

OPINION 6
NEPAL CONSTITUTION
CONUNDRUM

WORLD 9
36 DEAD IN GREEK TRAIN
CRASH, MIN RESIGNS

MONEY 10
AXIS BANK COMPLETES CITI INDIA'S
RETAIL BIZ BUY, PAYS ₹11,603 CRORE

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY MARCH 2, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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**DJOKO TAKES
WINNING
STREAK TO 18**
11 SPORT

Late City Vol.33 Issue 60
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

**G-20 Foreign
Ministers' meet
Ukraine
war casts
its shadow**



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

With the ongoing Ukraine conflict likely to figure prominently during the G-20 Foreign Ministers' conference here, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra on Wednesday refrained from speculating on whether the conclave will be able to come out with a joint communique against the backdrop of widening differences between the West and Russia on the war.

The major point of contention between the West and the Russia-China combine is expected to be on the Ukraine conflict, even as India is reportedly making all efforts to bring out a joint statement following the crucial meeting.

Russia on Sunday alleged that the G20 Finance Ministers' meeting in Bengaluru ended without a joint communique because of the "confrontational" approach towards Moscow by the "collective West" over the situation in Ukraine. He also clarified India's stand on the issue and reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that "this isn't an era of war".

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

**245 JUMBOS DIED IN
ODISHA IN LAST 3 YRS**
Bhubaneswar: As many as 245 elephant deaths were reported in Odisha in last three years, officials said on Wednesday. The 245 elephant deaths were reported from 2019 to 2022, they said. Odisha's Forest and Environment minister P K Amat on Tuesday told the Assembly that of the 245 jumbo deaths, six were killed by poachers.

**SC TO REVIEW VERDICT
IN CHHAWLA CASE**
New Delhi: Supreme Court is likely to consider on Thursday as many as five petitions seeking review of its verdict acquitting three death row convicts in gangrape and murder case of a 19-year-old girl in Chhawla.

**2 ISIS MEN SENTENCED
TO 10 YEARS IN JAIL**
Ahmedabad: A special NIA court here has sentenced two brothers, accused of having links with terror outfit Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to ten years of imprisonment. Waseem Ramodiya and his younger brother Naeem were arrested by Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) from Rajkot and Bhavnagar, respectively, in February 2017 for allegedly plotting to spread terror in state on instructions of their ISIS handlers. P4

BBC raids: All entities must follow law, EAM to UK Min

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

Days after an Income Tax 'survey' at the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) office in India, New Delhi on Wednesday said all entities operating in the country must fully comply with relevant laws. This message was firmly conveyed here by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to his UK counterpart James Cleverly when he brought up the tax 'survey' issue.

Cleverly is in the national Capital to take part in the G-20 Foreign Ministers' conclave for two days commencing Wednesday. The two Ministers also held bilateral talks on a range of issues, including ways to expand two-way engagement in a number of areas.

"UK Foreign Secretary brought up the BBC tax issue with External Affairs Minister today. He was firmly told that all entities operating in India must comply fully with relevant laws and regulations," sources said.

Last month, Indian tax authorities carried out surveys at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai. The action by the tax authorities came in the backdrop of a controversy over a two-part documentary released by the BBC recently about the 2002 Gujarat riots when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of the State.

Meanwhile, in a tweet, Jaishankar said the two sides reviewed the progress in the bilateral relations and exchanged views on the global situation as well as the G20 agenda. "Began the morning



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly during a meeting, in New Delhi, on Wednesday PTI Photo

with a bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary @JamesCleverly of the UK. Reviewed the progress in our relationship since our last discussion. Noted in particular the commencement of the Young Professional Scheme," he said. "Also exchanged views on the global situation as well as the G20 agenda," Jaishankar added.

The UK Government came out in defence of the BBC and its editorial freedom in that country's Parliament, but also told Opposition lawmakers it would not comment on an ongoing investigation.

As regards the British Minister's schedule, he marked a new scheme allowing young Britons and Indians to live and work in each other's countries for up to two years, which was announced by the Home Secretary earlier this week. India launched the reciprocal scheme in London on Tuesday.

During a visit to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, the British Foreign Secretary marked the opening of the Young Professionals Scheme, an ambitious new

partnership between the UK and India which allows up to 3,000 Brits and 3,000 Indians a year the right to live and work in the other country for up to two years.

He also announced the creation of the UK's first Tech Envoy to the Indo-Pacific region, who will boost ties with India as a priority. "This envoy is the second of its kind to be announced by the UK (after the appointment of a Tech Envoy to the US in late 2020) and demonstrates our commitment to the region and tech-diplomacy," a British High Commission statement said. The UK deployed its first Tech Envoy, Joe White, to San Francisco in 2020.

In a statement, Secretary Cleverly said, "India is a hugely important partner to the UK and the deeper ties we are forging now will help to grow the UK economy and boost our industries for future."

This landmark migration scheme will enable brightest and best in both our countries to benefit from new opportunities." *Continued on Page 2*

**NE poll results
today: Stakes high
for BJP; Sangma
meets Himanta**
PTI ■ NEW DELHI/SHILLONG

Even as all parties wait for the results of the just-concluded Assembly polls in three north-eastern States, the stakes are high for the BJP. The counting of votes will be held on Thursday and the results will signal if the has deepened its roots in Tripura, a Left bastion captured by the party in 2018, and made further inroads in Meghalaya and Nagaland, or the Opposition has managed to dent its influence. Meanwhile, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma met Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati, sources said on Wednesday.

Sarma, who heads the BJP-led North East Development Alliance (NEDA), met Sangma at a hotel in Guwahati on Tuesday night, they said. "Sangma was in Guwahati last night and Sarma, his friend, came and visited him at the hotel. They had a one-to-one meeting," a source told PTI. The meeting comes amid exit polls predicting a hung Assembly in Meghalaya with Sangma's NPP emerging as the single-largest party.

Continued on Page 2

vev at CPR's premises, and as part of the survey follow-up process, CPR received several notices from the department, it said. Following due process, detailed and exhaustive responses have been submitted to the department, the NGO said.

Oxfam's FCRA licence was suspended in January last year, after which the NGO had filed a revision petition with the Home Ministry.

"CPR has and continues to cooperate fully with the authorities. We are in complete compliance with the law and are routinely scrutinised and audited by government authorities, including the Comptroller and

Auditor General of India," said the NGO in a statement. The CPR said it has annual statutory audits, and all its annual audited balance sheets are in the public domain and "there is no question of having undertaken any activity that is beyond our objects of association and compliance mandated by law".

The CPR was founded in 1973 and it has been one of India's leading policy research institutions, home to several eminent thinkers and policy practitioners. CPR said it is an independent, non-partisan institution that conducts its work with complete academic and financial integrity.

Farooq backs Stalin for PM



Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin (2L), Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge (L) and others at an event organised for the celebrations of Stalin's birthday, in Chennai, on Wednesday PTI Photo

Chennai: Hours after Jammu Kashmir National Conference president Farooq Abdullah said there was a chance for DMK top leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to become the Prime Minister if Opposition parties came together and won the general election next year, MK Stalin surprised everyone by backing the Grand Old Party.

On his arrival here to take part in the 70th birthday celebrations of Stalin, Abdullah, when asked on prospective Prime Ministerial candidates, said a decision could be made on the best man to lead and unite the nation at appropriate time after a win by a united Opposition in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Asked on chances of Stalin becoming the Prime Minister, he told reporters: "Why not? Why can't he become the Prime Minister?"

To a question on Opposition unity, he said Stalin and DMK have done very well. When the nation's diversity is protected, then unity is guarded, he said.

Tamil Nadu's ruling party has done well on nurturing Opposition and national unity, Abdullah added. Addressing a mega public meeting here organised by the DMK to celebrate the party chief's birthday, he said: "Stalin, it is time to move on. Come to the national scene. Come to the nation and build the nation as you have built this State.

Nation needs people who can work together and to Kharge ji also I will say Let us forget who is going to become the Prime Minister. Let us first win the election (2024 Lok Sabha polls), then think who is going to become the Prime Minister." *Contd on Page 2*

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Calling for Opposition unity ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday said the primary objective of the Opposition should be to put up a united fight against "divisive forces" and said the issue of a PM can-

be able to receive any funds from abroad. The donors of CPR included the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania, the World Resources Institute and the Duke University, officials said.

According to CPR's website, its founder is Pai Panindiker and former members of the governing board include former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Chief Justice of India, the late, YV Chandrachud.

The think-tank has been asked to give clarification and documents regarding FCRA funds received by it, the officials said. The FCRA licence of



CPR was last renewed in 2016 and was due for renewal in 2021. In its statement, the CPR said the Ministry of Home Affairs has intimated it that its

registration under the FCRA has been suspended for a period of 180 days. In September 2022, the Income Tax Department conducted a sur-

When will Delhi CM resign, ask BJP, Cong

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after two Delhi Ministers facing corruption charges resigned, the BJP and the Congress on Wednesday intensified their attack on the AAP and Arvind Kejriwal and asked when the Chief Minister would resign. Even as Ministers Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain resigned from the Cabinet on Tuesday, the Delhi BJP staged protests at over 10 locations in several Assembly constituencies seeking the resignation of Kejriwal in the wake of the arrest of his deputy by the CBI in the excise policy case.

The Congress, too, staged a

protest near the AAP office, demanding Kejriwal's resignation and several Congress leaders and workers, led by their State unit president Anil Chaudhary, gathered near the party's DDU Marg office and raised slogans against Kejriwal and Sisodia. The party said a fair probe would not be possible as long as Kejriwal remains in power. "The entire Delhi Government is fully immersed in corruption. As long as Kejriwal remains in power, there will not be an independent probe in the liquor scam, and therefore, he should also submit his resignation," Chaudhary said. *Continued on Page 2*

Arvind to replace Sisodia, Jain with Bhardwaj, Atishi

Atishi may be first woman Min in Delhi Cabinet if Prez Murmu clears list sent by L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital is all set to get two new Ministers with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal forwarding the names of Aam Aadmi Party MLAs Saurabh Bhardwaj and Atishi to Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena to fill the posts vacated by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Health Minister Satyendar Jain who resigned following alleged corruption charges against them.

Bhardwaj is the MLA of the Greater Kailash constituency while Atishi, who will be the first woman Minister in the Kejriwal-led Delhi Cabinet represents Kalkaji.

According to Kejriwal, it will take about 20-25 days for formally inducting Atishi and Bhardwaj in the Cabinet. The portfolios will be shuffled again then and evenly distributed.

The development comes a day after Sisodia and Jain resigned from their ministerial positions. While Sisodia is in CBI custody in the Delhi excise policy case, Jain is in Tihar jail on allegations of money laundering in a case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses a Press conference, in New Delhi, on Wednesday. PTI Photo

Meanwhile, the L-G has received the resignation letters of Sisodia and Jain, and has

forwarded them to President Murmu along with the new names suggested for the

Resignations of AAP Mins raise questions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The resignations of Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, that came shortly after the Supreme Court refused to entertain the Delhi Deputy Chief Minister's plea to challenge his arrest by the CBI, have raised some questions.

While Sisodia's resignation letter was undated, Jain's note was handwritten and dated February 27. Both letters were sent to Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Saxena for acceptance on February 28. *See P3*

Atiq moves SC, claims he may be killed by UP cops

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

Jailed former Samajwadi Party MP and gangster Atiq Ahmed on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for protection for life, alleging that he and his family have been falsely "roped in" as accused in the Umesh Pal murder case in Prayagraj and he may be killed in a fake encounter by the UP Police.

In his plea, Ahmed, currently lodged at the central jail Ahmedabad, has referred to the statement made by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the floor of the Assembly to "completely ruin and destroy" him and claimed there is a "genuine and perceptible threat" to his and his family members' lives.

He said the Uttar Pradesh Police in all likelihood will seek his transit remand and also police remand to take him from Ahmedabad to Prayagraj and he "genuinely apprehends that he may be eliminated during this transit period".



In his plea filed in the apex court, 61-year-old Ahmed has sought directions to the Centre, State of Uttar Pradesh and others to protect his life against the "open, direct and immediate threat" to his life from high State functionaries of Uttar Pradesh.

"After the murder of Umesh Pal, Opposition put fuel in the fire in the House which provoked the CM to say...mafia ko mitti me mila doonga" because petitioner was the main subject in argument in House," the plea said.

Continued on Page 2

Prices of LPG cylinders go up, ATF goes down

PTI/PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Wednesday raised prices of both domestic and commercial LPG cylinders, while that of jet fuel received a cut in a move that could help lower air fares.

The price of non-subsidized 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder has been increased by ₹50 to ₹1,103 in the national Capital, showed data on the Indian Oil Corp site. The price of the 19-kg commercial LPG cylinder witnessed a steep hike of ₹350.50 to ₹2,119.50 per



cylinder. The hike in domestic cooking gas prices comes after a gap of around seven months post the last revision in July 2022. The price of commercial LPG cylinders which is largely used in restaurant and hotels has been raised twice this year. *Continued on Page 2*

FCRA licence of think-tank CPR suspended

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI**

Months after an Income Tax raid, the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday suspended the FCRA licence of prominent public think-tank Centre for Policy Research (CPR) for six months over violation of laws.

According to officials, there were lots of violations found in the acceptance of foreign donations by the NGO. The CPR was under scrutiny after Income Tax surveys on it and Oxfam India in September last year.

With the suspension of its FCRA licence, the CPR will not

SC to give verdict on pleas for independent ECs' appointment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce on Thursday its order on a batch of pleas seeking a collegium-like system for the appointment of election commissioners and the Chief Election Commissioner.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice KM Joseph is likely to give its verdict. The bench also comprising justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and CT Ravikumar had reserved its judgement on the issue on November 24 last year.

The top court had questioned the "haste" and "tearing hurry" with which the Centre appointed ex-bureaucrat Arun Goel as an Election Commissioner, saying his file travelled at "lightning speed" within departments in 24 hours. The Central Government had vehemently resisted the observations, with



Attorney General R Venkataramani contending the whole issue pertaining to his appointment needed to be looked at in entirety.

The top court had asked how the Union Law Minister shortlisted a panel of four names that was recommended to the prime minister for appointment as election commissioner when none of them would have completed the stipulated six-year tenure in office. It had perused the Centre's original file on Goel's appointment and said, "What kind of evaluation is this? Although, we

are not questioning the merits of Arun Goel's credentials but the process."

