O Late Rajesh Saini R/O 5/3 Rajiv Colony Sector- 17 Panchkula Haryana, Declare That My Son Arun Is Out Of My Control. So I Disown/ Disinherit Him From My Moveable-Immovable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Him Will Do So At His/ Her Own Risk.

**I, Army No. 14266305a** Hav Ajay Kumar S/O Sh. Ram Kishan Sharma R/O H.No. 1229/34, Sheetal Nagar, Rohtak (Haryana) Declare That My Daughter Name Baby Taruna Is Wrongly Mentioned In My Army Service Record. But My Daughter Correct & Actual Name Is Taruna (As Per School Record). Vide Affidavit Dated 24.03.2023 Before Notary Public Rohtak.

**I, Savinder Kumar** Dob 04-09-1991 (Existing Name And Dob Of Son As Per Service Documents) Son Of No.7773218-H Ex.Hony Nb Sub Ramesh Of Village Saba Khera Po Khubru Tehsil Ganaur Distt.Sonipat (Haryana) Have Changed My Name And Dob From Savinder Kumar 04-09-1991 To Shivender Dob 23-09-1993 (Existing In The Civil Documents Of Son ) Vide Affidavit Dated 24-03-2023 At District Court Sonipat (Haryana)

**I, Mahinder Kumar** S/O Sh. Babu Ram R/O H.No. 1214/1, Ward No. 6, Partap Mohalla, Rohtak Declare That My Name Mahinder Dhiman Is Mentioned In My Son Anupam Dhiman School Record. But As Per All Documents My Correct & Actual Name Is Mahinder Kumar. Mahinder Kumar And Mahinder Dhiman Both Name Are Same And One Person.

**I Tarun Kumar** So Kuldeep Singh, R/ B/9, 697 Luxmi Garden, Near New Happy School , Yamunanagar, That In The Matric Certificate Of My Son Vansh Verma His Father Name Is Mentioned Tarun Verma Instead Of Tarun Kumar , And Mother Name Is Mentioned Anju Verma Instead Of Anju .

**I. No. Jc 501585n** Gurbinder Singh Rank Sub Unit 23 Sikh C/O 56 APO Declare That In My Military Part-LI Order/Service Record My Wife's Name Has Been Wrongly Written As Sindperl Pal. But My Wife's Correct Name Is Sinder Pal Kaur.

**I, Shiv Ram Sharma** S/o Ram Gopal Sharma R/o Guru Har Sahai, Distt. Ferozepur Declare That My Daughter Saloni have passed her Matric Examination in 2020-21 under Unique ID 7406712 from Little Flower Convent School, Guru Har Sahai. On her Matric Certificate her mother name mentioned as Seema Rani but actually her mother correct name is Seema Devi. Concerned note it.

**I Ram Chander** S/O Sispal R/O Chatri Wala Kua Village Jharothi Tehsil Kharkhoda Distt Sonipat Declare That My Son Mohit Is Out Of My Control. So I Disown Him From All My Movable Or Immovable Properties. Anybody Dealing Him Them On Their Own Risk.

**I, Jasmer Singh** S/O Karoda Singh & Shoba W/O Jasmer Singh R/O Village Shatabgarh Tehsil Derabassi Distt Mohali Declare That Our Son Akash Saini Alias Mohit Alias Aman & His Wife Simran Kaur Are Out Of Our Control. So We Disown Both Of Them From All Our Movable And Immovable Property. Any Body Dealing With Them On Their Own Risk.

**I, Usha Rani** Spouse Late Shri Satish Kumar M. No. 2195/15, Moti Nagar Ambala City. I state that my son Yogesh alias Shammai and daughter-in-law Pooja and son Vikas alias Bunti and daughter-in-law Shivani and married daughter Minashi are out of listening to me, so I evict all of them from my movable and immovable property. In future the person who deals with them will be responsible himself.

**I, Pala Ram** S/O Gugan Ram R/o H.No. 77 Bhagwan Nagar Colony Pipli Tehsil Thanesar, District Kurukshetra, have evicted my son Kulwinder Kumar, his wife Rupa Rani from all my movable, immovable properties, as they are out of my control. Anybody dealing with them at their own risk.

**I, Sandhya Devi** spouse of Mr Govind Singh Jadon resident of Village- Banwara, Post-Sabalgarh, Tehsil- Sabalgarh, District- Morena, State- MP, Pin- 476229, have changed my name from Sandhya Jadon to Sandhya Devi Vide affidavit No.IN-PB82838420164072V dated 22 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot

**I, Amarjit Kaur** Mother of No.JC-511357Y Sub Amrik Singh resident of Village- Amla Singh Wali, Post- Bhadalwad, Tehsil & District Barnala, State- Punjab, Pin-148101, have changed my name and DOB from Amrjit Kaur to Amarjit Kaur and DOB 13 March 1961 to 02 Feb 1953 Vide affidavit No. IN-PB83133802692487V dated 23 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot

**I, Govind Singh** Jadon resident of Village- Banwara, Post- Sabalgarh, Tehsil-Sabalgarh, District- Morena, State- MP, Pin- 476229, have changed my Son name from Yeshvardhan Singh Jadon to Yashvardhan Singh Jadon Vide affidavit No.IN-PB82834824170090V dated 22 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot Bajinath, District-Kangra, HP, have been changed my Father name from Gurdev Singh to Gurdev Vide affidavit No.IN-PB82558025480245V dated 21 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot

**I, Parmjit Kaur** spouse of No.511046L Sub Kulbir Singh resident of VPO Veela Bajju, Tehsil- Batala, District-Gurdaspur, State- Punjab, Pin-143514, have changed my name from Paramjit Kaur to Parmjit Kaur Vide affidavit No.IN-PB83133659171263V dated 23 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot

**I No.14863209X** Sep/MT Prasenjit Debnath resident of 644 (I) TKTPTR PL ASC C/O 56 APO Pin- 905644 in my service record my name wrongly recorded as Prasanjit Debnath instead of Prasenjit Debnath Please Note

**I, No.15207936F** Hav Man Phool resident of Village- House No. 372 Street No.- 6, Rahul Vihar Ist Post- Vijay Nagar, Tehsil- Tehsil- & District- Ghaziabad, State- UP, Pin-201009 have changed my daughter name from Laxmi to Laxmi Rani Vide affidavit No.IN-PB83014504467225V dated 23 April 2023 before notary public Pathankot

**I, No.JC-304651M** Sub Ranveer Singh resident of VPO Dabri Baloda, Tehsil- Nalavgarh, District- Jhunjhunu, State- Rajasthan, have changed my Mother Saraswati Devi DOB from 28 April 1950 to 01 Jan 1940 and Father Ram Chandra DOB from 28 April 1940 to 28 April 1952 Please note

**I, Mousumi Borah** spouse of No.6395282W Hav Ranjit Borah resident of Village- Kolagaon, Post- Tilikiam, Tehsil- Khangia Gaon, District- Jorhat, State- Assam, Pin- 785006, have changed my name from Mousumi Borah to Mousumi Boruah Borah Vide affidavit No.IN-PB82495761017349V dated 21 March 2023 before notary public Pathankot.

**We Ram Murti Rai** S/o Girdhari Lal, & Neelam Rai wife of Ram Murti Rai Resident of House No. T-3/104, Juglal Colony, RSD Shahpur Kandi, Tehsil & District Pathankot (PB), Declare that my son namely Rahul Rai and his wife Kunica Rasotra are out of my control. I denar both of them my all moveable/immovable property and relationships vide affidavit.

**I Rajinder Kaur** W/o Surinder Kumar R/o Vill Nilpur Teh Rajpura Distt Patiala declare that in my Son Abhinav Kumar 12th School Certificate my name wrongly entered Rajinder but my correct name is Rajinder Kaur.

**I, Service No. JC675035P** Name: Sikandar Pandit unit 698 TKTPTR Coy Type C C/O 56 APO, Permanent Address Vill Gauripur PO Gauripur Tehsil Bihpur and Distt. Bhagalpur (Bihar) Pin code no. 853201 declare that in my army record my wife's name is wrongly entered as Paribha Kumari W/O Sikandar Pandit instead of Pratibha Devi W/O Sikandar Pandit vide affidavit dated 24-03-2023 Satpal Notary Pathankot Punjab.

**I, Anjana Kumari** W/o No. 14906788L Late Hav Jagdev Singh Village Bisso Chak Po. Dhaddar Teh-Dasuya (Hoshiarpur) Punjab, declare that in my husband's army record my name written is Anjana and my DOB was not written my age written 33 years. Actually my name is Anjana Kumari and my DOB is 14-07-1968 as per my records.

**I Rajwinder Kaur** W/O JC703988W Rank SUB NA Name Mastan Singh R/O VPO Ajrawar Teh Rajpura Distt Patiala Changed Name As Rajwinder Kaur And My Correct DOB Is 01/01/1979.

It is for general information that I, Deepak S/O Harjit Singh R/O Rehana Jattan, Phagwara, Kapurthala, Punjab - 144401 declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as Harjit in my educational documents. The actual name of my father is Harjit Singh respectively which may be amended accordingly

ਮੇਂ ਜਸਵੰਤ ਕੌਰ ਪਤਨੀ ਨੇ. ਨਿਰਮਲ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਾਸੀ ਲੋਨੋਵਾਲਾ ਤਹਿ: ਰੁਹੌੜ (ਰੂਪਰਥਾ) ਖ਼ਿਆਨ ਕਰਕੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੇਰਾ ਲੜਕਾ ਚੜਨੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਮੇਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਚਲਨੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਜੋ ਕਿ ਅੱਪਣੀ ਚੈੱਲ-ਅੱਚਲ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਦਲ ਕਰਕੀ ਹਾਂ। (ਹਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਲੈਣ ਦੇਣ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਖੁਦ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।) ਮੇਰਾ ਜਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਤਾਕੁਲ ਵਾ ਵਸਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, No. 6639883** Ex Hav Iqbal Singh S/o Sh. Chanan Singh R/O Village & PO Hussainpur Lalowal Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab has changed my wife name Jasvir Kaur to Simran Kaur whose date of birth is 05/08/1945.

**I, Kiran Kumari** W/o Rakesh Kumar R/O Village Nangthal Gathal PO Garhdiwala Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my minor daughter from Miss. Payal to Payal Rana. Concerned Note.

**I, Smt. Lalita Sood** W/o Late Sh. Subhash Chander R/O B-IV/ 389, Pahari Gate, Hoshiarpur declare that my husband was in receipt of service pension he has expired. Now I have changed the name of my daughter from Minakshi Sood to Meenakshi Sood. Concerned Note.

**I, Paramjit Singh** alias Paramjit S/o Shamsher Singh R/o H.No. 163, Phase 3A, Mohali declare that both the names of one and the same person that is myself. In future I will be known by the name of Paramjit Singh.

**I, Pushpinder Jain** S/o Late Ram Nath Jain R/o H No.864 ATS Prelude Derabassi Distt Mohali have changed my name from Pushpinder Jain to Pushpinder Kaur Jain.

**I, KM Rajni** W/o Parmod Kumar R/O VPO Bakana, Tehsil Radaur, Distt. Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Rajni to KM Rajni.

**I, Sharmila** W/o Deepak Chopra R/O House no 326, Sector - 8 & 9, Part -2, Karnal declare that I have changed my name from Sharmila to Sharmila Chopra for all future purpose.

**I, Tanya** D/o Deepak Chopra R/O House no 326, Sector - 8 & 9, Part -2, Karnal declare that I have changed my name from Tanya to Tanya Chopra for all future purpose.

**I, No. JC-369071M** NB SUB, Jadhav Ranjeet Dhanaji S/O Jadhav Dhanaji Shyamrao, residing at Vill. Kadepur, Teh. Kadegaon, Distt. Sangli, Maharashtra declare that I have changed my daughters name 1. Swaranjali to Swaranjali Ranjeet Jadhav 2. Kavya to Kavya Ranjeet Jadhav for all future purposes.

**I, Vikram Dalal** S/o Suraj Prakash Dalal R/o VPO Jakhuada, Jhajjar, Haryana declares that in my passport, my wife's name was wrongly entered as Sonia Lohchab. Her actual name is Priyanka Lohchab. Please correct it.

**I, Twinkle** D/O Kuldeep Singh R/O H. No. 19-A, Pratap Nagar, Azad Nagar, Near Saket Colony, Hisar (Hry.) have changed my name from Twinkle to Twinkle Chaudhary for all purposes in future.

**I, Nirmala Devi** spouse of Satyawan R/o Mayur Vihar, Gali No. 17, Gohana Road, Bypass, Sonipat, Haryana-131001 have changed my name from Nirmala Devi to Nirmila & in my husband service documents date of birth is recorded as 12/05/1972. That my actual date of birth is 25/03/1968 vide Affidavit dated 21/03/2023 before Sonipat Court.

**I, Gagandeep Singh** S/o No. 4471508A Late Sep Gurdeep Singh R/o Village & PO Kandhala Jattan Tehsil Dasuya Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab has changed my name from Gagandip Singh to Gagandeep Singh. Concern Note.

**I, Himanshu** S/o Raj Kapoor R/o VPO Bohan Distt. Hoshiarpur, Punjab have changed my name from Himanshu to Himanshu Rattu. Concerned note.

**I, Sunita Sachdeva** D/o Hans Raj Sachdeva, W/o Ashwani Ahuja resident of 4 F Kailash Nagar, Opposite New Grain Market Fazilka has changed my name to Sunita Ahuja.

**Ashwani Kumar** S/o Chiman Lal 4 F Kailash Nagar Opp New Grain Market Fazilka has changed my name to Ashwani Ahuja.

**I, Veena Breja** W/o Lalpat R/o H. No. 11, Mohanpura, Sonipat, Haryana 131001,have changed my name from Veena Ahuja to Veena Breja for all future purposes.

**I, Chameli** (Old Name which is to be changed) W/o Dinesh Kumar R/o Nathusari Chopta Distt. Sirsa Haryana, Daughter of Sh. Krishan Kumar R/o Bhoda Hosnak Distt. Fatehabad Haryana have changed my name from Chameli to Nirmila Devi.

**I, Rajesh Jangra** S/o Sh. Ram Phal Jangra R/o house no 109, Laxmi Vatika, Satroad Khas Distt. Hisar declare that I have changed my name from Rajesh to Rajesh Jangra for all future purposes.

**I, Suresh Kumar** S/o Chotu Ram R/O 1868, Basanti Colony, Kunjpura, Distt. Karnal informed that Suresh Kumar & Suresh Pal is the one and same person. Please note for future.

**I, Santosh** W/o Suresh Kumar R/O 1868, Basanti Colony, Kunjpura, Distt. Karnal informed that Santosh & Santosh Kumari is the one and same person. Please note for future.

**I, Avishek** s/o Pawan Kumar r/o Bambowal p/o Dagan Tehsil Mukerian (Hoshiarpur) have changed my name Avishek to Avishek Faquria. Please note.

**I, Vishal** S/o Rajpal R/o Village Kandala Teh. and Distt.Jind (Haryana).In my passport Name Vishal. Which is incorrect. Correct Name is Vishal.

**I, Sushma Devi** W/o Davinder Kapoor R/O House No. 108, Yog Vihar, Baltana, Zirakpur, SAS Nagar, Punjab have changed my minor daughter's name from Harshita to Harshita Kapoor

**I, Pralakash Arora** S/O Raman Arora R/O 170, Avtar Avenue, I/S Medical Enclave, Amritsar Have Declare That Arora Is My Surname And Pralakash Is My Given Name.

**I, Banta Singh** S/O Jeet Singh R/O Village Jhita Kalan, Tehsil And District Amritsar Have Changed My Name To Balwinder Singh.

**I Lakhbir Singh** Randhawa , S/O Kartar Singh , R/O Wno.5,Kathu Nangal Road, Majitha ,Amritsar. I Have Changed My Name From Lakhbir Singh To Lakhbir Singh Randhawa

I Hitherto Known As Angrej Singh S/O Sukhdev Singh, Residing At Vill. Salahpur, Po Qadian, Distt. Gurdaspur-143516, Punjab, India Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Singh Angrej.

I, Hitherto Known As Jaswant Kaur Sandhu Wife Of Tarlochan Singh Residing At Village Thatta Po Sarhali Kalan Tehsil And District Tarn Taran Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Jaswant Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Chandandeep Singh Nirman S/O Hardip Singh Residing At H.No.262, S.G.Enclave, Majitha Road, Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Chandandeep Singh.

I, Hitherto Known As Tarlochan Singh Sandhu Son Of Jagtar Singh Residing At Village Thatta Po Sarhali Kalan Tehsil And District Tarn Taran Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Tarlochan Singh.

I, Hitherto Known As Jagtar Singh Pannu S/O Resham Singh Residing At Village Lohke Khurd, P.O.Valthoa, Tehsil Zira, District Ferozepur-142047 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Jagtar Singh.

I, Hitherto Known As Satpal Kaur W/O Sarbjit Singh Residing At Village Dhota, District Tarn Taran, Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Satwant Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Parminder Kaur W/O Sarbjit Singh Residing At Near New Bus Stand, Majitha, District Amritsar Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Kawaljit Kaur.

I, Jasjit Singh Son Of Iqbal Singh Residing At Vpo Naushehra Pannuan, Tehsil & District Tarn Taran, Punjab Have Changed The Name Of My Minor Son's Satinderjit Singh Age 15 Years And He Shall Hereafter Be Known As Tanvir Singh.

I, Hitherto Known As Govardhan Dass Khurana Alias Goverdhan Dass Alias G.D.Khurana Alias Goverdhan Dass Khurana S/O Jagan Nath Khurana R/O 95, Basant Avenue, Amritsar143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Goverdhan Dass Khurana.

I, Hitherto Known As Paramjit Singh Son Of Dalip Singh Residing At D-4/146, Dilwari Street, Guru Arjan Dev Nagar, Putilghar,Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Sharma Nand Singh.

I, Hitherto Known As Sandeep Kumar Tejpal Son Of Jagdish Rai Residing At H.No.16, Gali No.15, Partap Avenue, Chheharta-143105 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Sandeep Kumar.

I, Hitherto Known As Harpreet Kaur Nirman W/O Hardip Singh Residing At H.No.262, S.G.Enclave, Majitha Road, Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Harpreet Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Divjot Kaur Dhillon Wife Of Ranbir Singh Dhillion Residing At L-3/302 Inside Mehar Singh Hospital Jaspal Nagar Sultanwind Road Amritsar - 143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Divjot Brar.

I, Hitherto Known As Divjot Kaur Dhillon Wife Of Ranbir Singh Dhillion Residing At L-3/302 Inside Mehar Singh Hospital Jaspal Nagar Sultanwind Road Amritsar - 143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Divjot Brar.

**I, Kuljit Kaur** W/O Kashmir Singh R/O Chogawan Road Ajnala Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Kuljeet Kaur To Kuljit Kaur.

**I, No 3400033F** Ex Hav MCAP Nb Sub Paramjit Singh R/O Village Terkiana, PO &Tehsil Mukerian, Distt Hoshiarpur (Pb) have changed name of my son from Harwinder Singh to Harminder Singh. Concerned note.

**I, Vishal Goyal** S/o Vinod Goel, R/o Goel Karyana Town, Barnala Road, Prem Nagar, Sirsa, Tehsil & District Sirsa, declare that Vishal Goyal and Vishal Goel are same persons and my minor daughter name should be considered as: Aarna D/o Vishal Goel.

**I, Mukesh Kumar** S/o Ramesh Chand R/O Mohalla Sarai, Ward No. 11, Mahendergarh, Tehsil and Distt. Mahendergarh, Haryana hereby declare that I have changed my name from Mukesh to Mukesh Kumar for all future purposes.

**I, Radhakrishna Pillai N** Father of No.14937838W, Rank NK Name Rajesh R S/o Village Perinad, PO Vellimmon, Teh. Kollam, Distt. Kollam, Kerala-691511 have changed my date of birth in army record from 07-01-1965 to 30-05-1963 vide affidavit dated 24-03-2023 before Session Court Hisar.

**I, Rajesh Anuja** Wife of No. JC-391228A, Rank NB SUB Name A Rajesh Kanna R/O Village Ellatpatty, PO Markayankottai, Distt. Theni, Tamil Nadu-625515 have changed my name in army record from Rajesh Anuja to R. Anuja vide affidavit dated 24-03-2023 before Session Court Hisar.

**I, No. JC-391228A**, Rank NB SUB Name A Rajesh Kanna R/O Village Ellatpatty, PO Markayankottai, Distt. Theni, Tamil Nadu-625515 have changed the name of my daughter in army record from Sajitha Sri to R. Sajitha Sri vide affidavit dated 24-03-2023 before Session Court Hisar.

**I, L. Sakuntala Devi** Wife of No. JC-421877H, Rank SUB MAJ Name Landa Sankara Rao R/O Village Balarampuram, PO Dharampuram, Teh. Ichapuram, Distt. Srikakulam, A.P.-532312 have changed my name in army record from L. Sakuntala Devi to Landa Sakuntala vide affidavit dated 24-03-2023 before Session Court Hisar.

**I, Ratni Devi** W/o No. 14255961F, Ex NK (TS) Bahadur Singh R/O H. No. 2257, Gali No. 03, Adrash Colony, Rajgarh Road, Hisar (Haryana) hereby changed my name from Ratni Devi to Ratni Devi for all future purposes. My date of birth is 01-02-1987.

**I Jyotsna Gupta** W/o Kunal Gupta R/O 14/201, Heritage City, MG Road, Gurgaon declare that after marriage I have changed my name from Jyotsna Sethi D/o Chaman Lal Sethi to Jyotsna Gupta W/o Kunal Gupta. All concerned note please.

