

**OPINION 6**  
THE HULLABALOO OVER  
UK'S REFUGEE POLICY

**WORLD 9**  
ANTI-GRAFT BODY SUMMONS  
IMRAN'S WIFE

**MONEY 10**  
NINE ADANI GROUP STOCKS END  
LOWER; SNAPS 2-DAY WINNING STREAK

DEHRADUN, TUESDAY MARCH 21, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹2



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BARCA BEAT  
REAL MADRID  
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11 SPORT

# UK Govt, Indian diaspora slam Tricolour disrespect

British MP  
rapped for  
batting for  
Amritpal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/  
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
LONDON

A day after alleged Khalistani supporters grabbed the Indian Tricolour atop the Indian High Commission, the United Kingdom Government on Monday termed the acts of vandalism as “disgraceful” and “completely unacceptable.” Britain said it will take the security of the Indian High Commission in London “seriously.” One person was arrested later in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile, officials from the Indian mission in London said the “attempted but failed” attack was foiled and the Tricolour was now flying “grander” with a larger tricolour now adorning the India House façade.

As regards the incident of vandalism, Scotland Yard said it was called to reports of disorder on Sunday afternoon and that a man has been arrested as its enquiries continue.

“There was no report of any injury, however windows were broken at the High Commission building,” the Metropolitan Police statement said.

British Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi’s tweet, expressing concern over the ongoing action to arrest Amritpal Singh and arrest of some alleged Khalistani elements, has received condemnation. Dhesi, an MP from Slough, tweeted, “Very worrying reports coming from #India, of the imposition of an internet blackout in the #Punjab state, with mass arrests and restrictions on gatherings. Praying that the tense situation is soon resolved and that human rights of all



People from Sikh Community protest against vandalisation by Khalistani supporters at Indian High Commission in London, in New Delhi on Monday PTI

are respected.”

Taking exception to his message, Congress spokesperson and senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi criticised Dhesi for “nurturing Khalistani sentiments” in the United Kingdom and said his tweet will not fetch him new votes from Slough “which has a massive chunk of Pakistan supporting population.”

Sharing the photograph in a Twitter post, the BJP’s national spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill said, “Jhanda Ooncha Rahe Hamara-UK Govt must act... Punjab and Punjabis have a glorious track record of serving/protecting the Nation. Handful of jumping jacks sitting in the UK do not represent Punjab.”

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor termed the incident on Sunday at the Indian High Commission “utterly shocking” and a “major insult.” The British condemnation came after India on Sunday evening summoned the senior-most UK diplomat in New Delhi to convey its “strong protest” at the actions taken by separatist and extremist elements against the Indian High Commission in London.

British Deputy High Commissioner Christina Scott was summoned to the MEA in view of the incident as High Commissioner Alex Ellis was out of Delhi, sources said.

Ellis described the incident as “disgraceful” and “totally unacceptable.”

## Entrance blocked, Indian envoy in Canada cancels visit to event

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/ BRITISH  
COLUMBIA (CANADA)

In an apparent fall out of the ongoing operation to nab Amritpal Singh in India, its envoy to Canada had to cancel an event in British Columbia due to security concerns as alleged Khalistani supporters blocked the entrance to the venue there.

Some of the protesters were also reportedly wielding

swords. In another incident, a 21-year-old Sikh student was assaulted in British Columbia.

The incident related to the Indian envoy took place late on Sunday in front of the Taj Convention. High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma was scheduled to attend a reception organised by the Friends of India and Canada Foundation in Surrey, British Columbia.

## Consulate hit in US; India protests, summons envoy

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
WASHINGTON

An incident of vandalism by alleged Khalistani supporters targeting the Indian consulate in San Francisco has taken place. The perpetrators installed so-called Khalistan flag on the consulate premises.

This was the second such

incident involving the Indian embassies with the first one in London on Sunday evening when the Indian tri-colour was grabbed by the protesters.

India on Monday summoned the US envoy to register protest against attacks on its consulate in San Francisco.

As regards the attack in the US, raising pro-Khalistan slogans, the protesters on Sunday

broke open the makeshift security barriers raised by the city police and installed two so-called Khalistani flags inside the consulate premises. Two consulate personnel soon removed these flags.

Soon thereafter, a group of angry protesters entered the consulate premises and started hitting the door and windows with the rods.

## NSA slapped on Amritpal's 5 aides; uncle surrenders

Curbs on Internet  
services extended

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police on Monday flagged a possible “ISI angle” as it invoked the stringent National Security Act against five men linked to radical preacher Amritpal Singh, whose uncle and driver surrendered amid a Statewide crackdown against his “Waris Punjab De” group.

The pro-Khalistan supporter and radical preacher has allegedly been maintaining close links with drug peddlers

and Pakistan’s ISI to further his goal for a separate country for the Sikhs, officials said. While drug lords were allegedly helping the pro-Khalistan preacher financially, including gifting him a high-end Mercedes SUV, the ISI was helping him with arms, ammunition and other logistics, they said.

Meanwhile, the Punjab Government extended the suspension of mobile internet services, this time up to Tuesday noon. The Khalistan sympathiser’s uncle Harjit Singh and driver Harpreet Singh gave themselves up before police past Sunday midnight.

## Clear OROP arrears by Feb 28; no more sealed-cover note: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to accept the sealed-cover note submitted by the Defence Ministry and fixed February 28, 2024, for disbursement of “One Rank, One Pension” (OROP) arrears. The Bench, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud ordered that the Centre is duty-bound to comply with its 2022 judgment on the payment

of pension arrears worth ₹ 28,000 crore for 2019-2022.

“Sealed covers in court are against transparency, we want to end it...Please share the sealed cover with the opposite side or take him to the chamber. We want to put an end to the sealed cover business being

followed by the SC since High Courts also follow it,” said the CJI when Attorney-General R Venkataramani submitted the details in a sealed cover.

“This is about implementing the orders. What can be the secrecy here? You must give a copy to the other side. Sealed covers are completely against settled judicial principles,” said CJI when the A-G insisted on submitting it in a sealed cover.

## Modi’s push to make India energy atmanirbhar by 2047: US report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India, the world’s fifth largest economy, can achieve energy independence through clean technology by 2047, a report by a top US research institute said, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Atmanirbhar Bharat push that spans from a massive renewable capacity addition to electric mobility, saving billions of dollars in imports.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, a US federally funded research and development centre, along with



The India Energy and Climate Center (IECC) located at UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy published a report, “Pathways to Atmanirbhar Bharat”, that highlights the steps taken by India towards the adoption of clean energy.

India is 80-85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil and coal needs. The price and supply volatility in global energy markets, as witnessed in recent years, strain India’s foreign exchange reserves, resulting in economy-wide inflation. However, recent dramatic declines in clean energy costs provide India an opportunity to lower energy imports through investment in renewable energy, battery storage, EVs, and green hydrogen, the report said.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi has already set a target to install 500 GW (gigawatt) of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The government intends to grow EV sales in India to capture the markets of 30 per cent of private cars, 70 per cent of commercial vehicles and 80 per cent of two- and three-wheelers by 2030. Also, it is targeting production of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by splitting water using electricity from renewable sources.

Abundant solar energy and local technology will aid this and also reduce carbon emissions.

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## PNS ■ NAINITAL

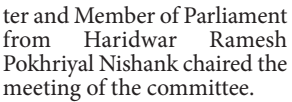
During the hearing on Monday, the Urban Develop-

As per the case details, Almora resident Jitendra Yadav had filed the PIL stating that the State government had prepared the plastic use and plastic waste disposal rules in 2013 but the same are not being followed. The Centre had introduced the plastic waste management rules in 2018 under which the responsibility of the producer, transporter and vendors had been fixed and they are supposed to take back as much used plastic as they sell.

They would provide fund to the local authority to dispose the plastic waste if they are unable to return the used plastic. However, these rules are being blatantly violated in Uttarakhand. There are heaps of plastic waste in the mountainous regions of the State and these are not being disposed of by the authorities, the petition states.

## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

minister Harish Rawat had sent a proposal to name the airport after Adi Guru Shankaracharya. She said that the former CMs Trivendra Singh Rawat and Nishank talk about naming the airport after former PM Vajpayee which is an insult of Adi Guru Shankaracharya and more than 80 crore followers of Hinduism. Dasauni said that

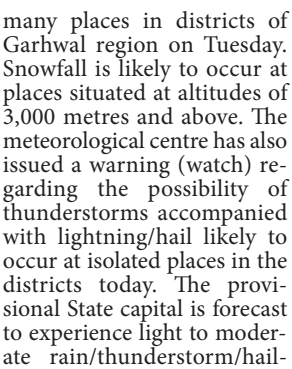


the BJP should refrain from engaging in politics on the institutions set up by the Congress party. She said that there is no doubt that the former PM Vajpayee was a leader who is accepted by all and he deserves honour but BJP leaders and the party should answer as to why they are against naming the airport after Adi Guru Shankaracharya.

## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The rainy weather is likely to continue in various parts of the State today. The State meteorological centre has forecast that light to moderate rain/ thunderstorm/ snowfall are very likely to occur at most places in districts of Kumaon region and at

storm with the maximum and minimum temperatures likely to be about 22 degrees Celsius and 10 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Monday were 23.9 degrees



Celsius and 14.6 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 21.8 degrees Celsius and 12.8 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 9.8 degrees Celsius and 5.2 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 14 degrees Celsius and 7.8 degrees Celsius respectively in New Tehri. Further, 34.5 millimetres rain was recorded in Mussoorie, 23 millimetres in Khatima, 16 millimetres in Nainital, 15 millimetres in Dwarahat and 37 millimetres in Pantnagar.

## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

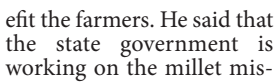
importance in the Vedas and Purana. It has been considered the basis of self-purification and liberation. Worshipping goddess Durga in Chaitra Navratri removes negative energy and positive energy circulates all around." Considering such widespread religious importance of Chaitra Navratri, religious and cultural programmes will be organised in all major goddess temples and Shaktipeeths across the State, said Semwal.

He said that the State government will conduct a special campaign to organise such programmes for nine days in Navratri.

which are symbols of the strength and power of mother power in all the major Devi temples of Shakti Peeths of all the districts in the State. Each district administration will organise religious programmes like Ram-charitmanas, Devi Gayan and Devi Jagran among others and will ensure women and girls especially participate in these events. Semwal added that DMs have been directed to form a committee at the district or block level to decide in which temple the administration should organise the religious programme for the next nine days.

## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A meeting of the regional Advisory committee on development of millet value chain was organised by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was organised here on Monday. The bank's chief general manager Vinod Kumar Bist presided over the meeting with Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperatives secretary BVRC Purushottam as the chief guest.



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## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police have registered a case of abetment to suicide in the Bageshwar mass suicide case against those mentioned in the suicide note allegedly written by 13-year-old Anjali, one of the three children found dead on March 16 along with their mother. The police on Saturday found a suicide note of six pages allegedly written by class VIII student Anjali before the mother and three children purportedly committed suicide. The police matched her handwriting with her writing in her school notebook and will soon confirm it through the experts too. The superintendent of the police of Bageshwar, Himanshu Verma told The Pioneer that the child has written in the suicide note about the humiliation and mental harassment they all

were subjected to because of the father Bhupal Ram who had borrowed money from several people and failed to pay them back. He has also allegedly scammed many in the name of providing them jobs. His creditors allegedly used to pressurise the mother and humiliate the family. Besides this, the family was also distressed financially and had no ration or food at their home, said the SP. "Anjali has mentioned names of some people who allegedly harassed them and pushed them to take the extreme step of committing suicide. We have registered a case against them under section 306 of the Indian Penal Code," said Verma. He said that the police are investigating the matter and will act accordingly if any new evidence comes to light in the case.

## PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

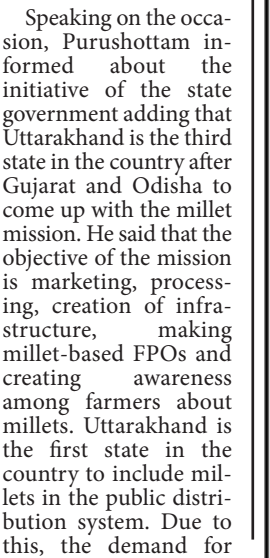
The Chamoli district magistrate Himanshu Khurana chaired a meeting regarding the National Green Tribunal's directions to ensure scientific disposal of plastic waste on Hemkund pilgrimage route, adequate number of toilets, regulating the number of horses and mules along with ensuring cleanliness of the environment. He directed officials to ensure plastic waste collection and installation of a compactor machine to scientifically dispose of the collected waste. Officials were also directed to ensure ade-

quate number of toilets and sanitation on the pilgrimage route. He further said that registration of horses-mules, their insurance, health check and provision of warm water should be ensured while also regulating their numbers on the route. Arrangements should also be made to dispose of their dung, he said. The chief development officer Lalit Narayan Mishra, district tourism officer SS Rana, chief veterinary officer Dr Pralayankar Nath and others were also present in the meeting.

## PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State government is committed to the protection of Sanatan Dharma and culture. The officials who do commendable work for this through good governance will be felicitated, said the State's Tourism and Culture minister Satpal Maharaj. He was speaking at the all-India Jyotish conference organised by Sanskrit Academy, Uttarakhnadhere on Monday. He also appreciated the academy's assistant director's proposal to link Sanskrit schools and colleges

with the Char Dham Yatra in Chamoli and Rudraprayag districts. The minister said that commendable work also generates enthusiasm among others. About 70 scholars were presented certificates for presentation of research papers on various subjects. The acad-



I have changed my name from SHAHNAZ BANO to SEHNAZ BANO. In future I shall be known as SEHNAZ BANO W/o Razaullah Khan. Address H.No 52 Shimla Enclave Shimla Bypass Near HDFC Bank Dehradun.

In my Service record my daughter's name is mistakenly recorded as ANUSHKA whereas my daughter's correct name is Anushka Rawat and DOB 29.01.2005 as mentioned in other documents. No 15767667M-HAV RAJIV SINGH RAWAT, Selaqui, Vikasnagar Dehradun vide Affidavit 20.03.2023 before Dehradun

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from PURNA CHAND KESTWAL (old name) to POORAN CHAND KESHTWAL (new name). In future I should be known and recognised as Pooran Chand Keshtwal, s/o Purushottam Dutta Keshtwal, address: Ward No-9, Indira Udyan Marg, Vikasnagar District-Dehradun, Uttarakhand

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# Cabinet approves new excise policy of U'khand

The prices of regular brands to become competitive with other States; cess of Rs 3 on every bottle for women welfare, sports and protection of cows

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State cabinet in its meeting held on Monday gave its approval to the new excise policy-2023-24. In an attempt to curtail the sale of illicit liquor and smuggling from other States the policy envisages bringing parity in prices of the liquor bottles of regular brands.

There would not be a difference exceeding Rs 20 per bottle between the prices of liquor of regular brand in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The excise department has also decided to carry forward the licences of existing liquor shops for the year 2023-24 as well. The existing license holders would have to submit an additional surcharge of 15 per cent on last year's rates to renew their licences. The licences of the shops which are not renewed would be allotted on the



basis of a lottery. The State government has set up a target of Rs 4,000 crore for the excise department. In another decision the government has decided to levy a cess of Rs three on sale of every bottle of liquor in the state. A sum of Rs one each has been levied for sports, women welfare and conser-

vation of bovine species. In another decision the cabinet decided to extend existing fitness charges for the vehicles engaged in mining for one more year. The cabinet also gave its nod to the proposal that has a provision of self attestation to the applicant for construction of single story houses.

