

## OPINION 6

MYANMAR NIGHTMARE  
CONTINUES UNABATED

## WORLD 9

US CARRIES OUT AIRSTRIKES  
IN SYRIA

## MONEY 10

INDIA'S FOREX KITTY JUMPS BY  
USD 12.8 BN TO USD 572.8 BN

DEHRADUN, SATURDAY MARCH 25, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹2

the pioneer

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'HARDIK SIMILAR  
TO DHONI AS  
CAPTAIN'  
11 SPORT

## Rahul disqualified from LS

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Announcing Rahul's disqualification, the Lok Sabha

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

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

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

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

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



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

India. I am ready to pay every price."

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

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

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

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

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

Lies, slander  
part of Rahul's  
politics: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

UK's security  
obligations not  
met: JaishankarWe want action,  
not assurance:  
EAM; UK MPs  
slam Khalistanis  
for vandalismPIONEER NEWS  
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■  
NEW DELHI/LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## CAPSULE

K'TAKA ABOLISHES 4%  
QUOTA FOR MINORITIES

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

HC SETS ASIDE DELHI  
BJP MLA'S HOUSE BAN

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

COVID RELIEF OVER, NOW  
SURRENDER, ORDERS SC

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

TAXPAYERS WITH INCOME  
OVER ₹7L TO GET RELIEF

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

Mere membership of  
banned outfit makes  
persons criminal: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pak hecklers shown door  
at Kashmir event in USPNS/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

45 Defence JVs with foreign firms  
OK'd for faster weapons  
productionPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"These initiatives, inter

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

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

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

PNS ■ VARANASI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



# Sale of mutton-chicken sans checks in Doon- HC issues notice to MCD and Food Safety Dept

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The Uttarakhand High Court has issued notices to the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun and the Food Safety department, seeking their replies by April 16 in a public interest litigation filed regarding the sale of meat in mutton and chicken shops without any tests in Dehradun. The division bench of Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Alok Kumar Verma issued this direction while hearing on the PIL filed by Dehradun resident Vikesh Negi. Negi has stated in his petition that the only registered slaughter house in Dehradun was closed down four years ago.

Animal and bird meat is being sold from shops in Dehradun without the Food Safety department checks. The MCD and the department are unaware of where the goats and chicken are being slaughtered and from where the meat is being sourced, contended Negi. Since closure of the abattoir in Dehradun during 2018, meat is being sold from shops in the city without the Food Safety department testing the same. The petitioner has stated that the MCD and the department are toying with the health of the public. The two bodies are shifting the blame to each other on the

question of the quality of the meat. Negi said that in response to an application he had filed under the Right To Information Act, he was told by the Food Safety department that the MCD is responsible as it allocates shops and collects rent whereas the MCD stated that the Food Safety department is responsible for checking the meat as it issues the licenses to the shops. The petitioner has requested that the rules under which the goats and poultry have to be checked before being slaughtered in an abattoir should be implemented.

# Defamation case attempt to kill RaGa politically: Harish Rawat

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Former chief minister Harish Rawat has said that the defamation case filed on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is an assault on him by the ruling dispensation and an attempt to murder him politically. Addressing the media at the headquarters of the Uttarakhand Congress here on Friday, the senior Congress leader and member of Congress Working Committee (CWC) said that the Surat episode is the climax of the mindset which calls for making the country free from opposition. He said that the Prime Minister, BJP and RSS leaders have made all sorts of comments about former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Rawat claimed that the case on Rahul Gandhi is an outcome of the questions being asked by him on the money laundering cases of Gautam Adani. He said that the workers of the

Congress party are standing firmly with Rahul Gandhi on the issue. The former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Pritam Singh said that democracy is under attack in the country. Questioning the celebrations done by the Pushkar Singh Dhami government on completion of one year in office, Singh said that in the last six years of rule of the BJP in the State the government has proved to be a failure in every sphere. He said that in the run up to the Assembly elections in 2022, the BJP had promised that it would provide employment to the youngsters but instead of fulfilling its promises the unemployed were assaulted by police for demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe in a series of recruitment test paper leak cases. He said that the situation of law and order is

pathetic in the State and the Ankita Bhandari murder case has shown a mirror to the State government. Singh said that the government has failed to reveal the identity of the VIP allegedly involved in the crime. The government is also ignoring the consistent demands of Congress party and general public for a CBI probe in the case. Former cabinet minister Hira Singh Bisht said that the BJP should learn political decency from the Congress governments. He said that corruption is at its peak in Uttarakhand. The vice president (Organisation) Mathura Dutt Joshi, president of youth Congress Sumittra Bhullar and chief spokesperson of Uttarakhand Congress Garima Dasauni were also present on the occasion.

# Court took decision on wrong done by Rahul Gandhi, says CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Responding to a question asked by media persons on the defamation case on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his disqualification from the Lok Sabha, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the justice system is the same for all citizens in the nation. He said, “The

justice system in India is the same for everyone. If someone does something wrong, the justice system takes cognisance and after that it takes action and decision. Rahul Gandhi had committed a wrong so the court took a decision on it,” said the chief minister.

# CM walks the talk- directs CS for on the ground execution of his announcements

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has directed the chief secretary SS Sandhu to implement the announcements made by him at Rangers Ground on March 23 in a time bound manner. The CM had made a slew of announcements in Rangers Ground in a programme organised to mark completion of one year of his government in office. Dhami directed the CS to convene meetings with the departments concerned and take effective steps to start implementation of the announcements before April 15, 2023. He said that in the

last one year the government has worked with sensitivity on the important issues associated with the development of the State and public welfare. The State government is committed to the all-round development of the State by preparing a development roadmap for the next 10 years. The CM said that many important announcements were made by him on completion of one year of his government in office on March 23. He said all these declarations are needed to be implemented on ground in a time bound manner.

# MCD to increase usercharge for garbage collection service from April 1

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) has decided to increase user charges for door-to-door garbage collection from April 1. The new user charge will be recovered as per the category of commercial establishments and residential areas. The MCD has increased the charges from double to five times in various categories of commercial establishments. The municipal commissioner Manuj Goyal said that the corporation will also change its strategy to collect charges after getting several complaints of locals being duped in the name of recovering user charges. He said that MCD will collect fees from commercial establishments digitally only. Locals of residential colonies will be allowed to pay cash and would get an electronically generated receipt to prevent

scamming by fraudsters. It will also make the teg collection process more transparent. He said that the monthly user charge for people living in the below poverty line will be Rs 30. The charge for general houses has been increased from Rs 50 to Rs 70. The corporation has increased charges for small, medium and big restaurants to Rs 300, Rs 600 and Rs 2,000 respectively. The corporation has also determined user charges for hotels and offices on the basis of the number of beds and the number of employees working there respectively. Besides this, residential societies with up to 40 flats will pay Rs 2,000 while societies with 40 to 100 flats will have to pay Rs 5,000 as user charge every month. Societies with more than 100 flats will be charged Rs 10,000 as user charge.

# Rabi procurement season to start from April 1

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Food and Civil Supplies Minister Rekha Arya on Friday held a meeting with representatives of departments concerned to discuss the preparations for procurement of wheat for Rabi crops marketing season 2023-24 slated to start from April 1. She said that the State currently has a storage capacity of 2.20 lakh metric tonnes and government organisations like Food Corporation of India (FCI), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED), Uttarakhand Consumer Cooperative Union Limited among several others have opened

purchase centers. She said that purchase centres are designated so that farmers do not have to sell their food items at low prices. Since the central government has announced the minimum support price for the procurement of Rabi crops, Arya said that these bodies will ensure the farmers get fair price for their crops. The government has declared MSP for wheat as Rs 2,125 per quintal. The rabi procurement season will be from April 1 to June 30 and the department is also making constant efforts to ensure the farmers can sell their crops without any hassle.

# Uttarakhand Congress leaders condemn RaGa’s disqualification

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Terming the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha as a black day for democracy in the country, the leaders of Uttarakhand Congress have said that every worker of the party is now ready for the fight to save democracy in the country.

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara said that Rahul Gandhi has rightly said that democracy is in peril in the country. He said that the voice of the Congress party can-

not be stifled by the tyrant. Mahara said that the Congress party would go to the masses and would overthrow the Modi government in the elections of 2024.

The leader of opposition (LoP) in the State Assembly Yashpal Arya said that the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha is akin to murder of democracy. He said that the sentence on Rahul Gandhi was suspended and he has a right to appeal. He said that the

whole episode has made it clear that whosoever raises the issues of the general public and exposes the deeds of the Union government would be harassed by technical issues. Arya said that from the last few years Rahul Gandhi was raising a solo voice against corruption of the Union government. He added that the country would not have democracy if the political people would be stopped from speaking in public rallies, parliament or assemblies.