**I Shubi Abbas** W/o Sh. Hasan Abbas R/O H.No 1716, Sector-04, Tehsil Thanesar, Distt. Kurukshetra have changed my name from Shubi Kazmi to Shubi Abbas. All concerned please may note.

**I, Savita Roda** R/O New Sidhat Hospital, Barsat Road, Preet Vihar, Ward No.3, Panipat, Haryana, Declare That Have Change My Name Savita To Savita Roda For All Future Purposes.

**No.15628394K LNK** Ajay kumar S/o Balvir Posing at 21 RR C/O 56 APO that is my Service Record my son Name Marvit kharangarh is wrong but Correct Name is marvrit Choudhary.

**I Surjit Singh** Son Of Nachhattar Singh R/O Aman Colony Chak Bir Sarkar Kacha Thandewala Road Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Surjeet Singh Brar

**I Marvi** w/o Nitin Arora Resident at House No. 3/6 Street No. 1 Bagh Colony, Jalalabad, District Fazilka have changed my name to Marvi Arora.

**I, Christina Wilson** wife of Wilson Ratan (Daughter of Mr. Ved Parkash) R/O Near Power House, Gandhi Nagar, Ferozepur 152002 Punjab, India have changed my name from Christina to Christina Wilson.

**I, Harpreet Singh** Brar S/o Harjinder Singh R/o Village Chugha, Distt. Ferozepur Have Changed My Name From Harpreet Singh Brar To Harpreet Singh.

**I Firdosh Bano** Alias KM Firdoush Bano W/o Zafar Anjar Farooqi (D/o Mohammad Akhtar) R/O #182 J/P Colony, Sular Patiala have declare that boths names are mine & same person.

**I, Vagabati Ghosh** Mother Of Nk Subir Ghosh Resident Of Vill : Goyal Para, Po- Baharan, Teh : Katwa, Distt : Burdwan, State : Wb, Pin-713130 Have Changed My Name From, Vagabati Ghosh To Bhagabati Ghosh

**I Rajesh Kumar** Gautam S/O Amrit Lal R/O #406 Gali Jhattian Wali, Zira Tehsil Zira (Ferozepur) Have Changed My Surname Spelling Rajesh Kumar Golam To Rajesh Kumar Gautam

**I, Anchal Teria** W/O Kartik Dhuria R/O H.No.1136, Gandhi Nagar, Sri Muktsar Sahib Have Changed My Name To Anchal Dhuria

**I Sukhdave Kour** Mother Of Nk Paramjeet Singh Resident Of Vill : Bambhia Bhai Ka, Po: Bambhia Bhai Ka, Teh : Bagah Purana, Distt : Moga, State:Pb, Pin- 151208 Have Changed My Name From, Sukhdave Kour To Sukhdev Kaur.

**We Baldev Singh** S/O Ajit Singh & Smt. Pritpal Kaur W/O Baldev Singh R/O Vpo Jodhe Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt Amritsar Punjab On Behalf Our Minor Daughter Have Changed Name Amarajdeep Kaur To Amrajdeep Kaur .

**I, Rahul Chadha**, S/O Harish Chander Chadha, R/O Flat No-904, Tower - J, Victoria Heights, Peer Muchalla, Zirakpur, Mohali, Have Changed My Name To Rahul Chadha.

**I, Priyanka** W/O Dheeraj Firani D/O Mannohan R/O H.No. 393, Guru Nanak Nagar, Nalas Road, Rajpura, Distt Patiala Have Changed My Name To Priyanka Firani

**I Valbhav Arora** S/O Bhim Sen Arora R/O 254 Sector- C Defence Colony Ambala Cantt. Distt. Ambala, Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name From Sanah To Sanah Arora.

**I Amanpreet Kaur** W/O Lovepreet Singh R/O Vpo Bath Tehsil & Distt Tarn Taran Have Changed My Minor Son Name Khushman Singh To Singh Khushman Surname As Singh

**I Sarbjit Kaur** W/O Angrej Singh Village Manakpura Tehsil Patti District Tarn Taran Have Change My Sarbjit Kaur To Sarabjit Kaur.

**I Om Parkash** S/O Khattu Ram Chawala R/O 1607, Near Mahavir Mandir Rajpura Town Distt. Patiala Have Changed My Name To Om Parkash Chawala.

**I, Subedar Kashmir** S/o Nirmal Singh R/O Village Jiwawal, P.O Dhiamian, District Hoshiarpur (Punjab) Have Changed My Son Name From Rajbir Singh to Rajveer Singh, Kindly Note.

**I, G S Gupta** S/o Sh. Jai Dev R/o 315, Sigma Hospital, Near Balmiki Chowk, Sirsa have changed my name from G S Gupta to Gauri Shanker. Concerned note.

**I, Harshul** S/o Sh. Gauri Shanker R/O 315, Sigma Hospital, Near Balmiki Chowk, Sirsa have changed my name from Harshul to Harshul Gupta. Concerned note.

**I Adesh Garg** R/O 133/15 Model Town pranchi road Pehowa kurukshetra Haryana have changed my Minor daughter Name From Enaya To Enaya Garg.

**I, Param Jit Singh** S/o Santosh Singh VPO. Thaska Miranji, Tehsil Ismailabad, Kurukshetra. I Have Changed My Name Paramjeet Singh S/o. Santokh Singh.

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# Amritpal and associates geared up to create a separate Sikh nation: Police

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

‘Waris Punjab De’ head and self-proclaimed preacher Amritpal Singh and his associates were all geared up to create a separate Sikh nation — Khalistan. Raising his private militia — Anandpur Khalsa Fauj (AKF), Amritpal and his team had already finalized the “emblem, logo, and flag” of the proposed Khalistan state, along with the flags of several provinces, “map of Khalistan”, and the currency.

The startling revelations were made by the police on Friday a day after Amritpal’s close aide and his gunman Tejinder Singh Gill alias Gorkha Baba was arrested, and the police recovered several sensitive and incriminating videos and pictures from his mobile phone. “The incriminating material shows the sinister designs of this nascent militia force and the enormous threat they would have become for peace and harmony of Punjab and national security,” read the statement released by Khanna district police on Friday. Even as the Khalistan ideologue continued to elude police since it began a crackdown against him and his Waris Punjab De outfit on March 18, several of his alleged aides are in police

custody, with seven, including Amritpal, facing the stringent National Security Act (NSA).

The videos, pictures, and messages, released by the Khanna police on Friday, also show aides of Amritpal carrying weapons, wearing bullet-proof jackets with ‘AKF’ written on it, doing arms training at some isolated place near Jallapur Khera village in Amritsar. Videos also show Gorkha Baba resorting to martial training while keeping a large number of weapons in the background, some others can also be seen cleaning and assembling weapons.

In one of the videos, a WhatsApp group, in the name of AKF, is shown in which a voice message of one of the members can be heard talking about the purpose of creating the group and the AKF, and clarifying that only the select ones are made members in that group.

Khanna Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amneet Kondal, sharing all details with the media, said that the recoveries from Gorkha Baba’s phone include ‘state emblem, map and logo of proposed Khalistan state, currency bills of 10 Khalistani dollar with slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale’s picture, AKF logo, and videos of firing practice at makeshift firing range at

Amritpal’s village’. The “Khalistan flag” had some Urdu words on it, she added.

A driving license of a Pakistani national was also recovered, said SSP Kondal.

Forty-two years old Gorkha Baba, hailing from Mangewal village in Ludhiana district, was arrested on Thursday. A member of AKF and one of the alleged gunmen of Amritpal, Gorkha Baba revealed during the investigation, that all members of AKF were assigned belt numbers, for instance, AKF 3, AKF 56, AKF 47, etc — perhaps based on their seniority or proximity to Amritpal Singh; and were also given salaries, said the police.

SSP Kondal said several videos of Gorkha Baba were recovered from his phone in which he was seen loading weapons and practicing firing, videos and pictures of members wearing bulletproof jackets with the ‘AKF’ logo, and AKF WhatsApp group chats were also recovered.

The police maintained that Tejinder too was a drug addict and had joined a de-addiction centre at Amritpal’s native village Jallapur Khera in Amritsar some months ago just like many others. Soon, he was “promoted” as Amritpal’s gunman and given weapons training, said the police, adding that he was also a member of the

‘Close Protection Team (CPT)’ — a group which has been entrusted with Amritpal’s security.

“After checking Tejinder Gill’s previous records, he has two FIRs registered against him — one under the Excise Act for alleged liquor smuggling in which he was convicted; and another was for assault which was cancelled based on both parties reaching a compromise,” said the police.

SSP Kondal further revealed that two WhatsApp groups — ‘AKF’ and ‘Amritpal Tiger Force’ — were checked thoroughly, and analyzed. “In one of the groups, instructions were given to the group members to get new members inducted. The members were later paid salaries by Amritpal. The members were youngsters who came for de-addiction and were later indoctrinated and given martial and weapons training, including firing practice,” she added.

The police said that one Gurbhuj Singh alias Bheja gave weapons and martial training to the newly-inducted members of Waris Punjab De at a makeshift firing range at Jallapur Khera. About two months ago, according to police, Bheja also arranged 10 bullet-proof jackets with the AKF logo.

Tejinder’s interrogation

also pointed out that one Harsimrat Singh Hundal alias Labh Singh alias Tiger was responsible for Amritpal’s security, who took care of the weapons, assigned duties to the members of Close Protection Team.

**Amritpal suspected to be in Delhi**

Currently, on the run, Amritpal Singh is suspected to have left for Delhi. Punjab police, suspecting that Amritpal has crossed the Delhi border through any vehicle other than the bus, have alerted the Delhi Police regarding the pro-Khalistan “fugitive”. Police maintained that Amritpal and his associate Papalpreet Singh, after taking shelter at the residence of their woman acquaintance at Shahbad, had taken a Haryana Roadways bus from Kurukshetra at around 2 am on March 20. Punjab Police, after tracking the bus, have taken the driver and conductor into custody, and interrogating them about Amritpal and Papalpreet to know where the two got down from the bus.

An alert has also been issued in Dehradun, Haridwar, and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Uttarakhand as a precaution in view of the possibility of Amritpal entering the hill state. Notably, these three districts of the state have been

affected by terrorism in the 90s. The local police are conducting intensive checking on the borders of all three districts and in other areas.

**SSB steps up vigil, Amritpal’s posters along Nepal border in UP**

The Sashastra Seema Bal has issued an alert and put up posters bearing pictures of Amritpal Singh and his aides along the border with Nepal to avert the possibility of the radical preacher fleeing the country via Uttar Pradesh. The Punjab Police launched a crackdown against Amritpal and elements of his ‘Waris Punjab De’ outfit last week.

**Amritpal May Have Changed His Look**

Sources maintained that after the interrogation of the arrested woman from Kurukshetra Baljeet Kaur, Amritpal has changed his appearance and now he is roaming around with open hair without a turban. Earlier on Tuesday, Punjab Police had released at least seven new photos of the radical leader and have asked people to help the government nab him. The police have also recovered a bag from Baljeet Kaur, which Papalpreet had left with him. The bag contains two pullovers, and one white chola, besides Income tax returns of past years.

**Pb CM orders survey to assess loss due to incessant rain**

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In the backdrop of incessant rain across the state, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday ordered “special girdawari” to ascertain the loss of crops and orchards due to untimely rainfall in the state. He has directed the financial commissioner (Revenue) to issue detailed instructions to the concerned deputy commissioners to immediately carry out “girdawari” (survey) in the areas lashed by the recent spell of rains to ascertain the damage caused to crops, orchards and other property.

He asked the officers to ensure that the report is submitted at the earliest so that adequate compensation as per government’s norms is given to the affected people, said an official statement.

The chief minister assured the people that the government is committed to safeguarding their interests against nature’s fury. He said every effort will be made to compensate the farmers for the losses suffered due to the current spell of recent rains in the state.

**Punjab police release 44 from preventive custody**

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Police on Friday said they have released 44 people taken into preventive custody during a crackdown on pro-Khalistan preacher Amritpal Singh and handed them over to their family.

“In the larger interest of the public and keeping in view that youngsters should not suffer, Punjab Police have decided to release those persons who have a minimum role or were just following Amritpal Singh on religious sentiments only,” said Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Arpit Shukla. He said in a statement that 44 people, who were under preventive custody, were released and handed over to their family members on Friday following a promise of good conduct in future. On Thursday, Inspector General of Police (Headquarters) Sukhchain Singh Gill said that Punjab Police might release 177 people from preventive custody. A total of 207 people were taken into custody for allegedly disturbing peace and harmony. Of them, 30 have been found involved in major criminal activities and remaining were under preventive custody, police said.

Chief Minister Punjab Bhagwant Mann has given clear instructions to police to not harass innocent people during the crackdown on Amritpal Singh and his outfit ‘Waris Punjab De’, according to an official statement.

including mothers, who told him that they want to see their children receive a good education and go on to occupy top posts.

Mann thanked people for reposing faith in him and said he will uphold the faith and also said that Punjabis should not get swayed by the ideas of such self-proclaimed preachers who have no emotional bonding with the state and its people. He said the sole motive of such people was to disturb the hard-earned peace of the state.

The chief minister said that these people are highly mistaken to think that they can divide people on communal lines, adding that this is the era of education and people with knowledge and expertise are recognised due to which the state government is making strenuous efforts to promote education in Punjab.

He said he wants to see books, laptops, and medals in the hands of youth.

The Chief Minister further directed the officers to organize a camp to address the grievances of the people regarding errors in Property ID. Every data regarding the property should be uploaded on the portal so that the owner can not only see the complete details of their properties but can also verify the same and correct if any wrong information is uploaded.

While directing the officers regarding the data uploaded by the farmers on the Meri Fasal Mera Boyra (MFMB), the Chief Minister said that the officers should ensure 100 per cent registration of agricultural land by the farmers. He said that the officers should encourage and make the farmers aware to get the registration of even the vacant land on the MFMB portal.

The Chief Minister directed the officers that a survey should be done if automated pensions are being issued or not so that real time tracking of the beneficiaries should be done and the reason, if any, can be found as to why the actual beneficiary is left.

The Chief Minister said that the DAYALU scheme has been recently launched by the State Government and for its meticulous implementation a system should be developed wherein monitoring of the data related to birth, death, marriage and migration should be done.

Highlighting the importance of Swachhata Abhiyan, the Chief Minister directed that officers concerned that cleanliness should be ensured in every village so that the state villages can become a role model in the country. He also mentioned the Dulheri village, Bhiwani district which the Prime Minister recently gave a special mention. Narendra Modi in Mann Ki Baat programme for its cleanliness campaign.

## Punjab has to be made Punjab again, not Afghanistan: Bhagwant Mann

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday said that some people were trying to divide the state on sectarian lines but his government was duty-bound to make Punjab a progressive, peaceful and prosperous state by foiling the nefarious designs of the anti-Punjab forces.

“We have to make Punjab, Punjab again, not Afghanistan,” he said.

He said his government will maintain peace, amity and communal harmony in Punjab at all costs, adding that the youth will not be allowed to “become raw material for those running factories in the name of religion”. His remarks have

come amid a police crackdown on pro-Khalistan preacher Amritpal Singh and his outfit ‘Waris Punjab De’. The radical preacher is on the run and efforts are on to nab him.

A number of his associates have been arrested or detained and the stringent National Security Act has been slapped against some of them, including Amritpal Singh.

The police crackdown was initiated after Amritpal Singh and his supporters stormed the Ajnala police station near Amritsar wielding swords and weapons to secure the release of one of his associates. Without taking any names, Mann said in an emotional appeal to people that it’s easy to ask children of strangers to

take up arms or give up their life, but when those people find themselves on the receiving end they face harsh realities. The chief minister said he has got phone calls from a cross-section of people,



## Complete special Girdawari of damaged crop by April 15 for compensation: Hry CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday directed the officers concerned to complete the work regarding conducting special Girdawari (crop damage assessment) to compensate the farmers for the crop damage due to untimely rain and hailstorm by April 15 so that the compensation to all the identified farmers can be transferred by the month of May.

Chairing a review meeting on various schemes and projects with the Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal, Additional Chief Secretaries (ACS), Divisional and Deputy Commissioners, Khattar said the officers have a key role to play in the implementation of any welfare scheme formulated by the Government. With this, officers too are duty-bound to ensure that the benefits of the State government’s welfare-oriented schemes reach the grassroots level, he added.

“Considering Primary Members (PM) of the society and Common man (CM) equally important as a Prime Minister (PM) and Chief Minister (CM), every officer has to think out of the box along with performing their duty diligently to ensure meticulous implementation of every Public welfare scheme,” he said.

Additional Chief Secretary, Home, TVSN Prasad apprised the Chief Minister that the directions for conducting special Girdawari to compensate the farmers has already been given to the officers concerned. This work would be completed by April 15.

During the meeting, a detailed review was done of various significant schemes including Parivar Pehchan Patra, Mukhyamantri Antyodaya Parivar Uththan Yojana, SVAMITVA, CHIRAYU, NIROGI Haryana,

AMRIT Sarovar, Meri Fasal Mera Byora, DAYALU, Old Age Pension scheme, Engineering Works Portal etc. “The real intention of the Government while formulating any welfare scheme is to ensure timely and swift delivery of the benefits among the actual and targeted beneficiaries. Mere drafting schemes on paper and not ensuring their delivery at the grassroots level has no meaning,” said Khattar.

The Chief Minister said that in these 5 years, 2 years were badly impacted due to COVID-19 restrictions. The system was constrained but we converted this Pandemic into an opportunity that played a pivotal role in bringing revolutionary changes in the system by making maximum use of IT, said Khattar.

“Ensuring the delivery of citizen-centric schemes to those who actually deserve it should be the top priority of every officer before preparing a blueprint of any scheme. With this, it should also be ensured that the execution of ongoing and the new welfare schemes is streamlined and are completed in a time-bound manner,” Khattar said.

**11 AM TO 1 PM FOR PUBLIC INTER-ACTION**

The Chief Minister said that the officers should be focused on maximum interaction with the general public to bridge the communication gap and directed the field officers including Deputy Commissioners and the Superintendent of Police to hold daily interaction with the common man for at least 2 hours. Every day 11 am to 1 pm should be fixed for public interaction and during this period no video conferencing with these officers would be held. Besides this, regular interaction should also be done with the elected representatives and

workers as they too are working for the welfare of the society, said Khattar. The Chief Minister further directed the officers to ensure compliance with State Government orders regarding ‘No meeting Day’ on every Tuesday in letter and spirit.

Khattar said that along with ensuring that the benefits are reaching the last mile person, close vigil should be kept on the leakages in the benefits being given under various schemes.

“We have to ensure every system should be transparent, paperless and faceless. Also ensuring the quality of work in very ongoing or new development projects should also be the top priority of every officer,” said Khattar. He said that the meticulous implementation of CHIRAYU and NIROGI Haryana should be ensured along with the identification of the real beneficiaries.

He directed the officers to conduct regular reviews both at the headquarters and district level of the works being executed on the Engineering works portal. Besides this, a

review of the local audit system should also be done at regular intervals to further strengthen this. “Officers upto the rank of Director in every department should check the real-time implementation status of the schemes being run by their departments at the ground level. Besides this, the Administrative Secretaries who are district Incharges must visit their respective districts,” directed Khattar.

The Chief Minister directed the officers to make dedicated efforts to keep a track of how many beneficiaries having annual income of less than Rs. 1 lakh have been provided financial benefits, jobs, loans etc under the Mukhyamantri Antyodaya Parivar Uththan Yojana (MMPAU). He said that the fourth phase of this scheme would start from next month.

He said that income verification is a pivotal work being carried out under the State Government’s ambitious PPP scheme hence officers should give utmost care to income verification work so as to get accurate data.

## BRIEFS

**Hry CM interacts with contractors**

**Chandigarh:** Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday interacted with the contractors and bids amounting to Rs 204.82 crore for different projects were finalised. The projects include development of infrastructure facilities like roads, water supply, wastewater conveyance system, recirculation system of treated wastewater, stormwater drainage system, street lighting etc, at IMT Sohna, Electronic Manufacturing Cluster. The work was awarded to M/s Jain Construction for Rs 122.99 crore. Khattar instructed the officials to upload the Haryana Schedule of Rates (HSR) in the public domain on the portal to provide information about the development works.

**Hry CM to interact with beneficiaries of Farmer Producer Organisations today**

**Chandigarh:** Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will interact directly with the beneficiaries of the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) through audio conferencing on Saturday. The Government official spokesperson said that the Chief Minister has taken the initiative of Samvad programme once a week; with the beneficiaries of various schemes being run by the central and state government. So far, 10 such programmes have been organized in the state.

**Hry Cabinet meeting on April 5**

**Chandigarh:** Haryana Cabinet meeting will be held under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar at 11:00 am in the Main Committee Room, Haryana Civil Secretariat, Chandigarh, on April 5, a government spokesperson said on Friday.

**Fake call centre busted in Gurugram, 12 held**

**Gurugram:** A fake call centre, which allegedly cheated foreign nationals on the pretext of providing customer support services posing themselves as employees from companies such as Amazon, Apple and eBay, was busted in Gurugram and 12 people were arrested in this connection. The police recovered four mobile phones, six laptops and Rs 92,000 cash during the raid at the illegal call centre operating from the basement of a house in Sushant Lok. “Acting on a tip-off, the police raided the centre on Thursday night. The operator of the alleged call centre failed to produce any valid documents of the Department of Telecommunications or any other agreement related to their work,” Station House Officer of the cyber-crime police station (East) Inspector Jasvir said.