# Srinagar & Almora medical colleges to get 60 assistant professors each

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In view of the shortage of the faculty in the medical colleges located in the mountainous areas, the State government has decided to send most of the recently recruited assistant professors to these colleges. The Medical Education department would appoint 60 assistant professors each in the Government Medical College in Almora and Government Medical College in Srinagar out of 171 assistant professors recently recruited. The government medical college in Haldwani would get 40 while government Doon Medical College (GDMC) would get 11 assistant professors from the latest recruitment drive. The Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that orders have been given to the department to give priority to Almora and Srinagar medical colleges while making appointments of assistant professors. He said that the appointment letters to these assistant professors would be given by the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on

March 22. Similarly an employment fair would be held at the residence of CM on March 21 when appointment letters to 824 Auxiliary Nursing Midwifery (ANM) by the CM. As per the National Medical Commission (NMC) there is a 30 per cent shortage of faculty in Srinagar and Almora medical colleges.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Uttarakhand Medical Services Selection Board (UKMSSB) had recruited 171 assistant professors in different disciplines of medical sciences. The newly recruited candidates would be appointed in the pay scale of Rs 67,700 to Rs 2,08,700 and would be deployed in the vacant posts in the government medical colleges of the state. In Uttarakhand there are four functional government medical colleges; the Government Doon Medical College, Medical College Haldwani, Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Medical College Srinagar and Almora medical college.

# SIT nabs another accused in Lekhpal-Patwari paper leak case

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Lekhpal-Patwari recruitment examination paper leak case arrested another accused-David on Sunday. He was also jailed for his alleged involvement in helping some candidates cheat in the online forest guard recruitment exam held in September 2021 via Bluetooth. The accused had also purportedly leaked the question paper of the Junior Engineer (JE) examination held from May 7 to 10 last year along with his accomplices. A case is also registered against him for allegedly scamming people in the name of providing jobs, said the senior superintendent of police of Haridwar, Ajai Singh.

He informed that the SIT investigation revealed that the accused along with his accomplices was involved in taking a hefty amount of money from some aspirants of the Lekhpal-Patwari examination besides collecting necessary documents from them before taking them to a Biharigarh situated resort to make them memorise answers of the leaked question paper. Singh who is monitoring the SIT said that a warrant of arrest was issued by



the court as the accused David was continuously absconding to avoid his arrest in the Lekhpal-Patwari paper leak case. He said that a reward of Rs 50,000 was also announced by the inspector general of the Garhwal range, Karan Singh Nagyal.

He said that after conducting raids on several locations, David was finally nabbed on Saturday from the Bhagwanpur area. Singh said that seven charges under several relevant sections besides the Prevention of Corruption Act have been imposed on the accused in the Lekhpal-Patwari paper leak case. He said that

it was revealed during the preliminary inquiry that he was also allegedly involved in leaking the examination paper of the JE examination by taking lakhs of rupees along with his accomplices. It is pertinent to mention here that the Uttarakhand police constituted SIT of Haridwar to investigate irregularities in the Lekhpal-Patwari examination held on January 8 under Uttarakhand Public Service Commission (UKPSC).

The investigation was initially conducted by the Special Task Force but the state government ordered the formation of the SIT to probe the matter after receiving backlash for yet another recruitment scam in the State. The SSP said that the SIT is collecting concrete evidence and will soon arrest all the accused involved in the paper leak case. Evidence against those candidates who bought the examination paper are also being gathered by the team, added Singh.

# 500 encroachments demolished in Vikasnagar in two days

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The UJVN Limited along with district administration and police on Monday demolished 150 houses constructed illegally on the government land from Dakpathar to Dhalipur near Shakti canal in Vikasnagar. Authorities have demolished over 500 encroachments out of nearly 600 in two days, many of which have been there for the past 22 years. According to UJVNL officials, they had issued notices and made announcements several times to make the dwellers evict the encroachments. When the dwellers did not act on them, the authorities had to start the anti-encroachment campaign on Sunday, as per the officials. The police on Monday continued to use drones to monitor the situation to tackle potential threats in the area and recorded the entire encroachment campaign through video recording. The officials said



that the police are also keeping an eye on anti-social elements that can potentially cause chaos during the encroachment. A considerable police force will also remain deployed in the area on Tuesday as well during the campaign under the supervision of superintendent of police (rural)

Kamlesh Upadhyay and strict action will be taken against those who would attempt to disrupt the campaign, said the officials. They added that police and district administration will demolish the remaining encroachments on Tuesday.

# NMOPS condemns statement of Finance minister on pension

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The employee organisations agitating for the restoration of the old pension scheme (OPS) have condemned the statement of the Finance minister Prem Chand Agarwal on the OPS. The minister had said that the restoration of the OPS is the issue of the Central government. The president of the Uttarakhand chapter of the National Movement for Old Pension Scheme (NMOPS) Jeetmani Painyuli said that more than 90,000 employees and officers are agitating for OPS from last four years. He said that many States such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have already given the benefit of OPS to

their employees while the so called double engine governments are continuing to adopt an apathetic attitude towards the demand of the employees. The general secretary of the organisation Mukesh Raturi said that the pension of employees is a state subject and terming it as an issue of union government is an attempt to hit the interests of the employees. He said that the NMOPS is organising pension march in all district headquarters of the country on April 16. The senior vice president of the NMOPS, Jagmohan Singh Rawat said more than 50 organisations of employees have extended their support to the NMOPS. He said that 'Pension Rath Yatra' would

be taken out in all parts of the country in the month of June and from August 1 to 9 'pension Ghanti Bajao' programmes would be held outside the residences of Member of Parliament. A mega rally would be organised on October 1 in Delhi in which employees from all parts of the country would take part. The office bearers of the NMOPS point out that the pension is a tool of social security of the employees. After a service of 20-30 years the employees are getting only Rs 1,000 to 2,000 as pension in the New Pension Scheme (NPS) and in such a condition the employees are justified in demanding the benefit of OPS.

# UPES appoints deans for its three schools

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

UPES has appointed deans for its three schools- School of Health Sciences and Technology, School of Design and School of Computer Science. The university officials said that these recent appointments would boost the university's efforts to further enhance its pedagogy, research and overall student experience across its respective schools. While Padma Venkat has been appointed as the dean of the School of Health Sciences and Technology professor Phani Tetali has joined UPES as the dean of School of Design and Ravi

Shankar Iyer has been appointed as the dean of the School of Computer Science. Venkat has 31 plus years of experience in mi-



global experience in transforming ideas into successful products and businesses.

Speaking on these ap-



crobiology, biochemistry, phytochemistry, Ayurveda and public health. Tetali is a well-known illustrator, designer, animator, educator and cartoonist with more than 30 years of experience. Iyer has over 25 years of

pointments, UPES vice chancellor Ram Sharma said that their knowledge and vision in their respective fields would undoubtedly strengthen the innovative capabilities of their respective schools of UPES.



## Attention! GST Taxpayers

Whose Aggregate Annual Turnover<sup>#</sup> is upto a specified limit\* can opt for  
**GST Composition Scheme for the FY 2023-24**  
**by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023**

The eligible taxpayers, who wish to avail the Composition Scheme may opt for the same by performing the following steps on the GST portal ([www.gst.gov.in](http://www.gst.gov.in)):

Log in to the Taxpayers' Interface

Go to Services > Registration > Application to Opt for Composition Levy

Fill the FORM GST CMP-02 and submit

Those eligible taxpayers, who are already availing Composition Scheme, need not file FORM CMP-02 if they are eligible.

Attractive Tax Rates

Easy & Convenient Compliance

Minimum Compliance Requirements

Auto Renewal and Easy to Opt-out


Less Bookkeeping

Available for supplier of Goods as well as Services

**BENEFITS**

* Type of Suppliers		# Aggregate Annual Turnover during FY 2022-23
Supplier of Goods	Taxpayers registered in 08 Specified States	upto ₹ 75 Lakh
	Taxpayers registered in other States	upto ₹ 150 Lakh
Supplier of Services		upto ₹ 50 Lakh


For more details, please refer to Section 10 of CGST Act, Rule 3-7 of CGST Rules and Notification No. 14/2019- Central Tax dated 07.03.2019



### GST Composition Scheme: Big Benefits for Small Taxpayers

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# India vital for stability in Indo-Pacific: Kishida



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Monday said India is indispensable for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and no country should use force or coercion in trying to drive their territorial claims, after unveiling his plan for the region. These observations were in apparent reference to Russia and China.

Delivering the 41st Sapru House lecture, Kishida also strongly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and said global principles of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity must be adhered to in every corner of the world.

On the Ukraine conflict, Kishida also noted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that 'today's era is not of war'.

The Japanese prime minister delivered the lecture in the presence of a gathering of top diplomats, envoys and strategic affairs experts, hours after holding wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Modi on further strengthening the India-Japan 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'. "India is indispensable," Kishida said while elaborating on his vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. The Japanese prime minister also said Tokyo will collaborate closely with New Delhi in contributing to stability in the South Asian region.

"Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is a vision gaining traction. The FOIP is a visionary concept. It is to

defend rule of law and freedom," he said.

Kishida said countries must follow the United Nations principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes.

"Peace is paramount. The principles such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and opposition to unilateral changes to status quo by force must be followed. The principles should be adhered to in every corner of the world," Kishida said.

His comments came amid increasing global concerns over the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. Kishida said states should not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims at sea.

# Stalemate over Adani, Rahul continues in Parl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament was adjourned for the day on Monday without transacting any business as the deadlock continued between the ruling and the opposition parties over Rahul Gandhi's alleged 'anti-India' remark in Loonoo and a demand for a Joint-Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the charges of share manipulation against the Adani business Group.

Both the houses of Parliament have not conducted any business since the start of the second-leg of the budget session on March 13.

In a repeat of scenes of the earlier days, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla again asked agitating members to come to his chamber to discuss issues and find a way out.

"You come, sit and discuss. Both the ruling side and opposition come to the chamber and discuss. We will find a solution and run the House. We will discuss your topics and issues also," he said after the house resumed proceedings for the day and members of the treasury benches raised the issue of Rahul's remarks.

Countering the treasury benches, opposition members, including those from the Congress, also shouted slogans demanding a JPC probe into alleged stock manipulation by the Adani Group.

"Sit down. Let the Question Hour continue...Nation wants to watch the House proceedings. This House belongs to you," Speaker Birla said in an



effort to bring the House in order. He also assured the members that they will get adequate opportunity to speak as per rules after the Question Hour. The Speaker also objected to Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) member Harsimrat Kaur Badal showing a placard from her seat, saying it was not allowed in the House.

"Please allow Parliament function" was written on one side of the SAD member's placard while "save democracy" was written on the other side.

As the members refused to relent, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. It was adjourned for the day after it resumed in the afternoon.

Rajya Saba too was adjourned for the day in the afternoon after its proceedings remained derailed in the morning session.

As soon as the Upper House reassembled for the afternoon session, after being adjourned in the morning session, Deputy Chairman Hariwansh asked Sujat Kumar (BJD) to raise a discussion on the working of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship amid sloga-

neering by the treasury bench and the opposition members.

Even as Kumar tried to speak, the slogan shouting continued, forcing the deputy chairman to adjourn the House for the day.

Earlier, as the House assembled for the day, the ruling and opposition parties traded barbs over Rahul's remark in London and the demand for the probe into allegations against the Adani Group.

During the morning session, as the ruling BJP and the opposition parties kept shouting slogans, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar had adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

Dhankhar said he had received notices under rule 267-9 from Congress members, including Pramod Tiwari, Rajneet Ranjan, Kumar Ketkar, Syed Nasir Hussain, Ameer Yajnik, AKHilesh Prasad Singh, Neeraj Dangi and Mukul Wasnik, to discuss the failure of the government to constitute a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to look into allegations of accounting fraud and stock market manipulation against the Adani Group.

# Opp accuses Govt of stalling Parliament, diverting attention from demand for JPC on Adani group



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several opposition parties on Monday accused the government of stalling Parliament and finding ways to divert attention from the opposition demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) into the Adani issue.

Leaders of opposition parties, including those from the Congress, DMK, RJD, CPI-M, CPI, NCP, JDU, AAP, and Shiv Sena, met in the chamber of Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge in Parliament House complex and coordinated their strategy on the demand for a JPC into the Adani issue.

Speaking to reporter outside Parliament House, Congress deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Pramod Tiwari claimed nothing happens in the

BJP without the directions of the prime minister. Despite several attempts our demand for a JPC is not being accepted, he said.

"Why is the government shying away from JPC...The BJP is running away from JPC and is finding ways to divert attention and is not allowing Parliament to function. We have pledged that till the time JPC is not constituted, we will not budge and continue with our struggle. This is not for leaders, but for the people," Tiwari said.

"You may carry on with 'police Raj', it is indicative of dictatorship. This seems just a trailer of dictatorship and the real dictatorship is yet to come," he charged.

Ram Gopal Yadav of the Samajwadi Party said if a JPC probe is held then the real culprits will come out and the BJP will stand "exposed".

# Platform screens at Patna rly stn show porn clip, ad agency contract cancelled



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

A day after TV screens installed at platform number 10 at Patna railway station played a porn clip, the Railways on Monday said it has cancelled the contract of the agency responsible for relaying advertisements on the screens.

Passengers at the Patna Junction railway station were in for a shock on Sunday when TV screens installed at the platforms displayed a porn video clip. Confirming the incident, a railway official said on Monday the private operator who was given the contract has been "blacklisted" and booked in FIRs lodged separately by the RPF and GRP.

In a statement, Virendra Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, East Central Railway (ECR), said that two FIRs have been registered against the agency, one each by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police (GRP).

"A serious note was taken of the lapse when the matter was reported. The tender awarded to the operator concerned has been terminated forthwith and he is being black-listed for any future contracts", said Virendra Kumar, chief public relations officer of East Central Railway zone.

"All TV screens installed by the operator have been disconnected. The RPF and GRP have registered separate FIRs in connection with the embarrassing incident. Investigations into it are on", he added.

# MHA for CBI inquiry against Aman Biradari for FCRA violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended a CBI inquiry against activist Harsh Mander's NGO 'Aman Biradari'. MHA officials on Monday said a CBI inquiry has been recommended against the NGO for violation of various provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. Mander, who was a member of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council during the erstwhile UPA Government, founded Aman Biradari -- "a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world".

All NGOs receiving foreign funding have to mandatorily register with the Home Ministry under the FCRA. According to Mander's website (https://harshmander.in), he is the "founder of Aman Biradari, a people's campaign for a sec-



ular, peaceful, just and humane world, established after the Gujarat communal carnage of 2002".

"Aman Biradari works closely with other people's organisations and groups for the defence of secularism; for public compassion; and for promoting the values of the constitution," it states. In October 2022, the MHA had cancelled the FCRA registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT) -- two NGOs headed by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi -- for alleged violation of laws.

# Rahul writes to LS Speaker, seeks permission to speak over London democracy remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the ruling party continuously mounting pressure, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to allow him to speak in the Lok Sabha over his democracy remarks made in London. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said time has been sought for Rahul Gandhi to speak in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday and he will make his statement if allowed. He has not made any public statement about his London remarks yet.

Kharge also slammed the Modi government over the Delhi Police team reaching Rahul Gandhi's residence on Sunday to inquire about his "women are still being sexually assaulted" statement made during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "This is an attempt to target and harass. They want to weaken us by intimidation, but we will not get scared or be weakened,"



Kharge said.

Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi too attacked the Centre over the Delhi Police's notice to her brother Rahul Gandhi and said the people of the country are watching all the exploits of "the corrupt BJP government" and will reply when the time comes.



however defended his statement at a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee for External Affairs and has claimed that he has never insulted the country.

Rahul Gandhi had met Birla last week after his return from the UK and on the same day told the Press that he

requested the Lok Sabha presiding officer to allow him to speak in the House. Congress leaders said that Rahul Gandhi wants to speak in the Lok Sabha to clarify his remarks made in London, over which the BJP is demanding an apology from him after accusing him of insulting the country and its institutions on foreign soil.