# BJP has no role in Rahul’s disqualification, Cong opposing constitutional process: Bhatt


PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State president Mahendra Bhatt said that the BJP has no role in Rahul Gandhi losing his membership of the Lok Sabha. The decision on his disqualification was effective after the decision of the court and resulted in him losing his membership. Bhatt said that Rahul Gandhi is himself responsible for this situation because he could also have sought an apology from the OBC community but he did not do so due to his ego. The Congress leaders are also struck by pride and calling his statement correct.

The BJP State president said, “It appears as if the Congress also wanted him to lose his membership because in the case of party leader Pawan Khara they approached the Supreme Court within 15 minutes but remained silent in Rahul’s case. He had insulted the OBC community and after the full judicial process was followed, the court found him guilty and handed out the sentence. Now, as part of the constitutional process, he has lost his Lok Sabha membership. However, the Congress is playing politics and opposing the constitutional process. In the past the Congress has crushed constitutional institutions. The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi refused to accept the Allahabad High Court decision to disqualify her and the Congress forced the emergency upon the nation. It is a matter of concern that even today the Congress has retained its anti-democracy tendency which is why it is staging demonstrations across the nation with its leaders making illogical statements.”

Bhatt said that Rahul Gandhi is currently out on bail in various other corruption and defamation cases. As far as the public


is concerned, it has already punished the Congress by rejecting it in the Lok Sabha and other elections, he added.



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Admission Notice No.71 /2023



INI-SS Entrance Test for Admission in DM/M.Ch & MD (Hosp. Administration) Courses for AIIMS, PGIMER, NIMHANS, SCTIMST & JIPMER for July-2023 session

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi invites online application for Entrance Examination leading to admission in Post-Doctoral (DM/M.Ch.(3 year)/MD (Hospital Administration) Courses for AIIMS New Delhi & Six other AIIMS, PGIMER, NIMHANS, JIPMER and SCTIMST for July, 2023 session.

Online Registration for application			
Courses	Institutions	Opens on	Closes on
DM/M.Ch.(3 year)/ & MD (Hospital Administration)	AIIMS - New Delhi & other Six AIIMS, PGIMER, NIMHANS, JIPMER and SCTIMST	23.03.2023	06.04.2023 at 5:00 PM

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NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE



No. 74-W/23/WA/Publication

CPM/GSU/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders closing date 10.04.2023 16:00. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Date: 24.03.2023

Tender No. Date	22-GSU-MB-22-23-LT 24.03.2023	23-GSU-MB-22-23-LT 24.03.2023	24-GSU-MB-22-23-LT 24.03.2023	25-GSU-MB-22-23-LT 24.03.2023	26-GSU-MB-22-23-LT 24.03.2023
Name of work	Appointment of Tech Consultant for providing Architectural and Technical Consultancy for feasibility study of Chandausi Station in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway under AMRTI BHARAT STATIONS SCHEME.	Appointment of Tech Consultant for providing Architectural and Technical Consultancy for feasibility study of Najibabad Station in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway under AMRTI BHARAT STATIONS SCHEME.	Appointment of Tech Consultant for providing Architectural and Technical Consultancy for feasibility study of Garhmukteshwar Station in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway under AMRTI BHARAT STATIONS SCHEME.	Appointment of Tech Consultant for providing Architectural and Technical Consultancy for feasibility study of Nagina Station in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway under AMRTI BHARAT STATIONS SCHEME.	Appointment of Tech Consultant for providing Architectural and Technical Consultancy for feasibility study of Harrawala Station in Moradabad Division of Northern Railway under AMRTI BHARAT STATIONS SCHEME.
Tender Closing Date Time	10.04.2023 16.00	10.04.2023 16.00	10.04.2023 16.00	10.04.2023 16.00	10.04.2023 16.00
Advertised Value(Rs.)	1642144.23	1665207.68	1409415.60	1463155.47	1499189.63
Earnest Money (Rs.)	32900.00	33300.00	28200.00	29300.00	30000.00
Bidding Start Date	27.03.2023	27.03.2023	27.03.2023	27.03.2023	27.03.2023

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I, KIRAN W/o No.2805182W/L/HAV POKHARKAR AMOL KESHAV, Vill- Pimpalgon (Kh.), POST-Pimpalgon (Kh.), TEH.- Ambegon, DIST.-Pune, Maharashtra-410503. I have changed my name KIRAN to KIRAN AMOL POKHARKAR inclusion of middle and last name as per my adhaar no. 778098447252 vide affidavit sworn before notary and advocate Sanjeev Kumar dated 24.03.23. UK GOI.

In my Husband Service record my daughter name mistakenly recorded as MEGHA KUMARI where as my Daughter correct name is MEGHA BAMRADA and DOB-21.06.1995 as mentioned in other all documents. Hemanti Devi W/o No 14488689K HAV Late Chandramohan.Turner Road, Clement Town, Dehradun vide Affidavit 24-03-2023 before Dehradun.

सूचना

मेरा पुत्र पंकज पोखरियाल (विवाहित) मेरे कहने-सुनने में नहीं है उसे मैं अपनी सभी चल-अचल सम्पत्ति से बेदखल कर संबंध विच्छेद करता हूँ। भविष्य में वह अपने कृत्य व लेन-देन के लिए स्वयं जिम्मेदार होंगे। मेरे या मेरे परिवार के किसी सदस्य का कोई दायित्व नहीं होगा। नरेन्द्र प्रसाद पोखरियाल पुत्र स्वयं मोक्षन प्रसाद पोखरियाल निवासी पटेल मार्ग, कोटद्वार, जिला-पैडी गढ़वाल, उत्तराखण्ड।

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform that the original Sale deed 23.11.1970, Original No. 5895 and Duplicate No. 5896 of property no 30 Teg Bahadur Road (Municipal No 6) (Old 4 King George Avenue) which was duly registered in the office of Sub Registrar, Dehradun in Book No. 1, Volume 1006, Page 219 to 255, A.D.F. Book No.1, Volume 1002, Page 158/159, dated 09.12.1970 purchased by Smt. Vijay Laxmi Juneja and Sh. Balwant Rai Juneja from Smt. Hem Semwal W/o. Sh. B. D. Semwal has been lost and Police Complain has been made by Sh. K. K. Juneja S/o. Sh. B. R. Juneja on 29/12/2020 at Thana Dalanwala vide G. D No. 49. The said property is free from all charges, liens and encumbrance and it is not mortgaged anywhere by ay financial institution or banks etc. Incase someone finds the original/duplicate sale deed please contact the undersigned.

K.K.Juneja  
30, Teg Bahadur Road  
Dehradun

सार्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मूल विक्रय पत्र दिनांक 09.03.1970 जिसका पंजीकरण उपनिबन्धक देहरादून में बही संख्या 1, जिल्द 976 के पृष्ठ 150 से 151 में नं. 1385 पर दिनांक 16.03.1970 जो कि श्री तेजा सिंह पुत्र श्री ईशार सिंह, श्री रूल्दु राम एवं श्री जय भवान पुत्र श्री जगनाथ के पक्ष में निष्पादित किया गया है एवं मूल विक्रय पत्र दिनांक 06.07.1977 जिसका पंजीकरण उपनिबन्धक देहरादून में बही संख्या 1, जिल्द 1389 के पृष्ठ 84 से 93 में नं. 3830 पर दिनांक 17.09.1977 है जो श्रीमती राजो देवी पत्नी स्व. श्री रूल्दु राम व श्रीमती कमला देवी पत्नी स्व. श्री जय भवान के पक्ष में निष्पादित किया गया है, आवसीय सम्पत्ति खसरा संख्या 11/3 भिन, पण्डितवाडी, देहरादून कहीं गिर गयी है यदि किसी व्यक्ति के द्वारा पाया जाती है तो श्री संजय सिंह पुत्र श्री केशव सिंह मो. नं. 9836226350 को सूचित करने को कृपा करें।

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# Police issue alert in three districts for Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The director general of police Ashok Kumar issued an alert in Dehradun, Haridwar and Udhm Singh Nagar districts on Friday as a precaution considering the possibility of pro-Khalistan leader and fugitive Amritpal Singh entering Uttarakhand. He said that the police are conducting intensive checking on the borders of all three districts and in other areas. He said that these three districts were also significantly affected by terrorism in the 90s.

The additional director general of police (Law and Order) V Murugesan said that the Punjab police have informed them that the last trail of the absconding

Singh was reportedly found in Haryana and he can possibly try to hide in Uttarakhand too. All senior superintendents of police, especially of Dehradun, Haridwar and Udhm Singh Nagar have been directed to conduct checking and take action against suspicious persons, added Murugesan.