As the bench questioned the "lightning speed" with which Goel was appointed as an EC without his file even moving within departments for 24 hours, Venkataramani, the government's law officer, urged the bench not to make observations without looking into the entire issue of the appointment process.

Under the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, an EC can have a tenure of six years or up to the age of 65, whichever is earlier.

Goel's appointment as an EC came under scrutiny by the top court which had sought from the Centre the original records pertaining to his appointment for perusal, saying it wanted to know whether there was any "hanky panky". The top court, which had

rejected the Centre's objections to its order for producing the original file, had said it wanted to know whether everything was "hunky dory" in the appointment process as claimed by the government. On November 19, Goel, a Punjab cadre IAS officer, was appointed as election commissioner.

Goel would be in line to be the next CEC after incumbent Rajiv Kumar demits office in February 2025. His total tenure in the Election Commission would be of over five years.

He will join Kumar and Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey on the poll panel. There was a vacancy in the Election Commission (EC) following the retirement of previous CEC Sushil Chandra in May.

Goel was the secretary in the Ministry of Heavy Industries till recently and his voluntary retirement came into effect on November 18. He has also served in the Union culture ministry.

Centre to set up 2 Oz varsities in Guj's 'GIFT CITY'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the project of Aestablishment of foreign universities in India, the Centre on Wednesday announced for setting up of two Australian universities — Wollongong and Deakin — in Gujarat's 'GIFT CITY'. Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said both the universities will sign an agreement on setting up their campuses next week during Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's maiden visit to India.

The announcement comes just a month after the Centre's university regulator- University Grants Commission (UGC)-released draft rules to facilitate foreign universities in setting up campuses in India.

The Australian education minister Jaosn Clare announced that noted former cricketer Adam Gilchrist, the global brand ambassador of Wollongong University, will help in setting up university campus in India.

Arvind...

From Page 1

While Gahlot has been given the additional charge of finance, PWD, planning, urban development, irrigation and flood control and water along with some departments, Anand, who is also the social welfare minister, will take care of education, health and other departments.

Gahlot, who was assigned finance, PWD, home, power, planning, urban development, irrigation and flood control and water Tuesday night until new ministers are appointed, is expected to continue to hold finance and planning.

A notification to this effect was issued on Wednesday, making it clear that Gahlot will present the Delhi Government budget 2023-24 in the Delhi Assembly until new Ministers are appointed.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai is looking after three departments, while Imran Hussain is in charge of only two departments -- food and civil supplies, and election.

An engineer by qualification who has worked in the United States for a short stint,

Bhardwaj is a close aide of Kejriwal who has, over the years, entrusted him with significant responsibilities both within the government as well as the party. Bhardwaj, meanwhile, is not a first-time minister. He was given the charge of transport in the 49-day AAP government formed in 2013.

He is the National Spokesperson for the AAP and is also the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice-Chairperson. Sources said that Bhardwaj is likely to be assigned the Public Works Department (PWD), and power and home departments.

Atishi, has been a key member of Sisodia's education team. She had also contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from the East Delhi constituency and lost to BJP's Gautam Gambhir.

According to sources, Atishi is expected to handle key departments such as Education, Labour, and Tourism, especially in the run-up to the G20 summit.

Atishi was the advisor to the deputy chief minister in the education department until the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2018 said that appointments of 10 advisors were not done after following proper procedure.

BBC raids: All entities must...

From Page 1

"India is also an emerging global leader on technology and there are immense opportunities for better collaboration between us in this sector. That is why we will be sending our first Tech Envoy to the Indo-Pacific region, to maximise the tech expertise of both countries," he said

Cleverly will also address an India-Europe business event in the Capital on Thursday where he will reaffirm the UK's commitment to conclude a Free Trade Agreement with India.

With more links than almost any country in the Indo-Pacific region, the UK-India trading relationship is already worth £34 billion, growing by £10 billion in one year.

When will Delhi CM resign, ask BJP, Cong

From Page 1

Similarly, holding placards and banners, BJP workers split up into groups and hit pockets of the city, raising slogans against Kejriwal and his party. Many banners bore slogans such as "Sharab ghotale ke sargana Kejriwal -- Istifa do, Istifa do".

Besides Sachdeva and Bidhuri, senior leaders, including Baijyant Jay' Panda, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Adesh Gupta and Kuljeet Singh Chahal, also joined the protests. Many also took to Twitter to share videos of the protest and demanded Kejriwal's resignation.

"Despite several Ministers being jailed for corruption, Kejriwal has remained on the post! For scams, the Delhi Government opened vends near religious places and schools too! Joined the leaders of the State in the public awareness campaign organized by today @BJP4Delhi at 10 intersection s. #Thekedar_Kejriwal_Istifa_Do," Panda tweeted in Hindi. BJP Delhi also shared a tweet in

Hindi: "Two hardcore corrupt are behind bars, everyone knows who's turn is now #Thekedar_Kejriwal_Istifa_Do".

"His pawns have resigned. When will he resign," BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia asked at a press conference and added that Kejriwal was the "kingpin" of the alleged corruption in framing of the Delhi excise policy, now withdrawn. Bhatia also targeted Kejriwal over Sisodia's resignation letter, saying that it is undated which raises a lot of questions.

"The resignation letter of Manish Sisodia raises very pertinent questions as it does not have a date.

Is it because the kingpin of the excise policy scam Arvind Kejriwal has yet again played with the Constitution. The surfacing of this undated letter reveals a lot about their practices," he said.

Kejriwal heads the Cabinet and council of ministers and "you are in a position to influence the ongoing investigation, in which your involvement is writ large", the BJP spokesperson said. Bhatia also demanded that Kailash Gahlot should also resign as minister as he was part of the group of ministers of the Delhi government that approved the liquor policy.

Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alongwith Baijyant Panda held a protest and demanded Kejriwal's res-

ignation. Bidhuri also slammed the AAP and alleged that "Kejriwal is the 'sutradhaar' (orchestrator)" of the whole scam in the excise policy".

"Why resignation was not taken from Satyendar Jain for the last nine months and it was suddenly taken from Manish Sisodia. This is the biggest scam and we will continue protesting till the chief minister resigns," he said.

Virendra Sachdeva, the Delhi BJP working president, asked if his ministers were "innocent", according to Kejriwal, why did the Supreme Court not give them any relief and their resignations were accepted.

Earlier, hours before the news of resignation by the two ministers hit the headlines, the BJP had said it would raise awareness on the "conspiracy" that was hatched to "toy" with the future of youths in Delhi by allowing "proliferation" of liquor vends.

Meanwhile, Delhi Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit wrote to Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, urging him to direct central agencies to invoke the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) or similar laws in the feedback unit (FBU) case.

"We believe that UAPA or similar Acts should be invoked in this case and the CBI and NIA must be directed by yourself to investigate under laws governing sedition and anti-national activities," he wrote.

Ukraine war casts its shadow

From Page 1

"This isn't an era of war. Dialogue and diplomacy are the way forward. The agenda is for the foreign ministers to discuss in the meet," the Foreign Secretary said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, France's Catherine Colonna, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, Germany's Annalena Baerbock and British Foreign Secretary James

Cleverly are among those attending the meeting. The main discussions will take place on Thursday. Prime Minister Modi is expected to address the conclave and likely to talk about India's growing influence globally.

Giving details of the high-profile event hosted by India as part of its presidency of the G-20, Kwatra said at a news conference, "It would not be correct to prejudge the outcome of the meeting."

He also said the G-20 meet will be held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, adding that this "is the largest gathering of Foreign Ministers at any G20 so far. Will carry the theme of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and marks the period of Amrit Kaal of India's independence." The conclave will start with a dinner on Wednesday for the visiting dignitaries.

On the Ukraine issue, the

Foreign Secretary said the developing situation is expected to be a point of discussion at the meeting. He also said the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on economic and development cooperation is an important issue for us.

Given the developing situation of Russia-Ukraine, naturally, it'll be an important point of discussion during Foreign Ministers' meet, Kwatra said, adding that it'll be important to see what they come out with, what understanding is developed.

As regards the agenda, the Foreign Secretary said the Foreign Ministers will deliberate on multilateralism, food and energy security, development cooperation, and counter-terrorism. He said around 40 delegations, including 13 from international organisations, are expected to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting.

A number of foreign ministers of non-G20 countries, including that of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, are also attending the meet following India's invitation as guests. The Foreign Ministers are also likely to discuss ways to deal with falling economic growth, increasing inflation, lower demands for goods and services as well as increasing prices of food, fuel and fertilisers.

Atiq moves SC, claims he may be killed by UP police

From Page 1

"Petitioner (Ahmed) genuinely apprehends and believes that the petitioner may be killed in a fake encounter on one pretext or the other by UP police particularly in view of the statement made by the Chief Minister of State of UP on the floor of the House," the plea alleged.

Umesh Pal, who was the prime witness in then BSP MLA Raju Pal's murder in 2005, and his police security guard Sandeep Nishad were shot dead on Friday last outside his home in Dhoomanganj area of Prayagraj.

Pal was a key witness in the 2005 MLA murder case in Prayagraj in which Ahmed and others are prime accused.

Arbaaz, an accused in the Pal murder case, was killed in an encounter with the police on Monday. Dhoomanganj police station SHO Rajesh Maurya was also injured in the encounter. The petition was filed on a day the Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) demolished the house of a close aide of Ahmed.

PDA secretary Ajit Singh said the house belonging to Zafar Ahmed has been bulldozed. He said Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen used to stay in the same house earlier.

"The said house was constructed without getting its map (naksha) passed from the authority and a notice regarding the same was issued in the past. Most of the house was destroyed by the afternoon," the officer said.

Meanwhile, in his plea, Ahmed sought a direction to the Centre to ensure his safety and security and that no physical or bodily injury or any other harm is caused to him and his family members.

He has sought directions restraining the State of Uttar Pradesh and others from taking him from Ahmedabad to Prayagraj or any part of Uttar Pradesh.

He has requested that his interrogation, if any, be carried out at the Central Jail Ahmedabad or at any other suitable place in Ahmedabad itself under the protection of Gujarat Police as well as central or paramilitary forces.

He has sought the top court's direction for his transit from Ahmedabad to Uttar Pradesh under the protection of any central police or paramilitary force if at all the transit is necessary.

He also sought a direction allowing his advocate to remain present during his interrogation and also to quash the warrants against him, if issued by any court, for taking him to Prayagraj from central jail Ahmedabad.

COURT NOTICE
(U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC)
IN THE COURT OF
SH. SURYA CHANDER KANT
Additional Principal Judge
(Family Court), Hisar

Anju Bala W/o Rajender Kumar,
R/o H.No. 305, Ward No. 5,
Gandhi Dairy Colony, Hisar
Vs.
General Public/Relative

Petition U/s 7 and 10 of the
Guardian and Wards Act
CNR No. HRHS01-008199-2022
GW/37/2022
Next Date: 17-04-2023

PUBLICATION ISSUED TO:
General Public/Relative

In above titled case, the
defendant(s)/respondent(s) could
not be served. It is ordered that
defendant(s)/respondent(s) should
appear in person on **17-04-2023** at
10:00 a.m.

For details logon to
https://highcourthcdt.gov.in/?
trs=district_notice&district=Hisar

Additional Principal Judge
(Family Court) Hisar

Dated, this day of 28-02-2023

PD(90288)C

THE PIONEER
CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sreekumar.N.B. S/o
Sh.N.B.K.NAIR R/O B-1/198
Aravali Apartments, Sector,
34, Noida Distt-Gautam
Budh Nagar, U.P and my
wife Anitha Kumari.N have
changed our name to Shree
Kumar & Anitha Kumari for
all future purposes.

PD(90288)C

Prices of...

From Page 1

Opposition parties on Wednesday hit out government over hike in price of LPG cylinders soon after assembly and bypoll elections ended, the results of which is to be declared on Thursday. Demanding an immediate roll back of price, Congress announced that if it comes to power at Centre, it would end "loot" by providing cylinders for domestic users under Rs 500.

Never said who will be PM, says Kharage

From Page 1

Incidentally, earlier in the day, Abdullah had backed Stalin as a PM candidate of the Opposition grouping. "All like-minded Opposition parties must come together in this fight against divisive forces. That is our desire. I never said who will lead, who will become the Prime Minister. Farooq Saab, I am telling you—we are not telling who will lead or who is not going to lead; that is not the question. We want to fight

together unitedly. That is our desire," Kharage told the NC leader during his address. "That is why we have sacrificed many times in the name of secularism, in the name of liberty, in the name of freedom of expression. That we have done and showed, and we have also lost many times," he added.

Kharage said today the country was going through difficult times, with more than 23 crore people being 'pushed' below poverty line due to the failure of

the Central BJP Government. The common man was hit by inflation and unemployment "but the BJP is only interested in polarising the society to win elections."

"We have seen such attempts in Tamil Nadu also but Tamil Nadu will not yield even one inch to BJP. I know their philosophy, their commitment," he said. He alleged Constitutional authorities were being reduced to talking like BJP spokespersons. "It is not

about one Governor in one state; it is happening in every State where the Opposition is in power," he said in an apparent reference to the Governor-Government spat in non-BJP ruled States. He alleged the BJP wanted "to take over the judiciary, the Election Commission and every institution in the country." The ultimate aim of the BJP was to "change the Constitution" and many party leaders and MPs have said this "openly." **PTI**

NE poll results today: Stakes high for BJP; Sangma meets Himanta

From Page 1

For the BJP, among the three States, it is Tripura which promises to have more national resonance than the two others as traditional rivals Congress and the Left have joined hands for the first time to challenge the BJP in the election to the State's 60-member Assembly. In this battle among the national parties, it is the Pradyot Debbarma-led TIPRA Motha that has emerged as an X-factor as the sway of its founder, scion of erstwhile royalty, among a big section of the tribal population has disturbed conventional calculations, more so as the BJP and its ally Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT) had done well

in the tribal region in 2018.

The BJP had won 36 seats and the IPFT eight last time. With the IPFT in decline following the death of its founder NC Debbarma, the burden of delivering a majority rests largely on the shoulders of the BJP while its two main rivals have united.

The BJP's stunning rise after having failed to win a single seat in 2013 to a majority on its own five years later by decimating the Left citadel for two decades was projected by the party as its ideological victory over its rivals, and a loss will be seen as a setback despite the Tripura's relatively marginal influence on national politics.

While regional parties

remain bigger players in both Meghalaya and Nagaland, the BJP ran a determined campaign with its bigwigs, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, in the States to expand its footprints.