In a tweet message Priyanka Gandhi said, "Notice is being given to Mr Rahul Gandhi as to why did you raise the voice of women, dalits, tribals, poor, farmers and youth who were suffering from atrocities?" "PM's friend Gautam Adani accused of having business relations with 38 shell companies abroad, no notice. Infiltration of fake company in defense sector through Adani, no notice. The government itself is accused of changing the rules to benefit Adani, not even discussed in the Parliament," the Congress general secretary said.

# SC directs all HCs to set up RTI portals within 3 months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed all High Courts to set up RTI portals within three months. The apex court also asked High Courts to implement RTI portals in district judiciary also. The bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the apex court had also set up a portal for filing RTI applications to help people access information about the top court. The bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, was apprised that the High Courts of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have already set up web portals for the purpose, while in Karnataka the High Court is using the website which is being set up by the State Government.

"We are of the view that such an exercise be carried out by all the High Courts in the country no later than within a period of three months from the date of this order," the bench said. The apex court was hearing a plea seeking direction to the registrar general of all high courts to establish and operationalise online RTI portal, both for the high courts as well as the district judiciary.

# India records 1,50,000 road accidents deaths annually

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

While the West has seen steady fall in incidence of road traffic accidents, India continues to record higher injuries with nearly 1,50,000 deaths annually of which 25 per cent is contributed by two wheeler road mishaps, doctors flagged concerns on World Head Injuries Awareness Day on Monday.

Among children particularly under 12, prominent reasons for death are a fall from a height, usually a balcony, they said. As per the Government 2020 data, 328 people died every day due to road traffic accidents.

Dr Deepak Gupta, Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS, pointed out that helmets reduce risk of death and head injury by 50-60 per cent. "Two times higher deaths have been



in non-helmeted riders, the majority of whom are women compared to helmeted riders. No doubt, helmets reduce risk of death by 50 per cent.

"With helmets, hospital deaths are reduced by 16 per cent, cervical spine injuries are lesser and facial injuries are also lesser by 12-60 per cent. New road safety rules should be followed (Six airbags in LMVs, mandatory seat belt

usage for back seat riders, helmets for pillion riders) introduced by the Government," he added.

Now the doctors have launched two campaigns, "SAHE" that aims to create awareness about safety gears like seat belts, airbags, helmets and road etiquettes while another is about 'safe balcony' as a disturbing chunk of accidents is due to fall from the balcony.

Well known neurologist Dr AK Mahapatra pointed out that high falls contributes to 5-7% of TBI, a unique injury pattern reported from India. "Many of these are potentially preventable if one targets improved balcony/barricading/ check on new home/work place building norms," he said.

Similarly, over speeding and drowsy driving continues to be the greatest killer on new highways. Dr Gupta also

underscored the fact that investment in precautionary measures was meager when compared to the cost incurred on treatment post TBI.

To draw home his point, he said that helmets cost Rs 2500, seat belts cost Rs 1000 and expenditure incurred on car airbags is a few thousand rupees and in fact they are pre-fitted in your vehicle. But if severely injured, costs incurred can run more than Rs 10-50 lakhs in private set ups and months of stays in public hospitals. Needless to say, pain, agony and loss of bread earners of the family are priceless, he added.

Dr Deepak Jha, Neurosurgeon from AIIMS, Jodhpur talked about the government's role in enforcing the law such as mandatory seat belts for both front and rear passengers in the cars and headgears for men and women on two-wheelers.

# ED grills Kavitha in excise policy case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday grilled BRS leader K Kavitha for over 10 hours after she appeared before the agency for a second round of questioning in the money laundering probe linked to the Delhi excise policy 'scam'.

Kavitha entered the ED headquarters here at 10:30 AM and after making formalities like marking attendance, her questioning and recording of statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act began at about 11 AM and continued till about 9:30 PM, officials said.



Rashtra Samithi MLC daughter of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababai Rao has been asked to appear again on Tuesday, they said.

She was first questioned in the case on March 11 for around nine hours following which she was summoned again on March 16. Kavitha had skipped the deposition last week citing her pending plea before the Supreme Court

for relief against the ED action in the case.

The agency, however, rejected her claims and asked her to depose on March 20. The apex court has fixed the hearing on her petition on March 24.

On March 11, Kavitha was confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman Arun Ramchandran Pillai, an arrested accused in the case who allegedly shares close ties with her, apart from some other suspects in the case.

During Monday's session, Kavitha is said to have been physically confronted with Pillai and her former auditor Butchibabu Gorantla, officials

said.

The ED has been on record stating that Pillai "represented the South Group", an alleged liquor cartel linked to Kavitha and others, that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to gain a larger share of the market in the national capital under the now-scraped Delhi excise policy for 2020-21.

The "South Group" comprises Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobindo Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSR Congress MP from Ongole Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others, according to the ED.

# Pets may pass multi-drug resistant organisms to sick owners: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Healthy dogs and cats could be passing on multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs; bacteria that resist treatment with more than one antibiotic) to their hospitalized owners, and vice versa, according to new research being presented at this year's European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) in Copenhagen, Denmark to be held next month. However, the researchers have also clarified that "we identified only a handful of cases suggesting



that neither cat nor dog ownership is an important risk factor for multidrug-resistant organism colonization in hospital patients."

The study of over 2,800 hospital patients and their companion animals is by Dr. Carolin Hackmann from Charité University Hospital Berlin, Germany, and col-

leagues.

"Our findings verify that the sharing of multidrug-resistant organisms between companion animals and their owners is possible," said Dr. Hackmann.

The role of pets as potential reservoirs of MDROs is a growing concern worldwide. Antimicrobial resistance happens when infection-causing microbes (such as bacteria, viruses or fungi) evolve to become resistant to the drug designed to kill them. Estimates suggest that antimicrobial resistant infections caused almost 1.3 million deaths and were associated with nearly 5 million

deaths around the world in 2019.

In this case control study, researchers wanted to find out whether pets (ie, cats and dogs) play a role in the infection of hospital patients with MDROs.

They focused on the most common superbugs in hospital patients—methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE), 3rd generation cephalosporin-resistant Enterobacterales (3GRE) and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE), which are resistant to multiple antibiotics including penicillin and cephalosporins.



# ‘Only Lord Krishna can crack layers of Bengal job scam’

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Only Lord Krishna can crack the multi-departmental and multi-layered recruitment scandals.” That was how an advocate representing the Enforcement Directorate on Monday put his case before a designated court in Kolkata while demanding custody of Ayan Sil a builder and a latest fish netted by the Agency presently investigating the multi-crore school level recruitment scam in Bengal.

The arrest of Sil a close aide of jailed Trinamool Congress leader Shantanu Banerjee has opened a new dimension in the recruitment scandal, ED told the court adding his arrest has unveiled a parallel scam in the municipal department.

A 38-hour raid in Sil’s house has yielded incriminating documents and hard discs which are a “data mine,” and have brought to the surface illegal appointment of at least 5,000 civic employees in 60 municipalities out of which seven are in North 24 Parganas

bordering Kolkata only, the ED told the court.

For the first time the Agency has stumbled upon a detailed “rate chart” for jobs at Sil’s residence. According to this rate chart Group D employees including the sweepers, drivers etc were charged Rs 4 lakh per job while for Group C jobs including assistant teachers and typist an aspirant had to cough up Rs 7 lakh, the ED referring to the hard discs and documents said.

The Agency has also recovered several hundred original OMR sheets apparently referring to the 2012 Teachers’ Eligibility Test (TET) exams, sources said. Besides, like Shantanu Banerjee and Anubrata Mondal, the senior TMC leader of cattle smuggling fame, Sil too had taken recourse to at least 50 fake accounts to channelise his black money, sources said.

Earlier after arresting Banerjee, a TMC leader from Hooghly district the ED had told the court that they had struck a “gold mine” adding

how the CDR or call data recorder of his two mobile phones had yielded the names of some topmost politicians of the State.

“The names cannot be revealed in the open court considering its political sensitivity and hence they have been listed in the case diary,” the ED officials said leading the Opposition parties to immediately demand interrogation of such “senior most” leaders based in South Kolkata.

In Sil’s case too, the ED said the CDR has revealed the names of 4-5 “influential persons,” who played an important role in money transaction and functioning of the multi-departmental and multi-layered job racket, sources said.

The ED officials pointed out that apart from SSC and municipal job scam, the “data mine” recovered from Sil’s residence could also lead to a parallel recruitment scandal in Fire Brigade department too, adding the data were being studied in that respect.

Reacting to the Monday’s arrest Bengal Opposition

Leader Suvendu Adhikari said he was contemplating a Public Interest Litigation seeking revelation of the educational certificates of the employees appointed in the past one decade.

“The TMC’s organized job syndicate has left no department untouched ... I want someone to file a PIL so that the certificates based on which these people have obtained their jobs ... most of these jobs were given to the close aides of the TMC leaders, MLAs, MPs, councilors etc,” he said.

When contacted, Bengal Municipal Affairs Minister Firhad Hakim said that he would soon order an internal inquiry to ascertain whether there were people who had obtained their jobs illegally.

Last eight months have seen recovery of cash and property worth several hundred crores and arrest of a number of senior ministers, MLAs, leaders, party strongmen and senior government functionaries including vice chancellors and secondary board chairmen.

# Cong sounds K’taka poll bugle

Gives 3 poll guarantees — 200 units of free power, ₹2,000 monthly assistance to Gruha Lakshmi, 10 kg rice free to every BPL family member

PTI ■ BELAGAVI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday called on party leaders in the state to fight the BJP with unity, as he exuded confidence of “sweeping” the forthcoming Karnataka Assembly polls with absolute majority.

He also announced unemployment allowance for the youth, as the party’s fourth poll guarantee, on coming to power. The Congress has already announced three poll ‘guarantees’ — 200 units of free power to all households (Gruha Jyoti), Rs 2,000 monthly assistance to the woman head of every family (Gruha Lakshmi), and 10 kg of rice free to every member of a BPL household (Anna Bhagya).

Addressing a public rally at Belagavi in northern Karnataka, Gandhi hit out at the BJP-led Central government, saying “this country belongs to everyone, does not belong to two to three selected, it is not Adani’s”. “Select people, who are BJP’s friends, are getting all the benefits. It is



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi and others during the ‘Yuva Kranti Samavesha’, in Belagavi, on Monday PTI Photo

leading to corruption,” the Wayanad MP alleged. Gandhi and AICC President M Mallikarjun Kharge, who hails from the state, said an unemployment allowance of Rs 3,000 per month would be given for graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders for two years in the event of the party gaining power in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May. Gandhi attacked the Basavaraj Bommai government

in Karnataka, dubbing it as the “most corrupt government”. “It is a 40 per cent commission government,” he claimed. The Congress, on coming to power, will fill up all the government job vacancies in Karnataka, he asserted. Exuding confidence in the party winning the Assembly election, Gandhi said: “All Congress leaders will fight the Karnataka Assembly election united, Congress will sweep this election.”

## I cannot be intimidated by police, cases: Rahul Gandhi

PTI ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said he cannot be intimidated by the repeated political attacks on him, police being sent to his house numerous times or the many cases lodged against him as he believes in the truth and always stood with it.

Gandhi’s remarks came in the wake of a Delhi police team reaching his residence on Sunday to inquire about his “women are still being sexually assaulted” statement made during the nationwide Bharat Jodo Yatra.

“Many people may be scared of the Prime Minister, BJP, RSS and the police, but I am not. I am not scared of them in the least and that is their problem.

# Mamata on alliance hunt; to meet Naveen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

After holding talks with Samajwadi Party chieftain Akhilesh Yadav, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is likely to visit Odisha later this week apparently to meet her counterpart Naveen Patnaik. Banerjee who will visit the Puri Jagannath Temple will also “call on Navin Babu” at Bhubaneswar, senior leaders in the Trinamool Congress said not ruling out political talks between the two leaders.

Banerjee — a devotee of Lord Jagannath — who seems to have been facing one of the worst crises of her political career in the wake of the multi-departmental recruitment scam exploding the her government’s face sending a number of her close aides including Partha Chatterjee and Anubrata Mondal to jail will offer special prayers at the Jagannath Temple, sources said. Banerjee had performed a yagna or special prayers at her residence ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections that saw her coming out with flying colours



routing the BJP by many miles.

Though Banerjee is likely to raise a dialogue on a possible non-BJP, non-Congress alliance the Biju Janata Dal chief who too has maintained equi-distance from the two national parties is unlikely to join the alliance being contemplated by Banerjee, Yadav et al, sources said reminding Patnaik had hardly been in any political meeting which was staunchly anti-Narendra Modi.

Earlier this week like Banerjee, SP chief too had said that they were not contemplating any Congress-led alliance against the BJP adding however that they would definitely try to stitch together an alliance keeping the two bigger parties out.

# Omar says BJP not ready to face electors

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Monday observed that his party machinery was still intact and flourishing in the plain areas of Jammu region against all odds.

Sporting a white headgear Omar, in his inimical style, also lashed out at the ruling Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) for not showing raw courage to hold the much-awaited Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Omar while addressing his first public meeting, after the Abrogation of Article 370, in Bajalta area of Jammu also



charged that BJP was not ready to face electorate and that’s why they were running away on one pretext or the other from holding elections. First they said it is necessary to complete delimitation of Assembly constituencies then they said summary revision of electoral rolls should also be completed. Then they talked about weather not being conducive but now they have no justification to further delay the polls. Abdullah said the weather is getting pleasant, they have only two reasons for delaying the polls further, one could be the worsening security situation which they claim has improved and the second being that they are afraid to face the voters. “If they had been brave, they would have gone for the elections.

After today’s public rally, some people (among the BJP) who were supportive of early elections will also feel jittery,” he said in an apparent reference to former legislator Devender Singh Rana who resigned from the post of NC provincial president and joined the BJP in October 2021.

Abdullah said the public meeting has proved beyond any doubt that the NC is alive both in Kashmir and the Jammu province.

“People come and go but those who have love for the organisation and are not linked to any particular individual will stay back because they are with the party’s principles, flag and agenda,” he said. The NC will show its real strength during the assembly elections, Abdullah asserted. “They will try to

polarise the situation as they are doing elsewhere in the country. We have to frustrate their attempts by standing united,” he said.

The former chief minister said for the first time he is witnessing a government which “feels happiness in inflicting difficulties on the people. It will be better to get rid of this government as soon as possible”.

“They are only engaged in propaganda, drama and showoff... Sometime back, we heard of an outside company making an investment in Srinagar but it proved much ado about nothing,” the NC leader said referring to the Emaar group of United Arab Emirates laying the foundation of a mega mall project worth Rs 500 crore on Sunday.

He said his party was accused of being an obstacle in the path of development and job creation, and asked what happened over the past three years. “There is no new project, and recruitment for government jobs was cancelled owing to scams,” Abdullah said.

Those who celebrated the abrogation of Article 370 in Ladakh and Jammu are equally sad, he claimed. “We were angry from day one but there were some people who celebrated it with a hope of ‘New J&K’.

The people in Jammu suffered economically because of the stopping of the darbar move and anti-encroachment drive, while Leh people are openly expressing that they were happy to be part of J&K,” the NC leader said.

## ‘NCP would not support any policy to punish relatives of terrorists’

**Jammu:** National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah Monday claimed his party would not support any policy to punish relatives of terrorists as it is against natural justice.

Omar also clarified no terrorist was given government jobs by previous dispensation in J&K. Interacting with reporters after addressing a public rally Omar Abdullah also raised issue of “misuse of police against civilian population”.

“No terrorist was given a (government) job but we did not punish people because they were relatives of terrorists. Is it fair for me to punish you for the crime committed by your father or a son? Tomorrow, if God forbid a close relative of (Lt Governor) Manoj Sinha Sahab commits a crime, should he be sent to jail?” the former chief minister said. **PNS**

# Digital platforms have potential to meet universal health targets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Digital health is a great enabler in delivery of health care services and has the potential to support overall universal health coverage targets, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Health Minister on Monday said and added a two-pronged approach has been adopted in this regard with a focus on digital health through policy framework and by creating a digital ecosystem for path breaking interventions.