The police on March 21 had also registered a complaint against a man from Kashipur of Udhm Singh Nagar for allegedly supporting Singh who has been on the run since March 18 by uploading posts on social media in his support. According to the Punjab police, a total of 207 persons have been arrested for dis-

turbing peace and harmony in Punjab out of which, 30 have been found involved in substantive criminal activities while the remaining are under preventive arrest.

Those arrested include Baljit Kaur, a resident of the Shahabad area, for allegedly harbouring absconding Amritpal Singh and his associate Papalpreet Singh at her home. The last known location of Singh was in Haryana as per the Punjab authorities due to which, the Uttarakhand DGP has directed SSPs of Haridwar, Dehradun and Udhm Singh Nagar to remain alert as these districts may have scope for Amritpal Singh to get some support.

# Chief science advisers of G20 nations to discuss mutual interest S&T issues at Ramnagar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Issues of mutual interest in science and technology will be discussed by the chief science advisers of G20 nations at the Chief Science Advisers Round-table (CSAR) at Ramnagar in Nainital district during March 28-30. Addressing the media in the national Capital, principal scientific adviser to the Government of India, Ajay Kumar Sood said, "The chief science advisers (or their equivalents) are uniquely positioned in the overall governance framework to drive the policy choices by providing evidence-driven science advice. The overarching and cross-cutting nature of the science advice mechanism enables us to build synergy among various sectors, and as a catalytic tool to achieve solutions to some of the complex, multidimensional and transdisciplinary issues. With this understanding and motivation, G20-CSAR is conceptualised as an initiative under India's G20 presidency to drive the agenda for inclusive global science advice."



Scientific secretary at the office of principal scientific adviser to the Government of India, Parvinder Maini said that opportunities in One Health for better disease control and pandemic preparedness, synergising global efforts to expand the access to scholarly scientific knowledge, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in science and technology along with an institutional mechanism for inclusive, continuous and action-oriented global science and technology policy dialogue will be discussed during

the G20 CSAR.

G20 secretariat joint secretary Nagaraj Naidu Kakanur said that CSAR is a unique initiative happening for the first time. Priorities identified are universal in nature and fall under the rubric of India's G20 theme which is One World One Family One Future. The outcomes of the CSAR discussion will be shared with the leaders of the G20 countries and will find reflection in the 18th G20 Heads of State and Government Summit, he added.

# Traffic plan issued in view of G20 CSAR

PNS ■ RAMNAGAR

The district administration has released the traffic plan for Ramnagar-Kaladhungi considering VIP and VVIP movement during the G20 CSAR to be held here from March 28 to 30. There will be a no-parking zone from Kosi barrage to Taj Resort via Lakhanpur. On March 28 the movement of heavy vehicles will be prohibited on the Kosi barrage-Lakhanpur-Amdanda-Garjiya-Ramnagar route. Heavy vehicles will be allowed from 10 PM to 6 AM. Similarly, only vehicles carrying essential commodities like petro/diesel/milk, gas and ambulances will be allowed on the VIP route from March 28 to 30 though a complete zero

zone will be implemented during the movement of VIP vehicles.

Considering the devotees who visit Garjiya during Navratri in tractor-trolleys and other large vehicles, these will be turned back from Haldua barrier and only those devotees who are travelling in light vehicles will be allowed on the route. The GMOU/KMOU buses, trucks and taxis among other vehicles usually parked at Ranipur Road, in front of PWD guest house, Amdanda Road and in front of the degree college will be parked at the MPIC inter college ground from March 25 to 30.

## Digital health IDs of 30.61 lakh made in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In a major step towards digital Uttarakhand mission, the State Health department has claimed that the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs of 30.61 lakh people in the State have been made under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM). The health related details of all these persons are now available online. In provisional State capital Dehradun, a total of 6,61,919 ABHA IDs have so far been made. The State mission director of ABDM, Arunendra Chauhan said that the ABDM is a dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Under the mission the health record of all the citizens of the country is being digitised. The digital ID would have complete detail of the health status, diagnostic tests and treatment and the record would be available online for any hospital. He said that the efforts are being made to make ABHA IDs of every individual. These IDs would also ensure paperless registration and treatment and its holders can take tokens in the hospitals by use of the QR code. The department has so far made 6,61,919 IDs in Dehradun, 3,98,571 in Nainital, 2,82,253 in Haridwar, 2,32,694 in Udhm Singh Nagar, 1,83,236 in Pauri, 1,43,166 in Almora, 1,22,741 in Tehri, 94,285 in Pithoragarh, 75,008 in Chamoli, 71,453 in Bageshwar, 65,452 in Champawat, 55,736 in Uttarkashi and 28,832 in Rudraprayag district. The Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat ABDM is a revolutionary step in the health sector. He said that the officers have been asked to connect every citizen of the State with the mission. He appealed to the general public to come forward and get their ABHA IDs generated. The ABDM was started in the year 2021 in Uttarakhand.

## State to reintroduce sports quota in govt jobs soon: Dhami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State government is providing scholarships to 3,900 budding sports persons under the Mukyamantri Udiyaman Khiladi Unnayan Yojana. The government has also decided to reintroduce sports quota in government jobs. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami stated this on Friday in an event organised by the Sports department at the new multipurpose sports building in Parade Ground, Dehradun.

He also felicitated 168 national level players and 42 coaches who won medals in the year 2021 and 2022 by distributing a total cash prize of Rs 2.08 crore among them. Besides this, Dhami also presented the Uttarakhand Khel Ratna award to Badminton player Lakshya Sen and athlete Chandan Singh for the year 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively. The CM also awarded Devbhoomi Uttarakhand Dronacharya Award for 2019-20 to badminton coach Dharendra Kumar Sen, taekwondo coach Kamlesh Kumar Tiwari and archery coach Sandeep Kumar Duklan for 2021-22. Athlete



Suresh Chandra Pandey was also presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his remarkable contribution in the field of sports.

Dhami said on the occasion that young players of Uttarakhand are bringing laurels to the state by participating and winning in national and international competitions. He said that in the new sports policy, the government has made efforts to provide all possible facilities to the players. He said that a target has been set to make Uttarakhand the leading state of the country by 2025 and everybody will have to do their best in their respective field of work. The Sports minister Rekha Arya also said that the government has also included traditional sports in the new sports policy to promote them among youths. She said that the department is also making all preparations to successfully host the 38th National Games in 2024.

# आयुष्मान भारत डिजिटल मिशन (ABDM)

**डॉ० धन सिंह रावत**  
स्वास्थ्य मंत्री, उत्तराखण्ड

**श्री पुष्कर सिंह धामी**  
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तराखण्ड

## आयुष्मान भारत डिजिटल मिशन का उद्देश्य

देश में डिजिटल स्वास्थ्य को बढ़ावा देना है, यह डिजिटल नेटवर्क के माध्यम से हेल्थ केयर इकोसिस्टम के विभिन्न हितधारकों को आपस में जोड़ेगा।

### आयुष्मान भारत डिजिटल मिशन के लाभ

#### एकीकृत डिजिटल स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली

आप देश में किसी भी जगह मौजूद डॉक्टर के साथ अपनी हेल्थ रिपोर्ट शेयर कर पाएंगे और अपनी बीमारी के बारे में सलाह ले पाएंगे. साथ ही बीमारी की जांचें, लैब रिपोर्ट्स, ईलाज एवं दवाईयाँ आदि भी घर बैठे ऑनलाइन माध्यम से प्राप्त कर सकेंगे। इससे समय की बचत के साथ-साथ बीमार व्यक्ति को होने वाली परेशानी से भी छुटकारा मिलेगा।

#### 14 अंकीय ABHA संख्या के माध्यम से आसान साईन-अप

आपकी हेल्थ से जुड़े सभी डॉक्यूमेंट और जांच रिपोर्ट्स आप **ABDM Health Record** मोबाइल ऐप में स्टोर करके रख सकेंगे।

### कागज रहित मेडिकल रिकॉर्ड्स

आयुष्मान भारत डिजिटल मिशन की मदद से आपको घंटों किसी अस्पताल के बाहर अपने पुराने स्वास्थ्य दस्तावेजों को लेकर लाइन में खड़े रखने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। क्योंकि किसी भी नये ईलाज की जरूरत पड़ने पर, आप अपने पिछली स्वास्थ्य सम्बन्धी जानकारीयों को ऑनलाइन दिखाकर सही परामर्श व उपचार प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

चिकित्सक को भी मरीज की मेडिकल हिस्ट्री पता करने, उसके लिए ईलाज की ठीक प्रक्रिया तय करने में सहाय्य मिलेगी।