For the first time, the BJP has fought on all 60 seats in Meghalaya and constantly targeted National People's Party leader and Chief Minister Conrad Sangma for running the "most corrupt" state government in the country.

The BJP was a partner in the state government but broke ties ahead of the polls. The party hopes to boost its strength from two in the Assembly to emerge as a more

powerful player if the verdict throws up a hung assembly like the last time. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP's pointsman for the northeast region, met Sangma after the polls in an indication that the two parties can do business together again.

An interesting sideshow to these election is the strong push by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress to make an impact in the polls to project itself as a stronger challenger to the BJP than the Congress, more so as the countdown to the next Lok Sabha polls in 2024 begins.

The Congress has also run an intensive campaign, with

Rahul Gandhi holding a rally in Meghalaya, in its bid to claw back its lost influence in the states it once dominated.

In Nagaland, which had the unique feature of having no opposition as all parties with presence in the 60-member assembly backed the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party-led government, the BJP is again fighting the polls in alliance with the NDFP.

Sarma has claimed that there will be no hung assembly in Tripura, Nagaland or Meghalaya, as predicted in some exit polls, and the BJP-led NDA will form governments with absolute majority in all three northeastern states.

SISODIA, JAIN’S RESIGNATIONS RAISE MORE QUESTIONS

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The resignations of Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain have raised more questions than answers to the puzzle.

The double resignation came shortly after the Supreme Court refused to entertain Manish Sisodia's plea to challenge his arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

While Sisodia's resignation letter was undated, Jain's note was handwritten and dated February 27. Both letters were sent to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena for acceptance on February 28.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP

questioned the resignation of Sisodia from the Cabinet with the poser whether this was voluntary or forced resignation.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accepted Sisodia and Jain's resignations but some purported discrepancies in the matter have come to the fore.

Sources said the timing of both resignations has also come under scrutiny as Jain's handwritten letter was dated February 27 but the resignation of both ministers was formally announced on February 28.

They said Sisodia could not have written his elaborate and typed, undated letter in jail.



The question is whether Sisodia signed the resignation letter before getting questioned and arrested by CBI. Another question is whether Jain's plain and handwritten resignation was taken after Sisodia signing on the papers. If Sisodia had resigned

earlier and Jain on February 27, why were the announcements of resignation made in the evening of February 28? What game did Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal play in getting rid of Sisodia and Jain?; the sources have questioned. In the letter to

Kejriwal, Jain said he was thankful for the opportunity given to him. "I hereby tender my resignation as a minister of the Government of GNCTD of Delhi. I am highly thankful for giving this opportunity to serve the people of Delhi. My resignation may kindly be accepted," he wrote. Jain has already been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail for the last 10 months in connection with the money laundering case.

Shortly after the SC order, Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain's resignations were formally announced late Tuesday evening. Both Sisodia and Jain, have played a pivotal role in implementing Kejriwal's governance agenda of good education and health facilities

in the national capital. In his three-page resignation letter, Sisodia claimed that the real target of the criminal action against him was party chief Arvind Kejriwal.

The Delhi Deputy Chief Minister said: "Their target is not me, but you [Kejriwal] because today, the people of Delhi as well as the rest of the country see you as a leader who has a vision for the country."

Sisodia claimed that preparations are on to file more cases against him. "They tried hard to make me leave your [Kejriwal's] side," he said. "When I did not bow down before them, today they have arrested me and put me in jail."

"Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil main hai, dekhnai

hai zor kitna baazu-e-qatil main hai," a poem by fire-brand poet from Bihar Bismil Azimabadi found mention in the resignation letter of Delhi deputy Chief Minister, who resigned from the Delhi Cabinet on Tuesday night, following graft charges against him in the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 case. The lines translate to: The desire for revolution is in our hearts, we shall see how much strength lies in the arms of the enemy. The apparent reference is to the ruling BJP, which has been persistently attacking AAP and its leaders over the corruption allegations.

Sisodia claimed that the allegations of corruption have been levelled against Kejriwal

by those people who are 'scared' of his politics. "The people of the country who are battling poverty, unemployment, inflation and corruption see Arvind Kejriwal as a hope. They don't see him among the leaders who believe in 'jumla's as Kejriwal does what he speaks", he said.

In his resignation letter, Sisodia lamented that "despite working with honesty and integrity for eight years, allegations of corruption" were levelled against him, while asserting that the "allegations are in fact nothing more than a conspiracy hatched by cowardly and weak people who are scared of (Delhi Chief Minister) Arvind Kejriwal's politics of truth".

Kejriwal calls meeting of AAP MLAs, councillors to mull strategy

AAP will launch door-to-door campaign from March 5 to inform people about false cases against Sisodia, Jain

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Ministers Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain resigned from the Cabinet, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday called a meeting of AAP MLAs and MCD councillors to discuss the party's strategies in the light of recent developments.

It was decided that the AAP will launch a door-to-door campaign from March 5 under which all MLAs will apprise people about the "false cases" registered against party leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain.

The resignation of two of its ministers, allegations of graft, has thrown a new challenge for the AAP with its rivals using the development to discredit the party's key plank of "Kejriwal model of governance".

The Chief Minister, who is also convener of the AAP, convened the meeting at his residence, Civil Lines to chalk out future strategy to counter



BJP propaganda.

The meeting was also convened to boost the morale of the party workers and leaders as upcoming assembly polls are likely to be held in several states this year.

Addressing party's MLAs and councillors, Kejriwal on Wednesday said the BJP was using it as an excuse to stall the "good work done" by the AAP government in the national capital.

"It has been decided that AAP will do door-to-door campaigning & go to every house, speak to every person. We'll explain to them how

PM is going to the extreme like Indira Gandhi did once...People will give an answer, they're watching everything and are angry", Kejriwal said. "He can't do what we are doing. They have in different states for several years but they couldn't fix a single hospital or school. So what can they do now? Their main aim to stop work, the excise policy is an excuse. I want to assure everyone, work will not stop," Kejriwal said.

"It is no coincidence that nation's best performing health and education ministers are in jail today.

Addressing reporters after a meeting with AAP MLAs and councillors, the chief minister challenged the BJP: "AAP is a storm. We will be unstoppable now and our time has come."

"Two people who brought laurels to India have been jailed by PM. Excise Policy just an excuse, there was no scam. PM wanted to stop good work in Delhi...Sisodia was arrested as he did good work in education, Jain was arrested as he did good work in health", Kejriwal said. "If Sisodia joins BJP today, won't he be released tomorrow? All cases will be withdrawn. If Jain joins BJP today, all cases will be withdrawn & he'd be released from jail tomorrow. Issue isn't corruption but to stop work & send CBI-ED after opposition", he added.

Assuring that the Delhi Government's work will not stop, Kejriwal said Saurabh Bharadwaj and Atishi, who have been recommended for inclusion in the council of ministers, will carry forward the legacy.

Opp parties use resignations to discredit 'AAP model of governance'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The resignation of two of its Ministers, including Manish Sisodia, amid allegations of graft, has thrown a new challenge for the AAP with its rivals using the development to discredit the party's key plank of "Kejriwal model of governance".

The development comes at a time when the AAP is gearing up to contest all the seats in the Assembly elections to be held in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, keeping its "Delhi model of governance" as one of the key planks for the polls. AAP leaders said the party has become stronger whenever it has been attacked and accused the BJP government of running a "witch-hunt" against its leaders.

Insiders say the AAP leadership has "already" asked the party's state units to "intensify" their campaign against the BJP and the Congress in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan which will go to



polls this year. The party will turn the table on the BJP with a massive counter-campaign highlighting a range of issues, including allegations of stock manipulation by the Adani Group and the alleged misuse of central probe agencies by its government at the Centre, they said.

Riding high on its electoral success in Punjab and gains in Gujarat and Goa last year, the AAP is gearing up to contest in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan even though it had failed to open its account in the last assembly elections in these states.

AAP leaders said the party

has become stronger whenever it has been attacked and accused the BJP government of running a "witch-hunt" against its leaders. Kejriwal is scheduled to visit these four states to launch his party's foray ahead of elections.

While Kejriwal is scheduled to launch his party's poll campaign in BJP-ruled Karnataka on March 4, he will visit Chhattisgarh and sound the AAP's poll bugle in the Congress-ruled state on March 5. The AAP supreme will launch his poll campaign in Rajasthan, currently ruled by the Congress, on March 13, and in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh on March 14.

Ashram flyover to be inaugurated soon: Kejriwal



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the much-awaited inauguration of the Ashram flyover extension will be held soon. The flyover extension was scheduled to be inaugurated on February 28.

At a press conference, Kejriwal rejected claims that Sisodia's arrest was the reason behind the postponement of the inauguration.

"It might be inaugurated. The postponement was not due to Sisodia (arrest). But a few works remain which would be completed in three-four days."

However, a senior government official had earlier said the inauguration was postponed in light of Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's arrest.

SC/ST Welfare Committee orders revision of fee structure of GGSIPU-affiliated colleges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Assembly Committee on Welfare of SC/STs has ordered revision of fee structure and audit of the Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) affiliated colleges to review and reduce the high fee structure for all students and ensure fee concession for students from SC/ST communities on a priority basis.

The committee had summoned the Higher Education Department of the Delhi Government and the GGSIPU administration to discuss the issue of higher fee structure and lack of fee concession to SC/ST students in GGSIPU and affiliated colleges.

During the meeting, it was identified that the State Fee Regulatory Committee formed under the Delhi Professional Colleges or Institutions Act 2007, which regulates the fee structure, doesn't have any rep-



resentation from the SC/ST and other disadvantaged communities. It was also deliberated that the SC/ST students do not get any fee concession in GGSIPU and affiliated colleges.

The Committee's chairman Vishesh Ravi instructed the Higher Education department to amend the DPCI 2007 Act to include a provision providing for a member of the SC/ST community to be present in the State Fee Regulatory Committee to ensure fee con-

cession for SC/ST students in GGSIPU and all other Universities under the Delhi Government.

The Committee on SC/ST Welfare also recommended the State Fee Regulatory Committee fix the fee structures based on a rigorous audit of the GGSIPU-affiliated colleges & to review and reduce the high fee structure for all students and ensure fee concession for students from SC/ST communities on a priority basis.

Man held, official sacked over theft of plants for G20

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A 50-year-old property dealer was arrested and a local authority official sacked on Wednesday over the theft of flower pots kept for beautification of the area for a G20 event. Police also recovered 10 stolen flower pots and an SUV, which was used in the crime, from the arrested accused, they said.

An official of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) has been sacked after his name was revealed by the arrested accused, GMDA said. Gurugram police on Tuesday lodged an FIR into the theft of flower pots after a purported video clip of two men stealing them went viral on social media.

The arrested accused, identified as Manmohan, is a resident of Gandhi Nagar area in Gurugram, police said, adding a GMDA official has also come under the scanner as the accused revealed that he



had called him at the spot to pick the plants.

"The GMDA official has been identified as Nawab Singh, who is manager in the urban environment division. We will also arrest him soon. The main accused, Manmohan, was let off on police bail after he joined the investigation," DCP (east) Virender Vij said.

Police said the suspect was traced with the help of his vehicle's registration number which was visible in the viral video. The vehicle, a Kia



cerned staff on duty during the occurrence of the incident has been terminated from his service," said a spokesperson of GMDA.

The complaint in the case was lodged after District Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav took cognisance of a viral tweet and asked the Gurugram police to intervene and investigate the matter. The incident took place Monday in front of the Ambience mall on the Delhi-Gurugram expressway. The man in the video clip can also

be seen putting those pots in the boot of an SUV.

A number of flower pots were set up here ahead of G20 meetings that are scheduled to take place from March 1 to 4. An FIR was filed on the basis of a complaint by Metropolitan Green Planner, Urban Environment Division of GMDA.

"It has been observed that some passersby/thieves are stealing flower pots placed on the roadside. A video of the theft of flower pots is also going viral on Twitter, in which the registration number of the car used in the theft is HR 20 AY 0006," the FIR said.

However, there is no record of the vehicle bearing registration number HR 20 AY 0006 on the government's 'Vahan' website. Instead, the site shows a Haryana-registered vehicle having number HR 20 AB 0006. An FIR was registered against unidentified accused under Section 379 (theft) of the Indian Penal Code at DLF Phase 3 police station.

Amanatullah acquitted in 2022 demolition drive rioting case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Wednesday discharged AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan in a case of alleged rioting and stone pelting on police personnel in May 2022 while opposing a demolition drive being carried out by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. Special Judge Vikas Dhull passed the directions on an appeal filed by Khan against a magisterial court's order.

The metropolitan magisterial court had directed framing of charges against Khan and others under sections 147 (rioting), 153 (provocation with intent to cause riot), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of his public functions), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant



from discharge of his duty) and 332 (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant).

The sessions court on Wednesday said the magisterial court's order suffered from "grave illegality" and was not sustainable in the eyes of law. The judge said that the magisterial court had placed heavy reliance upon the statement of witnesses, even though video recording was not supporting

the allegations made by the witnesses, to come to a prima facie view that charge is required to be framed against the revisionist and other accused persons.

The judge said there were two views possible, one of which, based upon the statement of witnesses, raises a suspicion only that revisionist and other accused persons had committed the offence alleged

by the witnesses.

However, the other view, which was made out from the video recording did not raise a grave suspicion that revisionist and other accused persons had committed the offence alleged by the witnesses in their respective statements, the judge noted.

"It is a settled principle of law that if two views are possible and one view raises a suspicion only, then accused needs to be discharged. In the light of above discussion, the impugned order suffers from grave illegality and is not sustainable in the eyes of law," the judge said while discharging Khan.

The metropolitan magistrate had on January 20 ordered framing of charges against Khan and others.

According to police, Khan, who was the area MLA, along with his supporters, had formed unlawful assembly and pelted stones on Delhi police personnel, besides damaging public property while opposing a demolition drive being carried out by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation in Kalindi Kunj area on May 12, 2022. Reasonable force had to be used at the spot to curtail the crowd, police said, adding that several police officials got injured in the stone pelting.

The unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had formally come into existence on May 22 last year. It was reunified by merging three civic bodies - North, South and East municipal corporations or NDMC, SDMC and EDMC.

1,300 stray cattle impounded, 16 illegal dairies sealed in Feb: MCD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As part of a drive, civic authorities have impounded 1,300 stray cattle and sealed 16 illegal dairies in the month of February in Delhi, the officials from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) said on Wednesday.

The veterinary services department of Keshavpuram Zone has "rescued 75 cattle" which were kept illegally in a park in the Kohat Enclave area, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) said in a statement. Under the drive that began on February 1, the MCD has impounded 1,300 stray cattle from all its 12 zones.