**Medical Officer promoted to Assist Professor after intervention of Pb SC Commission**

**Chandigarh:** After the intervention of the Punjab State Scheduled Castes Commission, Dr. Satnam Singh, Medical Officer of Orthopedics was promoted to Assistant Professor of Orthopedics by the Department of Medical Education and Research. Paramjit Kaur, a non-governmental member of the commission, said that Dr. Satnam Singh, Medical Officer of the Department of Medical Education and Research, Punjab, had complained to the commission that he was not promoted according to the reservation policy. In this regard, the commission asked the concerned department to take action on the basis of merit.

**Education Minister Bains expresses grief over the death of three teachers**

**Chandigarh:** Punjab School Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains has expressed grief over the death of three teachers and a driver in a road accident near Village Khai Feme, Jalandhar. Extending his heartfelt sympathies with the bereaved families of these teachers Kanchan, Prince and Maninder, Bains prayed to the Almighty to give them strength to bear this irreparable loss and grant eternal peace to the departed souls. They will always be remembered for his immense contribution to the field of education, he added.

**PPCB celebrates World Water Day**

**Chandigarh:** To sensitize people and government officials towards environment preservation, the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) celebrated World Water Day on Friday. On the occasion of the World Water Day 2023, two tankers of treated wastewater of STP were used for plantation in the Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (Gmada) office at Airport Road. The officials of GMADA assured the PPCB that the treated wastewater in place of fresh water will be utilized for plantation to the maximum extent and record in this regard will also be maintained. Environment Minister Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer said that various new initiatives have been taken by the department to ensure that people and industrial houses would not defile the purity of water and soil in the state.

**Rs 20 cr to be distributed to 68500 beneficiaries under PMMVY**

**Chandigarh:** Under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, an amount of approximately Rs 20 crore will be disbursed to approximately 68,500 beneficiaries till March 31, 2023, to uplift the nutritional and health status of pregnant women and lactating mothers. Informing this, the Social Security, Women and Child Development Minister Dr Baljit Kaur on Friday said that the Government gives Rs 5,000 in three installments (Rs 1000+2000+2000) to women aged 19 years and above on the birth of their first live child.

**Rajasthan feeder canal to remain closed for 60 days**

**Chandigarh:** On the request of Rajasthan Government, Punjab Water Resources Department has decided to close Rajasthan Feeder Canal for 60 days. Spokesperson said that Rajasthan Government has made an appeal to close the canal due to remaining work of relining, thereby the Punjab Government has decided to close the canal from March 26, 2023, to May 24, 2023 (both days inclusive) for 60 days.

**Jauramajra chairs meeting to discuss issues of GoG scheme**

**Chandigarh:** Punjab Defence Services Welfare (DSW) Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra on Friday chaired a meeting to address the issues of erstwhile GOG scheme. Discussions were held with the 11-member team of GOG, under leadership of Maj Hardeep Singh. Jauramajra assured the team all assistance from the CM Office.

**Punjab Speaker exhorts students to participate in democratic process**

**Chandigarh:** Punjab Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan on Friday encouraged the youth to increase their involvement in the democratic process. Addressing the students of a private school of district Bathinda, who visited to see the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, Sandhwan said that it is need of the hour to encourage the youth in politics to stop the decline in the political sphere and only then the progress of the country can be ensured. “When the students see the proceedings of the House, they will also develop an interest in politics”, said the Speaker. During the visit, the students learned about the various proceedings of the Legislative Assembly such as bringing resolutions and passing the bill. They were also made aware of how a bill is discussed before it is passed and a decision is taken on whether the bill deserves to be passed or not.







### SJVN signs EPC Contract Agreement for 382 MW Sunni Dam Hydro Project

**SHIMLA:** In the august presence of Chairman & Managing Director Sh. Nand Lal Sharma, SJVN today signed Contract Agreement for Engineering, Procurement & Construction of Civil & Hydro-Mechanical works of 382 MW Sunni Dam Hydro Electric Project. The Contract Agreement for Rs 1098 crores has been signed with M/s Rithwik Projects Private Limited, Hyderabad.

Sh. Nand Lal Sharma briefed that the Letter of Award for Civil & Hydro-Mechanical works was issued on 14.01.2023. Today, contract agreement for the same has been executed after completion of all pre-requisites.

Sh. Nand Lal Sharma highlighted that the construction activities of various civil components of the project are going on full swing. Infrastructure development to facilitate timely execution of the project and mobilization of major contractor at project site is at full pace. This project is scheduled to be completed within 58 months i.e., by November 2027.

The contract agreement was signed by Sh. S.K Bhargava, General Manager (SJVN) and Sh. V. Praveen, Dy. General Manager (M/s Rithwik Pvt. Ltd.). On this occasion, Smt. Geeta Kapur, Director (Personnel), Sh. A.K. Singh, Director (Finance), Sh. Sushil Sharma, Director (Electrical) and senior officials of SJVN & M/s Rithwik Pvt. Ltd. were also present. 382 MW Sunni Dam Project is a run-of-the-river project situated in District Shimla and Mandi of Himachal Pradesh on river Satluj. Project will generate 1382 million units annually at the levelized tariff of Rs. 3.90 per unit and will contribute 1.1 million tons annually towards carbon emission reduction. On commissioning, 13% of the electricity generated will be provided free of cost to Government of Himachal Pradesh including 1% for Local Area Development Fund. For the project life cycle of 40 years, this free power translates into benefits of Rs. 2803 crores to Himachal Pradesh. Development of the project will lead to community assets creation and infrastructure development. Project construction activities will result in direct and indirect employment opportunities to around 4000 persons. This will lead to overall socio-economic development of the state of Himachal Pradesh.



Chitkara University organized the biggest industry-academia conclave of the region to promote collaborations for joint development of technologies Chitkara University Technology Enabling Centre (CU-TEC) set-up and sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India organized the biggest industry-academia conclave of the region on March 4, 2023. The conclave was held at Chitkara University, Rajpura, Punjab and it was organized in collaboration with the Patiala Chamber of Industries. In this event, a large number of regional industries as well as academic institutions came together with just one objective in mind, i.e. to jointly develop technologies which can be commercialized.

Dr. Krishna Kant Pulicherla - Scientist, TDT Division, DST, New Delhi, who is responsible for smooth and efficient functioning of Technology Enabling Centres (TECs) set-up by the DST across India, participated in this conclave. During his address, he gave insights into various funding schemes wherein industry-academia partnerships are preferred, and industry contributions are greatly valued while evaluating the funding proposals. Director of MSME Development Institute, Ludhiana - Mr. Virinder Sharma stressed upon the need for industry-academia collaborations in solving various real world problems faced by the MSME industries. Mr. J. S. Sandhu - President, Patiala Chamber of Industries and Owner, Champion Engineering Industries also mentioned that the MSME industries have a lot of areas wherein they can collaborate with academia for jointly developing solutions for a variety of problems.

### Registration of entries for 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' begins

The Award seeks to recognise literary works in Indian languages. Entries for the Award can be submitted from March 22nd to April 7th, 2023

**Mumbai:** Bank of Baroda (Bank), one of India's leading public sector banks, has instituted a unique award 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' to encourage and promote literary works written in Indian languages. The 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' will recognise the best Hindi translated work in Indian language novels. Now, the Bank has initiated the process of inviting entries under the 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman'.

The award promotes the mutual interconnection amongst Indian languages, encourages literary translation work in the country and seeks to make the best Indian literature available to the general public in Hindi.

Under the 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' scheme, the translated work of the novel written in Indian languages as mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution are eligible for the Award. The award will be presented to both the original author of the selected novel and the translator who has translated the book to Hindi from the original regional languages. Entries for the Award are being invited from Hindi translators as well as publishers.

Every year, the original author of the novel and the Hindi translator of that novel so selected, will be honoured and will receive ₹21.00 lakh and ₹15.00 lakh respectively. In addition, the authors and the Hindi translators of the next five shortlisted works will also be recognised and receive ₹3.00 lakh and ₹2.00 lakh respectively.

Interested applicants can register and submit their nomination for the Award from March 22nd, 2023 to April 7th, 2023. The entry form, terms & conditions and other details for submission of entries are available on the Bank's website at the link - <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/bank-of-baroda-rashtrabhasha-samman>.

**PIRAMAL CAPITAL & HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED**  
(Formerly Known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.)  
Registered Office: Unit No- 601, 6th Floor, Piramal Aagastya Corporate Park, Kamani Junction, Opp. Fire Station, LBS Nagar, Kuria (West) Mumbai-400070. Telephone-912238024000.  
Regional Office: PCFHL, 1st Floor, 6 & 8, Raksha Business Centre, Ambala Chandigarh Highway, Zirakpur, Punjab- 146063.

**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
For Immovable Property as per Rule 8-(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and Appendix- IV  
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd. (Formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorised Officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days of the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of the Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd. (Formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd) for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Date of Possession
1.	(Loan Code No-17800003485), (Patiala-Branch), Indrajit Singh (Borrower)/ Mandeep Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Uplil Road Sangrur Near Dargah Sangrur Sangrur Sangrur Punjab - 148001	19-Dec-19 Rs. 13,65,295.00/-	22-Mar-23
2.	(Loan Code No-13500007116), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Suman Dev (Borrower)/ Pritam Lal Singhal (Co-Borrower)	Flat No 303, Third Floor Spring Dale, Spring Dale Tower , Near Panchkul, Height Zirakpur Mohali Punjab - 140603	12-May-21 Rs. 24,78,206.00/-	23-Mar-23
3.	(Loan Code No-17800000264), (Patiala-Branch), Gurinder Pal Singh (Borrower)/ Sukhjeter Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Neelkanth Enclave Vill Mangwal Sangrur Neelkanth Enclave Vill Mangwal Sangrur Sangrur Sangrur Punjab - 148001	21-Oct-21 Rs. 18,22,043.00/-	22-Mar-23
4.	(Loan Code No-13500007399), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Mahendra Kumar (Borrower)/ Deepmala Kumari (Co-Borrower)	Property No B-006/02910 Sec-14 Guru Teg Bahadur Nagar Kharar Kharar Rupnagar Punjab - 140301	22-Nov-21 Rs. 15,70,397.00/-	20-Mar-23
5.	(Loan Code No-31100000082), (Ambala-Branch), Bittu Singh (Borrower)/ Sarabjit Kaur (Co-Borrower)	House No-119 on Kh No-9/23, Khewat/ Khatoni-282/477, Harman Nagar, Deoghar Water Tank, Teh-Patran Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147105	22-Nov-21 Rs. 7,68,259.00/-	23-Mar-23
6.	(Loan Code No-17800005495), (Patiala-Branch), Satgur Singh (Borrower)/ Gurmit Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Inner Side Of Sarawhtikari School Road Near Bsnl Tower Patiala Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147001	21-Mar-22 Rs. 10,09,383.00/-	22-Mar-23
7.	(Loan Code No-17800003668), (Patiala-Branch), Sukhwinder Kaur (Borrower)/ Mukhwinder Singh Kharoud (Co-Borrower)	Darshan Nagar Ablowal Patiala Near Patiala Public School Patiala, Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147001	21-Mar-22 Rs. 9,63,676.00/-	22-Mar-23
8.	(Loan Code No-17800006433), (Patiala-Branch), Pappu Ram (Borrower)/ Happy H (Co-Borrower)	Treet#11, Hira Bagh, Village: Chaura Near Preet Cement Store Patiala, Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147001	25-Apr-22 Rs. 7,93,848.00/-	22-Mar-23
9.	(Loan Code No-13600003194), (Ludhiana Metro- Branch), Sukhbir Kaur (Borrower)/ Joginder Singh (Co-Borrower)	Village Ladian Kalan Shri Sai Enclave Khara No-37/17/37/16/38/20 Ludhiana Ludhiana Punjab - 141001	04-Nov-22 Rs. 24,70,558.00/-	21-Mar-23
10.	(Loan Code No-17800005312), (Patiala-Branch), Padma Devi (Borrower)/ Sunny Kumar (Co-Borrower)	Near 40 No. Railway Crossing Gobind Nagar, Thuhli Road Nabha Nabha Patiala Punjab - 147201	04-Nov-22 Rs. 9,73,020.00/-	22-Mar-23
11.	(Loan Code No-17800006160), (Patiala-Branch), Jagtar Singh (Borrower)/ Balwinder Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Street No 4 Moran Wall Gali, Ward No 10 Near Bhirn Di Chakkhi Sekha Road, Samana Sangrur Punjab - 148001	04-Nov-22 Rs. 7,21,708.00/-	22-Mar-23
12.	(Loan Code No-05400000824), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Jaal Singh (Borrower)/ Manjeet Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Guru Nanak Nagar Malkana Patti Samana Samana Patiala Punjab - 147101	04-Nov-22 Rs. 2,04,852.00/-	22-Mar-23
13.	(Loan Code No-17800007051), (Patiala-Branch), Neeraj (Borrower)/ Shakuntla Devi (Co-Borrower)	Street No- R-8, Lalheri Ro Nr.Railway Line Khanna Ludhiana Ludhiana Punjab - 141401	08-Nov-22 Rs. 16,68,914.00/-	21-Mar-23
14.	(Loan Code No-13500007262), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Vishal Jewellers Private Limited (Borrower)/ Vishal Kapoor, Ranjit Kapoor, Hemant Kapoor, Sunila Kapoor, Vishal Jewels Uj (Co-Borrower)	House No 3437-38 Mohala Nodhar, Misar And Shop No Ugf 7 58 Omex Mall, Mail Road, Patiala Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147001	08-Nov-22 Rs. 2,34,52,246.00/-	21-Mar-23
15.	(Loan Code No-17800007140), (Patiala-Branch), Vinod Kumar (Borrower)/ Kamlesh Rani (Co-Borrower)	Ward No 3 B1/488 Garg Colony Old Rajpura Near Shingari Shuttering Store Rajpura Patiala Punjab - 140401	04-Nov-22 Rs. 20,20,713.00/-	21-Mar-23
16.	(Loan Code No-13500005082), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Rakesh Kumar (Borrower)/ Nirmala Devi (Co-Borrower)	H No 2814 Dola Mohalla Rupnagar Rupnagar Punjab - 140001	04-Nov-22 Rs. 10,51,318.00/-	22-Mar-23
17.	(Loan Code No-17800002216), (Patiala-Branch), Maman Chand (Borrower)/ Meena Rani (Co-Borrower)	1) House At Ward No. 4, Patiala Samana Road House At Ward No. 4, Patiala Samana Road Patiala Punjab - 147001 2) House At Waed No. 2 Near Bus Stand Ghagga Teh Patran Distt : Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147102	08-Nov-22 Rs. 3,42,206.00/-	23-Mar-23
18.	(Loan Code No-19100042149), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Manoj Singh (Borrower)/ Balwinder Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Panlind Estate Nabha Road Opp. Chahal Police Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147005	08-Nov-22 Rs. 4,84,768.00/-	22-Mar-23
19.	(Loan Code No-19100042278), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), Amritpal Singh (Borrower)/ Balwinder Kaur (Co-Borrower)	Panlind Estate Nabha Road Opp. Chahal Police Patiala Patiala Punjab - 147001	08-Nov-22 Rs. 4,13,433.00/-	22-Mar-23
20.	(Loan Code No-17800002504), (Patiala-Branch), Sunita S (Borrower)/ Hemant Mattu (Co-Borrower)	Sant Nagar Near New Railway Station Nab Sant Nagar Near New Railway Station Nab Dist Patiala, Nabha Nabha Patiala Punjab - 147201	08-Nov-22 Rs. 1,77,683.00/-	22-Mar-23
21.	(Loan Code No-13500008354), (Chandigarh Metro- Branch), City Of Kumar (Borrower)/ Geeta G (Co-Borrower)	371/A, Ground floor without roof Darpan City Of Kumar, Civil Hospital Khari Mohali Punjab - 160103	29-Jun-21 Rs. 20,94,689.00/-	20-Mar-23
22.	(Loan Code No-17800006324), (Patiala-Branch), Gurpreet Singh (Borrower)/ Tarandeep Kaur (Co-Borrower)	New Mohinder Colony Patiala Near Dakla Road Distt Patiala Near C I A Staff Patiala Patiala Punjab- 147001	18-Dec-21 Rs. 7,10,264.00/-	22-Mar-23

Date : March 25, 2023  
Place : Punjab  
Sd/- (Authorized Officer)  
PIRAMAL CAPITAL AND HOUSING FINANCE LTD.  
Formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.

### SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

**ICICI Bank**  
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005  
Whereas  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Ashish Mittal/ Sanjeev Kumar Mittal/ LBBK00002923058/ LBBK000002923060	Plot Comprised In Kharsa No. 29/33, Situated In Darrankhara, Vard No.12, Opposite Tara Chand Dhamrakhshra, Tehsil Thanesar And District Kurukshetra, Haryana/ March 22, 2023	October 31, 2022/ Rs.33,90,485/-	Kurukshetra

The above-mentioned borrower(s)'s/guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : March 24, 2023  
Place : Kurukshetra  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**पब्लिक नोटिस**  
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**Public Notice**  
It is for the information to general public that Sh. Vinita Anita W/o Sh. Suresh Kumar R/o VPO Bithla, Tehsil Jhajjar has applied for transfer of her H.No. 1274/SF Situated in Housing Board Colony, Sector-5, Hansi in favour of Sh. Naresh Kumar S/o Sh. Umed Singh R/o H.No.22, Mohalla Rao Tularan Vihar Rewari. If any Person has any objection regarding transfer of this flat, he/she should file objection with documentary proof in writing in person, to this office within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received from any person within stipulated period, the permission for transfer of flat will be granted in favour of Sh. Naresh Kumar S/o Sh. Umed Singh the basis of documents submitted as per policy of the Board. No Claim/objection shall be entertained after that in this regards Estate Manager, Housing Board Haryana, Hisar

**Public Notice**  
It is for the information to general public that Sh. Vijay Smit S/o Sh. Harish Chander R/o H.No. 306, Bhamaashra, Distt. Hisar has applied for transfer of her H.No. 3294/MIG/GF Situated in Housing Board Colony, Sector-184, Part-II, Hisar in favour of Smt. Minakshi Nagar D/o Sh. Tulsi Ram Nagar and Yashika D/o Sh. Ramesh Kumar (Gurdian of Yashika Smt Minakshi Nagar) R/o H.No. 192, Sector-15A, Hisar. If any Person has any objection regarding transfer of this flat, he/she should file objection with documentary proof in writing in person, to this office within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received from any person within stipulated period, the permission for transfer of flat will be granted in favour of Smt. Minakshi Nagar D/o Sh. Tulsi Ram Nagar and Yashika D/o Sh. Ramesh Kumar (Gurdian of Yashika Smt Minakshi Nagar) the basis of documents submitted as per policy of the Board. No Claim/objection shall be entertained after that in this regards Estate Manager, Housing Board Haryana, Hisar

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# AFSPA extended in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Friday extended for six months the “disturbed area” status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

According to two separate notifications, the decisions have been taken after review of the law-and-order situation in both the states. The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for “maintenance of public order”.

The home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam as ‘disturbed area’ on September 30, 2022.

One more police station



area has been brought under the ambit of the AFSPA through the fresh notification.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkhamb police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam, are declared as ‘disturbed area’ under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier,” one of the notifications said.

In the other notification, the home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA, 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared nine districts and 16 police stations in four other districts of Nagaland as ‘disturbed area’ for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2022. It said, now, the disturbed area status will be applicable in eight districts and 21 police stations areas falling under five other districts.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Nagaland has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek and Peren districts in Nagaland and the areas in Nagaland falling within the jurisdiction of i) Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima District; ii) Mangkolemba, Mokochung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchem and Anaki C’ police stations in Mokochung District... are declared as ‘disturbed area,’ the notification said.

# RAHUL’S DISQUALIFICATION FROM LS Opp leaders main target in Modi’s new India: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after calling Rahul Gandhi the “biggest asset” and “biggest TRP” of the BJP, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday took a turn this time slamming the Narendra Modi Government for getting the tallest Congress leader disqualified from the Lok Sabha in a defamation case.

Moments after Gandhi’s disqualification from the House, Banerjee said the Opposition leaders were the main target of in the new India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

While Bengal Opposition parties—save the BJP — would not exhibit much of enthusiasm over Banerjee’s statement saying she was more concerned about the rising popularity of “Under PM Modi’s New India, Opposition leaders have become the prime target of BJP” Banerjee who is also the president of Trinamool Congress wrote in her Twitter post. Condemning the kind of treatment meted out to the Congress leader she said



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaks during a meeting, in Kolkata, on Friday PTI Photo

“Today, we have witnessed a new low for our constitutional democracy.” Attacking the BJP government for pursuing double standards she said while on one side saffron leaders with criminal records were made ministers and on the other leaders of the opposition parties were made victims of political speeches. She said, “While BJP leaders with criminal antecedents are inducted into the cabinet, Opposition leaders are disqualified for their speeches.”

Her nephew and TMC National general secretary Abhishek Banerjee wrote that “Democracy” in today’s India sounded oxymoronic. Though

he would not refer to the Rahul Gandhi issue he wrote, “Democratic India is an oxymoron now.” TMC MP Shantanu Sen called it a “black day” wondering whether BR Ambedkar would have relished such a huge drop in Indian democratic standards today.

“This is a Black day for the Indian democracy. Had the father of our Constitution BR Ambedkar been alive he would have literally cried,” Sen said wondering “how a ruling party with such a brute majority in Parliament can stoop such low to script such a dirty game.” Gandhi was disqualified from being a Member of Lok Sabha hours after he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment by a Surat court in a caste defamation case.

The Left too, hit out at BJP government for its “vindictive attitude” saying “plot to disqualify Gandhi was hatched divert attention from burning issues like corruption, unemployment” etc. Reacting sharply on issue senior counsel and CPI(M) MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya said.