इस योजना से देश के शहरी क्षेत्रों के साथ-साथ ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले लोगों को भी बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं उपलब्ध हो पाएंगी।

प्रत्येक व्यक्ति का हेल्थआईडी (आभा आईडी) के साथ जुड़ा डाटा सुरक्षित रखा जाएगा और आप जिस सलाहकार या डॉक्टर के साथ इस डाटा को शेयर करेंगे वही उसे देख पाएगा।

## एबीडीएम से कैसे जुड़ें

नागरिक	स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रदाता	चिकित्सा इकाई के मालिक/प्रबन्धक
<p>प्रदेश में अब तक बनाए गए लगभग 30 लाख से अधिक ABHA आई.डी. एवं 4 लाख से अधिक ऐप डाउनलोड किए गए।</p>	<p>प्रदेश में अब तक लगभग 1910 स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रदाता ABDM में पंजीकृत हो चुके हैं। आप भी हेल्थ केयर प्रोफेशनल रजिस्ट्री (HPR) में अपना पंजीकरण करें।</p>	<p>प्रदेश में अब तक लगभग 710 चिकित्सा इकाई ABDM में पंजीकृत हो चुकी हैं। आप भी अपनी चिकित्सा इकाई का हेल्थ फैसिलिटी रजिस्ट्री (HFR) में पंजीकरण करें।</p>

अधिक जानकारी के लिए टोल फ्री नं. **155368 / 18001805368** पर सम्पर्क करें या फिर **abdm.gov.in** पर जाकर रजिस्ट्रेशन करें।

आयुष्मान भारत डिजिटल मिशन, उत्तराखण्ड द्वारा जनहित में जारी।



# Rahul’s case echoes in UN



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

A verdict sentencing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to jail for two years echoed in the United Nations (UN) and it said the international body was aware of it.

When asked whether UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was “worried about democracy” in India, Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for Secretary General, said late on Thursday, “I can say we’re aware of the reports regarding

the case of Rahul Gandhi. We understand that his party does plan to appeal the decision. That’s as much as I can say on that at this stage.”

Rahul was sentenced to two years in jail on Thursday by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his “Modi surname” remark.

He took to Twitter to give his initial reaction by quoting Mahatma Gandhi in Hindi. “My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, non-violence, the means to get it. — Mahatma Gandhi,” he tweeted.

# String of initiatives launched to eliminate TB by 2025 in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/VARANASI

Asserting that “it’s difficult to accomplish new outcomes with old approaches,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi on World TB Day on Friday launched a string of innovative initiatives like TB-Mukt Panchayat, official pan-India rollout of a shorter TB Preventive Treatment and Family-centric care model for TB.

He said this would help India achieve TB elimination target by 2025, five years ahead of the global stipulated time.

The Prime Minister said the new initiatives to fight against the bacterial infection is in addition to a multi-pronged approach being already followed, including measures to enhance nutrition, increase people’s participation, treatment innovation, integration of technologies and disease prevention through programmes like Fit India, Yoga and Khelo India.

“These could become the



World TB Summit Varanasi 2023 | Rudraksh International Cooperation and

global model for ending TB...” he said.

Under ‘TB Mukta Panchayat Abhiyan’ members of the local bodies are sensitised and trained about the disease, with them aiding the government’s implementation of the programme and achieving TB free status while the nation-wide rollout of a 3-month preventive treatment for those at risk of developing TB aims to reduce the course of treatment from the previous six months and replace the daily pills with a once-a-week medicine regimen.

Stating that 80 per cent of TB medicines are made in India, Modi lauded the role

played by the pharma industry and said it is a big strength to the world’s fight against TB. “I wish that fruits of each and every endeavour of India, campaign of India, innovation of India reach to the whole world...as we are committed towards the Global Good!,” he said at an event organised by the Union Health Ministry along with the Stop TB Partnership organisation..

The Prime Minister credited people’s participation for the great work that India has done in the fight against Tuberculosis. After the government’s appeal, about 10 lakh TB patients were adopted across

the country by people, including children of 10 to 12 years of age. Financial help to a TB patient under the programme has reached up to one thousand crore rupees.

“This addresses the challenge of nutrition for TB patients along with the government’s direct benefit transfer scheme started for TB patients in 2018. Approximately Rs 2,000 crore have been directly transferred into their bank accounts for their treatment, with 75 lakh TB patients benefiting from this. “Ni-kshay Mitras have now become a new source of energy for all TB patients,” he said.

The Prime Minister also drew the world’s attention to the integration of technology in the programme, with the Ni-kshay portal that can track all those with an active infection. He also said that ICMR has developed a new method for sub-national disease surveillance that has made India, apart from the WHO, the only country to have this kind of model.

# Houses adjourned again amid uproar



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The deadlock to the Parliament’s second-leg of the Budget session is unlikely to be found before the end of the second-leg of the Budget session on April 6 as both the Houses were again adjourned for the day amidst heavy uproar even while the Lok Sabha managed to pass the Finance Bill with the Opposition members trooping into the well and shouting slogans “Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai”.

The battle-lines have turned sharper as the Congress member from Waynad, Kerala, Rahul Gandhi has been disqualified from his Lok Sabha member-

ship following his conviction by a Surat court.

Slogans like “Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai” and “We want JPC” raised by the opposition when the house resumed its proceedings at 1200 after being adjourned in the morning.

The Finance Bill, 2023 ‘tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Lok Sabha saw its passage amid heavy noise by Opposition MPs demanding a JPC inquiry into the Adani Group issue. The ruling party members too sought apology from Rahul for his comments against the Indian democracy

# Delhi Police registers case in violence at Indian High Commission in London

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the incidents of violence targeting the Indian High Commission in London on Sunday last, the Delhi Police has registered a case in connection with the protest.

The case was registered by the special cell under the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act as it involves unlawful activities carried out by certain people holding Indian nationality abroad, a senior police officer said here on Friday.

It was done after the Ministry of Home Affairs directed the Delhi Police to take appropriate legal action on the receipt of a report from the Ministry of External Affairs over the incident at the Indian High Commission March 19.



Last Sunday, the tricolour flying atop the Indian High Commission in London was grabbed at by a group of protesters waving separatist Khalistani flags and chanting pro-Khalistani slogans, leading to an arrest related to the violent disorder.

Officials from the mission said “attempted but failed” attack had been foiled and that the tricolour was now flying “grander”. The Metropolitan Police said two members of security staff sustained minor

injuries which did not require hospital treatment. An investigation has been launched.

India on last Sunday night summoned the British deputy high commissioner and demanded an explanation over the complete “absence of security”. In a strongly-worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said India finds “unacceptable” the indifference of the UK government to the security of Indian diplomatic premises and personnel in the UK.

# ‘Financial help being provided to States, UTs for promotion of film tourism’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Tourism issued guidelines in 2012 for extending financial support to state governments and Union territory administrations for promotion of film tourism, and a financial assistance of up to Rs 2 lakh per film is provided under it, the government has informed a parliamentary panel.

This was mentioned in a report on ‘Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Three Hundred Twenty Sixth Report on the subject ‘Role of Indian Missions Globally for the growth of Tourism in India’ tabled in Lok Sabha on Friday.

The committee in its report has also said that it had observed that many of the tourist spots and places of religious importance are located near the national highways

yet the state of the last-mile connectivity from the national highways to the tourist spot “leaves much to be desired”.

“The Committee feels that good quality last-mile connectivity is important to ensure a positive experience for tourists visiting a tourist destination in the country, which in turn, helps attract more tourists through word-of-mouth publicity.

“The Committee therefore recommends that the ministry may examine the state/quality of last mile connectivity roads at all such tourist spots near the National Highways at the earliest and ensure their construction and maintenance with the concerned Ministries/agencies to make the tourist places more accessible to tourists, both domestic and international, which will invariably increase the number of tourists visiting such places,” the panel had observed.

# Rahul may have to vacate bungalow unless higher court stays conviction, say experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday stood disqualified from contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction, an expert on electoral laws said.

Now following his disqualification as an MP, Rahul Gandhi may have to vacate his official bungalow in Lutyens’ Delhi within a month if he does not get relief from a higher court in the criminal defamation case, an official said on Friday. Rahul Gandhi was allotted the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow after his election as a Lok Sabha MP in 2004.

“As he has been disqualified from Lok Sabha, he is not entitled to a government accommodation. According to rules, he will have to vacate his official bungalow within a month since the date of dis-



qualification order,” an official of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had to vacate her official Lodhi Estate bungalow in July 2020 as she was no longer eligible for it after her security cover had been downgraded.