Its veterinary services department has caught stray cattle from different areas, including, Todapur, Pan Mandi, Nabi Karim, Budh Vihar,



Sector-23 Rohini, Sabholi, RK Puram, Sarita Vihar, Malka Ganj, among other places.

An illegal dairy has been sealed in Ganga Vihar and the cattle after being 'ear-tagged' have been sent to designated 'gaushalas' for their further upkeep", the statement said.

The veterinary services department has also taken action against illegal dairies

being run in urbanised areas which causes water pollution as dung and urine of bovines flow into drains, officials said.

Taking strict action, the MCD has sealed 16 illegal dairies in all its 12 zones from February 1 till date, and "104 dairy owners have been prosecuted or challaned in the same period", the statement said.

7 ISIS-linked ultras get death penalty in 2017 UP case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Lucknow has sentenced to death seven ISIS-linked terrorists, while awarding life imprisonment to an associate in the 2017 Kanpur ISIS case.

In Gujarat, another NIA special court awarded two brothers to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment in the ISIS Rajkot case in which the duo was convicted for radicalising and recruiting people to carry out terror acts in the country in the name of the global terror group. With these two convictions, the conviction rate of NIA stands at 93.69 per cent.

"The NIA sets standards of investigation and prosecution yet again. Continuing the tradition of evidence-based investigations, which rely on scientifically collected hard evi-

dence, the NIA has achieved yet another milestone. In two separate judgments, NIA Special Courts at Lucknow and Ahmedabad have pronounced sentences for a total of 10 accused," the federal anti-terror probe agency said in a statement.

Both cases relate to online radicalisation of the accused in the name of ISIS, their motivation to commit violent Jihad and cause terror attacks in the country, it said.

The eight accused from Uttar Pradesh —Atif Muzaffar, Mohammad Danish, Asif Iqbal alias Rocky, Mohammad Atif alias Atif Iraqi, Mohammad Faisal, Mohammad Azhar and Gauss Mohammad Khan all hailing from Kanpur Nagar, and Sayed Meer Hussain of Kannauj, along with deceased Md Saifullah, had set up a hide-out in Haji Colony in Lucknow, the NIA said.

"They had prepared and tested some IEDs and had unsuccessfully tried to plant them at various locations in UP. Investigations have led to discovery of several photographs of the accused making IEDs and even with weapons, ammunition and ISIS flag," it said.

The group had reportedly collected illegal weapons, and explosives from various places. Atif and three others, identified as Md Danish, Sayed Meer Hussain and Md Saifulla, had been responsible for fabricating the IED that was planted in the Bhopal-Ujjain passenger train. The train explosion on March 7, 2017 had left 10 passengers injured.

"All eight had come together to propagate ISIS ideology and promote its activities in India. In pursuit of this objective, Mohammad Faisal, Gauss Mohammad Khan, Atif



Muzaffar, Md Danish, Md Saifulla had explored land routes. They had visited several key cities across the country, including Kolkata, Sundarbans, Srinagar, Amritsar, Wagah Border, Badmer, Jaisalmer, Mumbai, and Kozhikode, for undertaking 'hijrah' (migration)," it said.

Gauss Mohammad Khan and Atif Muzaffar had, in fact, explored a route to cross over to Bangladesh via Sundarbans,

as per investigations.

Faisal, Atif and Saifulla had also travelled to Kashmir in March 2016 in a bid to contact some terrorist groups that could help them to cross over to Pakistan, from where they could migrate to ISIS-controlled territories in Syria. Another accused, Saifulla, was killed during an exchange of fire with Anti-Terrorism Squad of Uttar Pradesh on March 7, 2017 in Haji Colony.

Iraqi has been sentenced with life imprisonment.

In the other ISIS case of Rajkot, the NIA Special Court has sentenced the two terrorists to ten years rigorous imprisonment.

The case relates to the use of social media platforms, such as Skype and Telegram to radicalise and recruit cadres to carry out terror acts in India in the name of ISIS.

Both accused Vaseem Arif Ramodia alias Ninja Fox and Naem Arif Ramodia alias ND are brothers and residents of 'Firdoshi', Nehru Nagar, Raiya Road, Rajkot, Gujarat.

"Investigations have revealed that they used online chats and messages to advocate and spread the ideology of ISIS. They arranged, participated and assisted in organising online discussions and meetings among active ISIS operatives to plan and execute

acts of violence and terrorism. They had tried to commit arson by burning vehicles and shops belonging to non-Muslims. They had unsuccessfully tried to fabricate an IED as well," the NIA said.

On the directions of their online ISIS handlers, both the accused were preparing to carry out a lone-wolf attack at Chotila Temple. They had already reconnoitered the area but they were apprehended before they could carry out the attack, it said.

This case was initially registered as FIR No 01/2017 in Police Station ATS, Ahmedabad, Gujarat and re-registered by NIA on May 25, 2017. Chargesheet was filed against them on August 22, 2017 and after the trial was completed, judgment convicting the accused was pronounced on February 28 this year.

Nadda launches BJP's Vijay Sankalp Yatra in K'taka

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Barely two months away, the triangular contest for the Assembly polls in Karnataka moves to a higher pitch with BJP national president JP Nadda on Wednesday launching the first part of 'Vijay Sankalp Yatra' from Chamarajanagara, the southern part of the State, reaching out to the Scheduled tribe (ST) communities.

The 20 days yatre will culminate with a mega rally in the district headquarters town of Davangere on March 25 which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There would be four 'yatre' from different part of the poll-bound Karnataka.

Seeking to bring more tribal areas under the saffron influence, the BJP Government at the Centre had added 15 communities in Karnataka, Chattisgarh, Himachal



Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh to the list of STs which is expected to broaden its voter turf across the country.

The Government had last year expanded the list of STs from 735 to 750 as part of the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Amendment Bill 2022.

The election of Droupadi Murmu as the first tribal President last July also added political sheen to the tribal approach of the BJP in the recent years.

The campaign 'yatra' from

four different directions across the poll-bound State, in specially designed vehicles or "Rathas", will be launched by the party's Central leaders in the next few days.

While Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is scheduled to flag off second yatre on March 2 from Nandagad in Belagavi district, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is slated to launch the third and fourth yatres that will start from Basavakalyana in Bidar district and Avathy in Devanahalli

near Bengaluru, on March 3, in the morning and afternoon, respectively.

More than 50 State and national leaders will take part in this campaign, which will cover all 31 districts and 224 constituencies of the State, where elections are due by May.

The tours will cover 8,000 km, along which the party has planned over 80 rallies, 74 public meetings and about 150 road shows, they said, adding that it is expected to "touch about four crore people.

The yatra that will begin from four different places will consist of 10-12 leaders in each of them.

This is the second phase of election 'yatra' by BJP in the State.

The first was launched last year by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavraj Bommai and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa.

Launching the first of four Yatras, Nadda was accompanied by Chief Minister Bommai, Yediyurappa, and party's state president Nalin Kumar Kateel among other leaders.

Addressing people from the Soliga tribal community, Nadda said, "With the Vijaya Sankalp Yatra beginning from an auspicious place and with the grace of god, I'm confident about BJP getting the blessings of the people in the upcoming Assembly polls."

He said, the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is marching ahead with strength and he has changed the political dimension of the country from "casteism, vote bank and dynasty politics", to taking everyone together with a moto 'sabka-saath-sabka-vikas-sabka-vishwas-sabka-prayas' (Together, for everyone's growth, with everyone's trust).

Opp parties slam Govt over hike in cooking gas price

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Wednesday criticised the Government over hike in price of LPG cylinders soon after the Assembly and bypoll elections ended, the results of which is to

be declared on Thursday.

Demanding an immediate roll back of the price, Congress announced that if it comes to power at the Centre, it would end the "loot" by providing cylinders for domestic users under Rs 500.

The parties termed that sudden increase in the prices of domestic fuel will definitely fade the colours of Holi for all sections of the society, particularly the poor and middle class.

Cooking gas LPG price on Wednesday was hiked by Rs 50 per cylinder — the first increase in rates in almost eight months — that came within days of end of polling in three northeastern states and was sharply criticised by the Opposition. In Delhi, a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder now costs Rs 1,103, up from Rs 1,053, according to a price notification of State-owned fuel retailers.

Haircut, trimmed beard: Rahul's new look for Cambridge lecture

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/LONDON

After sporting a long beard during the four months Bharat Jodo Yatra, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was noticed in a new look with a trimmed beard.

Rahul reached in London on Tuesday for a week-long tour of the United Kingdom during which he is scheduled to deliver a lecture on "Learning to listen in the 21st century" at his alma mater Cambridge University. He is also slated to interact with students at the university's business management department.

Rahul's long beard became a topic of discussion among political leaders, social media who kept guessing whether he would continue to don the look or trim the beard.

Rahul was also a victim of ridicule for the changes he made to his body during this period.

Pictures of Rahul wearing



a coat and suit with cropped hair and beard went viral on social media and his new images circulated on the hashtag New Look.

Interestingly, his long beard invited comments from his political adversaries like Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa who compared his looks to former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Post the Bharat Jodo Yatra he came to Parliament and the just concluded Congress Plenary sporting beard. Earlier

CBI recovers ₹50L, 1.5 kg gold, property documents in searches in Kolkata

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday said it conducted searches in Kolkata in an ongoing investigation of a case which led to recovery of Rs 50 lakh, 1.5 kg gold and property documents.

During the searches, the CBI also seized a list of 1,500 aspirants for the recruitment of assistant teachers, they said.

The said premises was allegedly purchased by then Advisor of West Bengal Central School Service Commission, SP Sinha and his wife in the name of her friend, officials said.

The corruption case against Sinha was registered on the orders of Calcutta High Court against then Minister-in-charge, Department of School Education, West Bengal



Government and others on the allegations of illegal appointment of 11th & 12th standard Assistant Teachers.

"It was further alleged that the then Advisor of West Bengal Central School Service Commission was part of the network which was involved in illegally accommodating undeserving candidates for appointment in SSC scam cases," the CBI said in a statement, adding, investigation in the case is continuing.

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mrs. Amrita Singh is attorney holder of Built up Portion of Property Bearing No. 9 (New Plot No. B-206-A), Land area measuring 40 Sq yds. Built on Plot No. 9, out of Kharsa No. 5/15, Situated in the area of Village Hastal Colony Known as Vikas Vihar, Vikas Nagar, New Delhi-110059 vide Notarized GPA dated 20.11.2012 executed by Mrs. Akhatri Khatoun. Now, Mrs. Amrita Singh intending to sell above said property to Mrs. Moni Chaudhary and Now, Mrs. Moni Chaudhary is mortgaging the above said property with Falteton India Home Finance Co. Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dwivedi/Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas North, Unit no 507, 9th Floor, GD-ITL Tower, (B-38), Netaji Subhasi Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9086771722/9812282836 (M).

FORM NO.5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow- 226007 (Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for Filing & Appearance by Publication
O.A. No. 1153/2022 Date: 27.02.2023
[Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)]
ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant
Versus
JAYANT JHA & OTHERS ...Defendants
To, Defendants :-
1. JAYANT JHA S/o. BISHWAMBER JHA R/o. 504, Gautam Tower Grihapravesh Sector 77, Noida, Near Gautam Budh Nagar- 201301, U.P.
Also at : Flat No. 1503, Floor No. 15, Tower-2, Plot No. Gh-16f, Unibera Tower, Sector-01, Greater Noida, Noida-201307, U.P.
2. BISHWAMBER JHA R/o. 504 Gautam Tower Grihapravesh Sector 77, Noida, Near Gautam Budh Nagar- 201301, U.P.
3. UNIBERA DEVELOPERS PVT. LTD. Corporate Office: A-11A, 11nd Floor, Sector-58, Noida (U.P.)- 201301, U.P.
In the above noted application, you are required to file in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear 28/08/2023 at 10.30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decide in your absence
Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal Lucknow

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Kavita Sharma who is purchasing the Residential Property measuring 55 sq. yds. (15' X 33'), part of Khewat/Khata No.89/133, Mustakl No.38, Kila No.22, Mustakl No.47, Kila No. 2, situated at Mauja Agwanpur, Near Surya Nagar, Part-I, Tensil and District Faridabad, Haryana; from Mrs. Kavita W/o. Mr. Ashok Kumar who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Deed dated 27.05.2021 (vide Document No.892), registered with the office of the Sub-Registrar, Faridabad; and same to be finance & mortgage by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim / right / title / interest / creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.
Lucem Legal LLP Plot no.136, (Basement) Uday Park, New Delhi-110049; Contact # 011-40046316

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road, Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow
SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE BY PUBLICATION
Dated:20.02.2023
Summons to defendants under Section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institution Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993
Original Application No. 1142 of 2022 ICICI Bank Ltd. V/s. Tushar Mudgal & Others
To, 1. M/s Palm Developers Pvt. Ltd., Corporate Office at- 6th Floor, Matrix Tower, B-4, Sector 132 Expressway, Noida- 201301. Through its authorized signatory
Defendant No.3
In the above noted Original Application you are required to file reply in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any) personally or through your duly authorised agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorised agent after publication of the summons and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 21/08/2023 at 10.30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.
Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007 (Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for Filing & Appearance by Publication
O.A. No. 1151/2022 Date: 27.02.2023
[Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)]
ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant
Versus
NAMPRATA PAUL AND OTHERS ...Defendants
To, Defendants :-
3. PALM DEVELOPERS PRIVATE LIMITED.
Registered Office at : 304, Sita Ram Mansion, 718/21, Joshi Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005
In the above noted application, you are required to file in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly the authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal on 28/08/2023, at 10.30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decide in your absence.
Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal Lucknow

Democracies must unite in increasing their aid to Ukraine, say US Senators



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Flagging the adverse impact of the Ukraine conflict, a group of top American Senators, who met Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week in New Delhi, have said they made a case to him that this is a battle between autocracy and democracy. They also emphasised that democracies must unite in increasing their help to Ukraine.

The Senators also said the

United States and the West must continue to deepen its relationship with India "if we want to outcompete the Chinese Communist Party in this century".

"When we were in India, we got a chance to speak to leaders. We also made the case that this was a battle between autocracy and democracy. When we spoke to Prime Minister Modi, we made that case," Senator Charles Schumer, who is the Senate Majority Leader, told a news conference in Washington late Tuesday.