These focus on not just availability, accessibility, affordability but also equity of health services, said the Minister at the inaugural of the two-day conference here co-hosted by the Ministry and the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office.

“It is time to move from ‘silos to systems’ with collaboration of all countries for enhanced coverage and quality of healthcare services,” he said in his virtual address at the ‘Global Conference on Digital Health - Taking Universal Health Coverage to the Last Citizen’, a co-branded event under India’s G20 Presidency organised by WHO - South-East Asia Region in collaboration with the Ministry.

Reiterating India’s commitment towards Universal Health Coverage, the Minister cited digital interventions have become the foundations of many crucial health pro-



grammes such as reproductive child healthcare, Ni-kshay, TB control programme, integrated disease surveillance system, hospital information system, among many others.

Addressing the event, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region, said digital health can significantly improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of person centric health services and effectiveness of disease management.

“Digital health is a critical imperative today as it can democratize healthcare and fast track what our Region has been working intensely towards since 2014 - the universal health coverage,” she said.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has particularly highlighted the importance of the application of digital technologies to health and its potential to strengthen health systems, prevent disease and enhance service delivery at the global, national and sub-national level, she said.

# BJP welcomes Kerala Bishop Mar Joseph Pamplany’s support

‘There is no freedom of expression for Bishops in Kerala’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday welcomed Kerala Bishop Mar Joseph Pamplany’s “support” to the BJP and “Church’s willingness” to hold discussions with the Modi-government to “protect the interests of farmers.”

Minister of State for External and Parliamentary Affairs V. Muraleedharan hit-out at the Left parties and the Congress “for criticizing Bishop for supporting the centre.” “There is no freedom of expression for bishops in

Kerala. Freedom of Expression is denied to bishops, either because they are Christians or their views favour the government of India,” said the BJP leader. Addressing a press conference here, Muraleedharan said “how the Bishop of Pala was ridiculed for pointing out the dangers of Narcotic Jihad, and its impact on the Christian community.”

Taking a dig at CPM and Congress he said “they say they are for minorities and freedom of speech but when a Christian bishop speaks his mind or indirectly favours the government of India – they pounce upon him, a ridiculous situation in Kerala,” said the union minister adding “it exposed the double standards of Congress and CPM and their hypocrisy”. Muraleedharan claimed that

these parties never cared for either farmers or minorities and “just wanted them to remain as safe vote banks and they should not be allowed to be moved away.” On attacks on Churches, Muraleedharan questioned Congress’s double-speak – and reminded them of the incidents in Chhattisgarh ruled by the Congress.

Speaking about the “acceptance” of the Christian community of BJP “and Prime Minister Narendra Modi” he mentioned that Meghalaya with over 75% Christians, Nagaland with over 80% Christians and Goa with around 25% Christians have “reposed their trust in BJP”.

Besides Muraleedharan former Union Minister KJ Alphonse and BJP Spokesperson Tom Vadakkan also attended press conference.

## SC clubs 3 FIRs against Cong leader Pawan Kherra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday clubbed three FIRs lodged against Congress leader Pawan Kherra for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and transferred them to the Hazratganj police station in Uttar Pradesh’s Lucknow.

Extending the interim bail till April 10, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala took note of the facts that three FIRs were lodged against Kherra. Out of the three FIRs, two were lodged at the Cantonment police station in Varanasi and the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. The third FIR was lodged in Assam.

The apex court bench directed that the three FIRs stand transferred to Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. Kherra, whose interim bail was extended till April 10, will have to appear before the court of competent jurisdiction in Lucknow to seek regular bail in the matter.

The apex court, from time to time, had been extending the interim bail of Kherra who was arrested by the Assam Police on February 23 in connection with his alleged remarks against Modi made at a press conference in Mumbai on February 17.

The Congress spokesperson was arrested from the Delhi airport after he was de-boarded from a plane that was supposed to take him to Raipur. He obtained bail from a magisterial court here on February 23 after CJJ-led bench granted him interim bail during an urgent hearing earlier in day.

India Police Sports Control Board. This event holds importance for participating teams since it is being held post-Covid pandemic after a gap of three years, the last such event being held at Pune in December, 2019. “During ten-day event, the teams will display their

expertise in multiple facets of Special Forces training, including precision shooting, endurance, special operations planning and execution, and special survival skills, which aptly demonstrate collective preparedness of nation to face terrorists challenges,” it said. **PNS**



# ED attaches properties of Pune edu group for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has attached four properties, including land and a school building, of the promoters of a Pune-based education group under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The action is part of a probe into an alleged bank loan fraud against a cooperative bank in Pune. The attached assets belong to Rosary Education Group and its main partners Vinay Aranha and Vivek Aranha. A provisional order for attaching four properties has been issued under the PMLA, the agency said in a statement.

“The present market value of the attached properties is estimated to be around Rs 98.20 crore,” it said. On March 10, the ED had arrested Vinay Aranha. The money laundering case stems from a Pune Police FIR filed on the basis of a complaint made by Shivaji Vithal Kale of Cosmos Bank against Vinay Aranha and Vivek Aranha.

The complainant alleged that the accused obtained loans of Rs 20.44 crore from the bank by submitting “fake” property documents. Vinay Aranha submitted “bogus” work invoices (in the guise of refurbishment of the Rosary schools) and got loans disbursed to bogus vendors which were immediately withdrawn in cash and handed back to Aranha (Vinay), it said.

The ED alleged that Vinay Aranha “diverted” the loans and got crores of rupees in cash. He also got loan amounts worth Rs 34 crore disbursed to

Paramount Infrastructure, Shabbir Patanwala, Ashwin Kamat, Deepti Enterprises and others. “All these so-called vendors have admitted that they did not do any work and returned the cash to Aranha. Despite giving repeated opportunities, Vinay Aranha has not given any account of the utilisation of the cash,” it said.

The ED found the schools of the group “did not” maintain any account of revenue, expenditure and income since 2012 and no ITRs (income tax returns) were filed.

“All this was purposefully done to enable Vinay Aranha to siphon off funds as per his whims and fancy. He admittedly splurged large amounts on celebrities and to host gala events (in the name of Vinay Aranha Foundation) for self-aggrandisement and also purchased multiple luxury cars,” the ED said.

In a separate case, the ED attached immovable properties worth Rs 20.16 crore of Bengaluru-based Injaz International represented by its partners Misbahuddin S. and Suhail Ahmed Shariff money laundering charges. The accused had allegedly acquired the ‘proceeds of crime; and layered the same in the form of various immovable properties.

The ED had initiated an investigation on the basis of the FIR registered by the Wilson Garden Police Station (Bengaluru) against Injaz International and its associated group, under various sections of the Prize Chits and Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act, 1978, Indian Penal Code and Chit Funds Act. The ‘Proceeds of Crime’ in this case is Rs 80.99 crore.







FIRST COLUMN

LIFE INSURANCE UNDER THE NEW I-T SCHEME

What to do with the insurance policies already taken, is the big question



S KALYANASUNDARAM

The Union Budget presented for the next fiscal year has provided the necessary incentive for taxpayers to switch to a new income tax scheme. Individual taxpayers are free to choose the old scheme or the updated scheme as per his/her convenience. Under the old scheme, tax payers were claiming deductions based on different savings, expenses and loan repayments as per provisions of the IT Act. The revised scheme does not allow any such deductions and immediately provides a higher exemption limit. Therefore, individuals opting for the new scheme need not continue with their savings.

The situation provides an opportunity for individuals to continue or discontinue endowment policies (and also similar life cover instruments like Money back policies, ULIP etc.). Though ideally term insurance will be the best option for life coverage, many have contracted for endowment policies on the perception that it is also a saving instrument. If they have taken the insurance only as a saving measure, they now have the option to discontinue it. The following options are available when choosing a new tax scheme for endowment policies (and similar policies).

Surrender the policy

It is possible to surrender the insurance policy to the issuer. This means no more premium is payable on this and the life cover will also lapse. The insurance company will return what is called the surrender value. Surrender value is the amount the policyholder will get from the life insurance company if he decides to exit the policy before maturity. Surrender value varies from policy to policy and it is printed on the policy itself.

Do not surrender but stop paying premium

This would not be the only option available. One need not surrender the policy but simply stop paying further premiums. When one continues with the policy without paying any further premium, the policy will have what is called "Paid up Value". In other words, the paid up value is the value payable at maturity of the discontinued policy (of premium payment).



Generally, a life insurance policy with an investment value earns some paid up value after at least 3 years in force (5 years for ULIPs). This means that policies like money-back endowment will have paid-up value after 3 years and ULIP will have market value after 5 years. To calculate the paid up value, multiply the number of premiums paid by the sum assured by the total number of premiums. This method will offer continuing life coverage at a reduced amount (paid up value) and maturing.

Allow it to lapse

By not paying premiums further, one can allow the policy to lapse if it has no surrender value. The premium paid will be a loss. But cash outflows for many more years in the future will be a big saving.

Taxation

The surrender value of a life policy is allowed as a tax-free benefit only if it fulfils some conditions with regard to the number of years premium paid. But as the surrender value eligibility matches this, the surrender value will be tax free. (Only if the policy was issued between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2012, there are additional conditions). There is no change in the deductions allowed in earlier years on account of premium payment. For paid up value, the amount received on maturity will be tax free.

Takeaway

The revised income tax regime allows the discontinuation of insurance policies taken with intent to save. This should not be confused with the necessity of life insurance. One may need life insurance protection, and it may be appropriate to have term insurance for the amount of coverage required. The decision of surrendering, continuing the policy without further premiums, or letting it lapse depends on the individual's determination of opportunity cost.

(The writer is a retired banker)

# Inflation management needs salutary changes



SUMEET BHASIN

The Reserve Bank of India's MPC will meet in the first week of April. The stakeholders are concerned if it will emerge wiser from recent global experiences



Vietnam became the first country to break ranks with the global community to cut the policy rates. The Central bank of Vietnam surprised the global economists to cut the benchmark interest rate. The East Asian nation was wary of the fact that the blind-walking alongside the US Federal Reserve to keep raising the interest rates would have surely taken its economy into fast downturn.

Europe remains hawkish with rate hikes, increasing the policy rate by 50 basis points last week. Jerome Powell, the head of the US Federal Reserve, has come under intense fire within his country. He is being accused of walking the US economy to the doorsteps of a deep recession. He has been dogged in pursuit of higher interest rates despite fellow members cautioning him of risks associated with hawkish measures.

Within a span of a few days, three banks in the US have come to their knees, with one collapsing in 48 hours. The US and Europe are now battling the worst fears of economists of banks failing the high interest regime. The monetary policy meeting (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will meet in the first week of April. The concerned stakeholders are watching out with intense curiosity to see if the MPC of the RBI will be wiser from the immediate global experiences of following a hawkish path.

Inflation indeed is a cause of concern. The poor suffers the most from an uncontrolled inflation. Therefore, there is an unequivocal understanding that inflation must be tamed with all the policy might available at the RBI and the government.

But it must not be ignored that high interest rates may be suicidal for the economy, as a number of factors make it less effective at controlling inflation, while harmful economic growth more. High interest rates drive away capital, which may exacerbate inflation further, while harming emerging economies more by putting pressure on their currencies. Several studies and reports have taken



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(Author is a policy analyst)

note of the creditstress, harming small businesses and low-income households, who are most sensitive to changes in interest rates, while being at loan repayments risks when rates are high. Also, economic growth naturally takes the blows of high interest rate regime, as private investment and private consumption take backseat in the economy.

Furthermore, increasing interest rates may not address the underlying causes of inflation, which can be caused by a range of factors, including rise in the money supply, high production costs, or changes in consumer demand. For instance high cereal costs in India is driving inflation high. Indeed, core inflation is also staying above six per cent. But cereal and fruits are making the management of inflation a daunting task. India indeed needs to take steps to work on post-harvest management with the participation of the private capital to ensure that the cereals, fruits and vegetables don't march on high price trajectory to give fresh legs to inflation.

Thus, it's incumbent upon the policymakers to consider targeted interventions to address specific drivers of inflation. The government has done well by proactively asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to auction the public wheat stock in the open market. The four rounds of the auctions of the wheat stocks have shown sobering impact on the wheat prices, which have significantly cooled down in the last few days.

Similar interventions are needed to cool down the prices of the specific drivers stepping up the inflation. The price stabilization fund, which is a mechanism created by the Centre, to deal with the volatility in the prices of food items needs effective utilization. This has

to be done by the state governments with effective utilization of the market intelligence architecture. It will be worthwhile to explore if there could be a mechanism to incentivize the states for better performances on the price stabilization front.

Failures among banks, including Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), have been attributed to a variety of factors, with high-interest rates bring the principal culprit, which has proven to be unsustainable and even disastrous. Banks resort to offer high-interest rates to attract depositors in pursuit of rapid growth. But the banks tend to gain customers who are primarily interested in the rate, leading to a higher concentration of risky or unstable deposits. This makes banks becoming host to hot money, which can make a sudden flight from the first sign of stress, as had been the case with Silicon Valley Bank and other regional banks in the US.

By all accounts the RBI will not be able to meet the projected inflation rate of 5.7 per cent for this fiscal. This will be possible only if inflation crashes by over 230 points in the last month of the financial year. This will call for the RBI to explain why it failed in the inflation management as mandated by Parliament. We already know that couple of the members of the MPC had opposed the Repo Rate hike in the last meeting. Therefore, it will be desired that the RBI embraces a course correction in the light of the fresh developments globally.

Pausing the rate hike trend will be most desired by the stakeholders. Cut in the rate hikes will, however, be the demand of the prevailing situations. Also, the fact that India had not resorted to printing of currencies to deal with the sit-

uations arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic may be factored in since the market is not flush with cash that requires to be sucked out. Indeed, the US and the European nations had excessively printed their currencies to deal with the economic crises due to the pandemic. They may require flushing out the excess cash from the system to control the inflation. This is surely not the case in India.

But it must not be forgotten that India has paid a heavy price for such quick-fix approach of the government to deal with the situations arising out of the economic crisis. The UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, former prime minister, had done exactly the same thing, of giving cash in the hands of the people in its bid to find an easy way out of the economic crisis, which India faced in the wake of the 2008 global crisis. This had led India to double-digit food inflation for the remainder of the term of the UPA government. It was only when Narendra Modi took charge of the country as the prime minister that the Central government could tame the runaway food inflation with agile policy making.

The weather scientists have warned that India may have to face El Nino this year. There may be a risk of weather pattern disruptions, which could also have bearing on prices of several items, which constitute the retail inflation basket. This also calls for the RBI to elicit wider participation in the process of the inflation management, since some of the solutions may lie in the domains of the Centre and the state governments.

It must be understood that working in silos is an ailment that made India suffer the most. The RBI must make sure that it's not working from silos.

# Reforming Parliament: Charity begins at home

It is high time that parliamentary reforms are undertaken to make the House more effective and in sync with the changing times

Just as we need reforms in many other areas, Parliament needs reforms urgently. Right now, both Houses remain paralysed. The Opposition is looking for public and media attention to embarrass the Government, while the Government is also in an aggressive mood.

The BJP opposed the earlier Congress Governments precisely as the Congress is following now, everything which could attract the public and media attention. The direct TV telecast also makes members play to the gallery.

The face-off between the adamant Treasury Benches and the belligerent Opposition continues over two controversial issues. The first concerns Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent alleged defam-



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

atory comments about the Modi government in the U.K. Strangely, the treasury benches are demanding, "Rahul Gandhi *sadan mein aao, sadan mein aakar maafi mango* (Rahul Gandhi come to the House and apologise)."

The second comes from the Opposition, which demands a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue. The Adoni issue had been simmering for some time, but the Government has been unwilling to discuss it in the House.