This was Rahul Gandhi’s fourth Lok Sabha term. First elected to Lok Sabha in 2004 from Amethi, he represented that constituency for two more terms. In 2019, he lost the Amethi seat to Smriti Irani but managed to win from Wayanad.

Incidentally, the Congress-led UPA government, in 2013, had attempted to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling to set aside an RP Act provision under which a person sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more shall be disqualified “from the date of such conviction” and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time. Rahul Gandhi himself had opposed the ordinance at that time and tore the ordinance in a press conference as a token of protest.

Rahul Gandhi is the second member of Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP P P Mohammed Faisal of the Nationalist Congress Party, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction. The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faizal to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case.

# Def Min signs contract with BEL for ‘Project Himshakti’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to indigenous production of weapon systems, Ministry of Defence on Friday signed a contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Hyderabad for procurement of two Integrated Electronic Warfare Systems ‘Project Himshakti’ at an overall cost of approximately Rs 3,000 crore.

Giving details of the contract, officials said here the project is under the Buy (Indian – IDMM) (Indigenously Designed Developed and

Manufactured)) category comprising contemporary and niche technologies.

‘Project Himshakti’ will encourage participation of Indian electronics and associated industries, including MSMEs, which are sub vendors of the BEL. It will generate employment of approximately three lakh man-days over a period of two years. The project is a significant leap forward in developing indigenous capabilities making the country ‘Aatmanirbhar’, in consonance with the Make-in-India initiative of the government.

# SC directs convicts released during Covid emergency to surrender in 15 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the COVID-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days. A bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar said undertrial prisoners, who were released on emergency bail during the pandemic, can move for regular bail before competent courts after their surrender.

# US pick for WB, Banga, cancels India meetings after tests Covid +

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian origin US nominee for World Bank president Ajay Banga, scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here has tested positive for Covid-19. Hence, his meetings to take place on March 23 and 24 were cancelled.

According to a Finance Ministry statement, Banga’s meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman would not happen as he is in quarantine.

“During routine testing, Ajay Banga tested positive for COVID-19 but remains asymp-



tomatic. In adherence with local guidelines, he is quarantining in isolation,” the statement said.

Besides meeting with the Union finance minister, Banga was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and top officials during his two-day visit.

Banga’s New Delhi visit is the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank’s top position.

In a statement on Wednesday, the US Treasury Department had said, “While in India, Banga will meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman and the Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar.

“These discussions will focus on India’s development priorities, the World Bank, and global economic development challenges,” it said.

Banga’s New Delhi visit was the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank’s top position.

India endorsed Banga’s candidacy soon after his nomination was announced in February. Since then, a diverse coalition of governments has expressed their support for Banga, including Bangladesh, Côte d’Ivoire, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom.

During his global listening tour, Banga met with senior government officials, stakeholders, business leaders, entre-

preneurs, and civil society.

Along the way, he built continuous momentum for his candidacy, gaining the support of advocates, academics, development experts, executives, Nobel Laureates, and former government officials.

If elected to serve, Banga will draw from his experience living and working in emerging markets and his expertise in forging public-private partnerships to mobilise investments and action to confront long standing challenges.

That includes his efforts at Mastercard to successfully bring 500 million previously unbanked people into the digital economy, as well as its support for 50 million small businesses.

# NIA chargesheets gangsters, criminals linked with pro-Khalistani terror outfits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a chargesheet against notorious gangsters/criminals, Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar, along with 12 others having links with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and several other pro-Khalistani terrorist outfits, in the second of the three terror-gangster nexus cases it is investigating. The latest action takes the total number of accused chargesheeted by the NIA so far in these cases to 26.

The chargesheet has exposed the linkages between members of criminal syndicates and drug smugglers with BKI and pro-Khalistani outfits.

Lawrence Bishnoi, in custody since 2015, has been operating his terror-crime syndicate from jails in different States, along with Canada-based Goldy Brar, who is an accused in the killing of Pradeep Kumar, a Dera Sacha Sauda follower, in Faridkot in November 2022.



The Lawrence Bishnoi terror-crime-extortion syndicate was also responsible for providing killers for the RPG attack case on Punjab State Intelligence HQs (headquarters) at Mohali, which was carried out on directions of Harwinder Singh alia Rinda, a Pakistan-based BKI terrorist, NIA investigations have revealed, the NIA alleged.

Goldy Brar was found to have direct links with Lakhbir Singh alias Landa, another BKI operative working closely with Rinda, as revealed in NIA investigations so far, it said.

Lakhbir Singh is also an accused in the Mohali RPG

attack, as well as the December 2022 RPG (rocket propelled grenade) attack on Police Station Sirhali in Tarn Taran, Punjab.

Investigations against Landa and three others are continuing. “All the 14 accused have been charged with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of well-known social and religious leaders, movie stars, singers and businessmen,” the NIA said in a statement.

Besides having links with conspirators in Pakistan, the accused were also in contact with pro-Khalistani elements based in Canada, Nepal and other countries, NIA investigations have further revealed.

NIA has seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons, 14 magazines, 298 rounds of ammunition and 183 digital devices and other incriminating material in raids across 74 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi in the case.

# ED attaches ₹252.17 cr property in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable property in the form of commercial asset Ambience Tower at Shalimar Bagh locality here worth Rs 252.17 crore belonging to Ambience Towers Pvt. Ltd, a company of Ambience Group, promoted by Raj Singh Gehlot in connection with a money laundering investigation.

The ED initiated Investigation on the basis of an FIR and subsequent chargesheet filed by Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu and Kashmir under the Provisions of Ranbir Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Samvat Act.

PMLA investigation revealed that Aman Hospitality Pvt. Ltd through its promoter director Raj Singh Gehlot was sanctioned a term loan facility of Rs 810



crore by a consortium of Banks led by J&K Bank to part finance its hotel project in Shahdara, Delhi.

The loan amount later turned into a non-performing asset (NPA). “During investigation, it was revealed that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted loan funds and layered the same through a web of bank accounts belonging to his relatives and Ambience Group companies. In addition to

diversion of funds, it was also found that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted materials to the other project sites of Ambience Group,” the ED said in a statement.

In line with the probe findings, Gehlot was arrested on July 28, 2021. His wife, Sheela Gehlot and other directors of Ambience Group Companies, Amit Gehlot, Shamsher Singh and Pawan Singh were arraigned as accused in the Prosecution Complaints (chargesheets in police parlance) filed by the ED.

The ED has already filed Prosecution Complaints dated September 24, 2021 and November 17, 2022 in the present case before the PMLA Court, Patiala House Courts here for commission of money laundering offences.

The PMLA court took cognizance through its order dated September 27, 2021 and November 30, 2022.

# Ayush Min, Def Min ink pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Ministry of Ayush and Department of ex-servicemen Welfare/ECHS under Union Ministry of Defence on Friday inked a pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics as an OPD service for five years period. These will be established at 10 polyclinics based at Ambala, Mysore, Ranchi, Nagpur, Bhopal, Bhuvaneshwar, Chennai, Meerut, Danapur, and Allepey (Alappuzha).

Ayurveda centres are already in place in 37 cantonment Hospitals, 12 military hospitals of AFMC and Ayurveda OPD in AH R&R,

AF Hospital Hindan and five ECHS polyclinics. The MoU was signed by Dr Manoj Nesari, Adviser (Ayurveda) on behalf of the Ayush Ministry and Maj Gen NR Indurkar, Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme on behalf of the Defence Ministry.

According to this MoU, Ayush Ministry will provide technical guidance from time to time and will empanel Ayurveda doctors and pharmacists for their engagement and provide list of essential Ayurveda medicines and any other technical support as may be required while the Defence Ministry will provide logistic and locations in the respective polyclinics.



# GUEST COLUMN

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## Self-help versus spirituality



**ACHARYA PRASHANT**

Spirituality lies in the knowledge that there can be no self-help. The greatest arrogance of the ego lies in claiming that it can be of help to itself. The great Self which you really are needs no help. And that self which you assume yourself to be is always in need of help; unfortunately it also becomes a helper to itself.

The wise one, the settled one, the relaxed one feels no need for help. So there is no question of self-help in his case. The one who feels the need to be helped, unfortunately, also decides to become his own helper. And that is the whole absurdity and the tragedy of this matter.

There is nobody who suffers and does not decide to be his own messiah. You go to anybody who is suffering and ask him, "What's wrong?" He will be able to describe it. You also ask him, "What would relieve

your suffering?" That too he will be able to describe. Now, the question is: if you know so much about your suffering and also the solution to your suffering, why are you still suffering?