Lt-Gen MV Suchindra takes over as Vice-Chief of Army Staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar on Wednesday here assumed the appointment of the Vice Chief of the Army Staff. He has taken over the charge from Lieutenant General BS Raju who will now head the Jaipur based Sapta Shakti Command.

Prior to taking over as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, Kumar was tenanted the appointment of Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) at Army Headquarters here. He has experience in intelligence, operations, force structuring, operational logistics and tech infusion in his recent appointments.

An alumnus of Sainik School Bijapur and National Defence Academy, Kumar was commissioned into 1 Assam Regiment in 1985. He has commanded 59 Rashtriya Rifles Battalion, an Infantry Brigade and an Infantry



Division on the Line of Control (LOC) and the highly active White Knight Corps in Northern Command.

The Officer has held various staff and instructional appointments to include an instructional tenure at Infantry School, Mhow, Senior Operations Officer in the United Nations Sector in Cambodia, Colonel (Policy) in Military Secretary Branch, Indian Army Training Team at Lesotho, Brigadier General Staff (Operations) of a Corps in the Eastern Theatre, Additional

Director General Military Intelligence and Director General Military Intelligence at Army HQ.

Kumar has attended the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Higher Command Course, Mhow and the National Defence College, New Delhi. He has also attended courses on 'Cooperative Security in South Asia' in Sri Lanka and 'United Nations Senior Mission Leaders Course' in Egypt. His military papers have been published in a number of professional journals.

‘Shinde couldn’t have become CM if Speaker had disqualified him, MLAs’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde could not have been sworn in as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra if the Assembly Speaker was not restrained from deciding the disqualification petitions pending against 39 MLAs, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said.

The Shinde faction told the top court that even if 39 MLAs would have been disqualified from the Assembly, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government would have fallen because it had lost majority and the then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had resigned before the floor test.

The Thackeray faction had earlier told the top court that the formation of a new Government in Maharashtra under Shinde was the "direct and inevitable result" of two orders of the apex court dated June 27, 2022 (restraining the Speaker from deciding the pending disqualification petitions) and June 29, 2022 (allowing the trust vote to be held) and had "disturbed the co-equal and mutual balance" between judicial and legislative organs of the State.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud told senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, appearing for Shinde bloc, "They (Uddhav faction) are right to this extent that Eknath Shinde was sworn in as chief minister by the governor and was able to prove his majority because the speaker was not able to proceed with the dis-



qualification proceedings against him and other MLAs."

Kaul said that just after June 29, 2022, Thackeray had resigned because he knew that he did not have a majority and in the floor test held on July 4, last year, his coalition had got only 99 votes as 13 of MVA legislators had abstained from voting.

On July 4, last year, Shinde had won the crucial floor test in the State Assembly with the support of BJP and independents. In the 288-member House, 164 MLAs had voted for the motion of confidence, while 99 voted against it.

Kaul said, "They (Thackeray faction) knew that they did not have a majority and even his 13 MLAs, who were earlier supporting them had abstained from voting in floor test. Shinde and other MLAs could not have been disqualified as the 2016 Nabam

Rebia verdict of the top court would have come into play, which said that the Speaker could not decide on the disqualification petitions, if a motion for his removal was pending.

Maha House adjourned over Raut's remark

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's alleged 'chormandal' (body of thieves) remark for the legislature sparked chaos in the Maharashtra Legislative Council on Wednesday, leading to House adjournment amid allegations and counter-allegations by the ruling and Opposition parties.

Earlier in the day, talking to reporters in Kolhapur, Raut allegedly called the "vidhi-mandal" (legislature) a "chormandal" (a body of thieves), upsetting lawmakers cutting across party lines. His remarks also disrupted proceedings in the Assembly.

In the Upper House, Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis said, "Raut did not call any person chor (thief), he used the word 'chormandal' for the legislative body. Raut and Shiv Sena (UBT) faction's leader Uddhav Thackeray are also legislative house members. (As per Raut's terminology) He also becomes a member of the 'chormandal'."

Fadnavis said Maharashtra Legislative House is described as the best in the whole country. "It has not been shaped up by one party, it has become so over a period of time. It carries



Ruling party MLAs protest against Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut over his alleged derogatory remark against the State Government and the Assembly during the Budget Session in Mumbai on Wednesday

the legacy of Maharashtra's first chief minister Yashwantrao Chavan," he said.

Referring to the breach of privilege motion moved by an Assembly member against Raut, Fadnavis said it is to maintain the respect for the house. "He (Raut) is not an ordinary person, but a respected member of the Rajya Sabha. If we are not going to condemn his comments jointly irrespective of the party line, then there will be thousands of Sanjay Rauts in society who will disrespect the house every day," he said.

The ruling BJP-Eknath Shinde bloc in the State cur-

rently does not have a majority in the Upper House.

"If the deputy chairperson does not want to accept the privilege motion, it is your decision. I am standing here to protect the decorum and respect for the house. If a BJP member had made such comments, my stand as part of the state government would have been the same," said Fadnavis.

"We should take his comments seriously. I completely condemn his comments and express my disapproval. People are watching what action we would be taking in this matter," he said.

GUJ HOUSE: FAKE TRAINEE PSI ISSUE

19 Cong, AAP MLAs suspended from Assembly after sloganeering, walkout

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

A total of 19 legislators from the Opposition Congress and the AAP were suspended from the Gujarat Assembly for a day on Wednesday after they shouted slogans against the BJP Government before walking out of the House over the issue of a fake trainee PSI found undergoing training at a state-run police training academy.

When Assembly Speaker Shankar Chaudhary rejected Congress' demand for a discussion on the issue on an urgent basis claiming that it is linked to the future of youths, 16 Congress MLAs and three from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), who were present in the House, staged a walkout as a mark of protest.

Gujarat Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs minister Rushikesh Patel moved a resolution for the suspension of these members for a day claiming that opposition MLAs raised placards and shouted slogans as a "pre-planned" strategy.

With the support of three independent MLAs, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government's resolution was passed, paving the way for the suspension of the 19 MLAs of the Congress and the AAP for a day for "creating ruckus, shouting slogans and walking out of the House".

On Tuesday, the office of the state Director General of Police (DGP) had announced that a person named Mayur Tadvi has been caught under-



going training as a trainee police sub-inspector (PSI) at the Police Training Academy in Karai village near Gandhinagar on forged documents.

Investigation conducted into the case so far has revealed that Tadvi prepared a forged letter of his selection as a PSI and entered the Karai-based academy a month back as a trainee.

However, he was eventually caught after officials found that his name was not there in the list of selected candidates when salary bills for 582 trainees were being prepared. Though the Congress had submitted a notice for discussion in the House on Tuesday under rule 116 of the Assembly, which deals with matter of "urgent public importance", senior party MLA Amit Chavda sought a discussion on Wednesday itself, calling the incident "serious" and saying that there may be many others who have gained entry into the

academy through such illegal means.

Congress MLA Shailesh Parmar said though the party has given a notice for discussion under rule 116 and it may come up for discussion after some days, the state government can at least give an assurance to the House because the issue affects all the youths of Gujarat.

When Chaudhary rejected their demand saying he cannot bypass the rules and he has to give at least two days to the concerned minister to come with his reply under rule 116, Congress MLAs started shouting slogans and waving placards demanding a discussion today itself alleging that the government is promoting corrupt practices.

They also sought resignation of Minister of State for Home, Harsh Sanghavi, and also sought an explanation from Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

Galwan martyr issue rocks Bihar Assembly

BJP stages walkout in protest against police misbehaviour with martyr's family

PTI ■ PATNA

Members of the Opposition BJP in Bihar created ruckus inside the State Assembly on Wednesday and staged a walkout in protest against the alleged police misbehaviour with family members of a martyred Army jawan.

The Opposition MLAs staged a demonstration in front of the premises before the commencement of Assembly proceedings condemning the arrest of Vaishali resident Raj Kapoor Singh, whose son Army jawan Jai Kishore Singh had died fighting Chinese troops in Galwan a few years ago.

Some BJP MLAs even tried to disrupt proceedings by plac-



ing a chair on the desk of the Vidhan Sabha secretary before the proceedings began at 11 a.m. Speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary allowed Leader of Opposition Vijay Kumar Sinha to make a statement on the floor of the House.

In his statement Sinha alleged that denigration of armed forces ever since Mahagathbandhan assumed power in Bihar was deliberate and not coincidental (prayog hai, sanyog nahin).

When the speaker pointed out that the leader of opposition was asking no question to which the government could be asked to furnish a reply, Sinha

demanded that a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee be convened to discuss the issue of the Galwan martyr.

"The Chair must not be dictated by the government," he said. At this the state Parliamentary Affairs minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary rose to his feet and asserted "the Chair must not take a wrong decision under pressure from the opposition either".

As the din continued, Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav rose to State that he had met the family of Jai Kishore Singh shortly after the jawan attained martyrdom.

Court orders convict to plant trees, offer namaz five times daily instead of imprisonment

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A court at Malegaon in Maharashtra's Nashik district has convicted a Muslim man in a case of road accident brawl but instead of imprisonment, it has ordered him to plant two trees and offer namaz (prayers) five times a day for 21 days.

Magistrate Tejwant Singh Sandhu in the order passed on February 27 noted that provisions of the Probation of Offenders Act granted powers to a magistrate to release a convict after admonition or appropriate warning to ensure he or she does not repeat the offence.

The court said in the present case, mere warning would not be sufficient and it is important the convict remembers his conviction so that he does not repeat it.

"According to me, giving appropriate warning means, to give an understanding that the crime had been committed, the accused has been proven

guilty and he remembers the same so that he does not repeat the offence again," the order said.

The 30-year-old convict, Rauf Khan, was booked in a 2010 case for allegedly assaulting a man and hurting him over a road accident brawl.

The court while convicting him in the case noted that during trial, Khan had said he was not offering regular namaz.

In view of this, the court ordered him to offer namaz five times a day for 21 days starting from February 28, plant two trees in the Sonapura Masjid premises and also care for the trees.

Khan was booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 325 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt), 504 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace) and 506 (criminal intimidation).

The court held Khan guilty under IPC Section 323 and acquitted him of the other charges.

DEFAMATION CASE OVER MODI'S SURNAME ROW

Court to hear Rahul's final arguments from March 7

PTI ■ SURAT

A court in Gujarat's Surat city will begin hearing from March 7 final arguments of the respondent in a criminal defamation case filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his alleged objectionable remarks on "Modi" surname, a lawyer said on Wednesday.

The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate HH Varma will begin hearing the final arguments of the respondent (the Congress leader) after the petitioner in the case wrapped up his concluding statements on Tuesday, Gandhi's lawyer Kirit Panwala said.

Former Gujarat minister and Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Purnesh Modi had filed a criminal defamation case against Gandhi after he allegedly stated at an election rally at Kolar in Karnataka ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as to "how come all the thieves have



Modi as the common surname?" According to the complainant, the Congress MP's statements defamed the entire Modi community.

"The final arguments of the petitioner (Purnesh Modi) concluded on Tuesday and we will begin our arguments from March 7," said Panwala. The Gujarat High Court had in March last year granted an interim stay on proceedings after Modi approached it challenging the lower court order rejecting his application to make the accused (Gandhi) "personally explain the contents of the CDs and/or pen drives

and/or any such other electronic records" related to his controversial speech.

The HC vacated its stay after the BJP leader withdrew his application demanding the Wayanad Lok Sabha MP's personal appearance in the lower court. The final arguments resumed from Monday (February 27) after the HC last week lifted the stay on proceedings in the matter in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court.

The lawyer for the complainant argued that CDs and pen drives containing the controversial remarks prove Gandhi made such a speech at the rally, and whatever he said about "Modi" surname defamed the entire community. The former Congress president had pleaded not guilty to charges during his earlier appearance before the Surat court, when it had recorded his statement in the case.

Swapna dares Kerala CM to deny CMO meeting with her

PNS ■ KOCHI

Swapna Suresh, the former Liaison officer at the Thiruvananthapuram office of the UAE Consulate has "dared" Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to deny her earlier statements that she had met him personally at his official residence Cliff House in the capital city on many occasions.

"I have met him for one-to-one meeting on a number of occasions in my capacity as the liaison officer of the UAE Consulate. I have met him at the Chief Minister's Office too many



times for personal discussions," Swapna told *The Pioneer* on Wednesday. She said the ED and the Customs have all the details of the meetings she had with Vijayan at the latter's residence and office.

What provoked her to come out in the open challenging the CM was the latter's statement in the Assembly that he does not know who Swapna was and he

has not met her personally.

Swapna is one of the prime accused in the gold smuggling through diplomatic channel of Thiruvananthapuram International Airport in 2019. She was arrested by the NIA from a hideout in Bangalore within days of the seizure of the gold by the intelligence wing of the Customs Department.

The charge against her is that she played a key role in facilitating the smuggling of the yellow metal through diplomatic channel with the active cooperation of the top officials in the Consulate General.

People's life savings put in danger, says Rahul Gandhi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi Wednesday

alleged the State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation of India were "forced" to make investments to save the Adani group, putting people's life savings in danger.

He sought to know who ordered the SBI and LIC to invest in industrialist Gautam Adani's group.

"LIC is losing about Rs 1,000 crore every day in its investments due to the fall in Adani Group's shares. The country is asking -- under whose pressure LIC-SBI invested public money in Adani," he asked in a tweet in Hindi while sharing a video.

In the video, released under the series "Mitrakaal-2, Aapka paisa, Adani par lootaya (Your money handed over to Adani)", Gandhi said the SBI is the biggest bank in the country and asked whether the LIC and SBI ordered to save the Adani Group.

"Why did LIC invest so

much in the risky Adani Group? When the veil from these things will be lifted, it will be known how much loss has been done to the country," he said.

"You kept your hard-earned money and savings for the future of your family and children. The question is, who is putting your money at risk," the former Congress chief asked.

Alleging that the LIC and SBI were "forced" to invest to save the Adani group, Gandhi said, "Do you want to jeopardize the future of your children? My question is to you

people, why is your money being used to save the Adani Group?"

"Why hasn't the private sector invested money in the Adani group? Is it not the duty of the prime minister to ensure that public money invested in LIC is safe?" he asked.

The Congress leader asked, "Will the Prime Minister reveal the truth about the loss suffered by the LIC from January 24, 2023, due to its investment in the Adani Group? What is the prime minister doing to address the concerns of retail investors investing in Adani Group."

He claimed that the Adani group has for long been facing allegations of money laundering, forgery and use of shell companies. "Who is behind these shell companies? Who ordered SBI and LIC to save the Adani group," Gandhi asked.