# Cambodia mountain to be home to Indian tigers

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A technical committee comprising officials from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is on the job to advise their counterparts in Cambodia to help them execute dreams of bringing Indian big cats in their land under the world’s first ambitious translational tiger programme conceived last year.

On its part, Cambodia has already identified 90 acres of forest land at its Tatai wildlife sanctuary in the Cardamom Mountain to be the home to the Indian tigers whenever they arrive.

SP Yadav, Head of the NTCA told *The Pioneer*, “We have constituted a technical support group which is advising Cambodia to achieve certain levels of standards with respect to staffing, prey base, habitat and protection. Once these are achieved, further action will be taken.”

He said hence it is too early to talk about the numbers of big cats proposed to be shifted to Cambodia. No tiger has been spotted in Cambodian forests for the last 15 years. The



last picture of a tiger was taken in the eastern highlands of Cambodia in 2007. The country is now committed to have the tigers, which is included in the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species, back to its forests.

Though Yadav was non-committal when the translocation will happen, Cambodia is pinning hopes that the tigers may arrive by the year-end, as has also been stated by Suwanna Gauntlett, founder and CEO of Wildlife Alliance, as per reports.

Officials in the Union Environment Ministry said that before the Indian big cats lands on the foreign land, it is necessary that ground and field works be done to ensure they are safe and get the conducive environment to settle down properly to make the translocation successful in the long term.

# 4 yrs ordeal of 5 Indian sailors jailed in Iran ends

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an emotional homecoming, five Indian sailors — who had been arrested, jailed, acquitted and grounded after they were stranded in Iran in June 2019, returned home on Friday after suffering four years of ordeal.

The five sailors — Aniket S. Yenpure (31), Mandar M. Worlikar (28), both of whom are from Mumbai, Pranav A. Tiwari (23) from Patna, Naveen M. Singh (30) from New Delhi and Thamizh R. Selvan (33) from

Chennai — appeared overwhelmed as they bowed and touched the Indian soil after they arrived at the city airport from Iran by an Iran Air Tehran-Mumbai flight this afternoon.

The sailors were accorded a moving reception by their relatives and friends, who cheered vociferously, hugged and lifted them in the air and celebrated the quintet who shed tears of happiness.“We have never been so happy as we are today. Nearly 45 months of nightmare has

ended today. We underwent lots of hardships like being arrested, thrown into jails there, fighting legal battles, getting acquitted and obtaining necessary permissions to fly back to India.

Finally we are back in a country to which we belong,” Aniket Yenpure said. “For the next one month, we will rest and be with our families,” Yenpure said. Naveen (New Delhi), Tiwari (Bihar) and Selvan (Tamil Nadu) will stay with Mumbai-based Yenpure and Worlikar for the next few days,

before returning to their home cities. Aniket thanked the Indian Embassy in Tehran which arranged for the emergency travel papers and air tickets for him and his fellow sailors and also a few Iranian lawyers who fought their case for more than six months and got them released from the jail and ensured their return to India. “The authorities in Iran seized our passports and Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC)-cum-Seafarer’s Identity document.

# Probe defamation plea filed by Union Min against Raj CM, court directs Delhi Police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Friday directed the Delhi Police to probe the criminal defamation complaint filed by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot over his remarks on the alleged Sanjivani co-operative scam.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Harjeet Singh Jaspal directed the Joint Commissioner of Police concerned to “investigate the matter either himself or through an officer not below the rank of an Inspector” and file the investigation report on April 25.

“...Keeping in mind the facts and circumstances and also keeping in mind the legislative mandate...(considering the fact that the accused is residing outside the local jurisdiction of this court), this court directs an investigation into the matter, through Delhi Police. Keeping in mind the sensitivity of matter, it is directed that Joint Commissioner concerned shall monitor investigation,” the judge said. The judge further said that investigation should endeavour to find answers to three questions —whether complainant Shekhawat was



addressed as “an accused” in the Sanjivani scam by accused Gehlot, whether Gehlot stated that the allegations against Shekhawat stand proved in the Sanjivani scam and whether Shekhawat or his family members have been arrayed as “an accused” in investigation of the scam. Union Jal Shakti Minister Shekhawat had filed complaint on March 4. The complaint alleged that Gehlot, a senior Congress leader, defamed the BJP leader by alleging his role in the scam.

“There is irreparable damage caused to his (Shekhawat) reputation,” the complaint claimed. The complaint alleged that Gehlot has been making defamatory remarks, trying to tarnish Shekhawat’s image and affect his political career. In Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, thousands of investors allegedly lost Rs 900 crore. Rajasthan Police’s Special Operations Group (SOG) has been investigating case since August 2019.

# Thieves, scamsters running freely while Rahul punished: Uddhav

TN ■ RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Friday dubbed the disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as a Lok Sabha member, as a “murder of democracy” and said that “it’s now a crime to call a thief a thief” in the country.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat’s decision to issue a notice to Gandhi disqualifying him an MP a day after he was convicted and sentenced to two years in jail in a defamation case evoked strong reaction from the MVA constituents in the state — Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena who said that the Congress leader is being punished for “exposing” the Narendra Modi government.

Maharashtra’s former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray said Gandhi’s disqualification as an MP was nothing but a “a murder of democracy” “It’s a crime to call even a thief a thief in the country,” Uddhav said.

“The thieves and scamsters are running around freely while Rahul Gandhi has been punished for calling a thief a thief... This is a blatant murder of democracy. All institutions are



under pressure. Whatever is happening of the is beginning of end of democracy in the country. We need to take our fight against the Modi government to a new level to restore democracy in country,” Uddhav said.

Coming down heavily on Lok Sabha Secretariat’s decision over Gandhi’s disqualification, NCP chief Sharad Pawar tweeted, “The disqualification of Mr Rahul Gandhi and Mr Faizal a few months ago as MP’s of Lok Sabha are against the basic tenets of the constitution, where democratic values are being curtailed. This is condemnable and against the very principles on which the constitution is based.”

“Our Constitution guarantees right of each Individual to fair justice; liberty of thought; equality of status and opportunity and fraternity assuring dignity of each Indian,” Pawar added.

# Corrupt Cong wants to make K’taka its ATM, fill coffers, alleges Shah

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Congress is degenerating across the country, and has now set its eyes on Karnataka to make the state its ATM and fill its coffers at the national level.

Speaking in the poll-bound State, he appealed to people of Karnataka not to give a “half and incomplete government”, and to form a BJP government with full majority and thereby strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

“Congress party is degenerating across the country, the Congress people don’t have any state with them that can fill the Congress’ central treasury, they want an ATM.... They want Karnataka to become Congress’ ATM, and the corrupt Congress’ eyes are now set



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the foundation laying ceremony of Sahakar Samridhhi Soudha and the inauguration of various development works of the Department of Cooperation (Karnataka), in Bengaluru, on Friday PTI Photo

on Karnataka,” Shah said. Addressing a beneficiaries’ meet organised by Karnataka Cooperative department and other departments, he asked people whether they will form a BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership in Karnataka or a

Congress government with Rahul Gandhi at the helm. “Wherever the Congress has formed the government, their history is corruption, humiliation of Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis, and strengthening anti-national forces,” he alleged. Bommai, veteran BJP leader B

S Yediyurappa, Karnataka Co-operation Minister S T Somashekar among others were present at the event.

Highlighting that the Modi government banned Popular Font of India (PFI), Shah said, “Siddaramaiah’s Congress government (earlier), used to withdraw cases against PFI, but Narendra Modi government by banning PFI has secured the entire South India, and also the entire country.” Claiming credit for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, he said, the Congress party was “delaying, obstructing and misleading” for 70 years, but Modi has laid the foundation for the temple and it will be ready very soon.

He also said that PM Modi, by abrogating Article 370, has put a bridle on terrorism in the entire country. “Modi’s mission is to make the entire country prosperous, take forward every state including Karnataka.”

# 2-day Gaj Utsav from April 9

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India’s two mega and important conservation focused projects involving tiger and elephants are completing their 50th and 30th years of existence respectively this year which the Government has plans to celebrate with much fan-fare next month.

President Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate a two-day “Gaj Utsav” on April 9 in Assam’s Kaziranga National Park to commemorate the successful completion of 30 years of Project Elephant while Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch a three-day mega event on April 7 in Mysuru in Karnataka to mark the completion of 50 years of Project



Tiger and showcase India’s tiger conservation success globally, officials said on Friday. The Prime Minister will also release the latest tiger census data, the government’s vision for tiger conservation during ‘Amrit Kaal’ and a commemorative coin, said S P Yadav, member secretary, National Tiger

Conservation Authority (NTCA). India launched Project Tiger on April 1, 1973 to promote tiger conservation. Initially, it covered nine tiger reserves spread over 18,278 sq km. At present, India has 53 tiger reserves covering more than 75,000 sq km (approximately 2.4 per cent of the country’s geographical area) of tiger habitat.

With a current population of about 3,000 tigers, India is home to more than 70 per cent of the global wild tiger population and their number is increasing at six per cent per annum. The tiger reserves are repositories for biodiversity conservation in the country. These ensure regional water security and carbon sequestration and thus contribute in

accomplishing India’s climate change mitigation targets. Similarly, ‘Gaj Utsav’ a two-day event to commemorate Project Elephant which was launched in 1991-92 as a centrally-sponsored scheme to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, prevent human-elephant conflict and to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India, will be inaugurated by the President at Kaziranga National Park on April 9, Minister of State for Environment Ashwani Choubey told reporters here.

Elephant is a national heritage animal protected under Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. India accounts for more than 60 per cent of the global wild elephant population.

# CBI arrests Joint DGFT in bribery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday arrested a Joint DGFT of Directorate General of Foreign Trade for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 5 lakh.

The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested a Joint DGFT, Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Rajkot (Gujarat) for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs Five Lakh from the Complainant,” the agency said in a statement.

The CBI arrested Jawri Mal Bishnoi, Joint DGFT in the corruption case, officials said. A case was registered against the officials on the allegations of demanding undue advantage to the tune of Rs 9 lakh from the complainant.

It was further alleged that complainant had submitted six files containing all required documents of periodical export of food cans to DGFT, Rajkot to issue no objection certificate (NOC) so as to release their bank guarantee of around Rs 50 lakh.

# SC to hear Opp parties plea over misuse of CBI, ED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to list for hearing on April 5 a plea by 14 opposition parties, led by the Congress, alleging arbitrary use of central probe agencies against political opponents.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Opposition parties, and said the plea would be taken up for hearing on April 5.

“I am asking for the guidelines for the future. This is a remarkable convergence of 14 parties against the misuse of the agencies, both CBI and ED,” Singhvi said, and claimed that 95 per cent cases of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are against the leaders of opposition. The senior lawyer referred to the rise in the number of cases filed



by the CBI and ED after the NDA government came to power in 2014. “Second statistics, pre-2014 and post-2014. There is a humongous jump in cases. The rate of conviction is four to five per cent. We are asking for pre-arrest guidelines and post-arrest bail guidelines,” Singhvi said.

Sources close to the deliberations which led to the filing of the common plea by 14 political parties said Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal played an important role in persuading other opposition leaders for moving the top court jointly.

The plea alleged there is an alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against opposition political leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent.

“Investigating agencies such as CBI and ED are being increasingly deployed in a selective and targeted manner with a view to completely crush political dissent and upend the fundamental premises of a representative democracy,” a statement issued on behalf of a petitioner alleged.

The plea filed through lawyer Shadan Farasat cited some statistics and said they demonstrated a “shocking and unconstitutional state of affairs”.

Besides the Congress, other parties who are part of the joint move are the DMK, RJD, BRS, Trinamool Congress, AAP, NCP, Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, JD(U), CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party and the J&K National Conference, the statement said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Inconsistent

ONDC is making a foray into the city transport sector but its very existence is problematic

Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC) has entered the city transport sector by tying up with a Bengaluru-based ride-hailing company. The objective is to check the market dominance of aggregators like Uber and Ola. ONDC, a Government-run protocol on the lines of UPI, is also reportedly negotiating with more companies in the sector in several other cities. While well-intended, there are fundamental flaws in the idea of ONDC. When it was launched in September last year, it was claimed that it would check the monopoly of global e-commerce giants like Amazon and Walmart. "After UPI, another game changing idea to democratise commerce - ONDC soft launch today to select consumers, sellers and logistics providers. Get ready for a world of choice, convenience and transparency," Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal tweeted the day ONDC was launched. But isn't checking monopolistic practices the duty of the Competition Commission of India (CCI)? The Competition Act, 2002, was passed by Parliament in 2002, to which the President accorded assent in January 2003. It was subsequently amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007. In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal were established. The CCI is now fully functional with a Chairperson and six members, according to the CCI's website. The provisions of the Competition Act relating to anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position were notified on May 20, 2009.



"It is the statutory duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants, in markets in India as provided in the Preamble as well as Section 18 of the Act," says the CCI website. The commission is also mandated to give its opinion on competition issues to government or statutory authority and to undertake competition advocacy for creating awareness of competition law, it adds. Against this backdrop, the very idea of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry setting up a body for the same purpose is duplication of work. Besides, it also militates against the principle Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated more than once: the government has no business to be in business. It is in pursuance of this principle that the Government has been privatising public sector undertakings. But, by launching ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry will be ensuring government interference in the economy — something that is not in tune with the Modi Government reformist agenda. On the face of it, ONDC's new forays may seem impressive but in reality these don't appear to be consistent with the newly emerging policy framework. Instead of zealously promoting ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry should focus on boosting manufacturing.

## PICTALK



Women in traditional dresses celebrate Zangtri as part of three-day Navreh (Kashmiri New Year) festival

PTI

## Are you contributing to electronic waste?

E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally. With the launch of newer devices, our greed leads us to buy the latest ones

Christian Lous Lange says "technology is an effective servant but a dangerous master". There is no denying everyone is addicted to technology in some way or another. Everyone has seen the transition from a wired telephone to the first cell phones followed by the latest, lighter and better version of cell phones. However, have we ever thought that today's technology will be obsolete someday? Today, technology has affected almost every aspect from advancements in education, medicine or transport to easy access to socialization, food, healthcare and productivity. Every year, big tech companies come up with new versions of their devices. This leads to the market to shift to its updated version. As a result, many individuals replace their phones or gadgets with new ones, causing a lot of E-waste. Today, almost 10 billion people have smartphones, and in 3-4 years without access to repair these devices will add to an enormous amount of e-waste that already exists. Though buying latest gadgets keeps an individual



updated, in the long run their constant use will affect our planet's health severely. According to a research, India is the 3rd largest E-waste producer after China and the USA. E-waste or electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world. It includes discarded electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, notepads, computers, radios and televisions. Computer devices account for nearly 70% of e-waste, followed by the telecom sector, medical equipment and electrical equipment.

Unfortunately, these devices end up in landfills, where they release hazardous gases into the atmosphere. The toxic components so released affect human health in terms of skin irritation, lung infections, kidney problems, nausea and others. They also contribute to soil contamination, polluting the envi-

ronment and most importantly harm and threat to wildlife. According to a recent study, E-waste has reached alarming levels with 5.3 billion phones thrown away every year. Since the last 5 years, waste has grown by 21% and is expected to reach 74.2 MT by 2030. If not recycled or disposed of properly, heavy metals in e-waste emit toxic substances causing serious environmental concern.

At the individual level, there are several solutions that can help reduce e-waste such as considering repairing a smartphone instead of buying a new one or preferring to donate old devices such as laptops, computers or notepads to schools or charitable organisations that can find a use for the product. Educating high-school students about e-waste's harmful effects has a greater impact on stopping its spread. Adopting changes in technology such as cloud computing and the internet of things can even help with dematerialization. In India, many e-waste recycling startups such as Cashify, Attero recycling, Namo E-waste, Binbag and many more have come up

with the objective of conserving resources by adopting economical and responsible disposal techniques of e-waste.

These startups are working day and night to create opportunities to transfer waste into socially and industrially beneficial raw materials such as valuable metals, plastics and glass. They are using simple, cost-efficient and environmentally friendly technologies suitable for Indian conditions. As climate change effects grow, it becomes the responsibility of its citizens to help the planet and prevent e-waste issues. Also, with the 5G revolution, it is imperative to recycle old smartphones. It is important to understand that a difference can only be made at the individual level.

E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally, as the moment electronic devices get introduced, an individual's greed leads them to buy the latest one while the old ones take space in the cupboard drawers. We need a safe channel for recycling obsolete equipment.

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



SAKSHI SETHI

## Myanmar nightmare continues unabated

It's been more than two years since the coup, yet the low-intensity civil war raging on in our neighbouring country is set to last for a long time



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

More than two years have passed since the coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, which prevented the elected members of the National League for Democracy, which had won 396 seats out of 476 in the Lower House of Parliament in the country's November 2020 elections, from assuming office. The junta that perpetrated the coup arrested Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD-leader and iconic symbol of the country's struggle for democracy, and leaders of her party. It unleashed a vicious repression campaign.

The Government continues to face growing countrywide resistance with murderous violence. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 6, 2023, that, overall, the military's airstrikes against civilian locations increased by 141 per cent in the second year of its takeover, and its shelling of communities, including hospitals schools and places of worship, by over 100 per cent. During the same period, incidents in which homes and neighbourhoods were set on fire rose by 380 per percent. This led to an estimated 1,200 per cent increase in the number of homes destroyed. He further stated that reports continued to be received daily, particularly from the Sagaing region, north-west of Mandalay, of ongoing incidents, with soldiers reportedly moving from village to village, looting and setting fire to homes and farms.

Türk cited his UN colleagues as saying 39,000 structures had been burned in villages and towns by the military since the coup. Overall, credible sources verified that at least 2,947 civilians, including 244 children, had been massacred by the military and its affiliates during this period. More than one third of these confirmed deaths occurred in military custody. The actual number of civilians killed is far higher. He further said that, besides those killed in military or police action, detainees across Myanmar had reported severe beatings; mock executions; suspension from ceilings without food or

water; electrocution; and acts of sexual violence as well as squalid detention conditions.

The question is, how long will Myanmar groan under the Tatmadaw's—as Myanmar's army is called—iron heel? Despite the savagery of the generals' repression, the country, to all appearances, is slipping out of their control. Ranged against them is the National Unity Government (NUG) formed by some NLD leaders, activists and representatives of several insurgent ethnic organisations and minor parties, on April 16, 2021. Its armed wing, the People's Defence Force (PDF), was established on May 5, 2021. According to a report by Richard R Paddock in *The New York Times* of 6 June, 2022, it had a total strength of 60,000. As indicated by the latest reports, it now comprises 300 battalions with over 250,000 soldiers.

A report in Mizzima (A Burmese multi-media news organization) on September 9, 2022, cites a brief by SAC-M, released on September 5, 2022, as saying that the military does not effectively control the country, and is incapable of governing it. According to



THE QUESTION IS, HOW LONG WILL MYANMAR GROAN UNDER THE TATMADAW'S — AS MYANMAR'S ARMY IS CALLED — IRON HEEL?

the report, the National Unity Government (NUG) is the legitimate government of Myanmar and is at the centre of a democratic revolution shaped by organisations opposed to Myanmar's military junta. These organisations are the de facto authorities over more of Myanmar's population and territory than the junta, which has stable control over only 72 out of the country's 330 townships, which comes to only 17 per cent of Myanmar's land area, because many are small urban townships. In an article published on September 29, 2022, in *The Interpreter*, brought out daily by the Lowy Institute, an Australia-based independent think tank, Adam Simpson cites a report by the SAC-M, saying that the NUG and ethnic resistance organisations effectively controlled over 52 per cent of Myanmar's territory. Twenty-three per cent were contested and the junta dominated 17 per cent.

The Tatmadaw suffered from low morale and desertion. The latter rate has fallen recently because of tough action to curb it. Tatmadaw's other weaknesses remain. Its weaponry is more suitable for

conventional warfare than anti-guerrilla operations; its younger generation lacks combat experience. On the other hand, the People's Defence Force lacks numerical strength besides heavy artillery, tanks, and aircraft. This is essential for winning large battles in the plains.

What seems likely in the foreseeable future is a stalemate, with the Junta controlling the capital Nay Pyi Taw and some other towns and strips of territory and the NUG and the armed forces of the ethnic minorities controlling the rest. The Junta is being attacked even in townships where the Tatmadaw is present, and may lose control over them. That it is apprehensive and struggling to hold on to these is clear from the imposition of martial law in 37 newly formed towns on February 2 and three more on February 22, bringing the total number of townships under martial law to 50 out of 330. Even these moves may not help. It is difficult to reverse the flow when the tide turns against you.

(The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## KANGAROOS HAVE A STRONG TAIL

Sir — Australians have come through a difficult phase and defeated Team India in their own den. This is a very rare occasion as we count on home wins in series after series. Team India struggled to tackle pace in the first two outings and succumbed to spin in the decider and won the series. The writing is on the wall in the ODI world cup this year. This is the second time India has lost a bilateral ODI series against Australia. And what's in common between their 3-2 loss in 2019 and the 2-1 defeat in this series is the fact that the Men in Blue were ahead on both occasions.