But that's what the suffering is – you think you know. Have you ever met someone who is suffering and says honestly, innocently, "I do not know why I am suffering?" Had you not known, really not known, you would not have been able to suffer either. Suffering is knowledge.

Everybody who suffers thinks that he knows why he is suffering; this knowledge itself is suffering. And if you know why you are suffering, you also know how to get out of the suffering.

Self-help is the worst crime one can commit upon himself. Spirituality begins the moment you realise that self-help is not possible. The One who will help you is beyond you. You can never be your own helper. Till the time you try and decide and make efforts to be your own doctor, you will remain a patient. In fact, this effort itself is the disease. This conviction that you are powerful, smart and intelligent enough to take care of yourself is itself your burden.

den.

Spirituality is to give up all efforts and pretence of self-help. You bow down and you say, "Enough of myself! I am done with myself! No more cleverness. No more trying to guess the ways of the beyond. No more trying to measure up to the Truth." But we are clever, we are so clever. Just as we choose our physician, we also choose our teacher. And just as we compare physicians, we also compare teachers. Just as we size up physicians, we also size up teachers. All this is self-help. "Let me do what is best for me." Do you even know what is best for you?

The more you will try to help yourself, the more you will convince yourself that you can continue in your old ways. Pay attention to this helper- he is the mischief. Who is this helper? Does he really want to get rid of the disease, the disease that he himself is? What is his objective? What does he want? In helping yourself, don't you just want the fulfillment of your own goals and desires?

A lot of self-help is directed toward tackling this question—"Why do I hesitate?" Now, is the one who is asking this question also

saying that "I want to change the very center from which my action arises?" No, he is not saying that. He is saying, "I want to act in the same way as I used to but I want to act without hesitation." So, the helper wants to remain the same. The objective is to do just what you want to do in a more efficient way, in a more polished way.

Real help is not about doing what you want to do in a better way. Real help is about letting the want itself change. Real help is about letting the actor itself disappear or change. It's not about being able to be more confident with people. Real help is about being free of the need to have confidence.

*(The author is a Vedanta teacher, writer and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation. Views expressed are personal)*

# Narsinh Mandir road still awaits repairs

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The Public Works Department has not yet started repairing the Narsinh Mandir motor road in Joshimath. If the road is not repaired before the start of the Char Dham Yatra next month, the pilgrims and other travelers may have to face problems. This road is used for traffic to the Badrinath temple. At present, there are issues at two spots on this road which has made it problematic for large vehicles to pass.

The pilgrimage to Badri-

nath will start with the re-opening of the shrine on April 27. The authorities are working to improve the arrangements in view of the pilgrimage but the Narsinh Mandir road which connects the Marwadi Chowk to the petrol pump is yet to be repaired.

The road is subsiding at two spots due to the wall being damaged. The PWD has not yet started the work of repairing the road at these spots. This is part of the major road leading to Badrinath and devotees

from across the nation and abroad pay their obeisance at the Narsinh temple before visiting Badrinath. The road sank in during the recent past due to which the traffic of heavy vehicles was also affected for some days. Problems are still being faced by large vehicles crossing this patch. According to the PWD, the Narsinh Mandir road is damaged at two sites. Tenders will be issued soon to undertake the repairs and the task will be completed before the start of the Yatra, said the officials.

## DM directs officials to speed up works in Badrinath

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

Chamoli district magistrate Himanshu Khurana has directed the executing agencies to increase manpower and expedite works being undertaken as part of preparations for the Char Dham Yatra and the Badrinath masterplan. After chairing a meeting with the officials, he inspected the

temple compound, Saket intersection, riverfront, Badrishi and Sheshnag lakes and the arrival plaza in Badrinath. He also directed the officials to prepare a separate route for removing debris. He said that shops should be allocated on priority basis to those whose shops have been removed.

The officials informed the DM in detail about the construction works. Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee vice chairman Kishor Panwar, sub divisional magistrate Kumkum Joshi, officials of PWD and other departments were also present on the occasion.

F. No. 3/7/2017-RE  
Government of India  
Ministry of Finance  
Department of Economic Affairs  
Financial Markets Division  
Regulatory Establishment Section  
\*\*\*

North Block, New Delhi 110 001  
Dated the 16 March 2023.

**Filling up the post of Judicial Member in Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT), Mumbai on contract basis.**

The Government of India invites applications from eligible candidates for filling up one post of Judicial Member in Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT), Mumbai for a term of four (4) years from the date of assumption of charge or till attaining the age of 67 years of the appointee, whichever is earlier.

The qualifications, eligibility, salary and other terms and conditions of the appointment of a candidate for the post of Judicial Member will be governed by the provisions of the Tribunal (Conditions of Service) Rules, 2021.

The vacancy circular, including the format for application, may be seen on the Department's website at <https://www.dea.gov.in/vacancy-deputation-department-economic-affairs>.

Applications of eligible candidates in the prescribed proforma i.e. Annexure I, II and III along with certified copies of required documents may be forwarded, through proper channel (wherever applicable), so as to reach the undersigned in the **Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Room No. 78, North Block, New Delhi-110001** on or before 24th April 2023. The applications may also be emailed at **pawankumar.irs@gov.in** and **dinesh.bisht@nic.in**.

**(Pawan kumar)**  
**Director (RE)**  
**Tel: 23093556**



CBC-15201/11/0019/2223

## Rain & snowfall likely at many places in State today


PNS ■ DEHRADUN

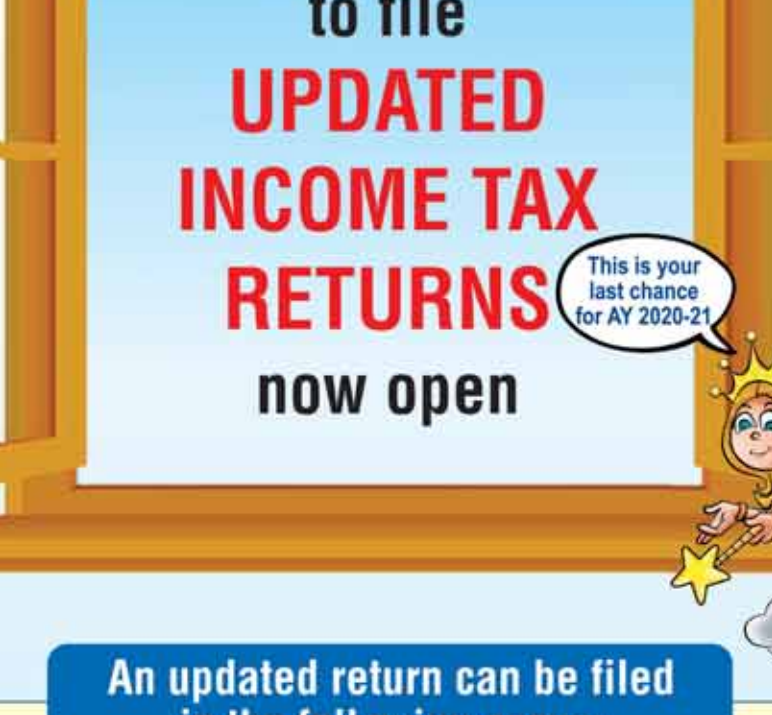
The rainy weather and snowfall likely to continue in various parts of the State today. The State meteorological centre has also issued a warning (watch) regarding the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/hail likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of the State today. The meteorological centre has forecast that light to moderate rain/ thunderstorm/ snowfall are very likely to occur at many places in the districts on Saturday while snowfall is likely to occur at places situated at altitudes of 3,500 metres and above. The Provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to experience partly to generally cloudy skies with light rain/ thunderstorms accompanied with lightning likely to occur in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 28 degrees Celsius and 14 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded at various places in the State on Friday were 27.9 degrees Celsius and 14.2 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 28.9 degrees Celsius and 11.8 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 18 degrees Celsius and 6.6 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 18 degrees Celsius and 8.9 degrees Celsius respectively in New Tehri.