The second half of the budget session opened on March 13. The row has become intense now, with the Opposition taking to the streets. The Congress also gave a privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra

Modi in Lok Sabha.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "A member of this House (meaning Rahul Gandhi) went abroad and made defamatory comments. He has to tender an apology. And how these people (some Opposition MPs) who are protesting and carrying placards in the House should be acted against; in my opinion, they should be suspended."

This brings us to the larger question of Parliament's functioning. There are enough checks and balances. Parliament's liberal framework provides many opportunities for vigorous debate, discussion, and dissent. Political parties must replace disorder, disruption and delay in legislation with debate, discussion, and decision in a democracy. The

adage is while the Opposition should have its say, the Government should have its way.

Historically, there was a degree of homogeneity in both Houses in the fifties and sixties. Many members like Piloo Modii enlivened the House with their repartees, humour, and healthy debates while maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House.

Congress shrank since the eighties while others, including regional parties, grew, leading to coalition politics.

Another area for improvement is the duration of sittings. Most state legislatures sit for barely 30 days a year. In some, like Haryana and Punjab, the average is about a fortnight. The Parliament spends less time on legislative business

resulting in lawmakers spending less time on law-making.

The first three Lok Sabhas sat for an average of 120 DAYS a year. The Lok Sabha spent less than 10 minutes to pass a law, and the Rajya Sabha less than half an hour.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended that Lok Sabha should have at least 120 and Rajya Sabha 100 sittings. A single minute in Parliament leads to an expenditure of Rs. 2.5 lakhs approx to the exchequer.

The former chief justice N.V. Ramana recently lamented how Parliament passed laws without deliberation and debate. The judiciary interprets the law and always looks for the discussion before passing the law. The presiding officers

of both Houses have time and again urged the members to maintain the dignity of the House in mind.

There should be a complete revamp of the rules to make clearing legislation and discussion on issues open, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Secondly, political parties should choose eminent men and women as members.

Thirdly, new members should be given adequate time to participate in the proceedings.

Fourthly, the party leaders should focus more on Parliament's functioning as they are also stakeholders.

Fifthly, Question Hour should not be disturbed as that is when Government answers many questions. The cancellation of Zero Hour and

Question Hour indicates that parliamentary reforms are urgently needed.

Sixthly, presiding officers should be given more teeth.

Seventhly, accommodation and negotiations should be part of the conduct of the House.

Eighthly, new members should be trained to understand the House's rules and regulations.

The parliamentary committees have gradually decreased their number of sittings. The Government also only refers some pieces of legislation to the committee.

A healthy democracy needs a fit functioning Parliament. Indian democracy has matured over the years, and it is time to make some necessary corrective issues.







# Anti-graft body summons Imran’s wife

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s anti-corruption watchdog on Monday summoned Imran Khan’s third wife Bushra Bibi in a corruption case, a day after police registered a terrorism case against the ousted premier and over a dozen leaders of his party for indulging in vandalism and creating unrest outside the judicial complex here.

Clashes erupted outside the Islamabad Judicial Complex on Saturday when Khan, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party arrived in Islamabad from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana case. However, due to the violence outside the judicial complex, the judge allowed Khan to return home after signing a register.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) team arrived at Khan’s Zaman Park residence in Lahore and issued notice to Bushra, according to The Express Tribune newspaper.

She was summoned on Tuesday, the report said.

Earlier, the NAB summoned Khan and his wife to their Rawalpindi office on March 9 to question them on the Toshakhana case.

## TOSHAKHANA CASE



Bushra Bibi

The hearing in the Toshakhana case was adjourned till March 30 as the judge observed that the situation was not conducive for holding the hearing.

Khan, 70, the former prime minister, has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as

the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana, and selling them for profit.

He was disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan in October last year for not sharing details of the sales. The election body later filed a complaint with the district court to punish him, under criminal laws, for selling the gifts he had received as prime minister of the country. Khan has vehemently denied those charges.

Lahore Police on Sunday booked Khan and over 1,000 PTI workers under terrorism charges. Khan, the cricketer-turned-politician was ousted from power in April last year after losing a no-confidence vote, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China, and Afghanistan.

Since his ouster, he has been demanding early elections to remove what he termed an “imported government” led by prime minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Sharif has maintained that elections will be held later this year once the parliament completes its five-year tenure.

# Khan’s nephew, supporters held

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan police arrested Imran Khan’s nephew and a number of his supporters on Monday for their alleged involvement in the attacks on the security personnel outside a court here over the weekend where the ousted premier arrived from Lahore to appear in the much-awaited hearing in a corruption case.

The raft of arrests was the latest amid the mounting cases filed against Khan, the chief of the main opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Monday’s arrests bring the total number of Khan’s followers detained in Islamabad to 198 since Saturday.

Among those arrested also include Hassan Niazi, Khan’s nephew.

The details of the other arrests were not known immediately. His supporters threw firebombs and hurled stones at the officers as riot police wielded batons and fired tear gas. More than 50 officers were injured and a police

checkpoint, several cars and motorcycles were torched.

Lahore Police on Sunday booked Khan and over 1,000 PTI workers under terrorism charges in two cases. The number of cases against Khan has climbed up to 97. Police also claimed to have recovered rifles, Kalashnikovs, bullets, marbles and petrol bombs from his house during the search operation.

Khan, 70, who arrived in the federal capital from Lahore on Saturday, appeared at the gates of the district court in the much-awaited corruption case. However, due to the violence outside the judicial complex, the judge allowed Khan to return home after signing a register.

The former prime minister has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana, and selling them for profit.

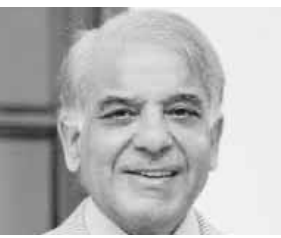
# Shehbaz Sharif condemns smear campaign against Army Chief

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday strongly condemned the “disturbing” smear campaign against Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir and other institutions by his predecessor Imran Khan and urged Pakistanis living abroad to raise their voices against it. Khan, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, has accused Gen Munir of orchestrating the crackdown against him last week by the country’s security personnel in a corruption case.

“The campaign against the Army chief is intolerable and a continuation of the conspiracy against the institutions,” Prime Minister Sharif was quoted as saying by the PM Office. In a tweet, Sharif directly held Khan responsible for the campaign against Gen Munir.

“PTI’s disgusting smear campaign against Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir at the behest of Imran Niazi is deserving of the strongest condemnation,” he tweeted. “This man (Khan) is stooping to unprecedented lows in his desperation for power & going to the extent of damaging the country &



undermining our armed forces & their leadership,” he said in another tweet.

Prime Minister Sharif said the campaign against Gen Munir, who he said was the “first army chief to be appointed on merit in Pakistan,” could only be the agenda of the enemies of Pakistan. Gen Munir, who served as chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), replaced Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa as the Chief of Army Staff in November last year.

Sharif said “toxic politics” was being spread, as he urged patriotic Pakistanis living abroad to raise their voices against the “foreign-funded campaign.”

The Pakistan Prime Minister also blamed Khan for dragging heads of state institutions for his dirty politics, which he said was against the Constitution. “Strict legal

action should be taken against those who instigate chaos, riots and rebellion in Pakistan,” the premier warned. Pakistani police on Sunday registered a terrorism case against Khan and over a dozen PTI leaders for indulging in vandalism, attacking security personnel and creating unrest outside the judicial complex here ahead of a court hearing in a graft case involving the ousted premier.

Clashes erupted outside the Islamabad Judicial Complex on Saturday when Khan arrived in Islamabad from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana case. Khan has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana, and selling them for profit. Established in 1974, the Toshakhana is a department under the administrative control of the Cabinet Division and stores precious gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by heads of other governments and states and foreign dignitaries.

# IMF denies tying economic bailout to compromise on Pak’s nuclear prog

Islamabad (PTI): The IMF on Monday rubbished claims that it has attached nuclear-programme-related strings for the revival of Pakistan’s much-anticipated bailout programme that has been stalled for months, a media report said. Cash-strapped Pakistan is awaiting a much-needed USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was originally due to be disbursed in November last year. The funds are part of a USD 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting on external debt obligations.

Pakistan, currently in the throes of a major economic crisis, is grappling with high external debt, a weak local currency and dwindling foreign exchange reserves enough to shore up for barely one month’s imports.

Esther Perez Ruiz, IMF’s resident representative in

Islamabad, has denied attaching any strings to the External Fund Facility (EFF), according to Geo TV.

“Regarding recent speculation that programme discussions with the authorities for the ninth review under the IMF-supported programme may have covered Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme, I want to be categorical that there is absolutely no truth to this or any insinuated link between the past or current IMF supported programme and decision by any Pakistani government over its nuclear programme,” the report said, quoting the official.

The IMF chief said discussions have exclusively focused on economic policies to solve Pakistan’s economy and balance of payments problems, in line with the Fund’s mandate for promoting macroeconomic and financial stability. It comes days after Pakistan’s Finance Minister Ishaq Dar assured Parliament that the federal government

would not make any compromise on the country’s nuclear and missile programme despite tough economic conditions and hurdles to secure a loan from the IMF. “Let me assure you that nobody is going to compromise anything on the nuclear or the missile programme of Pakistan — no way,” Dar told Parliament last week. Dar also indirectly held Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and its chief Imran Khan responsible for the delay in the IMF funding as he blamed the then government of Imran Khan for agreeing on tough conditions to get the funding.

Separately, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Pakistan’s nuclear programme was being “jealously guarded by the state.”

Pakistan has been hosting the IMF mission since early February to negotiate the terms of the deal, including the adoption of policy measures to manage its fiscal deficit ahead of the annual budget due around June.

# ‘No such thing as Palestinian people’

Tel Aviv (AP): A firebrand Israeli minister claimed there’s “no such thing” as a Palestinian people as Israel’s new coalition government, its most hard-line ever, plowed ahead on Monday with a part of its plan to overhaul the judiciary. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition said it was pushing a key part of the overhaul — which would give the coalition control over who becomes a justice or a judge — before the parliament takes a monthlong holiday break next week.

The development came a day after an Israeli and Palestinian delegation at a meeting in Egypt, mediated by Egyptian, Jordanian and U.S. officials, pledged to take steps to lower tensions roiling the region ahead of a sensitive holiday season. It reflected the limited influence the Biden administration appears to have over Israel’s new far-right government and raised questions about attempts to lower tensions, both inside Israel and with the Palestinians, ahead of a sensitive holiday season. As the nego-

tiators were issuing a joint communique, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich delivered a speech in Paris saying the notion of a Palestinian people was artificial. “There is no such thing as a Palestinian nation. There is no Palestinian history. There is no Palestinian language,” he said in France late Sunday. He spoke at a lectern draped with what appeared to be a map of Israel that included the occupied West Bank and parts of Jordan. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said Smotrich’s remarks were “conclusive evidence of the extremist, racist Zionist ideology that governs the parties of the current Israeli government.”

A far-right settler leader who opposes Palestinian statehood, Smotrich has a history of offensive statements against the Palestinians. Last month, he called for the Palestinian town of Hawara in the West Bank to be “erased” after radical Jewish settlers rampaged through the town in response to a shooting attack that killed two Israelis.

# Amazon to lay off 9,000 more employees

New York (AP): Amazon plans to eliminate 9,000 more jobs in the next few weeks, CEO Andy Jassy said in a memo to staff on Monday.

The job cuts would mark the second largest round of layoffs in the company’s history, adding to the 18,000 employees the company said it would lay off in January.

In the memo, Jassy said the second phase of the company’s annual planning process completed this month and led to the additional job cuts. He said Amazon will still hire in some strategic areas. “Some may ask why we didn’t announce these role reductions with the ones we announced a couple months ago. The short answer is that not all of the teams were done with their analyses in the late fall; and rather than rush through these assessments without the appropriate diligence, we chose to share these decisions as we’ve made them so people had the information as soon as possible,” Jassy said.

# Top Af Taliban leader issues decree against nepotism

Islamabad (AP): The supreme leader of the Taliban has issued a decree against nepotism, barring officials in Afghanistan’s Taliban administration from hiring relatives in government positions. The shadowy leader, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, also ordered all Taliban officials to sack their sons and other relatives who are already working in their administration. The decree was posted late on Saturday on the Taliban government’s Twitter account.

“It is an order to all officials in the ministries, departments and independent authorities that no one is allowed to appoint family members or relatives in government positions,” the decree said. The tweet did not elaborate on the reasons behind the decree but it followed rumours that many Taliban officials have appointed their sons and

relatives in high-ranking government positions rather than professionals or those with experience needed for the posts. Taliban government spokesmen were not immediately available on Monday to elaborate on the order or provide further details. The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in mid-August 2021 amid the chaotic departure of U.S. and NATO troops after 20 years. Despite initial promises of a more moderate stance, the Taliban gradually reimposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, as they did during their previous rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. Girls are now barred from school beyond the sixth grade and women are banned from working, studying, travelling without a male companion, and even going to parks, gyms or bath houses.

# Kenya Opp leads anti-Govt protests

AP ■ NAIROBI

At least three Kenyan legislators and several protesters have been arrested in protests in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, organised by the opposition demanding the resignation of President William Ruto. Hundreds of demonstrators spread across the city have not managed to reach the designated meeting point in the central business district as police dispersed them with teargas through the morning. The opposition called for protests against Ruto who they say was not validly elected in the August 2022 elections. They are also blaming Ruto’s administration for the rising cost of living. Nairobi police boss Adamson Bungei said those arrested in the protests would be released after paying cash bail. Bungei had over the weekend said police had denied the opposition permission to hold their protests and that any congregation would be illegal. Opposition leader Raila Odinga



on Sunday insisted that protests would proceed as planned and demonstrators would march to

State House, the official residence of the president. Odinga said Kenyan citizens have a con-

stitutional right to demonstrate and the role of the police is to protect them after they issue a notification in advance. Police have been heavily deployed to State House with motorists and pedestrians being stopped from accessing the road there. Most shops in Nairobi’s central business district closed on Monday as business owners feared looting.

The leaders who have been arrested include the senate minority leader Stewart Madzayo and members of parliament Opiyo Wandati and Amina Mnyazi. Other legislators who had turned up at the designated meeting point in the city were dispersed by the police with teargas.

They retreated to parliament buildings where they announced that protests would continue through the afternoon. Kenya’s opposition has in the past held violent demonstrations in which people have died.

# Archeologists uncover ‘oldest pearly town’ in UAE

Siniyah Island: Archaeologists said Monday they have found the oldest pearly town in the Persian Gulf on an island off one of the northern sheikhdoms of the United Arab Emirates. Artifacts found in this town on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain, likely once home to thousands of people and hundreds of homes, date as far back as the region’s pre-Islamic history in the late 6th century. While older pearly towns have been mentioned in historical texts, this represents the first time archaeologists say they have physically found one from this ancient era across the nations of the Persian Gulf.

“This is the oldest example of that kind of very

specifically Khaleeji pearly town,” said Timothy Power, an associate professor of archaeology at the United Arab Emirates University, using a word that means “Gulf” in Arabic. “It’s the spiritual ancestor of towns like Dubai.” The pearly town sits on Siniyah Island, which shields the Khor al-Beida marshlands in Umm al-Quwain, an emirate some 50 kilometers (30 miles) northeast of Dubai along the coast of the Persian Gulf. The island, whose name means “flashing lights” likely due to the effect of the white-hot sun overhead, already has seen archaeologists discover an ancient Christian monastery dating back as many as 1,400 years.

The town sits directly



south of that monastery on one of the curling fingers of the island and stretches across some 12 hectares (143,500 square yards). There, archaeologists found a variety of homes made of beach rock and lime mortar, ranging from cramped quarters to more sprawling homes with cour-

yards, suggesting a social stratification, Power said. The site also bears signs of year-round habitation, unlike other pearly operations run in seasonal spots in the region.

“The houses are crammed in there, cheek by jowl,” he added. “The key thing there is permanence. People are living

there all year around.”