They led the 2019 series 2-0 before losing three in a row. Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid have a lot of work to do as they aim to regain the trophy later this year. For now, the Aussies will relish regaining the top spot in the ODI rankings. They will also fly back home with the ODI series trophy as a consolation after losing out on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy earlier in the trip. For Australia, the tail wagged, the spin did the trick and Aussie batsmen pulled up their socks to make a match of it.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

## LEAST PAINFUL DEATH PENALTY?

Sir — What is the most efficient method of death penalty enforcement? The Supreme Court sparked such a debate by asking the government to hold a discussion on the issue on Tuesday. However, this is a complicated issue because determining the method of capital punishment is considered the responsibility of the legislature rather than the judiciary. Perhaps therefore the Supreme Court has stated unequivocally that it will not issue an order addressing the method of applying the death penalty. However, this question is necessary to determine whether the current method of imposing a death sentence meets legal and constitutional requirements. The current hanging method was last upheld by the Supreme Court in 1983, but the issue must be revisited considering scientific and technological advances since then. This need is confirmed when

## Blessing in disguise



Rahul Gandhi's conviction in the defamation case can prove blessings in disguise to strengthen democracy. Rahul Gandhi was convicted in a defamation case by the Surat court and sentenced to two years' punishment. Bail was also granted to appeal in the upper court. Rahul Gandhi's conviction can strengthen Indian democracy. Just a few days ago Congress spokesperson also uttered unwanted words against Modi and had to approach the supreme court for bail. With Rahul Gandhi's conviction in the 2024 Parliament elections no unhealthy

language will be used and electioneering will be pleasant without filthy language. This will automatically strengthen the democratic structure of the country.

At present, there is pandemonium in both houses of the parliament due to undesirable utterances by Rahul on foreign land. The ruling party demands an apology from Rahul. It is expected that Rahul Gandhi will learn a lesson from this conviction. This is the first time that Rahul has been convicted for the first time, but he is habitual of using undesirable and unwanted language. In the last election, his slogan "Chowkidar chor hai" became very famous and was directed at Modi. In the last Parliament elections, he had to apologise before the supreme court for misinterpretation of supreme court orders. Let us hope that Rahul Gandhi's conviction may prove a blessing in disguise to strengthen democracy in India.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

we look at the situation in other countries around the world.

Whether the current hanging process is considered the least painful or any other method after considering all aspects—the principle of dignity of death is bound to be vindicated. If another method is found to be superior, the current method will be ruled unconstitutional. The revised method can then be ratified by the legislature. In today's era, when the discussion of direct encounters with criminals appears to be gaining traction in our country for a variety of reasons, it is expected that the apex court's initiative will make us more aware of justice criteria.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

## HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Sir — The US State Department releases its annual Human Rights Report every year. In those countries, human rights are violated indiscriminately. If the names of those countries are mentioned in this report even after evidence of human rights violations, will those countries accept those strong

allegations? They will reject outright and say that America has no right to interfere in our internal affairs. As India will now bluntly tell the US State Department. Because in the just-released report, it has been said for India that there are 'cases of human rights abuses and people from minority communities, critics of the government and journalists are targeted'.

In Monday's report, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was closely monitoring developments in India "including increasing human rights abuses in the country" in the presence of Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. There is no need to look for distant events. A day after the publication of this report, Kannada actor Chetan Kumar was arrested for a tweet criticising a Hindu nationalist ideology. Therefore, the US State Department's allegation has some substance.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

NOW THE GOVT DECIDES WHAT WE EAT

Unlike the days of yore, Govts need to incentivise crops which suit modern life



In the early human civilisations, it was geography and weather that decided what crops were to be grown in any region. The same crop was consumed by the people of that area. Exports were tough and risky. But, in modern civilisation, Governments directly or indirectly control the food consumed.

Government subsidies are offered in various ways. It can be direct transfers to farmers by cash transfer (DBT) or by providing them with subsidized electricity, water, diesel, pesticides, fertilizer etc. Subsidies have also been provided in the form of MSP (minimum selling price) for certain agricultural products. Subsidies given to small and big enterprises are to set up export-oriented units or food processing units, cold storages, warehouses, or to set up SEZs or food parks to enhance the production of a particular cereal crop, fruit, vegetable, fish, meat products or certain packed products/processed food (dairy, apiculture) etc. By giving subsidies to farmers, the government incentivizes farmers to grow a particular crop, which can become a mass consumption item as government subsidies make it really cheap to produce and reduce the price of the products, and these crops when subsidized can change the dietary habits of not only millions but billions of people. A remarkable example of such action is the USA subsidizing corn and corn-related products which have flooded not only



the American market but also the world market with products like corn flour, cornstarch, corn syrup etc. Another remarkable example is from India. Government subsidy on rice and sugarcane has made India one of the largest producers of this agricultural produce. It has also made India one of the biggest exporters of these both commodities and flooding not only the Indian market but also the world market with it. Also, the Indian government gives rice and sugar subsidised to public distribution centres.

Well, there is nothing wrong in giving incentives to farmers to produce more to get good rates for their produce, but in the case of India, the biggest problem that we are facing is, that both these crops are highly water-intensive crops and a country of 1.4 billion is already facing a lot of trouble with its groundwater and water irrigation. Exporting these crops is like exporting water from the country. Rice cultivation also produces a large amount of methane, which is a harmful greenhouse gas (GHG). Another problem is that both these crops are high in carbohydrates and combined with an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to diseases such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and other heart-related issues. Governments across the world should, before incentivising a certain crop, consider that incentivizing one crop can really impact the consumption patterns of the masses. It can have a detrimental effect on the health of millions of people.

Another remarkable example is from the industrialization period in Europe and America. Potatoes were made a mass-consumed vegetable as the labour working in the factories needed high calories and carbohydrates to function in the long shifts of the factories. This dietary habit continued even after the industrialization era ended. For the generations after that, potatoes still remained the go-to vegetable as it was a cheap vegetable and people ate it in the past, hence the generations copied the same eating habits even after changes in working and lifestyle.

Today's lifestyle requires less physical work and more mental effort, which requires crops and dietary habit changes. This change can benefit generations to come. For example, eyesight weakness and malnutrition are common problems children face these days. To curtail these problems vital vitamins like vitamin A and C-rich fruits and vegetables can be incentivized by the government. Less water-intensive cereals like Bajra, Jau, and Ragi can be incentivized to become part of the daily meal plan. The year 2023 has been declared the millet international year by the United Nations. This is "as it consumes 70% less water than rice and needs 40% less energy in processing and is climate-friendly and environmentally friendly."

(The writer is the Director of Rath Public Schools)

# Empower ‘Divyangs’ with skills, inclusion

There is no dearth of opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, provided they are equipped with the right set of skills. The Govt is working in this direction



Divyangjan or persons with disabilities (PwDs) are a significant social group but are rarely provided with the right kind of opportunities, skills and platforms to showcase their talent and productive potential. It is unfortunately presumed that PwDs cannot make any meaningful contributions to our economy's growth, which is wrong. People with disabilities have immense potential to contribute significantly to the economy but they need skills that are best suited to them. It is an irony that PwDs, who account for more than 2 per cent of our total population, have not been allowed to be a part of mainstream discourse and pursuits aimed at empowerment through inclusion.

Unfortunately, the employability rate for PwDs is very low. It is estimated that only 36 per cent of India's 26 million PwDs are working. As per a report by the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on PwDs, nearly 64 per cent of persons with disabilities in India don't have jobs. More disabled men than women have jobs. As per an assessment of market intelligence, Unearth Insight, only 34 lakh out of almost 3 crore PwDs are employed but 1.3 crores are employable. Most of them are employed in organised and unorganised sectors, government entities or self-employed. It is therefore necessary to ensure that most PwDs get gainful jobs but how?

In order to ensure that persons with disabilities lead a dignified life independently, they must be provided with high-quality education. This is so that they have the freedom to choose their careers and have equal employment opportunities. There are several examples where Divyang people have achieved impressive feats in many fields thanks to their indomitable courage, talent and determination. If provided with the right environment, opportunities and skills, they can excel in every field. Education, in particular skill-based education, is the key to empower-



AS PER A REPORT BY THE UNION MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION ON PwDs, NEARLY 64 PER CENT OF THEM DON'T HAVE JOBS. MORE DISABLED MEN THAN WOMEN HAVE JOBS

(The writer is a co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner with the National Skill Development Corporation)

ment for everyone, including those with disabilities.

There is no dearth of jobs for PwDs, provided they are equipped with the right soft and practical skills. Some of the most valuable soft job skills for adults with disabilities that employers look for: attention to detail; communication skills; conflict management skills; problem-solving skills; teamwork skills; time management skills; and enrichment and life skills. Similarly, some hard job skills for PwDs include accounting, engineering, technical writing, computer-related jobs, healthcare, career counseling, customer service, insurance agent, massage therapist, telemarketer, photographer in a wheelchair, desktop publisher, graphic designer, web developer, bank teller, receptionist, financial analyst, landscaper or groundskeeper.

National Education Policy 2020 also underlines the importance of enabling arrangements in providing equal opportunities for quality education for children with disabilities. The conversion of NCERT textbooks for Classes I to VI into Indian Sign Language for hearing-impaired children is complete. It is a crucial initiative to include hearing-impaired students in mainstream education. It is heartening indeed to note that the Government is taking several steps to empower Divyangjan. Inculcating self-confidence among Divyangjan is very important to empower them for which they need skills. There are talents and abilities in people with disabilities; in some cases, these are greater than those found in normal people. Inclusive growth, development and confidence must encompass PwD aspirations.

It is worth noting that the

Government enacted the Right to Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which came into effect on April 19, 2017. It provides for 4 per cent reservation in government jobs for disabilities. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Accessible India Campaign, was launched by the Central Government on December 3, 2015. It provides universal accessibility for persons with disabilities so that they can live a meaningful life with dignity. Public buildings, transport systems and information and communication technology are included in this campaign. Keeping in view the problems related to accessibility faced by the masses, a mobile app has been developed to address accessibility problems in a quick and systematic manner.

The Government has also set up the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) to promote hearing-impaired persons' empowerment and to create sign language in the country. The institute, among other things, is continuously preparing sign language dictionaries that have so far included more than 10,000 words. The Government is also implementing a Unique Disability Identity Card (UDID) project to create a National Database for Persons with Disabilities. So far, over 84 lakh UDID cards have been prepared in 713 districts of all states and Union Territories.

The Disability Sports Centre is being established at Gwalior and the National Institute of Mental Health and Rehabilitation at Sehore, both Madhya Pradesh. Divya Kala Shakti is organised to showcase Divyang youngsters and children's talent and skills. However, they need a dedicated

programme to equip them with employable or gainful skills. The process of skilling and creating job opportunities for crores of youth through Skill India Mission and Kaushal Rozgar Kendra cannot exclude PwDs. Their needs require a specific and targeted approach.

We have the Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD) as a national body to fulfill the mission of mainstreaming PwDs through skill training to enable them to earn a livelihood and lead a life of dignity in the mainstream society and in turn contribute to the growing economy of the country. Skill training is also imparted at accredited training centres through trained and certified trainers. Trainers are trained on NSQC-approved job roles aligned to a specific disability. Trainers are also certified in disability orientation and sensitisation.

As of now, we haven't been inclusive in our approach to skilling people in any way. A few sectors' artisans received some attention, while many classes of artisans such as carpenters, iron smiths, sculptors, masons and others that are an integral part of society have been adapting to the changing times to fulfil; the needs of society that were ignored.

PwDs were rarely discussed in relation to their skill set. Empowering every section of society is essential to our country's development journey. I totally agree with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's argument that they should get easy loans, skilling, technical support, digital empowerment, brand promotion, marketing and raw material. Development of traditional artisans and craftsmen while preserving their rich tradition must include PwDs.

# Innovative approaches are galvanising livestock economy

A conclave in Hyderabad recently brought more than 100 startups, 50 CII members and the fast-growing livestock sector together

The livestock sector, besides contributing to the national economy, plays a key role in providing livelihood to 80 million rural households and is growing at a high and consistent rate in the country, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.93 per cent between 2014-15 to 2020-21 (at constant prices), which is much higher than the general agriculture sector.

India currently ranks third in unicorns and has a thriving startup ecosystem. It is estimated that 15 per cent of the world's agri-tech startups are based here. Modern technical breakthroughs have impacted almost every component of India's dairy and livestock value chain. This is due to Government initiatives to encourage investments, ease of



(The writer is Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying)

doing business and innovation.

Animal husbandry and dairying have more than 700 startups registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. This proves that there is more room for technology deployment and monetisation of interventions in the related sectors.

**Startup conclave**

A recent startup conclave in Hyderabad on February 28 included showcasing of a 100 select startups, a pitch fest, a buyer-seller meet, and a workshop for startups to train the early-stage startups operating in the animal husbandry and dairying sector in pitching, building the main business pillars, and their story of impact. Beside more than 100 startups, 50 members from the Confederation of Indian

Industry also participated in the event, searching for creative solutions to the key issues facing the livestock sector.

**Startups' exhibition**

Startups showcased their goods and innovations, including cosmetics made of camel milk and donkey milk (they offer a mind-boggling rate of Rs 1,200 per kg of donkey milk to the owners of donkey farms), building products and panels made of cow dung, innovations in animal feed and insect feed, platforms for online livestock trade, platforms that connect farmers with embedded digital finance options, new yoghurt flavours, breed improvement technology for cattle, intelligent dairy automation solutions, and cold chain solutions. Startups benefited greatly from the expo as

it gave them access to investors, dairy cooperatives, and government partners.

**Pitch fest & shoring capacity**

A special pitching event with a panel of investors, including venture capitalists and angel investors, was organised for 10 startups. With innovative products and services, the startups represent the animal husbandry and dairy industries. These products and services include artificial insemination equipment, cattle reproduction solutions, traceability, heat detection, frozen semen thawing, veterinary care, nanotechnology, polymer chemistry, vaccines, and diagnostics, among others.

A concurrent workshop was held for early-stage startups to guide them in the art of pitching and developing

primary business pillars/story of impact, problem-solving, and government-e-market-place. The speakers delved into investor psychology and expectations to help the audience understand what is required to have the highest chance of acquiring investment from a venture capital fund and PE and angel investors.

On the finer elements of pitching, term sheet preparation, legal rights, value, etc., the experts gave enlightening advice. The buyer-seller meeting was a fascinating session of the conclave that drew enthusiastic involvement from both sides. Of the prominent dairy cooperatives and enterprises participating in the event, ten start-ups delivered a sales pitch to market their products.

Technological advancements will lead to significant improvements in day-to-day operations and lower business costs. The Indian Government employs numerous cutting-edge breeding techniques in the animal husbandry industry to maximise local bovine herd production. Startups are crucial for making such a system self-sustaining.

The growth of startups has improved this ecosystem's development, organisation, and resilience, mostly to the benefit of its most significant stakeholder—the Indian farmers—who make up the agriculture sector, which includes the livestock industry and forms the backbone of the nation's economy.

Innovative approaches to

the problems of animal health, online marketplaces, improved supply chains, products with value-added, mobile apps, drones, and other investments are not only empowering producers or entrepreneurs but also improving the market, making resources more available, preventing waste, maximising profits, creating scalable businesses, and removing bottlenecks.

The support that the Government gives to startups shows the importance and impact of startups in the Indian economy. The livestock industry in India is poised to grow and will continue to be crucial in advancing our Hon'ble Prime Minister's goal of building an Aatmanirbhar (self-sufficient) India.



# Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 10 civilians | N Korea tests radioactive tsunami weapon at sea

**AP ■ KIVY**

Russian long-range strikes killed at least 10 civilians and wounded 20 others in several areas of Ukraine on Friday, Ukraine's presidential office said, as a senior Moscow official warned that the Kremlin's forces were prepared for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive in the coming weeks.

Five people died in Kostiantynivka, a town in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, when a Russian missile hit an aid station. Ukrainian authorities last year established hundreds of so-called "points of invincibility", where residents hard-pressed by the war could warm up, charge their cellphones and get snacks.

Local prosecutors said the Russians attacked Kostyantynivka with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. The civilians who died were refugees, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. As the mostly artillery war of the recent winter months stretched into its second spring, Russian forces also used air-launched missiles, exploding drones and gliding bombs in their attacks on several regions early on Friday, Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuri Ihnat said.

Two civilians were killed and nine were wounded in the Sumy province town of Bilopillya by a night-time rocket and artillery barrage and air strikes, the administration of the northeast region said. In the southern Kherson region, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited on Thursday, Russian shelling killed one person in the main city, also called Kherson, and killed another person and wounded four others in the town of Bilozerk.

On Wednesday, a Russian drone attack struck a high school and dormitories south of Kyiv, killing at least nine people. Kyiv's forces are poised to use the improved spring weather and the arrival of modern weapons supplied by



its Western allies, including tanks, to launch a counteroffensive aimed at dislodging Russian troops from occupied areas of Ukraine.

But Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and now the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, said the Russian military was ready to repel a counterattack. "Our General Staff is assessing all that," Medvedev said. He also said that a Ukrainian attempt to seize Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, could trigger a nuclear response from Moscow. "An attempt to split part of the state away means an encroachment at the very existence of the state," he said.

## UN decries killing of Russian POWs and Ukrainians

**Kyiv (AP):** UN human rights monitors have documented dozens of summary killings of Ukrainian and Russian prisoners of war, as well as the use of torture, human shields and other abuses against POWs since Russia invaded its neighbour that could amount to war crimes, according to a report released Friday.

The first full look by the U.N. human rights office's mission in Ukraine at the treatment of POWs was released along with an update of human rights violations overall from a six-month period that ran through January. The report was based on interviews with about 400 POWs, half of them Ukrainians who were released and the other half Russians held captive in Ukraine.

The team said it had no access to POWs held in Russia or Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine where it identified 48 internment sites.

## N Korea tests radioactive tsunami weapon at sea

**AP ■ SEOUL**

North Korea claimed on Friday to have tested a nuclear-capable underwater drone designed to generate a gigantic "radioactive tsunami" that would destroy naval strike groups and ports. Analysts were skeptical that the device presents a major new threat, but the test underlines the North's commitment to raising nuclear threats. The test this week came as the United States reportedly planned to deploy aircraft carrier strike groups and other advanced assets to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

Military tensions are at a high point as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korea joint military exercises has accelerated in the past year in a cycle of tit-for-tat responses.



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says is an underwater blast of test warhead loaded to an unmanned underwater nuclear attack craft "Haeil" during an exercise around Hongwon Bay in waters off North Korea's eastern coast Thursday, AP/PTI

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the new weapon, which can be deployed from the coast or towed by surface ships, is built to "stealthily infiltrate into operational waters and make a super-scale radioactive tsunami through an underwater explosion" to destroy enemy naval strike groups and ports.

The report came hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged to make North Korea pay for its "reckless provocations" as he attended a remembrance service honouring 55 South Korean troops killed during major clashes with the North near their western sea border in past years.

The testing of the purported "nuclear underwater attack drone" was part of a three-day exercise that simulated nuclear attacks on unspecified South Korean targets, which also included cruise missile launches on Wednesday.

KCNA said the North's latest tests were aimed at alerting the United States and South Korea of a brewing "nuclear crisis" as they continue with their "intentional, persistent and provocative war drills." It said

the tests were supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who vowed to make his rivals "plunge into despair." The US and South Korea completed an 11-day exercise on Thursday that included their biggest field training in years, and are preparing another round of joint naval drills that will reportedly involve a US aircraft carrier. Hours after the North Korean report, South Korea's air force released details of a five-day joint aerial drill with the United States that began Monday and concluded on Friday above waters off South Korea's western coast, which included live-fire demonstrations of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons.

The air force said the exercise, which involved various South Korean fighter jets and at least one US A-10 attack plane, was aimed at verifying precision strike capabilities and reaffirming the credibility of Seoul's "three-axis" strategy against North Korean nuclear threats — preemptively striking sources of attacks, intercepting incoming missiles and neutralizing the North's leadership and key military facilities.

The North Korean drone is named "Haeil," a Korean word meaning tidal waves or tsunamis. The North's Rodong Simmun newspaper published photos of Kim smiling next to a large, torpedo-shaped object at an unspecified indoor facility, but didn't identify it.

Other photos published with the same article showed sea-surface tracks supposedly caused by the drone's underwater trajectory and a pillar of water exploding up into the air, possibly caused by what state media described as an underwater detonation of a mock nuclear weapon carried by the drone. KCNA said the drone was deployed on Tuesday off the North's eastern coast, traveled underwater for nearly 60 hours, and detonated a test warhead at a target standing for an enemy port. It said the test verified the operational reliability of the drone, which it said the North has been developing since 2012 and tested more 50 times in the past two years, although the weapon was never mentioned before in state media until Friday.

# Israeli AG: Netanyahu broke law on conflict of interest

**Jerusalem (AP):** Israel's attorney general on Friday warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he has violated the Supreme Court's conflict of interest ruling, which barred him from direct involvement in his government's divisive plans for a judicial overhaul. Netanyahu's far-right government has barreled ahead with plans to weaken the Supreme Court and grant politicians less judicial oversight in their policymaking despite massive protests from across Israeli society — including an uproar among business leaders, top legal officials and military reservists. On Thursday, just hours after his coalition passed a law that would protect the Israeli leader from being



An Israeli activist dressed as a clown runs with border police as Israelis protest against plans by 'Netanyahu' in Tel Aviv, Israel on Thursday. AP/PTI

deemed unfit to rule because of his corruption trial and claims of a conflict of interest, Netanyahu defiantly pledged to proceed with the overhaul. Netanyahu contended that stripping the attorney general

of the power to remove him from office was necessary to clear the way for him to participate in the negotiations on the judicial overhaul in spite of her instructions, and try to "mend the rift" in the polarised nation.

# Demonstrators protest Netanyahu's visit to UK

**London:** British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak welcomed Benjamin Netanyahu at his official residence in London on Friday as protesters shouting "Shame!" in Hebrew demonstrated against the Israeli leader's right-wing policies and his plans to overhaul the country's judiciary.

Netanyahu had to pass by hundreds of protesters waving Israeli flags and waving signs calling for the defense of Israeli democracy as he arrived for talks that are expected to focus on concerns about Iran's nuclear programme.

"We are Israelis and Jews living in the UK demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is leading a judicial coup turning Israel into a dictatorship," one placard read.