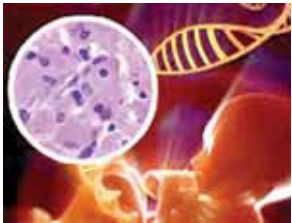
The charges come after US-based finance company Hindenburg Research made several allegations against Adani Group including fraudulent transactions and manipulation of share prices. Adani Group had termed these allegations as false and said that it has followed all the laws and provisions.

Ensure fund for rare diseases, Centre told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking up the cudgel on behalf of the patients diagnosed with ultra-rare genetic conditions such as Lysosomal Storage Disorders, 24 Parliamentarians from across party lines have urged the Centre to ensure a sustainable fund to manage certain diseases under the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021.

In a letter to Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandavia, the elected representatives



including Dr Fauzia Khan, Amiee Yajnik, Manoj Kumar Jha, Dr Santanu Sen and Dr N S Kanimozhi batted for putting up a mechanism to ensure continuity to all such patients, subject to a review of the progress of these patients by

competent members of the Central Technical Committee on rare diseases set up by the Ministry.

Dr Khan, convenor of the support group said, "In the last few months, we have been approached by several patients for different reasons, citing delay in treatment despite the availability of funding support made available by the Health Ministry."

"This unending delay on the part of the Centres of Excellence (CoEs) has caused serious concern and anxiety to

the patients and their families. Most of these patients are diagnosed with life-threatening rare genetic conditions, including Lysosomal Storage Disorders like Gaucher disease, Pompe disease, MPS I and II and Fabry disease," Khan said in the letter written a day after the World Rare Disease Day observed on February 28.

She said that despite a clear notification as a Group 3a condition, patients diagnosed with MPS I, II and Fabry disease are yet to be enrolled for treatment.

‘Avoiding junk food cuts diabetes risk’

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

If you sustain with your lifestyle intervention involving exercises and calorie restriction by avoiding junk food for at least six months, you can easily cut down the progression of prediabetes to type-2 diabetes by about 58 per cent, a study has said, giving a ray of hope to the people on the borderline diabetes which is on the increase.

Prediabetes is a stage before diabetes that refers to impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance, or a combi-

nation of both. In this case, your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but still not high enough to be considered as a sign of diabetes.

Sedentary work and unhealthy food patterns lead to prediabetes, and lifestyle modification is important.

The study "Impact of lifestyle intervention among prediabetic individuals" was conducted on 125 participants. The results were encouraging: None of them who were put on the intervention for a six months study period had developed diabetes.



"The degree of weight loss was less than 1% in the present study at the completion of six months which was achieved through a strict diabetic diet – low calorie and low fat – with

regular exercise," said lead authors R. Grace Janet Mary Ann and K. Karthiga from Research Centre of Home Science, Fatima College, Madurai. The study is published in the latest edition of Current Science.

The strength of the present study includes conducting diabetes awareness programmes once a month and monitoring blood glucose levels regularly with follow-ups for adhering to lifestyle modification through diet, regular exercise, meditation and avoiding junk and fast food, said the researchers.

FIRST COLUMN

J&K ON THE PATH TO PROSPERITY


The turnaround in J&K is visible now; tourists are coming, industry is booming



TARUN CHUGH

Jammu and Kashmir will soon host a G20 meeting. After three decades, the international community will witness the rise of the new Jammu and Kashmir. Preparations are in full swing in the Union Territory for hosting international dignitaries. The foreign diplomats would not be surprised to see peace and tranquillity in the Kashmir valley, because thousands of tourists from their countries must have already told them that J&K is no more a terror hotbed.

The touchstone of durable peace is private investment. Industries abandoned Jammu and Kashmir when Pakistan-exported terrorism arrived in the valley. But a new dawn came to the valley after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the oath of office in 2014. With PM Modi closely monitoring the development works in J&K, the US is witnessing a massive push in infrastructure development which will unlock industrial and tourism along with integration with the national and international markets for local products. Jammu and Kashmir are now flooded with applications for setting up industries. The J&K administration has received 60,000 applications for setting up industrial units. In addition, the administration is carrying out development works of a whopping Rs 50,000 crores in the UT. The district administrations have in the last couple of years roped in farmers, entrepreneurs and others to become the stakeholders in the turnaround of the economy of the UT. Jammu and Kashmir are now exporting vegetables and fruits to the Middle East. Also, the J&K administration is tapping the wealth of the scientific community to give the scale to the farmers in the UT to tap the export opportunity. The success of the snow sports in the Kashmir Valley has again demonstrated that the UT has made stone-pelting history. There is fear in the minds of terrorists, not the citizens. This is a big leap for bringing the fruits of development to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. But the dynasties of Nehrus, Abdullahs, Muftis,



and Mohammed Yusu Tarigami of the CPI cannot see the positive changes as they fan a fake narrative in the Kashmir Valley. They have ganged up to serve their vested interests with a common agenda. This is to train the gun at the temples of India so that their political business flourishes. The narrative of the troika will be countered with development. The sense of entitlement of the ruling family members of the Kashmir Valley will be countered by ensuring that the true democratic aspirations of the people are fulfilled. They created a terrorism capital in J&K and supported stone pelters. Now that the business of stone-pelters, the troika is busy peddling fear that there will be demographic changes in the valley. This is being done with an ulterior motive. This is being done to negate the aims of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

The women of the UT who lost their rights if they married outside have finally been given back their rightful dues. The women who merely married outside will now get the right to vote in their constituencies in J&K. For many years, they were stripped of their rights to vote in Vidhan Sabha elections. After the scrapping of 370 and 35A, the women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have become equal stakeholders. Lakhs of people in Jammu and Kashmir have availed benefits from the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, which was not earlier available to them. Lakhs of houses have been built. The same goes for toilets. The Narendra Modi government is not looking at the religion of the people in extending the benefits of the Central schemes. They are for all the citizens of the country irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. This has to be countered. The people will give a befitting reply to the ruling political class who rue the loss of entitlement. In the BDC and DDC elections, as many as 22 lakh people came forward to vote. This paves way for the arrival of the new crop of leadership in J&K. They will help in fulfilling the democratic aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

(Author is the national general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party)

Do not celebrate corruption



SUMET BHASIN

Arvind Kejriwal, prove your innocence; do not celebrate corruption by dancing on streets




Manish Sisodia, who has quit as Delhi Deputy Chief Minister, has been sent to five-day custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). This has come after Sisodia is said to have refused to cooperate with the investigative agencies during interrogations. He has also been facing a probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the scam involving the 'New Excise Policy', which had been scrapped after serious objections were raised by the stakeholders.

Sisodia is not the first politician to have faced probes by the CBI and the ED. There have been several others who have been grilled and probed by the investigative agencies. A few of such politicians have spent years in jails. They have been convicted also and debarred from electoral politics.

Former Chief Minister of Bihar Lalu Prasad Yadav has spent several years in jail for his involvement in the fodder scam. He faced the CBI probe. After years of probe, he was convicted also, and he had already spent a large part of jail term in the Ranchi prison. But the CBI never had to complain that he was not cooperating in the probe. The workers of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) didn't enact the drama on the street as is being done by the leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Ever since the CBI and the ED teams came knocking to Sisodia, he and his party have sought to take refuge in politics. They have sought to show that a political shield can save them from charges of corruption. Thus, Sisodia & Co in place of cooperating with the investigative agencies indulged in diversionary tactics. They have made claims of political witch-hunting. But they have failed to answer why the 'New Excise Policy' had to be scrapped. If the liquor policy was so good, then the Delhi government should have carried forward it. But Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was aware that if the city government continued with the policy, noose would have come to his neck also. In a bid to pre-empt, the investigative agencies from reaching him, he scrapped the policy.



THE PEOPLE MUST QUESTION THE AAP LEADERSHIP ON THEIR BANKRUPTCY ON MORALITY

(Author is a political analyst)

Kejriwal may be clever. But he cannot duck the rule of law. The investigative agencies have been reported to have dug out several files which had been deleted from computers, laptops and smartphones. These records are evidence of the involvement of Kejriwal and his ministers to orchestrate the scam to a grand proportions. Also, why the file had been deleted in the first place. This means that the attempts were made to destroy the evidences. If Kejriwal & Co were involved the destruction of evidences, then it amounts to serious charges.

Furthermore, it has also been reported that the investigative agencies have retrieved the electronic evidence of meetings in the run up to the adoption of the 'New Excise Policy'. This points to a wide conspiracy involving several actors in the scam, and the investigative agencies will need to act with speed to nab the co-conspirators of Sisodia. The fact that Kejriwal holds no department and doesn't sign any file should not be a shield for him. Being the chief minister of Delhi, Kejriwal is party to every decision taken by the council of ministers headed by him. The records of the meetings should reveal his complicity. Also, it's important that money trails be revealed so that all the actors in the scam face the rule of the law.

In place of submitting to the rule of law and the judicial process, the AAP is indulging in celebrations of corruption. They have been blocking roads in the national capital in several parts. This is weird to say the least. Sisodia along with the Rajya Sabha MP of the AAP went to Raj Ghat before proceeding for the CBI questioning on the day he was finally arrested for evading the due process of law. This is cheap poli-

tics.

Mahatma Gandhi always stood for probity in life. He was the symbol of morality in public life. He lived by example for transparency. The AAP wants to hide behind Mahatma Gandhi to shield the sins of its leaders. They have been enacting such drama for ages. They had used the Gandhian Anna Hazare also for their ulterior motives. Thus, this is not shocking that Sisodia went to Raj Ghat by calling the camera persons.

But the people must question the AAP leadership on their bankruptcy on morality. Satyendra Jain is in Tihar Jail for over seven months now. It will be without a parallel in any parts of the world that a minister was in charge of prisons while being in a jail. Politicians are said to be thick-skinned. But the AAP leadership is unabashedly shameless. The prison officials had been reporting to Jain who is lodged in a cell in Tihar Jail. Only after the AAP leadership became aware that their protests on the streets didn't resonate with the people that Kejriwal reluctantly made Sisodia and Jain resign from their respective positions as ministers. The time for taking high moral ground is now gone for the AAP.

Thus, the onus is on Kejriwal to prove his innocence. The shield that he holds no responsibility in the Delhi government by not heading any department will not hold long. Importantly, it's pertinent to ask what made the party which shared the stage with Anna Hazare and produced dossiers of corruption charges against top leaders of other parties at Jantar Mantar where they enacted kangaroo courts abandon the promises of transparency within the party. The AAP had said that the party will have a Lokpal within the organisation to look into the

affairs of funding. This was conveniently forgotten after the AAP came to power in Delhi.

The AAP had also promised that the party if it comes to power will establish a Lokayukta where complaints of corruption will be referred to. This was again conveniently forgotten. Did the AAP abandon its promises of transparency because the top leadership were deeply involved in the acts of corruption? This begs an answer, and the onus is on Kejriwal to come clean.


The AAP is now in power in Punjab. The Kejriwal-led party keeps mum on twin challenges faced by Punjab — rise of Khalistani elements and drugs menace. How could a political party which is in power in Delhi and Punjab maintain silence on such critical issues? The rise of Khalistani elements in Punjab has followed similar timeline as that of the entry of the AAP in the state.

In Delhi, Kejriwal & Co have oversold its Education Model to the world, while the evidences as revealed through applications for information filed under the Right to Information Act (RTI) has exposed the tall claims on the education front in the national capital. Nearly 80% of schools in Delhi are without science streams. What kind of an education model is there where the students in the age of technology are deprived of science streams? This amounts to the ruling AAP in Delhi committing frauds with the future of the children. The advertisement-led marketing has its own limits. The AAP will now have to answer to the ever expanding list of questions that beg answers from Kejriwal & Co. It will also be incumbent upon the BJP leadership to step up pressure and expose the masterminds in the liquor scam.

Retail investors: Beware of Futures and Options

Derivatives, though lucrative, are fraught with dangers. Investors must tread carefully

Legendary investor Warren Buffett believes that derivatives are "financial weapons of mass destruction". "Derivatives time bomb" refers to a possible market deterioration if there is a sudden unwinding of derivatives positions. One cannot forget that the 2008 financial crisis was primarily caused by derivatives in the mortgage market.



S KALYANASUNDARAM

A recent study by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) confirms the above belief. SEBI has published a study paper on the Profit and Loss of Individual Traders dealing in the Equity Futures and Options segment. The objective of the study was to analyse the trading by individual investors concerning net profit/loss incurred by them in the equity F&O seg-

ment for the period FY 2019 and FY 2022.

Derivatives and their usage

As we know a derivative is a financial contract whose value is tied to an underlying asset and common derivatives include futures contracts and options. Derivatives should be used ideally to hedge against a position. For example, if one is holding a particular share, he can enter into a sale contract in the Futures market so that if the price of the share falls, he will be protected as he will be holding a sale position also in futures. But people use the derivatives for speculation or arbitrage. Persons who enter derivatives with the purpose of speculation may not have any position originally but just to have the price difference in the derivatives he buys and sells

derivatives. Arbitrageurs may take advantage of differences in the price in the cash segment and derivatives segment.

Need to regulate speculation

While speculation in the share market is required to some extent, the market regulator has to ensure that it should be a healthy one. The market needs sufficient depth to provide liquidity and speculators provide such depth through their speculative activities. Hence it may not be wise to out-rightly ban speculative activities.

Retail investors

Of late we are witnessing that individual small investors are lured to participate in the derivatives segment with various incentives. The trading platform lures them with insignificant or no brokerage.

But now the study conducted by SEBI throws light on the extent of damage done to individual investors through the derivatives segment.

Client Participation

SEBI study reveals the mind boggling increase in the individual traders who participate in the segment. The total number of unique individual traders who traded through a sample of the top 10 brokers in the equity F&O segment was 45.2 lakhs during FY22, up from 7.1 lakhs during FY19 (a significant increase of over 500% in FY22 as compared to FY19), of which 88% were active traders. The study reveals how the younger generation has been lured to enter the derivatives market. During FY22, Individual traders belonging to the age group 30-

40 years had the highest share in participation (39%) across all age groups. For younger individual traders (20-30 years), the percentage share of participation went up significantly from 11% during FY19 to 36% during FY22.

Loss Makers

The study reveals that 89% of the individual traders (i.e. 9 out of 10 individual traders) in the equity F&O segment incurred losses, with an average loss of Rs.1.1 lakh during FY22, whereas, 90% of the active traders incurred average losses of Rs.1.25 lakh during the same period.