In the homes, archaeologists have discovered loose pearls and diving weights, which the free divers used to quickly drop down to the seabed while relying only on their held breath.

The town predates the rise of Islam across the Arabian Peninsula, making its residents likely Christians. Islam’s Prophet Muhammad was born around 570 and died in 632 after conquering Mecca in present-day Saudi Arabia.

Umm al-Quwain’s Department of Tourism and Archaeology, UAE University, the Italian Archaeological Mission in the emirate and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York

University all took part in the excavation. Umm al-Quwain, the least-populated emirate in the UAE, plans to build a visitor’s center at the site. Today, the area near the marshland is more known for the low-cost liquor store at the emirate’s Barracuda Beach Resort. In recent months, authorities have demolished a hulking, Soviet-era cargo plane linked to a Russian gunrunner known as the “Merchant of Death” as it builds a bridge to Siniyah Island for a \$675 million real estate development. Authorities hope that development, as well as other building, will grow the emirate’s economy. However, even this ancient site bears lessons for the Emirates.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Known to General public that my client ANAND KUMAR is purchasing property in PROPERTY BEARING NO-RZ-B-75,(THREE FLOOR) NORTHERN SIDE AREA 100 SQ YARDS OUT OF KHASRA NO-31/4 SITUATED IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE DABRI DELHI STATE DELHI COLONY KNOWN AS BABRIKTN, NEW DELHI-110045, from Sh. Satyavir Singh and mortgaging with Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. and Sh. Satyavir Singh don't have original Probate of will executed by Smt. Jaswanti Devi in favour of Sh. Satyavir Singh And if any person is having any objection, right or claim in respect of the said property in capacity in any manner or said mortgage then he may contact the undersign within 8 days of publication of this Notice.

**AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION**  
Ch. No. 760, Dwarka Court, Sector-19, Dwarka, New Delhi-110015  
M.:- 98990113918

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The public at large is hereby informed that property bearing number R-14 / 34, Raj Nagar, situated in Dist Ghaziabad, UP PIN-201002, measuring 288.10 Square Meters is mortgaged with the State Bank of India, SMC Branch, Sector-118, Noida, Dist Gautam Buddh Nagar since 2013. It is further informed to the public at large that Original Auctioned Letter and Original Possession Letter issued in the name of Shri Chetan Swapnil S/o Late Shri Tulsi Ram by Ghaziabad Development Authority are not traceable in the records. Any person dealing with the said property in the name of bona-fide owner Shri Chetan Swapnil shall be doing so at his own risk and our client shall not be responsible.

**Pawan Kumar Teggi (Advocate)**  
Ch. No. 948, District & Session Noida Court, Gautam Greater Budd Nagar.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mrs. Sangita Jain is the owner of built up first floor, without roof rights, L Type, having area measuring 60 Sq. Yds., "Said floor" part of Property bearing No. WA-106, Old Plot No. 23, out of Khara No. 176, Situated at abadi Gali No. 16, WA Block, Shakarpur, in the area of Village Shakarpur Khara, Delhi, vide G.A. AT-5 & Will dated 22.04.2010. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said property to a person who intends to obtain loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection/s upon the ownership of above owner over the said floor, its sale/mortgage/litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

**Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)**  
200, 2nd Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15  
Ph. 011-41105732, kumar.associates.advocates@gmail.com

**LOST & FOUND**

I, Nikila Arora Dio Lajpat Arora, R/o 87A, HIG Flats, Express View Apartment Pocket-B, Sector-105, Noida my Original Document Receipt No. 046, dated 16th July 2016, in the name of my mother Late. Seema Arora having an area of 495 Sq. feet, 45/187 Sq.mt. of Anandam Suites & Omnave Eternity Vrindavan District Mathura Uttar Pradesh unit Number ASV/14/001 Pin Code 281121, Developer M/s. Kansal Infra planner Pvt.Ltd. bought from whose Registered Office is B-3/252, 253 Ground Floor Sector-6 Rohini Delhi-110085 Whereas Factually Lost Somewhere Whose Complaint/Fir In E-station Lucknow Police Station/Fir Station Dary No.292300060158033 Dated 18/03/2023 have registered.

**UJVN LIMITED**

H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephone:- 0135 -2763508, 2763808 Fax 2763507,  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: [www.ujvn.in](http://www.ujvn.in)

पत्रांक सं. 262 दिनांक 20.03.2023

**Tender Extension Notice**

Due to unavoidable circumstances the Office of the Executive Engineer (E&M) SHP, UJVN Limited, Rishikesh hereby extends the date of bids invitation for E-Tender No 01/G(MSHP)/UJVNL/2022-23 As per details given below:

Last date for submission of Tender 28/03/2023 at 17:00 Hrs  
Date of Opening of tenders 29/03/2023 at 11:30 Hrs  
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"

**Executive Engineer (E&M) (SHP)/Rishikesh**

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

**EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED**

(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works & Services are available on i) Website of Coal India Limited: [www.coalindia.in](http://www.coalindia.in), ii) Website of ECL: [www.easterncoal.nic.in](http://www.easterncoal.nic.in), iii) CIL e-Procurement Portal: <https://coalindia.tenders.nic.in>, iv) Central Public Procurement Portal:<https://eprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal: <https://gem.gov.in>".

(By Order)  
ECL

**ECL's Website : [www.easterncoal.gov.in](http://www.easterncoal.gov.in)**

**INDAG RUBBER LIMITED**

(CIN: L74899DL1978PLC009038)

Regd. Office: Khemka House, 11, Community Centre Saket, New Delhi-110017.  
Phone: 011-26963172/73, 26863310, 26961211, 41664818, Fax No.: 011-26856350  
E-mail Id:- [info@indagrubber.com](mailto:info@indagrubber.com), Website: [www.indagrubber.com](http://www.indagrubber.com)

**NOTICE**

**(For the Attention of Equity Shareholders of the Company)**

Compulsory Transfer of Equity Shares of the Company to the DEMAT Account of the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority.

Notice is published in pursuance of section 124(6) of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016 ("the said Rules") notified by Ministry of Corporate Affairs as amended from time to time and Regulation 39 (4) of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.

The Rules, inter alia, require the Company to transfer all the shares in respect of which Dividend has not been claimed by the Shareholders after the last 7 consecutive years starting from the Final Dividend of the financial year 2015-2016, to the demat account of the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority set up by the Central Government within 30 days from the due date of transfer i.e July 2, 2023, in the manner as prescribed in the said Rules.

Accordingly, the Company has sent individual communications to the concerned shareholders whose shares are liable to be transferred to the demat account of the IEPF Authority in compliance of the said Rules, at their latest available address advising them to claim their dividends expeditiously. The Company has uploaded the complete details of such shareholders and their folio number or DPID- Client ID on its website i.e. [www.indagrubber.com](http://www.indagrubber.com). This Notice shall be deemed to be the adequate notice in respect of issue of new Share Certificate(s) by the Company on behalf of those Shareholders who hold Shares in physical form, for the purpose of transfer of their Shares to the DEMAT Account of the IEPF Authority in the manner as prescribed in the said Rules.

Concerned shareholders may note that, any further dividend, including other corporate benefits, on such shares shall be credited to the IEPF Account of the IEPF Authority. Upon credit of such shares to the said Demat account, no claim shall lie against the company in respect of the unclaimed dividend amount and such shares transferred to IEPF Account. However, shareholders may claim back the shares credited along with the unclaimed dividend amount from the IEPF Authority after following the procedure given under the IEPF Rules. The procedure for claiming the same is available at [www.mca.gov.in](http://www.mca.gov.in) and [www.iepf.gov.in](http://www.iepf.gov.in).

For any further information/ clarification on this matter, the concerned shareholder may write to the Company at Indag Rubber Limited, Khemka House, 11, Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017, Tel.: 011-26963172-73. Email-Info@indagrubber.com or contact the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent- Skyline Financial Services Pvt. Limited at D-153/A, 1st Floor, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020 Tel.: 011-26812682-83. email-[admin@skylinertd.com](mailto:admin@skylinertd.com).

**By order of the Board  
For Indag Rubber Limited  
Sd/-  
Company Secretary**

**Date: March 20, 2023  
Place: New Delhi**



# PSU banks' gross NPA declines to 5.53%, profit of ₹70,167 cr in April-Dec made

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has taken various reforms following which asset quality of public sector banks has improved significantly with gross NPA ratio declining from the peak of 14.6 per cent in March 2018 to 5.53 per cent in December 2022, Parliament was informed on Monday.

All PSBs are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22, and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in first nine months of current financial year, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

At the same time, resilience has increased with provision coverage ratio of PSBs rising from 46 per cent to 89.9 per cent in December 2022, he said, adding capital adequacy ratio of PSBs improved significantly from 11.5 per cent in March 2015 to 14.5 per cent in

December 2022.

Total market cap of PSBs (excluding IDBI Bank, which was categorised as private sector bank in January 2019) increased from Rs 4.52 lakh crore in March 2018 to Rs 10.63 lakh crore in December 2022, he said.

Karad also said banks, earlier placed under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework by RBI, have made significant improvement.

Talking about various measures taken to improve the financial health of PSBs, Karad said, the government implemented a comprehensive 4R strategy of Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem.

Major banking reforms undertaken by the government over the last eight years addressed credit discipline, responsible lending and improved governance, besides adoption of technology, amalga-



mation of banks, and maintaining general confidence of bankers, he said.

In reply to another question, Karad said, as per the information provided by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), the total estimated vehicle fleet is 30.48 crore (excluding data from Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Lakshadweep), of which 16.54 crore vehicles are uninsured.

Replying to another ques-

tion, Karad said the government since 2016 has given 'in-principle' approval for strategic disinvestment of 36 cases of public sector enterprises (PSEs) and/or subsidiaries/ units/ joint ventures of PSEs/ banks.

Of the 36 cases, 33 are being handled by Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) and 3 cases are being handled by the respective Administrative Ministry/Department, he said.

"Out of the 33 cases being handled by DIPAM, strategic disinvestment transactions have been completed in 10 cases; 5 PSEs are under consideration for closure; 1 case is held up due to litigation, 1 case is under Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) in NCLT and 2 transactions are under review for feasibility," he said, adding, remaining 14 transactions are at various stages.

In other PSEs, where the government continues to retain control, disinvestment through minority stake sale is carried out through various SEBI-approved methods such as initial public offer (IPO), offer for sale (OFS), buyback of shares etc. From time to time based on prevailing market conditions and investor interest, he said.

The modernisation and capacity expansion of PSEs are taken up by the respective boards of PSEs under the administrative control of different ministries, he added.



## Nine Adani group stocks end lower; snaps 2-day winning streak

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine out of ten listed companies of the Adani group closed with losses on Monday, snapping two-day of gains amid an across-the-board sell-off in the broader market.

While some Adani stocks hit their lowest circuit prices, flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd declined 3.84 per cent to close at Rs 1,805.10 on BSE. The flagship commanded a market capitalisation of Rs 2.05 lakh crore. The stock was the second biggest loser among Nifty stocks, dropping by 3.44 per cent.

Adani Total Gas plunged 4.99 per cent to end at Rs 853.10, Adani Power tumbled 4.83 per cent to close at Rs 190.30 and Adani Transmission went lower by 1.49 per cent to settle at Rs 1,009.60 per share. The three stocks hit their lower price bands on the exchange before recovering some ground.

Shares of Ambuja Cements nosedived 3.37 per cent to close at Rs 365.50, Adani Wilmar fell 3.16 per cent to end at Rs 413.85, NDTV dived 3.11 per cent to settle at Rs 199.30 and ACC declined 1.84 per cent to end at Rs 1,697.05 on the BSE.

Also, shares of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) fell 1.96 per cent to end at Rs 666.75 apiece on the bourse.

However, Adani Green Energy climbed 3.91 per cent to settle at Rs 848.75 per share. The

company's market valuation rose to Rs 1.34 lakh crore.

The BSE Sensex benchmark plunged 360.95 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 57,628.95 points. The broader NSE Nifty fell 111.65 points or 0.65 per cent to close at 16,988.40.

On Friday, seven Adani group companies had settled higher.

Last week, NSE and BSE announced that two Adani group stocks — Adani Green Energy and NDTV — will be moved to the first stage of the long-term additional surveillance measures (ASM) framework from Monday.

The move also comes close on the heels of the two exchanges excluding Adani Enterprises, Adani Power and Adani Wilmar under the short-term ASM.

After taking a beating on the bourses, following the report by US-based short seller Hindenburg Research, many of the group stocks have recovered some lost ground. However, amid sluggish broader market trends, the group's stocks have declined in the last few trading sessions.

The report had made a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share-price manipulation, against it. The group has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.

## PSUs asked to issue LoCs based on their financial strength



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has asked central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) to issue letters of comfort (LoCs) on the basis of their own financial strength so that no liability devolves on the Government of India.

The Office Memorandum dated March 20, 2023, has been issued following a request from some CPSUs in the oil and power sector seeking relaxation with regard to the issuance of LoCs.

"In view of requirements, it has been decided that CPSUs may issue LoCs on its own financial strength and all such LoCs shall only be issued after specifically inserting the following clause — under no circumstances, the liability under this Letter of Comfort shall devolve on the Government of India," the memorandum said.

Under the provision of the fiscal responsibility law, the budget requires to provide details of guarantees given by the government.

It further clarified that ministries and departments will not issue any letters of comfort as specified under the Office Memorandum dated March 31, 2022 on behalf of the Government of India.

Issuance of LoCs based on own financial strength is a part of regular business practice.

It enables these entities to raise resources at competitive rates for their capex or working capital needs as well as furthering the business interests of their joint ventures or subsidiaries or Group companies.

## Credit Suisse, UBS shares plunge after takeover announcement

AP ■ GENEVA

Shares of Credit Suisse plunged 63 per cent in Searly trading Monday after the announcement that banking giant UBS would buy its troubled rival for almost USD 3.25 billion in a deal orchestrated by regulators to stave off further market-shaking turmoil in the global banking system.

UBS shares were down 14 per cent in early trading on the Swiss stock exchange.

Swiss authorities urged UBS to take over its smaller rival after a plan for Credit Suisse to borrow up to 50 billion francs (USD 54 billion) failed to reassure investors and the bank's customers.

Shares of Credit Suisse and other banks plunged after the failure of two banks in the US raised questions about other potentially shaky global financial institutions.

Credit Suisse is among 30 financial institutions known as globally systemically important banks, and authorities worried about the fallout if they were to fail.

The deal was "one of great breadth for the stability of international finance," Swiss President Alain Berset said as he announced it Sunday night. "An uncontrolled collapse of Credit Suisse would lead to incalculable consequences for the country and the international financial system."

Switzerland's executive branch, a seven-member governing body that includes Berset, passed an emergency ordinance allowing the merger to go through without shareholder approval.

Markets remain jittery despite the best efforts of regulators to restore calm. Global stock markets sank Monday, with Hong Kong's main index sliding more than 3 per cent. Market benchmarks in Frankfurt and Paris opened down more than 1 per cent. Shanghai, Tokyo and Sydney also declined. Wall Street futures were off 1 per cent. Oil prices plunged more than USD 2 per barrel.

Credit Suisse Chairman Axel Lehmann called the sale to UBS "a clear turning point."

"It is a historic, sad and very challenging day for Credit Suisse, for Switzerland and for the global financial markets," Lehmann said, adding that the focus is now on the future and on Credit Suisse's 50,000 employees, 17,000 in Switzerland.

Following news of the Swiss deal, the world's central banks announced coordinated moves to



stabilize banks, including access to a lending facility for banks to borrow US dollars if they need them, a practice widely used during the 2008 crisis.

Three months after Lehman Brothers collapsed in September of 2008, such swap lines had been tapped for USD 580 billion. Swap lines also were rolled out during market turmoil in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Today is one of the most significant days in European banking since 2008, with far-reaching repercussions for the industry," said Max Georgiou, an analyst at Third Bridge. "These events could alter the course of not only European banking but also the wealth management industry more generally."