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक ... परचसे का प्रयोजन ... punjab national bank ...the name you can BANK upon...		POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)			
Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Punjab National Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice/s on the dates mentioned against each account calling upon the respective borrower/s to repay the amount as mentioned against each account within 60 days from the date of notice(s) / date of receipt of the said notice(s). The borrower/s having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each account. The borrower/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Punjab National Bank for the amounts and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.					
S. No.	Name of the Borrower/Guarantor	Description of Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice	Date of possession notice affixed	Amount outstanding as on the date of demand notice
1	Branch: Race Course, Dehradun. Borrower Firm:- M/s Pavitra Unixesal Saloon & Spa. Propritor: Smt Neelam Sharma W/o Sh. Subhash Sharma. Mortgagor/Guarantor: Mr. Subhash Sharma	Collateral Security:Em of all that three BHK Apartment bearing Flat No. 202 on Second Floor, Having Super Area of 1800 sq ft and covered area of 1400 sq ft together with undivided and importable proportionate share in the common areas and facilities of the complex alongwith the right to use the car parking space specifically earmarked in the still for the vendee, situated in Meridian Homes-1 forming part of land baring New Kharsa No. 439 (Old No. 256), Mauza Jakhn Pargana Central Doon Distt Dehradun forming part of property bearing Municipal No. 16, Krishana Vihar, Jakhn Dehradun Registered on Bahi No. 1, Jild No. 1002, page No. 149 to 202 at Serial No. 5546, on 25.11.2013 at Sub Registrar Dehradun in the name of subhash Sharma	08.08.2022	22.03.2023 <div>Symbolic Possession</div>	Rs. 21,96,329.00/- +with further interest and other Charges w.e.f. 01.08.2022
2	Branch: Race Course, Dehradun. Borrower/Mortgagor:- Mr. Manish Ahuja	All the plot of land being part of property bearing municipal No. 57/B (New No 57/4) Rest Camp. Tyagi Road, Dehradun forming part of the plot of land bearing no. 599 min according to settlement of 1904-05 situated at laxman Model Town Now Know as Rest Camp Dehradun Registered on Bahi No. 1 Jild No.3253 Page No. 99 to 130 Serial No. 2448, dated 26.03.2010 at Sub Registrar Sader 1 Dehradun in the name of ownership Mr.manish Ahuja	15.12.2022	22.03.2023 <div>Symbolic Possession</div>	Rs. 78,68,368.00/- as on 30.11.2022 +with further interest and Incidental Charges w.e.f. 30.11.2022
Date: 24.03.2023		Place: Dehradun	Authorised Officer, Punjab National Bank		

## Attention Taxpayers!





**An updated return can be filed in the following cases:**

- ▶ If original return has not been filed
- ▶ If belated return deadline has been missed
- ▶ To modify original return, if-
  - Income was not declared correctly
  - Wrong head of income was chosen or tax was paid at wrong rate
  - Reduction in carried forward loss or unabsorbed depreciation is required
  - Reduction of MAT/AMT credit is required


**You can file your Updated Return for A.Y. 2020-21 till**

# 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023


*Don't Delay. File Today.*

If you file ITR-U till 31.03.2023	Amount of additional tax payable
For AY 2020-2021	50% of aggregate of tax & interest payable
For AY 2021-2022 & AY 2022-2023	25% of aggregate of tax & interest payable


For more information please refer to Section 139(8A) & 140B of Income-tax Act, 1961



For e-Brochures  
scan QR Code





**Income Tax Department**  
**Central Board of Direct Taxes**





For more information  
scan QR Code


For additional information and to file updated return please visit: [www.incometax.gov.in](http://www.incometax.gov.in)

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Inconsistent

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

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



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

## PICTALK



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

PTI

## Are you contributing to electronic waste?

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



SAKSHI SETHI

## Myanmar nightmare continues unabated

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## KANGAROOS HAVE A STRONG TAIL

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

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

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

## LEAST PAINFUL DEATH PENALTY?

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

## Blessing in disguise



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

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

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

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

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

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

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

## HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

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

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

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

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

NOW THE GOVT DECIDES WHAT WE EAT


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



SHUBHANG RATHI

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

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



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

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

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

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

*(The writer is the Director of Rath Public Schools)*

# Empower ‘Divyangs’ with skills, inclusion



DINESH SOOD

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



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

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

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



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

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

ment for everyone, including those with disabilities.

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

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

It is worth noting that the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Innovative approaches are galvanising livestock economy

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

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

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



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

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

doing business and innovation.

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

**Startup conclave**

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

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

**Startups' exhibition**

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

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

**Pitch fest & shoring capacity**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Innovative approaches to

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

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



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

**AP ■ KYIV**

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## UN decries killing of Russian POWs and Ukrainians

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## Israeli AG: Netanyahu broke law on conflict of interest

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



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

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

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

## Demonstrators protest Netanyahu's visit to UK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Saudi Arabia, Syria may restore ties

**AP ■ BEIRUT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Protests continue as Paris reels under violence

**AP ■ PARIS**

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

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

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

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



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

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

## British King's visit postponed

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

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

now be off the cards. The protests have drawn support from beyond France's borders. In Greece, hundreds of protesters gathered outside the French Embassy in Athens on Thursday to show solidarity. Protesters chanted slogans and held placards that read "Macron, your democracy hangs on nine votes" and "From Greece: victory for the workers of France".

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

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches.

He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest. Macron's office announced that a state visit by the British king was postponed.

## Report on Leicester clashes warns of ethnic enclaves in UK

**AP ■ LONDON**

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

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

lence such as the rise of extremism and hate speech.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Starbucks CEO to work as barista

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Bolsonaro hands undeclared jewels to authorities

**AP ■ BRASILIA**

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

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

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

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

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







# Sensex, Nifty fall 1% amid weak global equities trend

Sensex declined 398.18 points, Nifty fell 131.85 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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



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

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Asian Paints and Wipro were the gainers.

In Asia markets, stock exchanges in Seoul, Japan, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

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

noon trade. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

"The asset management industry was hit hard by tax



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

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

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

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

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday.

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

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

such products.

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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



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

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

Healthy cash generation,

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

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

ue to register modest growth, supporting revenues.

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

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

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

## RBI Central board discusses global, domestic eco situation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

ing to a CCI notice.

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



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

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

Airports Ltd with GIL.

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

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

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



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

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



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

ginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Explaining the provision, the finance ministry said under

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

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

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

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



# WPL GAME EQUALISER: BARCLAY

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



## ‘Hardik similar to Dhoni as captain’

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The upcoming edition of the IPL starts on March 31.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Although a number of sports contin-



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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ IMPHAL

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

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

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

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



focus on performance, rather than results.

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

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

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

## Kimmich praises Nagelsmann amid reports Bayern coach out



AP ■ FRANKFURT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

"The Worlds in May last

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

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

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



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

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

The top-ranked players in both sections are:

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

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



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



PTI ■ BASEL

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

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

Thursday night.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Aman Raj stays at third, Aryan Roopa Anand is 7th at Challenge Tour event

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India's Aman Raj shot a solid four-under 68 to lie tied third after the second round of the Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge golf here on Friday.

At 9-under for 36 holes, Aman was two shots behind the leader, Manuel Elvira of Spain (63-70), who is 11-under and two shots ahead of the field.

Sweden's Rikard Karlberg (68-66), who has two wins in India, was lying second at 10-under, while Aman shared the third place alongside three others — Oliver Farr (64-71), Ashley Chesters (67-68) and Stefano Mazzoli (67-68), who were all at 9-under.

Just one shot behind them in tied seventh was local lad, Aryan Roopa Anand, a rookie pro. Aryan (68-68) is now 8-under and shares the seventh place with five others.

Two more Indians, Om Prakash Chouhan (70-67) and Mari Muthu (68-69) were tied 13th at 7-under. Chouhan made a fine move up by 30 places as he added 67 to his first 70.

The tournament has so far looked good for Indians, who are getting to play a European Challenge Tour event in India after a gap of 10 years. A win here could open the doors to the Challenge Tour, from where they can aspire for the main DP World Tour.

As many as 14 Indians made the cut, which fell at 3-under with 69 players making it through to the weekend, including amateurs Arron Edwards-Hill and Robert Moran who received invitations through Sir Nick Faldo's Elite Tour.

Aman, who is on a come-



back trail following a fine win on the domestic Tata Steel PGTI Tour, had a fine start with birdies on second and fourth, but back-to-back bogeys on sixth and seventh meant he was back to even par.

The 27-year-old Patna golfer, fought back superbly around the turn with four birdies in a span of five holes. He birdied ninth, 10th, 11th and 13th and then closed with five pars to stay at tied third, where he began the second day.

Aman will go out in the lead

group with Elvira and Karlberg at 9:30am. Aryan, starting from the back nine, birdied 10th and 11th and dropped a shot on 12th. He got back that shot with a birdie on 17th and turned in 2-under. On the front nine of the KGA Course, Aryan birdied four times on first, second, fifth and eighth but also dropped a double bogey on Par-3 fourth for a second straight 68.

Chouhan had six birdies against one bogey in his 67 and Muthu had five birdies and a double in his 69.



# Chikka tied sixth in Hong Kong as debutant Kho takes lead

PTI ■ HONG KONG

India's S Chikkarangappa carded a fine one-under 69 but slipped from tied fourth place to tied sixth place at the halfway stage of the USD 1 million World City Championship here on Friday.