For the group of active traders (excluding outliers), on average, loss makers registered net trading losses close to Rs 50,000 in FY22. For the group of active traders (excluding

outliers), the average loss of a loss maker was over 15 times the average profit by a profit maker during FY22.

Profit Makers

During FY22, 11% of individual traders in the equity F&O segment made a profit with an average profit of Rs.1.5 lakhs. The percentage went down marginally to 10% for active traders, though the average profit made by them went up to Rs.1.9 lakh during the same period.

For the group of active traders (excluding outliers), only 6% of individual traders in the equity F&O segment made a profit with an average profit of nearly Rs.3,400 in FY22. The top 1 per cent and top 5 per cent active profit makers accounted for nearly 51% and 75% of the total net profit

earned by all active profit makers, respectively.

Takeaway

One must understand that derivatives are basically for hedging and a recent study reveals that it is highly risky for individual investors to use them as a speculative tool to make money from the share market.

Entering a derivative position may be injurious to the financial health of small investors. One may be tempted to over-trade due to the leverage available in the derivatives market and such wide leveraged exposure increases the risk proportionately.

We have to wait and see how the regulator SEBI is going to take corrective measures to save the retail small investors.

Biden names two Indian Americans to Export Council

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has announced his intent to appoint two prominent Indian-Americans corporate leaders, Punit Renjen and Rajesh Subramaniam, to his powerful Export Council which is the principal national advisory committee on international trade.

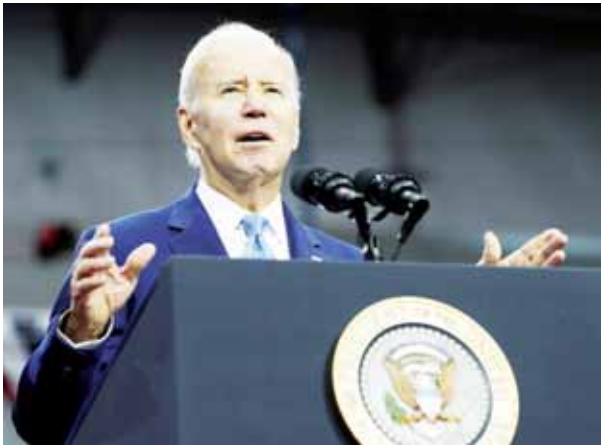
The president on Tuesday announced a list of members he intends to appoint to the the council, according to a White House press release.

Renjen, the former CEO of Deloitte Consulting and Subramaniam, CEO and president of FedEx, have their names on the list of members the president intends to appoint as members of the influential President's Export Council.

The council will be headed by Mark Edin, chairman of Kastle Systems.

More than two dozen leaders from the corporate sector, labour, real estate, national security and law, have been tapped into the President's Export Council.

Prominent among them are Karen S. Lynch, president and CEO of CVS Health; John Lawler, the chief financial offi-



cer of Ford; Gareth Joyce, CEO at Proterra; Brett Hart, president of United Airlines; Beth Ford, president and CEO of Land O'Lakes; and Qualcomm CEO Cristiano R. Amon.

"The Council advises the President on government policies and programmes that affect US trade performance; promotes export expansion; and provides a forum for discussing and resolving trade-related problems among the business, industrial, agricultural, labour, and government sectors," the White House said.

On December 31 last, 62-year-old Renjen retired as

Deloitte Global CEO after having served in the role since June 2015.

He now serves as Deloitte Global CEO Emeritus. Under his leadership, Deloitte launched WorldClass — a global effort to prepare 100 million underprivileged people for a world of opportunity — based on the belief that business thrives when society thrives, the White House said.

Recently, Deloitte made a commitment to be net zero by 2030 under its WorldClimate initiative and joined the First Movers Coalition.

Renjen is deeply commit-

ted to advancing diversity and inclusion at Deloitte through measurable actions toward gender balance.

Over his career, Renjen has been recognised by numerous organisations for his leadership, business acumen and commitment to societal impact.

In 2022, Renjen was recognised by the Economic Times as "Global Indian of the Year" and the Carnegie Corporation of America as one of 34 "Great Immigrants. Great Americans."

In 2021, the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum recognised Renjen with its Global Achievement Award. In 2020, Renjen was awarded the Oregon History Makers Medal.

Renjen is being considered to be the next chairman of SAP SE, a Germany-based European multinational software company.

Subramaniam, as President and Chief Executive Officer of FedEx Corporation, is responsible for providing strategic direction for all FedEx operating companies.

Subramaniam, 55, is chair of the five-person Executive Committee, which plans and executes the corporation's

UK to announce first Tech Envoy for India

PTI ■ LONDON

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly will announce the first Tech Envoy to the strategically important Indo-Pacific, charged with boosting tech and economic ties with India and the wider region.

The minister will arrive in New Delhi on Wednesday ahead of the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting and is scheduled to hold talks with his counterpart, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, to discuss progress on the UK-India 2030 Roadmap clinched in 2021 to bolster bilateral ties across defence, security, and business and trade.

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

said Cleverly is also set to reaffirm the UK's commitment to conclude a free trade agreement (FTA) with India during an India-Europe business event in Delhi.

According to official UK government data, the UK-India trading relationship was worth GBP 34 billion in 2022 – growing by GBP 10 billion in one year.

"India is a hugely important partner to the UK and the deeper ties we are forging now will help to grow the UK economy and boost our industries for the future," said Cleverly, ahead of the visit.

"India is also an emerging global leader in technology and there are immense opportunities for better collaboration between us in this sector. That is why we will be basing our

first Tech Envoy to the Indo-Pacific region, to maximise the tech expertise of both countries," he said.

The FCDO said the new Tech Envoy role will boost the UK's status as a science and tech superpower as the envoy works with partners in the region on areas of shared interest, including setting global technology standards and helping to solve challenges through innovative technology. The announcement is the second of its kind by the UK, after the appointment of a Tech Envoy to the US in late 2020, something the UK government says demonstrates a commitment to the Indo-Pacific and tech-diplomacy.

"India has the world's third highest number of tech unicorns and start-ups, with 108

start-ups gaining the unicorn status of a private company valued at over USD 1 billion. This announcement illustrates the UK's clear commitment to boosting partnerships in India and across South Asia," FCDO said.

During a visit to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi on Wednesday, the visiting Foreign Secretary will mark the opening of the new Young Professionals Scheme, which began accepting applications this week for young British and Indian nationals to apply to live and work in each other's countries for up to two years.

"This landmark migration scheme will enable the brightest and best in both our countries to benefit from new opportunities," said Cleverly.

and marketing across the FedEx portfolio of operating companies.

Subramaniam serves on the board of directors of FedEx Corporation, the Procter & Gamble Company, the US

Chamber of Commerce's China Center Advisory Board, FIRST, US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, and the US-China Business Council, and a member of the US-India CEO Forum.

China considering lethal aid to Russia: Pentagon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

There are indications that China is contemplating lethal aid to Russia in its war against Ukraine, the Pentagon said, joining the Biden Administration's chorus that there would be consequences to such a move by Beijing.

"There are indications that they are contemplating that. Again, I'm not going to have any further information in that regard or any additional intelligence to talk about beyond the fact that they haven't taken it off the table. And so, we want to be crystal-clear that that would be a poor decision, should they decide to do that," Brigadier General Pat Ryder, Pentagon Press Secretary, told reporters at a news conference.

This is something that the Pentagon is going to closely monitor, he said.

"Let's not forget about what the consequences are if they do. It will extend this conflict needlessly, it will result in more innocent lives lost as Russia continues to wage its campaign against Ukrainian citizens," he said.

Responding to a question, Ryder said, "If China were to provide aid, lethal aid" to Russia it would significantly or has the potential to significantly extend this conflict and again, support Russia's aim of eliminating Ukraine as a coun-

China sends 25 planes, 3 ships towards Taiwan

AP ■ TAIPEI

China sent 25 warplanes and three warships toward Taiwan on Wednesday morning, the island's Defence Ministry said, as tensions remain high between Beijing and Taipei's main backer Washington.

The ministry said 19 of those planes crossed into Taiwan's air defence identification zone while the ships were continuing to operate in the Taiwan Strait. It said Taiwan responded by scrambling fighters, dispatching ships and activating coastal missile defence systems to "closely monitor and respond."

China stages such incursions on a near-daily basis, part of what are termed "gray zone" tactics, aimed at intimidation and wearing down Taiwan's equipment, exhausting its personnel and degrading public morale. Those also include cyberwarfare and disinformation campaigns, along with a relentless drive to deprive Taiwan of diplomatic allies.

Taiwan has responded by upgrading its fleet of F-16 fighter jets and ordering 66 more of the planes from the

US, while purchasing a range of other weaponry and extending its mandatory term of military service for all males from four months to one year.

Relations between Beijing and Washington, Taiwan's primary ally and source of defensive weaponry, have spiralled over China's actions toward the island, trade, technology and the South China Sea.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken cancelled a visit to Beijing last month after the US shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon off the US east coast, drawing furious protests from China.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and has been rapidly expanding its military to meet that challenge should it arise.

In memos and testimony, top US officers have called for heightened preparations, saying China sees a shrinking window for action and may move on Taiwan within a few years. China says it prefers peaceful unification between the sides, but the Taiwanese public overwhelmingly favours the current state of de facto independence.

Economy of Egypt in dire straits

AP ■ CAIRO

A group of women stands in front of a vegetable vendor at a street market in one of Cairo's oldest neighbourhoods, yelling in frustration.

"Every day there are new prices," one said. "When will this war end?" another shouted, cradling a baby in her arms.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, now in its second year, has pushed up food and energy prices worldwide, adding another layer to Egypt's economic crisis.

Soaring inflation, a severely weakened currency and other problems have followed decades of government mismanagement and broader disruptions, starting with the turmoil from the 2011 Arab Spring popular uprising, then years of militant attacks, followed by the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The crisis has pushed many Egyptians out of the middle class, while the country's poor — about one-third of the population — are cutting back on life's essentials.

Many are asking how long they can survive like this.

Hany Hassan has found himself struggling to feed his four school-age children. His pay from his job as a bartender at a coffeehouse is buying less and less.

"This past year was the hardest in my life," said Hassan, 43, who earns roughly \$110 a month working 12-hour shifts seven days a week.

"I am scared that one day I won't be able to feed the kids."

Pak SC orders elections in Punjab, KPK in 90 days

Imran's party suspends jail bharo stir

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the election commission to hold elections in the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces within the 90-day period as mandated by the Constitution.

The Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies were dissolved on January 14 and 18, respectively by the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party as part of its bid to force early general elections in the country.

The court launched suo motu proceedings last week regarding the delay in the announcement of a date for elections in the two provinces.

A five-member bench headed by chief justice Umar Ata Bandial issued the split decision, passed by a majority of three, with two judges expressing reservations over the admissibility of suo motu action by the top court.

The decision paved the way for elections in the two provinces, currently run by interim governments. The respective governors, empowered to set the election dates, have demurred, apparently due to political reasons.

The court also ruled that President Arif Alvi's orders to hold elections on April 9 will be binding on the Punjab assembly but not on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly, as the latter was dissolved by the gov-



ernor, while the former was not.

"If the governor dissolved the assembly, then the governor will announce the election date," ruled the apex court.

The top court ordered the governor of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to announce the date for provincial elections. It also ruled that the president and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) should declare Punjab's polls schedule after consultation.

The bench concluded the case on Tuesday after hearing all parties, including the lawyers of counsels of the ruling coalition, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the president, and others.

The ruling by the court is a moral victory for the Imran Khan-led PTI which had demanded early elections. To put pressure on the coalition government in Islamabad, Khan, the former prime minister, whose party was in power

in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, dissolved the two assemblies.

As the federal government miserably failed to improve the economic situation, it is feared that an early election would only benefit Khan, who was ousted as Prime Minister in April last year.

Meanwhile, PTI on Wednesday suspended its "Jail Bharo Tehreek" (court arrest movement) after the Supreme Court ordered the election commission to hold polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies as stipulated by the Constitution.

"We welcome the SC judgement. It was responsibility of SC to uphold Constitution and they have valiantly done that through their judgement today. It is an assertion of Rule of Law in Pak. We are suspending our Jail Bharo movement and moving forward with election campaigns in KP & Punjab," Khan tweeted.

The former cricketer-turned-politician's tweet comes a day after 280 activists from his party were arrested during the last two days, taking the total number of arrests to 600.

Khan kicked off the 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' on February 22 from Lahore over what he called was a gross violation of human rights in the country, abuse of the Constitution and an economic meltdown.

Pak appoints Sikh Ambassador for Kartarpur Corridor

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora as the Ambassador-at-Large for Kartarpur Corridor as part of efforts to attract Sikh pilgrims from across the world, a government notification said on Wednesday.

The leading Sikh leader will work in the position in an honorary capacity, the notification said.

Arora hailing from Kartarpur in Narowal is also the central general secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) minorities wing. His family has been associated with the protection and welfare of the Sikh holy sites at Kartarpur.

His appointment comes as Kartarpur failed to attract the number of visitors Pakistan authorities had imagined after opening the critical holy site for Sikhs, especially those in India.

The Kartarpur corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, with the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in the Gurdaspur district in India's Punjab state. The 4 km-long corridor provides visa-free access to Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit the Darbar Sahib.

In November 2019, Prime Minister Khan formally inaugurated the Kartarpur Corridor as part of the commemoration of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak at a colourful ceremony.