Colm Kelleher, the UBS chairman, hailed "enormous opportunities" from the takeover and highlighted his bank's "conservative risk culture" — a subtle swipe at Credit Suisse's reputation for more swashbuckling gambles in search of bigger returns. He said the combined group would create a wealth manager with over USD 5 trillion in total invested assets.

UBS officials said they plan to sell off parts of Credit Suisse or reduce the bank's size.

Swiss Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter said the council "regrets that the bank, which was once a model institution in Switzerland and part of our strong location, was able to get into this situation at all."



## Sensex, Nifty close lower amid global equity rout on banking crisis worries

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex declined by 360 points while the Nifty closed below the 17,000-level on Monday due to a sell-off in financials, IT and capital goods shares amid a global rout in equities on lingering worries over the banking crisis.

Snapping its two-day gaining streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 360.95 points or 0.62 per cent to close at 57,628.95 as 23 of its stocks ended in the red. The index tanked more than 900 points to touch a low of 57,084.91 before recovering some losses at the day end.

The broader Nifty of the NSE plunged by 111.65 points or 0.65 per cent to close below the 17,000-level at 16,988.40. As many as 40 Nifty stocks declined while 10 advanced.

Analysts said investors fretted over the US banking crisis even as Federal Reserve and other central banks took efforts

to ease a fast-growing banking crisis.

Investors were also concerned ahead of a Federal Reserve meeting to decide on more possible interest rate hikes.

"The fear of contagion of the financial crisis has kept investors away from the equity markets as the global market faces numerous hurdles. Despite Swiss regulators' intervention to protect the global financial system, investor sentiment remained shaky," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Banking giant UBS is acquiring crisis-ridden Credit Suisse for around USD 3.25 billion in a deal arranged by Swiss regulators to avoid further turmoil in the global banking system.

The move failed to calm jittery investors as Credit Suisse tanked 63 per cent and UBS sank 14 per cent on Swiss bourses. Credit Suisse is among 30 institutions known as globally systemically important banks.



## Samsung to invest in smart manufacturing capabilities, research and development in India

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Korean electronics major Samsung will invest in setting up smart manufacturing capabilities at its mobile phone plant in Noida to make production more competitive, the company's global head for mobile business said here on Monday.

Samsung Electronics President and Head of Mobile eXperience Business T M Roh, in response to a PTI query on the company's investment plan in India, said that the company will continue to invest in research and development facilities in the country.

"We will continue our investment to bring the optimised or smart factory to the Noida facilities. We will continue our investment there. I believe that our investment for the smart factory will bring competitiveness in the production," Roh said.

The company started a manufacturing and R&D centre in India in 1996 and now has close to 70,000 employees in the country. Samsung now has its second

biggest manufacturing facility in the world at Noida and biggest research and development centre at Bengaluru in India.

The company this year started manufacturing its premium Galaxy S23 series in India.

"Samsung India has been focussing on make in India, make for India. We are not only meeting the domestic need but also use it as a hub for export," Roh said.

He said the company is collaborating with local vendors in India for mobile chargers and components like mechanics.

"It could not have been possible to be competitive without collaboration with local partners. The technology collaboration will continue with local partners. We have products for export, which are done in close collaboration with local vendors. In the case of OLED display manufacturing, we have been closely working with local vendors," Roh said.

Samsung has around 10,000 employees at its R&D centres across India, out of which the largest base of close to 3,500 is located at its Bengaluru centre.

## Toxic work culture, excessive pressure main reason of quiet quitting for most Gen Z: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Nearly half of Gen Z respondents consider toxic work culture and excessive work pressure as the trigger for quiet quitting, a report said on Monday.

Over 48 per cent of Gen Z, those born in mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s, attribute toxic work culture as the primary cause for quiet quitting, while a mere 6 per cent believe it to be a result of extended office timings, according to a report - Quiet Quitting and its Effect on Organisational Work Structure - by Kolkata based staffing firm Genius Consultants.

Notably, it revealed that 23 per cent of the respondents

blame office politics and excessive work pressure for the issue.

Quiet quitting is a term which is used for those employees who put no more effort into their jobs than absolutely necessary.

According to the report 'Quiet Quitting' has led to a new trend - Bare Minimum Mondays, where the employees specially the Gen Z tend to put in bare minimum efforts on the work front on the first day of the week.

The report, Quiet Quitting and its Effect on Organisational Work Structure, is based on an online survey among 1,928 employees across sectors.

It further revealed that over



54 per cent of India Inc are aware of the term 'Quiet Quitting' and 74 per cent of the respondents believed that the quiet quitting culture is distressing the work environment.

In current times, the work-

force perceives their job as more than just a means to an end, namely a source of income, said the report.

"Given the current situation, both the 'quiet quitting culture' and the 'Bare Minimum

## PE/VC investments nearly halve in Feb 2023: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Investments by private equity and venture capital funds declined by 44 per cent to USD 3.7 billion in February compared to the same period a year ago, a report said on Monday.

The bets by the long-term investors were 13 per cent lower when compared to the investments in the preceding month of January, the report by industry lobby Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association and consultancy firm EY, said. "...rising global recession

concerns, increasing cost of capital and mismatch in valuation expectations between sellers and investors are turning out to be major impediments in the deployment of capital," EY's partner Vivek Soni said.

He added that the recent events in the global financial world after the failure of SVB and the contagion spreading to other mid-market US banks catering to the technology sector has added to the overall uncertainty, and "may discourage investors from making bold bets in the immediate term".



The venture investing industry poured in USD 6.6 billion into companies in February 2022, while the same stood at USD 4.314 billion in January 2023.

In volume terms, the number of deals dropped by 60 per cent in February with 55 trans-

actions getting recorded as against 139 in the year-ago period, the report said, adding that there were 75 deals in January 2023.

From a sectoral perspective, real estate led by bagging USD 2.4 billion of the overall USD 3.7 billion in investments with the USD 1.9 billion funding announcement by an arm of CDQP and Temasek to set up an investment platform for office properties in India being at the top.

There were only nine large deals of USD 100 million or

more announced in February, aggregating to USD 3 billion in overall such commitments.

February 2023 recorded 11 exits worth USD 731 million compared to USD 1.4 billion recorded in February 2022 across 13 deals, and USD 898 million recorded across 20 deals in January 2023, it said.

Funds dedicated to India raised USD 881 million as compared to USD 347 million in the year-ago period, it said, adding that Kotak Alternate Assets' USD 590 million for a data centre fund was the largest.

## Clasico Brands UK Issues trademark infringement notice to Third Unicorn Ltd

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Clasico Brands UK Ltd. Recently issued a legal notice to Third Unicorn Private Limited and its shareholders with respect to infringement of the trademark MINISTRY OF CRICKET, which is owned by Clasico in various countries, including India.

Clasico Brands is a global company having its roots in all 5 continents of the world and operates in the personal and home care category with self-owned brands as well as global license franchisees. It owns production facilities are located across Europe, Asia, Middle East & Latin America. Third Unicorn is a tech start-up by Ashneer Grover. Madhuri Jain Grover and Aseem Ghavri are the Co-founders of Third Unicorn.

**BACKGROUND TO MINISTRY OF CRICKET**

Mr. Ajay Bindroo, the founder of Clasico Brands, had conceptualized and adopted the brand MINISTRY OF CRICKET as far back as the year 2014, and had begun to take steps to register this trademark around the world from the year 2019. Clasico is about to launch business operations under the brand MINISTRY OF CRICKET in the very near future under the entrepreneurship of Bindroo.



# Barca snatch Clasico win over Madrid

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona snatched a 2-1 Clasico win over Real Madrid with Franck Kessie's late goal Sunday to move 12 points clear at the top of La Liga. The victory dents Madrid's ambitions of retaining the title and leaves the Catalans close to lifting the trophy for the first time since 2019.

Carlo Ancelotti's Real took the lead through a Ronald Araujo own goal but Barcelona pulled level when Sergi Roberto tucked home just before half-time. Both sides had chances to win the game and Marco Asensio struck for Madrid, but the goal was ruled offside by VAR, before Alejandro Balde set up Kessie in the 92nd minute.

"We came from a Marco Asensio goal that we didn't know was offside and from losing, we scored Franck's goal, and the truth is it tastes a bit better, winning like that in the last minute," Sergi Roberto told Movistar.

"There are a lot of games left and you can never give Madrid up for dead. 12 points is a tricky distance to have to go, but it's up to us, and that is good."

The build-up to the match was overshadowed by Barcelona's corruption charge in the "Caso Negreira" refereeing scandal.

Madrid joined Spanish prosecutors' complaint against Barcelona last week and their president Florentino Perez snubbed the game for the first time in over 20 years, amid rising tensions between the two Spanish giants.

That fed the match's intensity, both on and off the pitch, in Xavi's sixth Clasico as Barcelona coach but only his first at Camp Nou.

Xavi asked fans to make the stadium a pressure cooker and they responded, selling it out, whistling Madrid in possession and conjuring one of the best atmospheres of the season.

Madrid did not manage a single shot on target in their Copa del Rey semi-final first leg defeat by Barcelona earlier in March, but Karim Benzema



stung Marc-Andre ter Stegen's palms inside the first minute.

Robert Lewandowski responded at the other end by testing Thibaut Courtois as the veteran marksmen exchanged shots. When Barcelona conceded the opening goal of the game, it was friendly fire. Araujo deflected Vinicius' cross in at the near post, with Ter Stegen helpless.

Araujo, playing at right-back to counteract the Brazilian, has enjoyed his duels with Vinicius in the past but this time the winger triumphed, albeit fortuitously. Barcelona supporters became enraged by his emphatic celebration in

front of them. It was the first goal from open play Barcelona have conceded at Camp Nou in La Liga all season long, and only the second strike at home and ninth overall.

## COMEBACK CHARGE

Barcelona complained defender Nacho, already booked, should have been sent off for a hand-off on Raphinha.

The hosts did not get their wish, but were building up steam and found the breakthrough just before half-time, from an unlikely source.

Selected in place of injured mid-

fielder Pedri, Sergi Roberto was in the right place at the right time to control a loose ball in the box and arc it beyond Courtois.

Barcelona had significantly more possession than in their cup win over Madrid and significantly more chances.

Lewandowski sent a deflected piledriver narrowly wide as Madrid wobbled, prompting Carlo Ancelotti to roll the dice and bring on Rodrygo and Ferland Mendy.

It almost paid instant dividends as Madrid robbed Sergio Busquets and Rodrygo lashed inches over the bar.

Madrid substitute Asensio fired

home what might have been the winner but the goal was ruled out for offside after a nervy wait for VAR instruction.

Barcelona seemed content with the draw but Kessie's last-gasp strike sparked wild celebrations at Camp Nou.

Asked if Madrid's hopes of defending the title were over, Courtois told Movistar: "Yes, we have to be honest, we will keep fighting until the end but it's (12 points) now, we have the better head-to-head, but they have to lose four games and we have to win them all."

"Nothing is impossible but it's very difficult."



# Leverkusen shock Bayern to keep Dortmund top

AP ■ BERLIN

Argentina's World Cup winner Exequiel Palacios struck twice from the spot as Bayer Leverkusen blew the Bundesliga title race wide open with a shock 2-1 win over Bayern Munich on Sunday.

With a little help from VAR, Leverkusen came from behind to hand coach Xabi Alonso a famous win on his first reunion with former club Bayern and keep the champions from regaining top spot.

"It's an unbelievable feeling. I'm so proud of the way we played today," said Alonso, who played for Bayern from 2014 to 2017.

Bayern are a point behind leaders Borussia Dortmund and the two sides set to meet in the next round of games on April 1.

"That is now a must-win game for us, because it will be very difficult to win the title otherwise," said Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann.

"It was a deserved defeat today. Apart from the last 10 minutes, they were the better team," he added.

Bayern sporting director

Hasan Salihamidzic was scathing in his criticism of the performance.

"We let ourselves be overrun by a team who played in midweek. That's not what it means to be Bayern Munich," he said.

"VAR was a lifesaver today and it was a perfect example of how the system should work," said referee Tobias Stieler.

The win also kept Leverkusen afloat in the race for Europe, with Alonso's side now just three points adrift of sixth.

Elsewhere, Union Berlin gave their Champions League hopes a boost as a rare goal from Rani Khedira helped them to a 2-0 win over Bundesliga top-six rivals Eintracht Frankfurt.

Khedira — the brother of 2014 World Cup winner Sami — stabbed in the opener to score only his seventh goal in 194 Bundesliga appearances and lift Union back into third place.

"It's also my first goal for Union so I am very happy," Khedira told Dazn. "Today was much more about mentality than about tactics."



# Rennes cut PSG's lead in Ligue 1

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain's march towards another Ligue 1 title was slowed on Sunday as they went down 2-0 at home to Rennes, a result that allowed Marseille to close the gap on the leaders to seven points with 10 games remaining.

Kylian Mbappe had an effort disallowed for offside before Karl Toko-Ekambi put Rennes in front with a magnificent strike right on half-time. Arnaud Kalimuendo made it 2-0 three minutes after the restart against his former club, as PSG — faced with a defensive injury crisis — slumped to a first home league defeat of the campaign.

It is the Parisians' fourth Ligue 1 loss this season, all of them in 2023, and the second time they have been beaten by Rennes. They also lost when the teams last met in Brittany in January. Marseille responded by winning 2-1 away to Reims later, with Alexis Sanchez scoring twice.

"A defeat is always upsetting. Obviously I can't be happy with the way the match went but in the context, with the number of

players we had out, we knew we were going to have difficult moments in defence," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier.

PSG only have a ninth Ligue 1 title in 11 seasons left to play for after being knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich.

Galtier has insisted that the prospect of what would be a French record 11th top-flight title is sufficient motivation for his team, but their performance indicated otherwise.

"The objective is to win the league. Will this defeat mean the board will consider my future? Maybe. But everything needs to be put into context," Galtier added when asked about his position. "There are no excuses but there are reasons for it."

The result allowed Rennes to reclaim fifth place from Lille in the fight for European qualification.

"To beat Paris twice in the same season says something about us. If we are capable of taking six points out of six against such a team, it means we have progress to make so we can do that in 90 percent of our matches," said Rennes coach Bruno Genesio.

# Alcaraz routs Medvedev for Indian Wells title

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz swept past Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-2 on Sunday to win the Indian Wells ATP Masters 1000 and secure his return to number one in the world.

US Open champion Alcaraz ended Medvedev's 19-match winning streak, denying him a fourth title in as many tournaments to ensure he will supplant Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic atop the rankings.

"It feels amazing to lift the trophy here, to recover the No. 1," Alcaraz said. "I would say this has been the perfect tournament."

Serbia's Djokovic, barred from entering the United States because he hasn't been vaccinated against Covid-19, sat out Indian Wells and will miss the Miami Open starting this week, where Alcaraz is the defending champion.

Alcaraz, 19, who became the youngest world number one ever after his triumph at Flushing Meadows last year, claimed his third Masters 1000 title and joined compatriot Rafael Nadal as the only players to win at least three as a teenager. Nadal won six before turning 20.

He was unstoppable on Stadium Court, breaking through what he'd called the "wall" of Medvedev's formidable defenses.

Medvedev, coming off titles in Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai, could find no answer as Alcaraz fired winners from all over the court, defying the windy conditions.

"Daniil obviously didn't play at his best level, but I'm very happy for my performance and how I played this tournament."

He said the big change in him since a semi-final defeat to Nadal last year at Indian Wells was his comfort level on the game's biggest stages.

"I think my tennis didn't improve so much since last year. What I improve a lot is to not take the pressure, just to play relaxed. That, for me, is the most important thing."

"That's why I show a great level, because I feel like I have no pressure. I enjoy."