Netanyahu arrived in London as protesters in Israel blocked roads and clashed with police over his right-wing government's plans to overhaul the judicial system.

The proposals have ignited the biggest protests in the country's history amid rare dissent from people throughout Israeli society, including military reservists, navy veterans, high-tech businesspeople and former officials. Netanyahu's proposals would give his government more control over judicial appointments, weaken the Supreme Court by limiting judicial review of legislation and allow Parliament to overturn court decisions with a simple majority vote. AP

## Large asteroid coming close, but zero chance of hitting earth

**Cape Canaveral:** An asteroid big enough to wipe out a city will zip harmlessly between Earth and the moon's orbit this weekend, missing both celestial bodies. Saturday's close encounter will offer astronomers the chance to study a space rock from just over 100,000 miles (168,000 kilometers) away. That's less than half the distance from here to the moon, making it visible through binoculars and small telescopes.

While asteroid flybys are common, NASA said it's rare for one so big to come so close — about once a decade. Scientists estimate its size somewhere between 130 feet and 300 feet (40 meters and 90 meters).

Discovered a month ago, the asteroid known as 2023 DZ2 will pass within 320,000 miles (515,000 kilometers) of the moon on Saturday and, several hours later, buzz the Indian Ocean at about 17,500 mph (28,000 kph). AP

## Saudi Arabia, Syria may restore ties

**AP ■ BEIRUT**

Saudi Arabia is in talks with Syria to reopen its embassy in the war-torn nation for the first time in a decade, state television in the kingdom reported late Thursday, the latest diplomatic reshuffling in the region. The announcement on state TV comes after Chinese-mediated talks in Beijing saw Saudi Arabia and Iran agree to reopen embassies in each others' nations after years of tensions. Syrian President Bashar Assad has maintained his grip on power in the Mediterranean nation rocked by the 2011 Arab Spring only with the help of Iran and Russia, which made a historic call earlier in the day to Oman.

Saudi Arabian state television aired a report late Thursday, quoting an anonymous official in the country's Foreign Ministry, acknowledging the talks between the kingdom and Damascus.

"A source in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed to Al-Ekhabariyah that ongoing discussions have begun with the

Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commenting on what was circulated by some international media," an anchor said on air. "Discussions are underway between officials in the kingdom and their counterparts in Syria about resuming the provision of consular services." Arabic-language media had been reporting the possible detente in recent days ahead of the Saudi state TV announcement. The Wall Street Journal, quoting anonymous Saudi and Syrian officials, attributed the talks to reopen the countries' embassies to Russian mediation.

Syrian state media did not immediately acknowledge the talks. Officials in both Saudi Arabia and Syria did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press early Friday.

Earlier Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin called Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, which the Kremlin called the "the first high-level bilateral contact since the establishment of diplomatic relations" between the nations.

# Protests continue as Paris reels under violence

**AP ■ PARIS**

Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday amid slowed train traffic, rows of trucks blocking access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littering the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations. Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches. He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest.

Polls say most French oppose Macron's bill to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64, which he says is necessary to keep the system afloat. The supply of fuel to Paris by the large Gonfreville-l'Orcher refinery in Normandy resumed on Friday after police intervened, according to Energy Transition Minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher. At the Fos-sur-mer oil terminal near Marseille, however, protesters were meeting to plan future oil refinery blockades.

Fearing disruptions in coming days as actions continue, France's Civil Aviation Authority has requested that a third of



flights be cancelled on Sunday at Paris' second airport, Orly, with 20 per cent to be cancelled on Monday. Unions have called for new protests and strikes on Tuesday, when Britain's King Charles III is scheduled to visit Bordeaux on the second day of his trip to France. The heavy wooden door of the elegant Bordeaux City Hall was destroyed by fire Thursday night by people taking part in an

unauthorised demonstration. The mayor of Bordeaux, Pierre Hurmic, said Friday he had "difficulty understanding the interest of such acts of vandalism." Hurmic said that he hopes Charles' visit to his city next week will not be cancelled. "I hope that we do not give this gift to the thugs," he said, although he acknowledged that a tram ride with the king may

## British King's visit postponed

**Paris (AP):** Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday, as the unrest across the country led officials to postpone a planned state visit by Britain's King Charles III.

Although no major protests were planned on Friday, train traffic was slowed, rows of trucks blocked access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littered the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations. Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond

on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

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# Report on Leicester clashes warns of ethnic enclaves in UK

**AP ■ LONDON**

A fact-finding report into the violent clashes between groups of men on the streets of Leicester following an India-Pakistan Asia Cup cricket match in Dubai last year has warned of ethnic enclaves or ghettos of migrants in the eastern England city as a key factor behind communal tension.

The Delhi-based Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights (CDPHR) think tank, which launched its report at a Committee Room in the House of Commons on Thursday, sheds light on the events that took place in August-September last year and their human rights implications. In its "Fact-finding report on Leicester Violence 2022 – The rise of territorial majoritarianism and Hinduphobia", the think tank calls for immediate action to address the underlying issues that led to the Leicester vio-

lence such as the rise of extremism and hate speech.

"There were two kinds of stories circulating around the violence that occurred, which is the motivation behind this fact-finding report," explained Rashmi Samant of the ATMAH non-profit organisation and one of the co-authors of the report. "What we found was that different religious groups in east Leicester, ground zero of the unrest, are living in ethnic enclaves – with some ethnicities clubbed up in some spaces more than others. This phenomenon is not common in the United Kingdom but we found it continues to happen in Leicester because of the spillover effect involving migrants from countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh," she said.

The report claims that the presence of these ethnic enclaves gave rise to territorial tensions and localised majoritarianism, which were

witnessed both before and during the unrest in east Leicester – the ethnic enclave of the Muslim community residing in Leicester with a minority presence of the Hindu community. Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman, chair of the India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), said at the launch event that "fake news" spread on social media has been identified as a major factor behind the escalation of the clashes. "Lessons must be learnt. There was a false narrative being spread to create divisions within the communities. In Leicester, people of all religions have lived alongside each other for many, many years," said Blackman.

The findings of the report say that the attackers attempted to undermine the fundamental principles of democracy and pluralism, including freedom of expression by spreading misinformation.

## Jamaican cleric gets 18-year sentence in NY terrorism case

**New York:** A cleric arrested in his native Jamaica and extradited to New York to face state terrorism charges on accusations of recruiting support for the Islamic State group was sentenced on Thursday to 18 years in prison.

Abdullah el-Faisal was convicted in January in state Supreme Court in Manhattan on counts including soliciting or providing support for an act of terrorism. The state law he was prosecuted under was put in place after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and prosecutors said his case was the first state-level trial on terrorism charges.

El-Faisal was extradited to New York City in 2020 after being arrested in Jamaica in 2017. Beginning in 2016, authorities said an undercover officer in New York City posed as a would-be jihadist and started communicating with the cleric.

The cleric was accused of giving out information to help the officer ultimately connect with the Islamic State group, as well as trying to do things like act as a conduit for a marriage between the officer and a member of the militant group.

Prosecutors said el-Faisal had supported the Islamic State organization for several years. AP

## Starbucks CEO to work as barista

**New York:** Starbucks' new Indian-origin CEO Laxman Narasimhan has said he will work as a barista once a month in stores to stay close to the company's culture, customers, challenges and opportunities.

Narasimhan, 55, officially became the Seattle-based coffee giant's chief executive on Monday, taking the reins from Howard Schultz about two weeks earlier than scheduled. He was welcomed as incoming chief executive officer of Starbucks with a coffee tasting in the place where it all began – at Seattle's Pike Place market store. In a letter to the employees on Thursday, the Indian-American business executive said he will always be a "fierce advocate" for the company's partners and its culture. "With you, I've experienced every aspect of the business to learn what it truly means to wear the green apron. You've welcomed me into our stores, trained me in how to be a barista ... all to

help me deeply understand what we do, how we do it, and the challenges and opportunities facing us," he wrote.

Barista is a person who serves in a coffee bar. "To keep us close to the culture and our customers, as well as to our challenges and opportunities, I intend to continue working in stores for a half day each month," he was quoted as saying by CNN.

"I thought it was very important for me to put myself in the shoes of the partners and really understand what they do and how they do it.

There were things I learned through experience in all of this. It taught me a lot," he said in a statement.

Pune-born Narasimhan joined Starbucks as interim CEO in October and has since spent time getting to know the company — including earning a barista certification, which requires 40 hours of training in stores. PTI

## Bolsonaro hands undeclared jewels to authorities

**AP ■ BRASILIA**

A representative of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday handed a set of diamond jewellery he had received from Saudi Arabia to a state bank, as he was ordered to do by a government watchdog.

The state bank Caixa Economica Federal received the box of precious stones at one of its branches in the capital Brasilia, the bank's press office told The Associated Press. A federal watchdog on Wednesday gave Bolsonaro five days to hand over the precious stones that he had received while president.

Authorities are investigating whether the goods were a public gift that Bolsonaro improperly tried to prevent from being incorporated into the presidency's public collection, or a private gift that Bolsonaro tried to sneak into Brazil without paying taxes.

Brazilian media started reporting on the jewels earlier this month, along with another set that was seized at the international airport in Sao Paulo. The seized set is estimated to be worth several million dollars. Neither set was declared to tax authorities.

Bolsonaro, who denies any wrongdoing with the jewellery, has been in the United States since late-December, just days before the end of his presidential term.



# US carries out airstrikes in Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

A strike on Thursday by a suspected Iranian-made drone killed a US contractor and wounded five American troops and another contractor in northeast Syria, the Pentagon said. American forces said they retaliated soon after with “precision airstrikes” in Syria targeting facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, with activist groups saying the US bombing killed at least four people. The attack and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to deescalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement that the American intelligence community had determined the drone was of Iranian origin, but offered no other immediate evidence to support the claim. “The airstrikes were conducted in response to today’s attack as well as a series of recent attacks against coalition forces in Syria” by groups affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard, Austin said. Iran relies on a network of proxy forces through the Mideast to counter the US and Israel,

its arch regional enemy.

The Pentagon said two of the wounded service members were treated on-site, while three others and the injured contractor were transported to medical facilities in Iraq.

Overnight, videos on social media purported to show explosions in Syria’s Deir el-Zour, a strategic province that borders Iraq and contains oil fields. Iran-backed militia groups and Syrian forces control the area, which also has seen suspected airstrikes by Israel in recent months allegedly targeting Iranian supply routes.

Iran and Syria did not immediately acknowledge the strikes, nor did their officials at the United Nations in New York respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press. The activist group Deir Ezzor 24 put the death toll from the American strikes at four people. Deir Ezzor 24, which covers news in Deir el-Zour province, said the strikes hit the city of Deir el-Zour as well as militiamen posts near Mayadeen and Boukamal. It said the strikes also wounded people, including Iraqis.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, reported that the American strikes killed six Iranian-backed fight-



ers at an arms depot in the Harabesh neighbourhood in the city of Deir el-Zour. The Observatory, which relies on a network of local contacts in Syria, said US bombing at a post near the town of Mayadeen killed two fighters.

A separate American strike hit a military post near the town of Boukamal along the border with Iraq, killing another three fighters, the Observatory said. The AP could not immediately independently confirm the activist reports. Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been suspected of carrying out attacks with bomb-carrying drones across the wider Middle East.

In recent months, Russia has begun using Iranian drones in its attacks on sites across Ukraine as part of its war on Kyiv. Iran has issued a series of conflicting denials about its drones being used in the war, though Western nations and experts have tied components in the drones back to Tehran.

The exchange of strikes came as Saudi Arabia and Iran have been working toward reopening embassies in each other’s countries. The kingdom also acknowledged efforts to reopen a Saudi embassy in Syria, whose embattled President Bashar Assad has been backed by Iran in his country’s long war.

US Army Gen. Michael “Erik”

Kurilla, the head of the American military’s Central Command, warned that American forces could carry out additional strikes if needed. “We are postured for scalable options in the face of any additional Iranian attacks,” Kurilla said in a statement.

Addressing the US House Armed Services Committee on Thursday, Kurilla warned lawmakers that the “Iran of today is exponentially more militarily capable than it was even five years ago.” He pointed to Iran’s arsenal of ballistic missiles and bomb-carrying drones. Kurilla also claimed that Iran had launched some 78 attacks on US positions in Syria since January 2021. “What Iran does to hide its hand is they use Iranian proxies,” Kurilla said.

Diplomacy to deescalate the crisis appeared to begin immediately around the strikes. Qatar’s state-run news agency reported a call between its foreign minister and Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser.

Doha has been an interlocutor between Iran and the US recently amid tensions over Tehran’s nuclear programme.

Qatar’s foreign minister also spoke around the same time with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian.

## EU leaders grapple with bank risks as economy weakens

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union leaders gathered Friday to gauge the risk of a banking crisis developing from recent global financial turbulence and hitting the economy even harder than the energy crunch tied to Russia’s war in Ukraine. The deliberations by EU government heads in Brussels follow US regulators shutting down two US banks, including Silicon Valley Bank, and a Swiss-orchestrated takeover of troubled lender Credit Suisse by rival UBS. The emergency actions on both sides of the Atlantic revived memories of the 2008 global financial meltdown and the ensuing EU sovereign debt crisis, which almost broke apart the euro currency now shared by 20 European countries. “For the moment, we see no reason to be worried,” Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo told reporters on his way to the EU meeting. “But we monitor it really closely, almost on a daily basis, because no one knows what can happen.” The European economy has been



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, center, speaks with President of the Eurogroup Paschal Donohoe during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels on Friday.

slowly rapidly since Russia invaded Ukraine 13 months ago to the day, leaving the EU flirting with recession. The war has fuelled inflation by prompting cuts in supplies of previously abundant Russian oil, natural gas and coal and by denting consumer and business confidence. The European Commission, the EU’s executive arm, expects economic growth in the 27-nation bloc to slow to 0.8 per cent this year

from 3.5 per cent in 2022 and 5.4 per cent in 2021. A projected rebound in growth to 1.6 per cent next year depends on a sound banking sector able to lend to businesses and consumers and protect deposits. The EU has beefed up its regulation of financial institutions since the euro debt crisis, and little sign has emerged so far of broader contagion in Europe from Credit Suisse’s dramatic rescue.

## China warns of consequences over US warship’s actions

AP ■ BANGKOK

China threatened “serious consequences” Friday after the US Navy sailed a destroyer around the disputed Parcel Islands in the South China Sea for the second day in a row, in a move Beijing claimed was a violation of its sovereignty and security. The warning comes amid growing tensions between China and the United States in the region, as Washington pushes back at Beijing’s growingly assertive posture in the South China Sea, a strategic waterway it claims virtually in its entirety. On Thursday, after the U.S. sailed the USS Milius guided-missile destroyer near the Parcel Islands, China said its navy and air force had forced the American vessel away, a claim the U.S. military denied.

The U.S. on Friday sailed the ship again in the vicinity of the islands, which are occupied by China but also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam, as part of what it called a “freedom of navigation operation” challenging requirements from all three nations requiring either

advance notification or permission before a military vessel sails by.

“Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations,” said U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. j.g. Luka Bakic in an emailed statement. “The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant,” Bakic added. China’s Ministry of National Defense responded by accusing the U.S. of “undermining the peace and stability of the South China Sea” with its actions.

“The act of the U.S. military seriously violated China’s sovereignty and security, severely breached international laws, and is more intransigent evidence of the U.S. pursuing navigation hegemony and militarising the South China Sea,” ministry spokesman Tan Kefei said.

## Philippines confronts Chinese diplomats over sea disputes

AP ■ MANILA

Filipino diplomats issued a slew of protests over China’s aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea, including targeting a Philippine coast guard ship with a military laser, when they met Chinese officials Friday, an official said. Territorial disputes in the busy waterway have long loomed as a potential flash-point in Asia and have become a sensitive front in the regional rivalry between China and the United States.

Washington lays no claims in the contested waters but has challenged Beijing’s extensive claims including by deploying its warships and fighter jets and repeatedly warning that it would help defend the Philippines — a treaty ally — if Philippine forces, ships and aircraft are attacked. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the sea-way, which sits atop vast deposits of oil and gas.

A Chinese delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong held two days of

talks starting Thursday with Philippine counterparts led by Foreign Undersecretary Theresa Lazaro and reviewed overall relations. The two sides focused on their territorial disputes Friday, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said. The talks opened with both sides citing an agreement between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who made a state visit to China in early January, to manage the territorial conflicts amicably while enhancing economic ties and other aspects of a nearly half-century of diplomatic relations.

“We should not allow specific differences to define our bilateral relations or allow certain disputes to stand in the way of overall cooperation,” Sun said in an opening speech before journalists were asked to leave the meeting room. “We need to properly deal with these issues through friendly consultations.”

A Philippine official involved in the talks told The Associated Press that Filipino

diplomats outlined several incidents underscoring China’s assertiveness in the disputed waters in the closed-door talks. That included a February 6 incident when a Chinese coast guard ship aimed a military-grade laser that briefly blinded some crew members of a Philippine patrol vessel off a disputed shoal. China’s representatives responded mostly by reiterating Beijing’s claim of sovereignty in most of the South China Sea, where they said Philippine vessels had intruded, the official said. Some “practical cooperation agreements” were proposed to prevent a further escalation of the disputes but those still needed to be vetted by other Philippine officials, the official said without providing other details. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to publicly discuss what transpired in the meetings.

Marcos summoned the Chinese ambassador to Manila to express concern shortly after the laser-pointing incident.

## ‘Pak gets \$2 bn rollover deposits from China to get IMF bailout’

Islamabad (PTI): Cash-strapped Pakistan has received a rollover of USD 2 billion in deposits for a period of one year from its all-weather ally China to help Islamabad get a much-required bailout from the IMF to stabilise its economy, a media report said on Friday.

The rollover, which basically is not a loan but a financial deposit to be kept at Pakistan’s central bank for a period of one year, is one of the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in meeting its external financing needs in order to move towards inking the staff-level agreement. The News International reported. Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar confirmed the development. “Yes,” Dar was quoted as saying in a brief response when asked about getting a rollover of USD 2 billion SAFE.

Pakistan and the IMF have been negotiating the release of a USD 1.1 billion loan since February but so far without any success due to the tough conditions by the donor which Pakistan is slow to fulfil. Pakistan is scrambling to increase its forex reserves which are estimated to be at USD 4.8 billion after China refinanced USD 500 million last week. Earlier, a Chinese bank provided USD 700 million to Pakistan.

Despite a slight improvement in the reserves, the situation is still grim as the country needs to pay USD 7 billion till June this year, making further borrowing necessary. Efforts to secure a loan from the IMF have been unsuccessful so far, which is expected to open avenues for further borrowing from the international market or getting loans from friendly countries.

## Court grants extension of anticipatory bail to Imran Khan in five terror cases

PTI ■ LAHORE

A top Pakistani court on Friday extended till March 27 the protective bail granted to former prime minister Imran Khan in five cases related to terrorism after he appeared before a two-member bench here.

The Lahore High Court (LHC) granted the extension of anticipatory bail to Khan after the 70-year-old chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appeared before it amidst tight security. Last week, Khan was granted anticipatory bail in these five cases till March 24. Of the five cases, one is related to the alleged attack on the judicial complex in Islamabad in which the government law officer objected that Khan should secure protective bail from Islamabad

## Khawaja Asif blasts Khan for ‘hypocrisy’

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan’s defence minister Khawaja Asif on Friday lashed out at former premier Imran Khan’s “hypocrisy” for seeking help from the United States after accusing Washington of toppling his government last year. Addressing a press conference, Asif said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief’s aide

sent a letter to the US, seeking its help, after Khan named a top US diplomat of plotting to oust him from power last year. This shows the “total sum of Imran’s journey,” Asif said. “His political journey started with a cypher - in which he had accused the US of conspiring against the PTI government,” Asif said.

court. Khan told the LHC that last week on his appearance before a court in Islamabad police and FC (frontier constabulary) personnel fired teargas shells at

his car and a clash took place between the PTI workers and police. Besides, a plot was hatched to kill him there and that is why he returned to Lahore.



Muslim men perform during the first Friday prayer of the fasting month of Ramadan at Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia on Friday. Muslims around the world are observing Ramadan, the holiest month on the Islamic calendar, where they refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sex from dawn to dusk.

## Polish coal miners protest EU methane reduction regulations

AP ■ WARSAW

Polish coal miners angered by a European Union directive aiming to reduce methane emissions protested noisily on Friday before the EU office in Warsaw saying it will deprive them of their jobs.

Some 300 miners chanted “Thieves” and used smoke flares and sirens to draw attention to their protest in the downtown area of Poland’s capital. Traffic was temporarily closed in the area.

Protesting miners from the Solidarity 80 union said recent climate recommendations for the 27-member EU that call for a significant reduction of methane, starting in 2027, would force most of the nation’s mines to close, with the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. The majority of Poland’s mines have a high presence of methane gas that gets released in the coal extraction process. That also leads to serious mining accidents as methane becomes explosive when mixed in low proportions with oxygen.

Located in the southern Silesia region, the coal mines are among Poland’s major employers, offering some 77,000 jobs in the nation of 38 million.

UNION TERRITORY ADMINISTRATION OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
Department of Industries & Commerce Civil Secretariat,  
Jammu, 180001

Date 16/3/2023

GLOBAL INVITATION FOR REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR HIRING OF INTERNATIONAL RENOWNED CONSULTANCY FIRM FOR PROVIDING TRANSACTION ADVISORY, INVESTMENT PROMOTION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THEME/AMUSEMENT PARK IN J&K.