As many as eight of the nine Indians made the cut.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Kho took the second round lead with 64 and he is now 12-under and two shots ahead.

Among other Indians, veteran Jeev Milkha Singh (71-66) and SSP Chawrasia (70-67) were both three-under and tied 23rd. Shiv Kapur (71-67) was two-under and tied 36th, as were Veer Ahlawat (71-67) and Honey Baisoya (69-69).

Karandeep Kochhar (69-70) was 1-under and tied 48th, as Gaganjeet Bhullar (73-67) made the cut on the line.

Viraj Madappa (73-71) was the lone Indian to miss the cut.

Kho, 22, fired his second-successive six-under-par 64 to lead by two from Tabuena, the first-round leader. New Zealand's Michael Hendry is in third place, four behind Kho, after returning a 64. Kho, a member of the HKGC since January who was unveiled this week as their ambassador, is 12-under and now has an outstanding opportunity to become the first player from Hong Kong to win on the Asian Tour.

This is the first international golf tournament in Hong Kong, China for 38 months.

Tabuena, who led with a 63 on Thursday, impressively recovered from a double bogey on his opening hole.

Korean Yoseop Seo returned a 64 and is solo fourth, five back from Kho. Thailand's Jazz Janewattanond (67) and Suradit Yongcharoenchai (68) are a further stroke back along with Zimbabwe's Kieran Vincent (67).

# Rudrankksh wins bronze as China extend golden run

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Reigning world champion Rudranksh Patil won bronze in the men's 10m air rifle, his second of the tournament, even as China extended their golden run at the ISSF World Cup by winning both gold medals on offer for the second consecutive day here.

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Sheng Lihao of China won gold in the men's 10m air rifle while compatriot Huang Yuting, a double gold medallist at the Cairo World Championships last year, won the women's event.

China maintained their top position on the medal tally at the end of competition day three with five gold, one silver and two bronze in their kitty. India lay second with three bronze medals to go with a gold and silver each.

Playing back-to-back matches can never be easy, especially in a home World Cup, but the champion shooter that he is, Rudranksh delivered yet again, clinching bronze from what at one point seemed a lost cause.

He shot a solid 631.0 in qualification to finish fourth after leading in the ini-



tial stages. In the 25-shot top eight ranking round, he was well outside the medal positions till the third five-shot series, before a fantastic fourth series, where he shot the highest score of 53.5, brought him back into contention.

Meanwhile the three Chinese qualifiers — Sheng (who led throughout the ranking round), silver medallist Du Linshu and Yu Haonan -- were on course to make it a Chinese 1-2-3 till the

20th shot. Rudranksh went into the fifth series 0.8 behind Yu. He then shot a strong 52.6 in the series as Yu faltered, posting 51.5 to finish fourth, as the Indian confirmed his second medal in two days and his fourth ISSF World Cup podium overall.

He finished with a score of 262.3 as Sheng and Du moved into the gold medal match with scores of 264.2 and 263.3 respectively.

The all-China gold medal contest was also a close one with Sheng prevailing 17-13 in the end.

## RAMITA FINISHES FOURTH

India had only one top eight finisher in Ramita in the women's 10m air rifle as she shot 632.3 to finish second among the medal contenders in the 52-strong field. The top eight had two Chinese, two Americans and one shooter each from Romania, Israel and Kazakhstan, besides hosts India.

China's Huang Yuting was in ominous form, topping the qualifications with a score of 632.8, while Tokyo Olympics silver medallist in the mixed team air rifle, Mary Tucker of the USA, also made it through in seventh place.

In the top eights, Huang was a cut above the rest, finishing on top again with a score of 265.7 as Mary shot 261.2 for a shot at gold.

Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le pipped India's Ramita to bronze, shooting 261.2 to the Indian's 260.5. Huang then maintained her form on the day to defeat Mary 16-4 for China's fifth gold of the competition.

# Scotland extends coach Clarke's contract to 2026 World Cup

AP ■ GLASGOW

Steve Clarke extended his contract Friday with Scotland's national soccer team through the 2026 World Cup, which would make him the Tartan Army's longest-serving coach in more than 20 years.

The Scottish Football Association announced the deal ahead of European Championship qualifying games against Cyprus and Spain.

Clarke led Scotland to Euro 2020 for its first major tournament since the 1998 World Cup.

After Scotland lost to Ukraine in the playoffs for last year's World Cup, the team won a Nations League group to advance to



the top tier for the first time.

Clarke, a former Chelsea defender, was hired in 2019 and is set to have the longest spell in the Scotland job since Craig Brown left in 2002 after nine years.

"Steve has united the nation behind a successful men's national team," SFA chief executive Ian Maxwell said in a statement.

Scotland's Euro 2024 qualifying group also includes Norway and Germany.

The top two teams in the group will advance to Euro 2024 in Germany. Scotland also has a guaranteed second path through the playoffs because of its Nations League group win. The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico will be the first 48-team edition.

# Euro 2024 host Germany looks to rebuild after World Cup

AP ■ DUSSELDORF (GERMANY)

Another World Cup failure, another rebuild for Germany. This time there's even more at stake. Germany will host next year's European Championship and is desperate to avoid another debacle at home.

The Germans once took pride in having a "tournament team," one that could put distractions aside to perform when it mattered. Following group-stage exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and a round-of-16 loss at the last European Championship, however, Germany has not won a knock-out game since the now-defunct Confederations Cup in 2017.

The current rebuild — with Germany able to skip qualifying as Euro 2024 host — starts with friendlies against Peru on Saturday and Belgium on Tuesday.

Germany coach Hansi Flick's squad is a mix of regulars like Emre Can, Timo Werner and Joshua Kimmich, and some more experimental picks. The six players getting their first call-ups include two right backs, Joshua Vagnoman and Marius Wolf. There is also AC Milan defender Malick Thiaw and 21-year-old winger Kevin Schade, who is a bench player for Brentford in the Premier League.

Just like predecessor Joachim Löw after the 2018 World Cup, Flick has left out Bayern



Munich forward Thomas Müller. The 33-year-old Müller signaled his international career might be over in an emotional interview at the World Cup in Qatar, but then changed tack to say he was still available for selection.

Müller has been here before. After Löw dropped him in 2018,

he ended up being recalled in 2021 in the aftermath of a 6-0 loss to Spain.

"We appreciate each other and will continue to be in good contact," Müller posted on Instagram last week after it was confirmed Flick would not select him. Some other big names are out of the squad temporarily, whether because of injury (goalkeeper Manuel Neuer broke his leg while skiing) or personal reasons (midfielder Ilkay Gündogan became a father last week). The reasons for dropping Real Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger and Bayern forward Leroy Sané are less clear-cut, but seem to be part of Flick's experiments in the rebuild.



# MATCHDAY: Spain hosts Norway; Wales at Croatia in qualifiers

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A look at what's happening in European Championship qualifying on Saturday:

## GROUP A

Luis de la Fuente takes charge of his first game as Spain coach in a potentially tricky match against Norway but he won't have to worry about Erling Haaland. The record-breaking Manchester City striker is out of the Norwegian squad after feeling pain from a groin injury.

Scotland plays Cyprus in the other game in the group after extending coach Steve Clarke's contract through to the 2026 World Cup.

## GROUP D

With long-time star Gareth Bale having recently retired, Wales will start a new era in its match at Croatia. Bale was Wales' most-capped men's player with 111 appearances and carried the team in recent years, including to the nation's first appearance at a World Cup in 64 years. However, Croatia star Luka Modric is still going. The 37-year-old Modric has said he will continue playing for his national team at least until the Nations League finals in June so should add to his record 162

appearances for Croatia against Wales in Split. Turkey visits Armenia in the other game.

## GROUP I

Switzerland's previous game was a 6-1 loss to Portugal in front of a crowd of 83,000 at the World Cup in Qatar. The Swiss return in an empty stadium facing Belarus in neutral Serbia.

Though Russia was kicked out of Euro 2024 by UEFA, its military ally Belarus was allowed to keep playing on condition of hosting its games in neutral countries with no fans allowed. Belarus chose Novi Sad in Serbia, which won't be an option when it "hosts" Kosovo in June.

Kosovo starts at Israel on Saturday and Romania is at Andorra. Switzerland is the only Group I team in the top 50 of FIFA's rankings, at No. 12. Romania is next best at No. 52.

## FRIENDLIES

Germany is starting a rebuild after its second World Cup group-stage exit in a row. Midfielder Joshua Kimmich takes the captain's armband instead of the injured Manuel Neuer in a much-changed squad to face Peru.

Germany isn't playing qualifiers because it's the host of the European Championship.