Medvedev certainly wasn't able to



## RYBAKINA BEATS SABALENKA TO WIN WOMEN'S TITLE

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina edged Aryna Sabalenka 7-6 (13/11), 6-4 on Sunday to win the Indian Wells WTA title and avenge her loss to the Belarusian in the Australian Open final.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina, the world number 10 who ousted top-ranked defending champion Iga Swiatek in the semi-finals, followed up with her first victory over second-ranked Sabalenka in five career meetings.

Rybakina, projected to rise to seventh in the world, handed Sabalenka just her second defeat of the year, denying her a third title to go with a win in Adelaide that presaged her first Grand Slam triumph at Melbourne.

"It's actually the first time it goes my way," Rybakina said as she accepted the trophy, a smiling Sabalenka leaning to the microphone to interject, "I will make sure it was the last one."

"We'll see next time," Rybakina laughed.



# Perez leads Red Bull sweep in Saudi Arabian GP

AP ■ JEDDAH

Red Bull's Sergio Perez flexed his street circuit muscles with dramatic effect on Sunday by storming to victory ahead of team-mate Max Verstappen at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

While the top two were clear cut, the next two places remained in confusion long after the race had finished with Fernando Alonso first stripped of third place and then reinstated in the early hours of Monday morning.

Perez, a 33-year-old Mexican, came home 5.355 seconds clear of the defending double world champion as Red Bull reeled off a masterful one-two triumph, the Dutchman having stormed through the field from 15th on the grid.

Verstappen also clocked the fastest lap of the race on the final lap to retain his lead of the embryonic drivers'

championship, snatching it back from Perez as they duelled at high speed.

It was Perez's fifth career win having previously triumphed in Monte Carlo and Singapore to earn his reputation as a 'street fighter'.

"It turned out to be tougher than expected," he said. "The safety car tried to take the victory from us again here, but not this year! The team did a great job. Now we must keep pushing."

Verstappen was eliminated from qualifying after a drive-shaft failure.

"It wasn't easy to get through the field," he said. "We settled for second so it's a good recovery in the end."

Two-time world champion Alonso finished a stirring third on track for Aston Martin to claim a 100th podium finish on his record-extending 357th start.

That place was initially taken from



him. He had received a five-second penalty for starting outside his grid position. When he tried to serve it during a pit stop, stewards ruled a jack had touched the car too soon and they hit Alonso with a 10-second penalty.

George Russell rose to third for Mercedes.

But Aston Martin requested a review and showed stewards videos of similar incidents that went unpunished. Stewards accepted that it was not clear the offence had broken Formula One rules and lifted the punishment.

Alonso was back to third followed by the two Mercedes cars of Russell and Lewis Hamilton.

Next were the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc, who started 12th. Esteban Ocon and his Alpine team-mate Pierre Gasly occupied the next two places.

# Alcaraz reclaims world No 1 ranking, Nadal out of top 10

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz returned to the top of the ATP rankings on Monday after his Indian Wells triumph, while Rafael Nadal dropped out of the top 10 for the first time in 18 years.

Spanish teenager Alcaraz cruised past Russian Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final to retake top spot from Novak Djokovic who was missing Indian Wells due to being unvaccinated against Covid.

American Taylor Fritz dropped five spots to world number 10 after his title defence ended in the quarter-finals.

Nadal, who has been out injured since a second-round exit



at the Australian Open, fell to 13th place. The 22-time Grand Slam champion had previously been inside the top 10 since April 2005.



# GRACE KNOCKS RCB, GG OUT OF WPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

UP Warriorz's Grace Harris (72 off 41 balls) once again set the stage on fire with her heavy-duty hitting, as the team defeated Gujarat Giants for the second consecutive time by three wickets with just one delivery to secure a place in the playoffs of the inaugural season here on Monday.

Following the win, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals and UP Warriors have made the grade, while Gujarat Giants and Royal Challengers Bangalore have been eliminated from the tournament.

Grace smashed the Giants attack to smithereens, hitting seven fours and four maximums in the chase of the Giants' 178/6. When she departed at 172, caught by Kim Garth of Harleen Deol, there were still seven runs to be scored for victory.

There were a few nervous moments when Simran Shaikh departed and it became 177/7 for the Warriorz. Two runs off the last two deliveries can always be a tricky proposition, but Sophie Ecclestone swept a Sneha Rana delivery to the boundary to signal the win with just one ball to spare.

Grace was involved in two productive partnerships, with countrymate Tahlia McGrath (57) and Sophie Ecclestone (19 not out).

While Graces' stand with McGrath was worth 78 runs, with Sophie it fetched 42 runs and it ensured an easy passage into the knockouts with just one balls to spare.

The partnership between Grace and Tahlia had laid a solid foundation and the former con-

tinued even after her country-mate had departed at 117/4.

Grace, who had scored an unbeaten 59 the last time the teams had met at the DY Patil Stadium and ensured a thrilling victory for the Warriorz with just one ball to spare, played with such ferocity, it made the Giants' bowlers look mere pedestrians.

All this despite the UP Warriorz being off to a rank bad start on a pitch that offered good bounce and carry. The team was down in the dumps at 3/39 before Grace and Tahlia came together to turn the tables on the Giants.

Skipper Alyssa Healy (12) went early after giving indication she meant business.

Young Giants medium-pacer Monica Patel took the prized scalp in just the second over of the innings after being dispatched for consecutive boundaries by the Australian.

Monika was given a pep talk by team-mates, and the result was the big wicket two deliveries later. The left-arm kept a back-of-length delivery on middle and leg stump that bounced a bit extra and Healy committed herself to a pull shot slightly early, getting an edge which flew to Harleen Deol at deep deep square leg.

The third over saw the Warriorz lose their second key batter in Kiran Navgire with Australian right-arm quick Kim Garth dismissing the quick for just four and reducing the Warriorz to 2/19.

To add to their woes, left-arm spinner Tanuja Kanwar got Devika Vaidya caught behind the stumps by Sushma Verma in the fifth over. Devika aimlessly raced down the track



to flick the ball only to get a feather touch which flew to the keeper.

Earlier, a brilliant 93-run partnership between Dayalan Hemalatha (57 off 33 balls) and the second costliest player Ashleigh Gardner (60 off 39 balls) helped Gujarat Giants post 178/6 in their do-or-die clash.

The authority and attacking ways with which the duo played indicated they were on a mission, given the do-or-die nature of the contest as the tournament enters its business end.

By the time the partnership ended, with Hemalatha dismissed by Parshavi Chopra in the 17th over with the team total on 143, the stand had put the team on course for a competitive total.

South African opener Laura Wolvaardt and Sophia Dunkley went about their task of scoring runs in powerplay with a lot of urgency. Runs flowed freely while the two batting stalwarts were at the crease, with Wolvaardt smacking a fine boundary off just the third ball of the opening over bowled by left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani.

The 23-year-old used the width on offer to steer it past backward point, making her intentions clear. Just two overs into the match and Gujarat Giants were in overdrive, with the team having scored 26 runs.

The powerful six by the South African off a length delivery outside off stump from left-arm India spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad in the second over had class and power written all over it.

Soon England batter Dunkley took charge, giving a further fillip to the scoring rate.

## Gujarat Giants gave bewildering reasoning for my omission: Dottin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indian Deandra Dottin has expressed disappointment at her exclusion from Women's Premier League franchise Gujarat Giants, terming it "bewildering".

The 31-year-old Caribbean all-rounder was signed for Rs 60 lakh by the Adani-owned side, but before the start of the tournament, she was excluded from the squad on medical grounds.

The Giants had stated that Dottin failed to get medical clearance by the deadline, which was the reason why they replaced her with Australia's Kim Garth. But Dottin refuted the claims made by the franchise.

"I wish to issue a brief statement in light of ongoing speculation surrounding my recent exclusion from the inaugural Women's Premier League that is currently taking place in India.

"I remain deeply disappointed by what can only, plausibly, be described as bewildering reasoning for my omission from the tournament," Dottin said in statement which she posted on Twitter.

"I was bought at the WPL auction by the Gujarat Giants, a franchise owned and operated by the Adani Group. At the commencement of the tournament, the franchise claimed that I was excluded from the team because I was apparently "recovering from a medical situation".

"This was followed by a

subsequent, clarifying statement that contended that I was, in fact "unable to obtain medical clearance" despite being granted as recently as February 20th," she said.

The veteran of 143 ODIs and 127 T20Is said that she was shocked by the decision taken by Giants' team management.

"I would like to make it clear that I had experienced minor abdominal pain and swelling for which I had sought treatment in December 2022. This was followed by two further referrals to specialists for second opinions in December and January 2023, respectively.

"Following testing and investigations by the specialists, I was asked to rest until February 13th and was cleared to resume fitness and playing activity from February 14th.

"Consequently, I recommenced my personal training and fitness regime according to the guided timelines and experienced some soreness on the first day of resumed training which was anticipated and reasonable, given that I had been asked to rest in the weeks preceding training." Dottin said her words were misinterpreted by the Giants.

"I was transparent about this in correspondence with the Gujarat Giants physiotherapist, however, this was misconstrued and later conveyed to members of the franchise's management team as me "experiencing abdominal pain post-session" which was not what I had indicated.



## New Zealand whitewash Sri Lanka

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Lanky fast bowler Blair Tuckner and spinner Michael Bracewell slogged all day in a Basin Reserve gale to bowl New Zealand to an innings and 58 run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test on Monday and a sweep of the two-match series.

The win was completed with only minutes remaining on the fourth day and capped New Zealand's extraordinary summer of home Test matches, which includes a one-run win over England at the Basin Reserve and a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka from the last ball of the first Test.

Once again New Zealand couldn't win without drama as it pursued Sri Lanka's last two wickets in fading light and a blustering wind on Monday. Had it not bowled out Sri Lanka, it would have had to have returned to try to do so on the final day, when rain was forecast

in Wellington.

Sri Lanka's last two pairs defied the New Zealand bowlers for almost two hours before the home team secured the wickets it needed for victory. New Zealand had to bowl 142 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka in the second innings, after bowling 67 in the first innings before enforcing the follow on.

Dhanahaya de Silva made 98 and Dinesh Chandimal 62 to help Sri Lanka bat throughout all but a few minutes of the final day. Kusal Rajitha then batted for 2-1/2 hours, Prabath Jayasuriya and Lahiru Kumara for an hour each as the Sri Lanka tail gallantly tried to force the match into the fifth day when weather might intervene. Southee took 3-21.

New Zealand claimed an extra half hour as the light faded and Rajitha's long vigil ended when he fell to Tim Southee for 20 as Sri Lanka was all out for 358.

## Swiss Open: Title holder Sindhu eyes turnaround

PTI ■ BASEL

Enduring a wretched run of form, defending champion PV Sindhu will hope to get back to winning ways when she competes at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

World number 9 HS Prannoy, who had finished runners-up in the last edition, too will eye a better show after a second round exit in the All England Championships.

The fifth seeded Indian, however, will have a tough task at hand as he opens against 2018 world championships silver medallist China's Shi Yuqi, who finished second best in Birmingham last week.

While Prannoy has been the most consistent singles player from the country, Sindhu and Lakshya Sen have struggled this season, making early exits in a series of events.

Sindhu, who parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-sang after failing to get results following a long injury



lay-off, made a first round exit last week after losing to Zhang Yi Man of China.

A double Olympic medallist, Sindhu will hope to regain her confidence as she returns to the \$210,000 event, opening her campaign against local player Jenjira Stadelmann.

Sen, who had made early exits from Malaysia and India Open, notched up an intense win over Chou Tien Chen last week but faltered against former world number 2 and two-time world championships medallist Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

## MI bags New York franchise in Major League Cricket

AP ■ NEW YORK

After Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians have now joined the US cricket revolution bandwagon as they acquired the New York franchise in the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC), here on Monday.

"The team will participate in the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket (MLC) subject to completion of customary due diligence; negotiation, and execution of definitive binding agreements, and receipt of required corporate, regulatory and third-party approvals and compliances," a press release stated.

Earlier, GMR group, co-owners of Delhi Capitals, have invested alongside Microsoft CEO



Satya Nadella in Seattle Orcas, while Chennai Super Kings are part of the Texas team.

"I am thrilled to welcome our New York franchise to the growing MI Family! With our entry into the first cricket league in the US, I hope we are able to establish Mumbai Indians as a global brand of fearless and entertaining cricket! This is another new beginning for MI and I look forward to the exciting journey ahead," owner Nita Ambani said.

The MI New York will be the fifth franchise after Mumbai Indians (IPL), MI Cape Town (SA20), MI Emirates (ILT20), and Mumbai Indians (WPL), in three different continents, four different countries, and five different leagues.

## Hima Das, Ancy Sojan win gold in 200m and long jump in IGP

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Star sprinter Hima Das won the 200m race quite comfortably in 23.79 seconds while long jumper Ancy Sojan shared the limelight with a best effort of 6.49m in the Indian Grand Prix-1 athletics event here on Monday.

Assam's Hima beat Aishwarya Kailash Mishra (24.81) of Maharashtra and VK Vismaya (24.82) of Kerala to take the women's 200m gold at the Laxmibai National College of Physical Education here.

Sojan, meanwhile, produced a series of leaps beyond 6.00m and won with a best effort of 6.49m, just past the 6.45m mark laid down as the Asian Games qualifying standard.

The meet though received lukewarm response with very

few top athletes competing in it. Many events had just three athletes competing.

Women's high jump and men's triple jump saw just two competitors each, men's 400m hurdles four, women's 400m hurdles three — one disqualified later —, women's shot put three, 800m women three and women's 5000m three participants.

Haryana's Krishan Kumar stepped up the pace approaching the halfway mark and topped the men's 800m race, clocking 1:47.26, his second best time over the distance. The Army man went past the Asian Games qualifying standard of 1:49.05.

The men's 5000m race saw three Uttar Pradesh runners come home inside the Asian Games qualifying mark of 14:00.00.

## Lovlina, Sakshi advance to quarterfinals of Women's World C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain made a winning start to her campaign as she and Sakshi Chaudhary moved to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Championships with dominant victories here on Monday.

Both Sakshi (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) notched identical 5-0 unanimous decision wins respectively.

While Lovlina out-punched Mexico's Vanessa Ortiz, Sakshi got the better of Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan to progress to the last eight stage.

But the most electrifying Indian performance of the day was displayed by Preeti (54kg). The youngster though eventually lost her bout to last year's 52kg silver medallist Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas by a 4-3 verdict, the bout was so close that a review had to be taken.

Preeti entered the tournament on the back of a selection row, where her place in the side was questioned as she

didn't win the National Championships.

However, the 19-year-old justified her place in the Indian team with her fearless performance.

The tenacious Preeti showed aggression against a more experienced opponent to take the first round 4-1.

She fought toe to toe with Jutamas as both pugilists connected punches but the Thai was able to edge the Indian and took the remaining two rounds with the final result being decided by a bout review.

"I learned a lot from this bout, the competitor was also good. I need to work harder. I was aggressive in the first round and I should have continued that and I should have dominated the bout," Preeti said.

Competing in her new 75kg category, Lovlina, who received a first round bye, won her opening encounter to walk one step closer to a medal.

"It was my first bout, the boxer was shorter than me. I was not able to follow by strategy to the T. I am not



very happy with this performance, I could have done better. She was coming ahead so I was forced to move back," Lovlina said after her bout.

"It is my first World Championships in this weight category. It will be difficult as the other boxers are already competing in this weight class. We will have to see how to play with which opponent. I think I can do better."

Sakshi, the 2021 Asian Championship bronze medallist, utilised her height and long reach to her advantage. She would punch Urakbayeva and step back quickly, not letting her opponent counter-attack.

The Indian danced around the ring, playing with aggression and released a number of punches to emerge victorious.

"I played much better than I expected. She is a good boxer so I thought it would be a 19-20 fight but the strategy worked for me and I was able to dominate," Sakshi said after the bout.