The UT of J&K intends hiring of international renowned consultancy firm for providing transaction advisory, investment promotion for development of theme/amusement park in J&K. The RFP can be downloaded by interested bidders from the website of J&K-tender at [jtenders.gov.in](http://jtenders.gov.in)

The Interested Bidders were required to submit a Tender fee through NBFT.

The last date for submission of bids is 20.04.2023 (17:00 hrs).

Sd/-  
Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department  
UT of Jammu & Kashmir

DIPK - 18668/22

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Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client Yes Bank Ltd. that Mr. Sanjay Dhanwan and Mrs. Anjali Dhanwan are the owners of Apartment No.PVC-15-0704 on 7th Floor, Super addressing 169.08 Sq. Mtrs., in Tower-15, at Pavilion Court, Situated at Sector-128, Jaypee Greens Wishi Town, Noida, has been/impounded Sub - Lease Deed dated 30.03.2016 Registration No. 10895 executed by M/s. Jaypee InfraTech Ltd. and M/s. Jayprakash Associates Ltd. in their name. All persons are hereby informed not to deal or carry out any transaction with anyone on the basis of the said missing document. If anyone has already dealt or carried out transaction or is intending to do so on basis of said stated document, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on or below address, failing which, it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Raghav Tiwari, Advocate  
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New Delhi - 110001 | Mob.: +91-8076186326

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General public is hereby informed that Mr. (Vishvakti) Sharma S/o Late Mr. Surender Kumar Sharma is the owner of the Property No. 70-C-22, area measuring 40 Sq. Yds. i.e. 33,444 Sq. Mtrs., out of Kharsa No. 1077/461 Min. Situated at Old Tejpal Mill, Shola Nath Nagar, in the area of Village Chandrawalla, District, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India-249103 by virtue of Requisitionment Deed dated 10.05.2022, regd. at Doc. No. 4395, and the same is to be financed & mortgaged with my client L. Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Ltd. and the legal heirs of Late Mr. Surender Kumar Sharma namely Menakshi, Pooja Pathania, and Rachana S. Sharma, shall have no objection regarding marriage of aforesaid property by Mr. Vishvakti Sharma, all persons (or persons) have any objection(s) or claim in this property, then contact the undersigned within 7 days from date of the notice on below address, failing which, it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Raghav Tiwari, Advocate  
Ch. 803, Patiala House Courts,  
New Delhi - 110001 | Mob.: +91-8076186326

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY  
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE**

**TD/TM/GEN-235(Vol-VII)/23/647, dtd. 24.03.2023**

**Name of the work: "Allotment of 03 (Three) nos. of Mechanical Iron Ore/ Iron Ore Pellet plots at IOHP." License Fees: Rs. 2,89,51,890/-** Wharfrage Fees Rs. 16,93,300/- Last date & time of submission of bid: 13.04.2023 up to 15:00 hrs Date and time of opening (technical bid): 13.04.2023 up to 15:00 hrs Refer our website for details <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> & <http://paradipport.gov.in/>

**Sd/-Traffic Manager  
Paradip Port Authority**

**PPAP/PR/236/2022-23** dtd.24.03.2023

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to inform to all concern that Mr. Shailendra Naresh Kulkarni S/o Sh. Naresh Sitaram Kulkarni & Mrs. Nisha Dutta W/o Shailendra Naresh Kulkarni both R/O C-148, Sector-19, Noida, (U.P.) who is the original allottee/owner of property No. Plot No C-148, Sector-19, Noida (U.P.) had sold the said property on General Power of Attorney basis to the following person(s): General Power of Attorney was executed in favour of Mr. Naresh Sitaram Kulkarni S/o Sh. Sitaram Dinkar Kulkarni R/o Flat No.6, Sapt Sarovar Apartments, Sapt Rishi Road, Sapt Rishi Ashram, Haridwar, Uttarakhand 249410 which is registered on Dt. 09/03/2023 in Haridwar and the Agreement to Sell was not registered or not executed. Because the Agreement to Sell is not registered or no Agreement to sell executed, so it is informed to all concern that the said Property No. Plot No C-148, Sector-19, Noida (U.P.) is going to be transferred in favour of Mr. Shailendra Naresh Kulkarni S/o Sh. 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# Sensex, Nifty fall 1% amid weak global equities trend

Sensex declined 398.18 points, Nifty fell 131.85 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the second straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Friday as investors pared exposure to the metal, energy and realty stocks amid a bearish trend in Asian and European markets.

Besides, a depreciating rupee against the US dollar and fresh foreign fund outflows also hit investor sentiments, traders said. In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10. During the day, it went lower by 502.3 points or 0.86 per cent to 57,422.98.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 131.85 points or 0.77 per cent to end at 16,945.05.

Bajaj Finserv was the biggest loser among the Sensex constituents, sliding 3.81 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Reliance Industries, HCL



Tech, SBI, Larsen & Toubro and Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank and Titan.

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Asian Paints and Wipro were the gainers. In Asia markets, stock exchanges in Seoul, Japan, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were also quoting in the red in the after-

noon trade. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the rupee declined 25 paise to close at 82.45 against the US dollar.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 1.73 per cent to USD 74.60 per barrel.

Foreign Portfolio Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 995.01 crore on Thursday after a day's breather, according to exchange data.

# AMC stocks under pressure; UTI AMC falls nearly 5%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of asset management firms declined on Friday amid amendments to the Finance Bill changing tax treatment for debt mutual funds.

The stock of UTI Asset Management Company tanked 4.73 per cent, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC declined 4.44 per cent, HDFC Asset Management Company fell 4.21 per cent, Shriram Asset Management Company dropped 3.21 per cent and Nippon Life India Asset Management dipped 1.29 per cent on the BSE.

The broader market also faced selling pressure as the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10.

The Lok Sabha on Friday approved The Finance Bill 2023 with 64 official amendments, including providing tax relief to some taxpayers opting for new tax regime, and removing long-term tax benefit for debt mutual funds to bring them at par with other interest earning instruments.

"The asset management industry was hit hard by tax



changes and the elimination of the indexation benefit of debt mutual funds," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Asset managers termed amendments to the Finance Bill changing tax treatment for debt mutual funds as a "surprise", which will be detrimental to the agenda of corporate bond market development.

Late on Thursday evening, the industry came to know about the changes the government proposed, wherein tax benefits for over three year investments in debt mutual fund investments will not be available

and all such bets will attract short-term capital gains tax.

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday.

A Balasubramanian, chairman of MF industry lobby grouping Amfi, who also heads Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, called the amendments as "surprising" and added that the industry will have to be ready for the changes that set in from April 1.

Consultancy firm Dhruva Advisors' partner Punit Shah said the amendment to treat gains on debt mutual funds as short-term gains will substantially diminish the attractiveness of

such products.

"The amendment in the finance bill will have significant structural changes to the way we invest. For mutual funds to get investor interest, it'll now have to purely be on their ability to add extra "risk adjusted returns" and not because of any tax arbitrage," Srikanth Subramanian, CEO of wealth management firm Kotak Cherry, said.

Financial advisor firm Fintoo's founder Manish P Hingar explained that mutual funds may no longer receive indexation benefits and will be taxed at marginal rates, and added the move will also impact gold funds and international funds.

"This move may have a negative impact on all debt funds, particularly in the retail category, as ultra-high net worth and high net worth individuals may choose to invest in safe havens like bank fixed deposits.

"We may see a shift from long-term debt funds to equity funds, and money may be directed towards sovereign gold bonds, bank fixed deposits, and non-convertible debentures in the debt category," Hingar said.



# RBI's MPC to meet 6 times next fiscal; first on April 3-6

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will meet six times in the next financial year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rate setting panel will be holding its first meeting of the next fiscal from April 3-6, the central bank said in a statement.

The RBI Governor announces the bi-monthly monetary policy after MPC's deliberations on the prevailing domestic and economic situations. The meetings are held over three days.

According to the schedule released by the RBI on Friday, the first bi-monthly monetary policy of FY2023-24 is scheduled for April 3, 5 and 6; and next will be held during June 6-8.

The third, fourth and fifth meetings have been scheduled for August 8-10, October 4-6, and December 6-8.

The sixth bi-monthly meeting of the MPC is scheduled to be held on February 6-8, 2024.

Headed by the Governor, the committee has two representatives from the central bank and three external members.

The central government has tasked the RBI to ensure that inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

# Govt to set up panel headed by finance secretary to improve NPS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday announced that a committee under the finance secretary will be set up to improve the New Pension System (NPS) with a view to take care of the concerns of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence.

While moving the Finance Bill 2023 for consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the new approach to the NPS will be designed for adoption by both central and state governments.

"I propose to set up a committee under the finance secretary to look into the issue of pensions and evolve an approach which addresses the

needs of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence to protect common citizens," she said.

"The approach will be designed for adoption by both the central government and state governments," she said.

The decision comes in the backdrop of several non-BJP states deciding to revert to the DA-linked Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and also employee organisations in some other states raising demand for the same.

The state governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have informed the Centre about their decision to revert to the Old Pension Scheme and have requested a refund of corpus accumulated under the NPS.



Earlier this month, the central government informed Parliament that it is not considering any proposal to restore the OPS in respect of the central government employees recruited after January 1, 2004.

Under the OPS, retired government employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as monthly pensions. The amount keeps increasing with hike in the DA rates. OPS is not fiscally sustainable as it is not con-

tributory in nature and the burden on exchequer keeps on mounting.

The total assets under management under the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana stood at Rs 8.81 lakh crore as on March 4, 2023. NPS has been implemented for all government employees except those in armed forces joining central government on or after 1st of January 2004. Most of the state/ Union Territory governments have also notified the NPS for their new employees.

According to the PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority), 26 state governments, with the exception of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, have notified and implemented NPS for their employees. NPS has been made avail-

able to every Indian citizen from May 1, 2009 on a voluntary basis.

Further, on June 1, 2015, the Atal Pension Yojana has been launched which has given the much required impetus to the social security schemes.

To regulate and develop the pension market, the government created PFRDA in 2003. It was initially designed for government employees exclusively, but its services were subsequently expanded to include all Indian nationals and NRIs, including self-employed persons.

PFRDA promotes, develops and regulates organised pension funds; namely National Pension System (NPS) to serve the old age income needs of people on a sustainable basis.



# Further delay in e-commerce policy rollout may accentuate issues in digital mkt: Par panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Any further delay in formulating and notifying a dedicated e-commerce policy may further accentuate the prevailing issues in India's digital market, according to a Parliamentary panel report.

The report tabled on Friday urged the Centre to finalise the draft National E-Commerce Policy at the earliest.

The department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in its report on the 'Promotion and Regulation of E-Commerce in India' observed that the absence of a dedicated e-commerce policy has resulted in a 'strategy vacuum' for the sector and 'ineffective regulation'.

Notably, the Committee said as the current regulatory framework is restricted to prevention and identification of sellers who have violated rules regarding Intellectual Property Rights, there exist gaps in enforcement mechanisms with regard to provision for imposing ex-post penalty on sellers who have violated the relevant rules.

It recommended the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to "develop appropriate mechanisms for enforcement of rules related to Intellectual Property Rights in e-commerce space in consultation with the relevant Ministries/Departments".

It also asserted that the online sale of medicines has not been regulated despite objections and concerns raised by stakeholders, and opined and reiterated its recommendation to

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to notify E-Pharmacy Rules and formulate comprehensive guidelines with regard to e-pharmacy/e-health platforms.

Noting that the Draft National E-Commerce Policy is at the stage of inter-ministerial consultations and could not be finalised till date, the panel said "any further delay in formulating and notifying a dedicated policy may further accentuate the prevailing issues in the fast paced digital market".

The Committee also observed that delay in finalisation and passage of the Competition Amendment Bill might have 'far reaching adverse and irreversible implications for competition in digital markets in India'.

It recommended the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to take concerted efforts to finalise and get the bill enacted at the earliest. The panel said necessary provisions should be incorporated in the amendment bill to empower and enable the Competition Commission of India as well as the Digital and Markets and Data Unit to effectively regulate the fast paced digital market taking into account the present day realities.

The Competition (Amendment) Bill, which seeks structural changes in the governing structure of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August last year.

The CCI has in recent times ordered probes as well as passed various orders with respect to alleged unfair business practices in the growing digital market.

# Pvt hospitals to clock 10-11% revenue growth in FY22-23, FY23-24: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Revenue of private hospitals will grow 10-11 per cent in financial year 2022-23 and 2023-24, supported by increasing domestic demand and pick-up in medical tourism, says a report. According to the Crisil Ratings report, revenue of private hospitals will grow on the back of healthy bed occupancy and sustenance of high average revenue per occupied bed (ARPOB).

In FY22, private hospitals had reported an all-time high operating profitability of 19 per cent due to a surge in treatment during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, which also pushed up occupancy levels, and, later, pent-up demand for elective surgeries, it said.

"Growing health awareness, especially after Covid-19, leading to increase in domestic demand together with recovery



in medical tourism, will ensure bed occupancy being maintained at almost similar levels of 60 per cent (past five fiscals average) even as bed addition continues," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Anuj Sethi said.

Sethi further noted that occupancy dipped only once during this period to 53 per cent due to lockdown enforced during the first phase of the pandemic.

Healthy cash generation,

leading to limited reliance on external borrowing to fund higher capex (both greenfield and brownfield) will in turn help private hospitals maintain adequate debt protection metrics and keep credit risk profiles stable, Crisil Ratings added.

Further, rising insurance coverage will make quality treatment more accessible, and support demand as well, he said adding that ARPOB which grew 20 per cent in FY22, will contin-

ue to register modest growth, supporting revenues.

The report further said private hospitals are seeing a gradual return of medical tourism - accounting for 10-12 per cent of revenue pre-pandemic - that got affected considerably during the pandemic, amid travel restrictions.

Lower cost of treatments, modern facilities with well-trained personnel, and increasing air-connectivity are expected to restore revenue from medical tourism to pre-pandemic levels. This will further support occupancy levels despite aggressive bed additions, Crisil Ratings noted.

However, the report noted any resurgence of Covid-19 or intense viral cases that triggers lockdown and restricts travel, or any regulatory intervention that impedes the performance of private hospitals, will bear watching in the road ahead.

# RBI Central board discusses global, domestic eco situation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India's central board on Friday reviewed the global and domestic economic situation as well as the associated challenges.

The 601st meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was held at Hyderabad under the chairmanship of Governor Shaktikanta Das.

"The board in its meeting reviewed the global and domestic economic situation and associated challenges, including the impact of current global geopolitical developments," RBI said in a statement.

Further, it said, the board discussed RBI's activities during the current accounting year 2022-23. The board also approved the budget for the accounting year 2023-24.

The meeting took place in the backdrop of global concerns over failure of banks in the US

amid aggressive monetary tightening. The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday hiked interest rates by 25 basis points to tame high inflation despite the banking crisis.

Both, Bank of England and European Central Bank (ECB) have also raised their benchmark interest rates. Meanwhile, policy makers and experts have said that the Indian banking system is in good shape.

At the meeting on Friday, directors of RBI's central board — Satish K Marathe, Sachin Chaturvedi, Pankaj Ramanbhai Patel and Ravindra H Dholakia — were present.

RBI Deputy Governors — Mahesh Kumar Jain, Michael Debabrata Patra, M Rajeshwar Rao, and T Rabi Sankar — were also present.

Besides, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Sethi, and Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi participated in the meeting.

# CCI approves GMR Airports Infra-Aeroports de Paris SA deal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fair-trade regulator CCI on Friday said it has approved the proposed deal of GMR Airports Infrastructure and Aeroports de Paris SA (ADP) under the green channel route.

The proposed combination involves ADP's proposed acquisition of and subscription to foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCB) issued by GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd, according to a CCI notice.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has cleared the deal. It has also given nod to the proposed intra-group merger of GMR Airports Ltd and GMR Infra Developers Ltd (GIDL) with and into GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd.

Also, the regulator has given its nod to the proposed acquisition by ADP (and its group entities) of equity shares and optionally convertible redeem-

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Also, the regulator has given its nod to the proposed acquisition by ADP (and its group entities) of equity shares and optionally convertible redeem-



able preference shares of GMR Airports Infrastructure post-merger, CCI said.

On March 19, GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd (GIL) announced the merger of GMR

Airports Ltd with GIL.

ADP is an international airport operator owned by the French Government, while GMR Airports Infrastructure is a listed-entity and global infrastructure conglomerate with expertise in operating airports. It primarily operates through its subsidiary GMR Airports Ltd (GAL).

GIDL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of GMR Airports Infrastructure.

# Individual taxpayers with income marginally over ₹7 lakh to get relief under new tax regime

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of Rs 7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the government amended the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a mar-



ginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Explaining the provision, the finance ministry said under

the new tax regime with effect from April 1, if a taxpayer has annual income of Rs 7 lakh s/he pays no tax. But if s/he has income of Rs 7,00,100 s/he pays tax of 25,010. Thus an additional income of Rs 100 leads to a tax of Rs 25,010.

Hence, marginal relief is proposed to that so that the tax what one pays should not be more than the income that

exceeds Rs 7 lakh (Rs 100 in this case), the ministry said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the amendment to Finance Bill seeks to provide a marginal relief to individual taxpayers having borderline income by proposing a deduction of income tax payable in excess of the differential income above Rs 7 Lakh.

# BRIEF POWERGRID WINS 6 PROJECTS THROUGH TARIFF-BASED COMPETITIVE BIDDING



Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSU under Ministry of Power, has acquired six project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for various transmission system projects after competing with various private sector players and emerging as a successful bidder in the Tariff Based Competitive Bidding process conducted by REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), as per the guidelines notified by Government of India.

These Project SPVs include Khavda RE Transmission Limited, KPS2 Transmission Limited, KPS3 Transmission Limited, Khavda II-B Transmission Limited, Khavda II-C Transmission Limited, ERWR Transmission Limited.



# WPL GAME EQUALISER: BARCLAY

There is no reason for men's game to be viewed as different, says ICC chairman

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Women's cricket has distinguished itself with the introduction of the WPL and it should not be viewed differently from the men's game anymore, says ICC chairman Greg Barclay.

He said the league will help uplift the women's game, thanks to the professionalism and money involved.

The first edition of the tournament will conclude here on Sunday.

"... As I say, I think it will be a great uplift for the women's game and I am looking forward to see how this tournament plays out," Barclay told the BCCI.

"Now, there is no reason for the two parts of the game, men and women, to be viewed as different. This is people playing cricket and they should be treated equally.

"Secondly, the professionalism and the remuneration that is afforded the players I think that's something that's going to be really important, again, for the women's game," he added.



The Women's Premier League, which was a long time coming, finally began on March 4 this year amid much fanfare.

"I think if you recognise the powerhouse that India is in terms of cricket, it's appropriate that they have launched the Women's Premier League. I know that Jay Shah (BCCI president) and his board and his team are really committed to making this one of the biggest and best tournaments that it can possibly be.

"I am sure that they will be successful in that respect. I am really pleased and very appreciate that this has happened," Barclay said.

"I take my hat off to Jay and his team at the BCCI for the way they have approached this. That is exactly what I would have expected out of an Indian run competition, it's absolutely amazing. Jay and his team are doing a wonderful job in leading the way in terms of getting the women's game to where it needs to be," he signed off.

Barclay is serving his second term as the chair of the game's apex body.



## ‘Hardik similar to Dhoni as captain’

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Having watched both of them from close quarters, Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore feels that his franchise skipper Hardik Pandya is very similar to legendary MS Dhoni in terms of leadership traits.

Sai Kishore, before joining Gujarat Titans, was with CSK for a couple of years.

"Hardik and Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) are pretty similar in the way they handle things, they both are pretty calm," Sai Kishore told the media during a virtual interaction session on Friday.

"One thing that I really admire about Hardik is his ability to handle success and failure equally - that is something very unique about him. He is a level-headed guy and that works (for him)," he added.

The 28-year-old said Gujarat Titans, who won the IPL last year in their debut season, will have to replicate their performances from last season in order to be successful.

"The tag of being defending champions is up to us whether to take it or not. We played well last year and that is why we won. I think if we can do that (then) the tag won't matter much," he said. Sai Kishore said the new rule of having an 'Impact Player' in IPL will make it more manageable than what it was in domestic circuit.

"It is more like the super-sub rule where we can either use a

bowler or a batsman. It is basically like playing with 12 people. We have already played with this (rule) in domestic (cricket). The only change is that we can use it till the 20th over, in domestic it was restricted to the 14th over. In 20 overs, it should be a lot easier to handle," he said.

The Tamil Nadu left-arm spinner said he is eyeing a place in the Indian side via strong performances in the IPL.

"Yes, there are a lot of left-arm spinners in India and this (IPL) is a very good opportunity but I would like to be here now in the present and play well for Gujarat. In the last five years, my skill-set has gone up and I want to keep improving. If it happens that I do very well in the IPL, I am going to play for India," he said.

However, Sai Kishore admitted that he has to improve his batting to come into national reckoning.

"It is a work in progress. I have done well in domestic (cricket) also. I know the areas where I am good at and areas where I need to work on. I am trying to put in hours into my batting and fielding," he said.

"In the IPL and higher you go, you want to bat at the top. In Tamil Nadu, I have had the luxury of batting at the top in a few games. The death overs batting needs more work and attention. Finding a pattern or formula to score quick runs is what I am working on," Sai Kishore concluded.



## David Warner will have point to prove in IPL, says Watson

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Australia all-rounder and assistant coach of Delhi Capitals Shane Watson says the team's new captain David Warner will have a 'point to prove' in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, starting on March 31.

Warner, who joined Delhi Capitals ahead of the 2022 season, has been named captain for IPL 2023 due to Rishabh Pant being ruled out following a horrific car accident in December last year.

Warner has captained Delhi franchise in the past, the then Delhi Daredevils, and has had a successful run as a skipper in IPL with the Sunrisers Hyderabad, leading them to their only title win in the 2016 edition.

Warner had an overall successful stint with SRH, but his poor form with the bat and his subsequent fallout with the team management was followed by an unignited exit in the 2021 season.

The leading run-scorer among all overseas players with 5,881 runs, Warner was removed as captain and was also benched permanently by the franchise and eventually released ahead of the 2022 mega auction.

He also endured a poor tour of India recently, failing with the bat in the two Tests at Nagpur and Delhi and scoring 23 in the only ODI he played post recovery from a hairline fracture to his left elbow.

"David Warner for me is just at the top of the order. He's going to continue to have a point to prove and everyone's going to be like riding off the back of him. He's always scored so many runs in the IPL. And to be an opening batter, and set the platform like he does is going to be very important," Watson told Star Sports.

The former Australia vice-captain Watson backed Mitchell Marsh to continue with his devastating form with the bat that he displayed in the ODI series win for Australia against India.

"(For) Mitchell Marsh, this is going to be another really big season for him. He's got incredible skill with the bat alone and how he's batting and takes the game on is going to play a really big part," Watson said.

Watson picked South Africa's Rilee Rossouw as the trump card for Delhi Capitals in IPL 2023.

"Well, one in particular is Rilee Rossouw, he's someone you know, I've played with him in the Pakistan Super League for Quetta Gladiators. And to see

how he has come back into international cricket and he's a world class hitter of the ball.

"He can take down any bowler at any stage, in any conditions. So if he gets on a roll, he can just take the game away from the opposition," he explained.

The Delhi Capitals assistant coach said his side has got all-round cover for the upcoming season.

"There's a lot of very talented players. We've got some youngsters with the ball, fast bowlers, we've got (Kamlesh) Nagarkoti and Chetan Sakariya. And then we've got our spinners as well, like Axar (Patel) and Kuldeep Yadav.

"Those two guys, to be able to have world class spinners bowling especially through the middle, to be able to try and get wickets and also keep the runs down, that's so critically important," he said.

Watson backed the pair of Patel and Kuldeep to take advantage of a spin-friendly pitch in their homeground.

"For sure, Delhi's normally, conventionally a lower, turning sort of wicket and we've got the bowlers to exploit that with our spinners alone. With Axar and also Kuldeep Yadav, but also with the batters that we've got, can really make the most of those conditions. It's a smaller ground as well," he said.

Watson admitted the absence of Pant will be a huge miss for the side.

"The biggest challenge for Delhi is just to be able to consistently put good performances together. You know, the Delhi Capitals have got a really, really skilful squad, and we do again this year.

"Obviously Rishabh Pant not being a part of, not playing this tournament is going to be a huge, huge miss," Watson expressed.

CSK's 2018 triumph tells you about leadership: Gavaskar praises Dhoni

New Delhi, Mar 24 (PTI) Recalling an ageing Chennai Super Kings' remarkable triumph after returning to IPL from a two-year ban, batting great Sunil Gavaskar praised talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni and said his ability to get the best out of his players makes him stand out.

The upcoming edition of the IPL starts on March 31.

Speaking on Star Sports Network, Gavaskar recalled the highlights of the illustrious IPL career of 'Captain Cool' and how he has brought out the best in his team mates.

## 13 suspicious cricket matches were played across globe last year: Sportradar report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There were 13 competitive cricket matches that came under the cloud of suspicion in 2022, according to a review report published by Sportradar Integrity Services.

Sportradar Integrity Services unit is an international team of qualified integrity experts who deliver analysis on irregular betting, match-fixing and other forms of corruption in sports.

The 28-page report titled 'Betting, Corruption and Match-Fixing' states that in calendar year 2022, an unprecedented '1212 suspicious matches' were detected across 12 sporting disciplines in 92 countries.

The company uses an application Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS) to detect suspicious activity during matches.

While football accounted for 775 matches, which possibly could have been corrupted, basketball is second in the list with 220 such games, and lawn tennis is third with 75 questionable games.

Interestingly, among 12 sports, cricket only has 13 allegedly corrupt games and is sixth in the list. The report claims that 13 corrupt games could still be the highest for the sport in a single year.

"Although a number of sports contin-



ue to display relatively low numbers of suspicious matches, 13 suspicious cricket matches is still the highest annual figure recorded by Sportradar Integrity Services, and handball and futsal also recorded their highest ever number of suspicious matches," the report stated.

The PTI had sent a questionnaire to Sportradar to understand which format has been corrupted the most and whether it is international games or matches in the T20

leagues. However, a look at the report states that the company is not referring to any matches played in India as per the graphics depicted in the report.

Therefore, one could ascertain that none of the 13 corrupt matches mentioned in the report has been played in India.

Sportradar, in fact, had partnered with the BCCI's anti-corruption unit in 2020 to detect betting irregularities during IPL matches.

## Myanmar face stiff challenge against Kyrgyz in Tri-Nation football trophy

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Myanmar will square off against the Kyrgyz Republic in their second match of the Tri-Nation International Football Tournament at the Khuman Lampak Stadium here on Saturday.

The tournament sees international football being featured in the football-crazy state for the first time, as India play host to Myanmar and Kyrgyz Republic.

The two outstation teams have already been in Imphal over the past week, where they have been training in preparation for the tournament. Myanmar had faced India in the opening match, which the hosts won 1-0.

Myanmar head coach Michael Feichtenbeiner looked to ease the pressure off from his players' shoulders, as he chose to



focus on performance, rather than results.

"Our target is to improve our performance first, and then to improve as a team. Only then can we reach something in terms of results. Of course, we want to get better results, that's the main target overall," said Feichtenbeiner in a release.

Feichtenbeiner showed a lot of respect for the opposition team when asked about the Kyrgyz Republic.

"They have a strong line-up that will come to their advantage tomorrow. The last few matches were not as successful for us, but we want to change that and try our best," he said.

## Sharath Kamal pulls out of Nationals due to back spasms

PTI ■ JAMMU

Back and calf issues have forced defending champion Achantha Sharath Kamal to pull out of the men's singles event of the 84th UTT Inter-State Senior National Table Tennis Championships beginning here on Saturday.

The last-minute pullout because of the recurring back and calf spasms that Sharath has suffered in the past two months have dealt a blow to the organisers and the local spectators.

But his absence would help former national champion G. Sathiyam's cause as he eyes his second title. Sharath, a 10-time national champion, said he has to be cautious and continue the rehab programmes devised before the World Championships in Durban in May.

"The Worlds in May last

week is my focus, and I want to prepare well for the big event. Most importantly, I don't want to aggravate the situation. I am going straight to rehab and concentrate just on the Durban Worlds," he said in a release.

The PSPB paddler indulged in extra stretching before the quarters and semi-finals of the team championships to keep fit. He was in discomfort, but his commitment to the team's cause kept him going as he competed and won the matches without letting the cat out of the bag.

As for the matches on the fifth day of the championships, the top 16 seeded players in the men's section and eight in the women's category will get into action from Saturday when the second stage draw, the knockout, begins. The women will play three rounds, while the men will play two. With the group topper



## Kimmich praises Nagelsmann amid reports Bayern coach out



AP ■ FRANKFURT

Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich praised Julian Nagelsmann as an 'outstanding' coach Friday amid reports that the 35-year-old manager is set to be fired and replaced by Thomas Tuchel.

Both Kicker magazine and German tabloid Bild reported Thursday that Bayern was ending Nagelsmann's spell in charge following the team's 2-1 loss at Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga on Sunday.

"I can only say that Julian Nagelsmann is an outstanding coach. Really, I've had a lot of coaches and a lot of top coaches and despite that

I'd say he's easily in the top three of my best coaches," Kimmich told reporters Friday as he prepares to captain Germany in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

"As things stand at the moment, you can surely understand that I can't say anything" about the reports, he added.

Germany coach Hansi Flick, who was Nagelsmann's predecessor at Bayern, said he was "very surprised" to see reports saying Nagelsmann would be removed.

Bayern's defeat to Leverkusen dropped Bayern to second place in the Bundesliga, one point behind Borussia Dortmund before the teams clash in Munich in the 'Klassiker' on April 1.

The Associated Press has asked Bayern for comment but the club has yet to make a statement about the situation.

Kicker reported that Bayern is in touch with Tuchel and that the German coach is expected to join Friday or Saturday. Tuchel led Chelsea to the Champions League title in 2021 and previously coached Paris Saint-Germain — losing the 2020 Champions League final to Bayern — and Dortmund.

Bayern faces Manchester City in the Champions League quarterfinals on April 11.

emerging as the qualifier for the knockout round, there will be a tough fight among the players in 78 groups (women) and 96 in men's singles, respectively.

Meanwhile, the 16 men and eight women players will have a good day's rest before the battle for the title and the prize purse of Rs. 16 lakh gets hot.

The top-ranked players in both sections are:

**Men:** G. Sathiyam, Manush Shah, Harmmeet Desai, Manav Thakkar, Sanil Shetty, Anirban Ghosh, Sudhanshu Grover, Jeet Chandra, SFR Snehit, Soumyajit Ghosh, Anthony Amalraj, Ronit Bhanja, Payas Jain, Deepit R. Patil, Yashansh Malik and Subh Goel.

**Women:** Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula, Reeth Rishya, Diya Chitale, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Anusha Kutumbale, Swastika Ghosh and Pra



# Sindhu exits, Satwik-Chirag duo enters quarters of Swiss Open



PTI ■ BASEL

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu failed to defend her Swiss Open Super 300 badminton title as she was shocked by unseeded Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in a thrilling three-game women's singles second round match here.

World No.9 Sindhu, seeded fourth here, was stunned 15-21 21-12 18-21 by the 38th ranked Wardani in their first-ever face-off at the international level on Thursday night.

Thursday night.

But second-seeded men's pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty kept India's flag flying by entering the quarterfinals with a hard-fought 12-21 21-17 28-26 win over Taiwanese pair of Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee.

The world No. 6 Indian duo will next face Danish pair of Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede later on Friday.

Earlier on Thursday, world No. 9 and fifth seed H S Prannoy

made a shock second-round exit after losing in straight games against unseeded Christo Popov of France.

Prannoy, favourite coming into the contest, looked a pale shadow of himself in front of world No. 40 Popov as he failed to give any fight, losing 8-21 8-21 to bow out of the men's singles event.

But it was Kidambi Srikanth, who was the first to crash out on Thursday, losing to Hong Kong's Cheuk Yiu Lee.

Going by rankings, there was hardly anything to separate the two as Srikanth is placed 20th in the world as against his rival's 19th position.

It was a hard-fought match, but Lee kept his composure to emerge 22-20 21-17 winner in the singles pre-quarterfinal contest.

National champion Mithun Manjunath also bowed out in the second round, losing 19-21 20-21 to Chia Hao Lee of Chinese Taipei.

# Aman Raj stays at third, Aryan Roopa Anand is 7th at Challenge Tour event

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India's Aman Raj shot a solid four-under 68 to lie tied third after the second round of the Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge golf here on Friday.

At 9-under for 36 holes, Aman was two shots behind the leader, Manuel Elvira of Spain (63-70), who is 11-under and two shots ahead of the field.

Sweden's Rikard Karlberg (68-66), who has two wins in India, was lying second at 10-under, while Aman shared the third place alongside three others — Oliver Farr (64-71), Ashley Chesters (67-68) and Stefano Mazzoli (67-68), who were all at 9-under.

Just one shot behind them in tied seventh was local lad, Aryan Roopa Anand, a rookie pro. Aryan (68-68) is now 8-under and shares the seventh place with five others.

Two more Indians, Om Prakash Chouhan (70-67) and Mari Muthu (68-69) were tied 13th at 7-under. Chouhan made a fine move up by 30 places as he added 67 to his first 70.

The tournament has so far looked good for Indians, who are getting to play a European Challenge Tour event in India after a gap of 10 years. A win here could open the doors to the Challenge Tour, from where they can aspire for the main DP World Tour.

As many as 14 Indians made the cut, which fell at 3-under with 69 players making it through to the weekend, including amateurs Arron Edwards-Hill and Robert Moran who received invitations through Sir Nick Faldo's Elite Tour.

Aman, who is on a come-



back trail following a fine win on the domestic Tata Steel PGTI Tour, had a fine start with birdies on second and fourth, but back-to-back bogeys on sixth and seventh meant he was back to even par.

The 27-year-old Patna golfer, fought back superbly around the turn with four birdies in a span of five holes. He birdied ninth, 10th, 11th and 13th and then closed with five pars to stay at tied third, where he began the second day.

Aman will go out in the lead

group with Elvira and Karlberg at 9:30am. Aryan, starting from the back nine, birdied 10th and 11th and dropped a shot on 12th. He got back that shot with a birdie on 17th and turned in 2-under. On the front nine of the KGA Course, Aryan birdied four times on first, second, fifth and eighth but also dropped a double bogey on Par-3 fourth for a second straight 68.

Chouhan had six birdies against one bogey in his 67 and Muthu had five birdies and a double in his 69.



# Chikka tied sixth in Hong Kong as debutant Kho takes lead

PTI ■ HONG KONG

India's S Chikkarangappa cardled a fine one-under 69 but slipped from tied fourth place to tied sixth place at the halfway stage of the USD 1 million World City Championship here on Friday.

As many as eight of the nine Indians made the cut.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Kho took the second round lead with 64 and he is now 12-under and two shots ahead.

Among other Indians, veteran Jeev Milkha Singh (71-66) and SSP Chawrasia (70-67) were both three-under and tied 23rd. Shiv Kapur (71-67) was two-under and tied 36th, as were Veer Ahlawat (71-67) and Honey Baisoya (69-69).

Karandeep Kochhar (69-70) was 1-under and tied 48th, as Gaganjeet Bhullar (73-67) made the cut on the line.

Viraj Madappa (73-71) was the lone Indian to miss the cut.

Kho, 22, fired his second-successive six-under-par 64 to lead by two from Tabuena, the first-round leader. New Zealand's Michael Hendry is in third place, four behind Kho, after returning a 64. Kho, a member of the HKGC since January who was unveiled this week as their ambassador, is 12-under and now has an outstanding opportunity to become the first player from Hong Kong to win on the Asian Tour.

This is the first international golf tournament in Hong Kong, China for 38 months.

Tabuena, who led with a 63 on Thursday, impressively recovered from a double bogey on his opening hole.

Korean Yoseop Seo returned a 64 and is solo fourth, five back from Kho. Thailand's Jazz Janewattanond (67) and Suradit Yongcharoenchai (68) are a further stroke back along with Zimbabwe's Kieran Vincent (67).

# Rudrankksh wins bronze as China extend golden run

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Reigning world champion Rudranksh Patil won bronze in the men's 10m air rifle, his second of the tournament, even as China extended their golden run at the ISSF World Cup by winning both gold medals on offer for the second consecutive day here.

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Sheng Lihao of China won gold in the men's 10m air rifle while compatriot Huang Yuting, a double gold medallist at the Cairo World Championships last year, won the women's event.

China maintained their top position on the medal tally at the end of competition day three with five gold, one silver and two bronze in their kitty. India lay second with three bronze medals to go with a gold and silver each.

Playing back-to-back matches can never be easy, especially in a home World Cup, but the champion shooter that he is, Rudranksh delivered yet again, clinching bronze from what at one point seemed a lost cause.

He shot a solid 631.0 in qualification to finish fourth after leading in the initial stages.



In the 25-shot top eight ranking round, he was well outside the medal positions till the third five-shot series, before a fantastic fourth series, where he shot the highest score of 53.5, brought him back into contention.

Meanwhile the three Chinese qualifiers — Sheng (who led throughout the ranking round), silver medallist Du Linshu and Yu Haonan -- were on course to make it a Chinese 1-2-3 till the

20th shot. Rudranksh went into the fifth series 0.8 behind Yu. He then shot a strong 52.6 in the series as Yu faltered, posting 51.5 to finish fourth, as the Indian confirmed his second medal in two days and his fourth ISSF World Cup podium overall.

He finished with a score of 262.3 as Sheng and Du moved into the gold medal match with scores of 264.2 and 263.3 respectively.

The all-China gold medal contest was also a close one with Sheng prevailing 17-13 in the end.

## RAMITA FINISHES FOURTH

India had only one top eight finisher in Ramita in the women's 10m air rifle as she shot 632.3 to finish second among the medal contenders in the 52-strong field. The top eight had two Chinese, two Americans and one shooter each from Romania, Israel and Kazakhstan, besides hosts India.

China's Huang Yuting was in ominous form, topping the qualifications with a score of 632.8, while Tokyo Olympics silver medallist in the mixed team air rifle, Mary Tucker of the USA, also made it through in seventh place.

In the top eights, Huang was a cut above the rest, finishing on top again with a score of 265.7 as Mary shot 261.2 for a shot at gold.

Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le pipped India's Ramita to bronze, shooting 261.2 to the Indian's 260.5. Huang then maintained her form on the day to defeat Mary 16-4 for China's fifth gold of the competition.

# Scotland extends coach Clarke's contract to 2026 World Cup

AP ■ GLASGOW

Steve Clarke extended his contract Friday with Scotland's national soccer team through the 2026 World Cup, which would make him the Tartan Army's longest-serving coach in more than 20 years.

The Scottish Football Association announced the deal ahead of European Championship qualifying games against Cyprus and Spain.

Clarke led Scotland to Euro 2020 for its first major tournament since the 1998 World Cup.

After Scotland lost to Ukraine in the playoffs for last year's World Cup, the team won a Nations League group to advance to



the top tier for the first time.

Clarke, a former Chelsea defender, was hired in 2019 and is set to have the longest spell in the Scotland job since Craig Brown left in 2002 after nine years.

"Steve has united the nation behind a successful men's national team," SFA chief executive Ian Maxwell said in a statement.

Scotland's Euro 2024 qualifying group also includes Norway and Germany.

The top two teams in the group will advance to Euro 2024 in Germany. Scotland also has a guaranteed second path through the playoffs because of its Nations League group win. The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico will be the first 48-team edition.

# Euro 2024 host Germany looks to rebuild after World Cup

AP ■ DUSSELDORF (GERMANY)

Another World Cup failure, another rebuild for Germany. This time there's even more at stake. Germany will host next year's European Championship and is desperate to avoid another debacle at home.

The Germans once took pride in having a "tournament team," one that could put distractions aside to perform when it mattered. Following group-stage exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and a round-of-16 loss at the last European Championship, however, Germany has not won a knock-out game since the now-defunct Confederations Cup in 2017.

The current rebuild — with Germany able to skip qualifying as Euro 2024 host — starts with friendlies against Peru on Saturday and Belgium on Tuesday.

Germany coach Hansi Flick's squad is a mix of regulars like Emre Can, Timo Werner and Joshua Kimmich, and some more experimental picks. The six players getting their first call-ups include two right backs, Joshua Vagnoman and Marius Wolf. There is also AC Milan defender Malick Thiaw and 21-year-old winger Kevin Schade, who is a bench player for Brentford in the Premier League.

Just like predecessor Joachim Löw after the 2018 World Cup, Flick has left out Bayern



Munich forward Thomas Müller. The 33-year-old Müller signaled his international career might be over in an emotional interview at the World Cup in Qatar, but then changed tack to say he was still available for selection.

Müller has been here before. After Löw dropped him in 2018,

he ended up being recalled in 2021 in the aftermath of a 6-0 loss to Spain.

"We appreciate each other and will continue to be in good contact," Müller posted on Instagram last week after it was confirmed Flick would not select him. Some other big names are out of the squad temporarily, whether because of injury (goalkeeper Manuel Neuer broke his leg while skiing) or personal reasons (midfielder Ilkay Gündogan became a father last week). The reasons for dropping Real Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger and Bayern forward Leroy Sané are less clear-cut, but seem to be part of Flick's experiments in the rebuild.



# MATCHDAY: Spain hosts Norway; Wales at Croatia in qualifiers

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A look at what's happening in European Championship qualifying on Saturday:

## GROUP A

Luis de la Fuente takes charge of his first game as Spain coach in a potentially tricky match against Norway but he won't have to worry about Erling Haaland. The record-breaking Manchester City striker is out of the Norwegian squad after feeling pain from a groin injury.

Scotland plays Cyprus in the other game in the group after extending coach Steve Clarke's contract through to the 2026 World Cup.

## GROUP D

With long-time star Gareth Bale having recently retired, Wales will start a new era in its match at Croatia. Bale was Wales' most-capped men's player with 111 appearances and carried the team in recent years, including to the nation's first appearance at a World Cup in 64 years. However, Croatia star Luka Modric is still going. The 37-year-old Modric has said he will continue playing for his national team at least until the Nations League finals in June so should add to his record 162

appearances for Croatia against Wales in Split. Turkey visits Armenia in the other game.

## GROUP I

Switzerland's previous game was a 6-1 loss to Portugal in front of a crowd of 83,000 at the World Cup in Qatar. The Swiss return in an empty stadium facing Belarus in neutral Serbia.

Though Russia was kicked out of Euro 2024 by UEFA, its military ally Belarus was allowed to keep playing on condition of hosting its games in neutral countries with no fans allowed. Belarus chose Novi Sad in Serbia, which won't be an option when it "hosts" Kosovo in June.

Kosovo starts at Israel on Saturday and Romania is at Andorra. Switzerland is the only Group I team in the top 50 of FIFA's rankings, at No. 12. Romania is next best at No. 52.

## FRIENDLIES

Germany is starting a rebuild after its second World Cup group-stage exit in a row. Midfielder Joshua Kimmich takes the captain's armband instead of the injured Manuel Neuer in a much-changed squad to face Peru.

Germany isn't playing qualifiers because it's the host of the European Championship.