कार्यालय वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक मेगा फूड पार्क, बहेड़ी

उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण,

ए-1/4 लखनपुर, कानपुर

ई-निविदा सूचना

एतद् द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जनपदों में स्थित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकास और अनुसंधान एवं रख रखाव कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिषदों/नगर निकाशों में पंजीकृत एवं अर्ह 'ए' श्रेणी में विद्युत लाईसेंस कर्मा/डेकेदारों से ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है। जो दिनांक 03.03.2023 को पूर्वाह्न 11.30 बजे से दिनांक 21.03.2023 को अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। जिन्हें दिनांक 22.03.2023 को पूर्वाह्न 11.00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा शपथ पत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 27.03.2023 को सायं 5.00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत रु. (लाख में)
1	Providing strilo light(3 colour) for street light pole at I.A. mega Food Park Baheri.	7.46

नोट:- (1) निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर एवं जी.एस.टी. सहित दे अधिक करें। अलग से कोई कर देय नहीं होगा। (2) विद्युत कार्य हेतु निविदादाताओं को निविदा अपलोड करते समय "विद्युत सुखा विभाग" उ.प्र. शासन, लखनऊ में श्रेणी 'क' अनुमोदित लाईसेंस अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होगा, अन्यथा निविदा को Consider नहीं किया जायेगा।

निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की website: www.onlineupsida.com पर स्थित ई-लिंक एवं सूचीपत्र की website: <http://etender.up.nic.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।

वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक मेगा फूड पार्क, बहेड़ी

उ.प्र.रा.औ.वि.प्र., कानपुर

Expression of Interest

No.SSA/Audit/Statutory Audit-2022-23/56/2023/4030 Dated:27.02.2023

Expression of Interest (EOI) are invited from the interested C&AG empanelled Chartered Accountants firms for PSU audit for the year 2022-23, having Head Office /established Branch Offices with sufficient audit Staff in the State of Assam and minimum of 5(five) years experiences of audit of accounts of Govt./Semi Govt./Society/Bank/ PSU/Autonomous Body etc. with yearly turnover of minimum ₹25,00,000/(twenty five lakhs) per year for last three years(i.e.FY-2019-20 to 2021-22)/for conduct of annual audit of accounts of Samagra Shiksha , Assam(FY-2022-23).

The EOI should be addressed to the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 and may be dropped in the "Tender Box" of the Office of the undersigned latest by 20th March,2023 during office hours(upto 5PM). EOI received after the prescribed time & date will not be entertained.CA firms engaged for conducting Internal Audit of accounts of Samagra Shiksha, Assam for the year 2022-23 and CA firms entrusted for conducting Statutory Audit as well as Internal Audit under Samagra Shiksha Assam for the financial years(i.e.2019-20,2020-21 & 2021-22) are not eligible to join in the process. Other terms and conditions, TOR etc. may be seen in the SSA Web Site (<https://ssa.assam.gov.in>) for submission of EOI.

Sd/-Mission Director

Samagra Shiksha, Assam,

Kahilipara, Guwahati-781019

जानसयोजी/CF/4620/22

विभाग अधिकारी

आचार्य जी.पी.राय

आचार्य जी.पी.राय

Drones fly deep inside Russia

AP ■ KYIV

Drones that the Kremlin said were launched by Ukraine flew deep inside Russian territory, including one that got within 100 kilometers (60 miles) of Moscow, signalling breaches in Russian defences as President Vladimir Putin ordered stepped-up protection at the border.

Officials said the drones caused no injuries and did not inflict any significant damage, but the attacks on Monday night and Tuesday morning raised questions about Russian defence capabilities more than a year after the country's full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

Moscow blamed Kyiv for the assaults. Ukrainian officials did not immediately claim responsibility, but they similarly avoided directly acknowledging responsibility for past strikes and sabotage while emphasizing Ukraine's right to hit any target in Russia.

Although Putin did not refer to any specific attacks in a speech in the Russian capital, his comments came hours after the drones targeted several areas in southern and western Russia. Authorities closed the airspace over St. Petersburg in response to what some reports said was

a drone. Also Tuesday, several Russian television stations aired a missile attack warning that officials blamed on a hacking attack.

The drone attacks targeted regions inside Russia along the border with Ukraine and deeper into the country, according to local Russian authorities.

A drone fell near the village of Gubastovo, less than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Moscow, Andrei Vorobyov, governor of the region surrounding the Russian capital, said in an online statement. The drone did not inflict any damage, Vorobyov said, but it likely targeted "a civilian infrastructure object".

Pictures of the drone showed it was a small Ukrainian-made model with a reported range of up to 800 kilometers (nearly 500 miles) but no capacity to carry a large load of explosives.

Russian forces early Tuesday shot down another Ukrainian drone over the Bryansk region, local Gov. Aleksandr Bogomaz said in a Telegram post.

Three drones also targeted Russia's Belgorod region on Monday night, with one flying through an apartment window in its namesake capital, local authorities reported.

Nationwide strike disrupts daily life in Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The one-day token strike organised by Sri Lanka's trade unions on Wednesday to protest the government's massive tax and utility rate hikes has brought daily life in the crisis-hit island nation to a grinding halt and disrupted services in key sectors like airports, ports and banking.

The trade unions belonging to various sectors called the strike after defying an essential services order issued by President Ranil Wickremesinghe and urged his government to withdraw its tax hikes.

In January, President Wickremesinghe, who is also the country's finance minister, hiked corporate taxes to 30 per cent from 24 per cent, after raising VAT (Value Added Tax) to 15 per cent last year.

The Sri Lankan government introduced tax hikes with effect from January widely believed to be on demand by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"We have launched the strike from 7 am today to 7 am tomorrow. We won't accept the essential services order. This is an action to highlight our hardships with tax increases," Niroshan Gorakanage, a port trade union leader, told PTI.

He said the eight ships



that were set to arrive on Wednesday and ships that were scheduled to leave the Colombo port were hit by the strike. Channa Dissanayake, a bank employees trade union official said work in the two state banks, including the Central Bank of Sri Lanka have been curtailed on Wednesday.

Joseph Stalin, the teacher's trade union spokesman said teachers were wearing black armbands to work to protest the government's move.

Charuka llangasinha of the University teachers federation said the strike would be resorted to until the government

rolled back the tax hikes.

Wickremesinghe said raising taxes to get over the current economic crisis was an essential step. However, trade unions allege the tax revisions were meant to please the IMF as the island awaits a nod from the world lender for a 2.9 billion dollar bailout package.

Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka needed to raise its tax revenue to that of 2019.

In 2019, Wickremesinghe's predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa drastically reduced tax revenue while ignoring calls for an IMF bailout.

The president has said he was aware of the burden placed

on people by higher taxes but the high taxes are part of the rescue operation of the Sri Lankan economy.

The IMF in September last year approved Sri Lanka a 2.9 billion dollar bailout package over 4 years pending Sri Lanka's ability to restructure its debt with creditors — both bilateral and sovereign bondholders.

Wednesday's strike is all set to add to the uncertainty over the upcoming local body polls. The Election Commission announced that the local body elections would not be held on March 9 as planned, and a fresh date will be notified on March 3.

36 dead in Greek train crash, in resigns

AP ■ TEMPE

Greece's transport minister has resigned after a train crash that killed at least 36 people and injured scores.

Transport Minister Kostas Karamanlis said he felt it was his "duty" to step down "as a basic indication of respect for the memory of the people who died so unfairly."

Rescuers delved Wednesday through flattened, burned-out carriages for survivors and bodies after a passenger train and a freight train crashed head-on in central Greece overnight, killing at least 36 people and injuring scores. The cause of the crash near the Vale of Tempe, about 380 kilometers (235 miles) north of Athens, was not immediately clear, but the stationmaster in the nearby city of Larissa was arrested Wednesday. The police did not release his name. Another two people have been detained for questioning. It's unclear at what speed the two trains were travelling when they ran into each other just before midnight Tuesday, but state broadcaster ERT said it was more than 140 kilometers per hour (87 miles per hour).

Multiple cars derailed and at least three burst into flames after the collision just before midnight Tuesday near the town of Tempe as the passenger train was emerging from a highway underpass.

Rescue crews illuminated the scene with floodlights before dawn on Wednesday as they searched frantically through the twisted, smoking wreckage for survivors.

After sunrise, they turned



A crane, firefighters and rescuers operate after a collision in Tempe near Larissa city, Greece on Wednesday

AP

to heavy machinery that had been brought in to start moving large pieces of the trains. What appeared to be the passenger train's third carriage lay atop the crumpled remains of the first two, where emergency crews were directing their focus.

Officials said many of the passengers on board the Athens to Thessaloniki train had been university students returning home after celebrating Carnival over the long weekend.

"This is a terrible tragedy that is hard to comprehend," said Deputy Health Minister Mina Gaga. "I feel so sorry for the parents of these kids."

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis was to visit the scene later in the day.

Survivors said several passengers were thrown through the windows of the train cars due to the impact. They said others fought to free themselves after the passenger train buckled, slamming into a field near

a gorge, about 380 kilometres (235 miles) north of Athens.

"There were many big pieces of steel," said Vassilis Polyzos, a local resident who said he was one of the first people on the scene. "The trains were completely destroyed, both passenger and freight trains."

He said dazed and disoriented people were escaping out of the train's rear cars as he arrived. "People, naturally, were scared — very scared," he said.

"They were looking around, searching; they didn't know where they were."

Eight rail employees were among those killed in the crash, including the two drivers of the freight train and the two drivers of the passenger train, according to Greek Railroad Workers Union President Yannis Nitsas.

The trains crashed just before the Vale of Tempe, a gorge that separates the regions of Thessaly and Macedonia. Costas Agorastos, the region-

al governor of the Thessaly area, told Greece's Skai Television the two trains collided head on at high speed.

"Carriage one and two no longer exist, and the third has derailed," he said.

Rescuers wearing head lamps worked in thick smoke, pulling pieces of mangled metal from the cars to search for trapped people. Others scoured the field with flashlights and checked underneath the wreckage. Several of the dead are believed to have been found in the restaurant car near the front of the passenger train.

Greece's firefighting service said some 66 people were hospitalised, including six in intensive care. "The evacuation process is ongoing and is being carried out under very difficult conditions due to the severity of the collision between the two trains," said fire service spokesperson Vassilis Varthakoyiannis.

The possible cause of the collision was not immediately clear. Two rail officials were being questioned by police but had not been detained.

Passengers who received minor injuries or were unharmed were transported by bus to Thessaloniki, 130 kilometres (80 miles) to the north. Police took their names as they arrived, in an effort to track anyone who may be missing. A teenage survivor who did not give his name to reporters said that just before the crash he felt a strong braking and saw sparks — then there was a sudden stop.

"Our carriage didn't derail, but the ones in front did and were smashed," he said, visibly shaken.

Tinubu wins Nigerian presidency

AP ■ ABUJA

Ruling party candidate Bola Tinubu was declared winner of Nigeria's presidential election early on Wednesday, with the two leading opposition candidates already demanding a revote in Africa's most populous nation.

Election officials' overnight announcement was likely to lead to a court challenge by his main opponents Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi. Abubakar also finished second in the last vote in 2019, then appealed those results before his lawsuit ultimately was dismissed.

On Tuesday, the two leading opposition parties had demanded a revote, saying that delays in uploading election results had made room for irregularities. The ruling All Progressives Congress party urged the opposition to accept defeat and not cause trouble.

Tinubu received 37% of the vote, or nearly 8.8 million, while main opposition candidate Abubakar won 29% with almost 7 million. Third-place finisher Obi took 25% with about 6.1 million, according to the results announced on live television by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

Tinubu "having satisfied the requirements of the law, is hereby declared the winner



Supporters of Presidential candidate Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress celebrate ahead of the final declaration of election results, at his campaign headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria on Wednesday

PTI

and is returned elected," said the country's election chief, Mahmood Yakubu.

The announcement came after 4 am, but celebrations already had started late Tuesday at the ruling party's national secretariat where Tinubu's supporters had gathered in anticipation of his victory. "None of the others matches his record!" said Babafemi Akin as he chatted excitedly about the prospects of a Tinubu administration. "I am sure he will do well."

Tinubu, 70, is the former governor of Lagos state, home to Nigeria's megacity of the

same name. However, he lost the state in Saturday's election to Obi, who drew a strong following among younger voters eager for change.

The parties now have three weeks to appeal results, but an election can be invalidated only if it's proven the national electoral body largely didn't follow the law and acted in ways that could have changed the result.

The Supreme Court of Nigeria has never overturned a presidential election, though court challenges are common, including by outgoing President Muhammadu

Buhari, who doggedly fought his past election losses for months in vain.

Nigeria's presidential election has been closely watched as the country is not only the continent's largest economy but it is also one of the continent's top oil producers.

Observers have said Saturday's election was mostly peaceful, though delays caused some voters to wait until the following day to cast their ballots. Many Nigerians had difficulties getting to their polling stations because of a currency redesign that resulted in a shortage of bank notes.

Yoon seeks better ties with Japan

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president on Wednesday called Japan "a partner that shares the same universal values" and renewed hopes to repair ties frayed over Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Since taking office in May last year, President Yoon Suk Yeol has been pushing to mend the historical grievance with Japan and boost a Seoul-Tokyo-Washington security cooperation to better cope with increasing North Korean nuclear threats.

In a televised speech marking the 1919 uprising against the Japanese colonizers, Yoon urged his people to remember what he called "patriotic martyrs who gave their all for our country's freedom and independence during the dark days." But he avoided mentioning any specific colonial wrongdoing as he explained why greater cooperation with Japan is needed.

"Now, a century after the March First Independence Movement, Japan has transformed from a militaristic aggressor of the past into a partner that shares the same universal values with us and cooperate on issues of securi-



South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol

ty, economy and global agendas," Yoon said.

"In particular, the trilateral cooperation among the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan has become more important than ever to overcome the serious nuclear threats posed by North Korea and global polycrisis," Yoon said.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said Yoon's address "offers hopeful signs not only for Seoul's relations with Tokyo, but also for South Korea's role in the world."

"Emphasizing shared values is much more than rhetoric if backed up by a foreign policy that deepens trilateral cooperation with the U.S. And Japan while increasing contributions

to global efforts, such as supporting Ukraine, strengthening supply chains, and countering climate change," Easley said.

South Korea and Japan are closely linked economically and culturally and are both key US Allies in the region. But they often bicker over issues stemming from Japan's 1910-45 occupation of the Korean Peninsula.

At the center of their current dispute is South Korea court rulings in 2018 that ordered two Japanese companies — Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries — to compensate Koreans who had been forced to work in their factories during the Japanese colonial period.

The companies and the Japanese government have dismissed the rulings, arguing that all compensation issues were already settled under a 1965 treaty that normalised bilateral ties and included Tokyo's provision of hundreds of millions of dollars to Seoul in economic assistance and loans.

The dispute prompted the two governments to downgrade each other's trade status and Seoul to threaten to abandon an intelligence-sharing deal.

US boosts military aid to Somalia

AP ■ MOGADISHU

The United States is increasing its military assistance to Somalia as the country sees success in battling what the US calls "the largest and most deadly al-Qaida network in the world."

Sixty-one tons of weapons and ammunition arrived Tuesday in Mogadishu, the US said in a statement of support for a historic Somalia-led military offensive against al-Shabab extremists that has recaptured dozens of communities since August.

In a separate joint statement with other leading security partners Qatar, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Britain, the US said they will support Somalia's efforts to manage weapons and ammunition that could allow the United Nations Security Council to lift its arms embargo on the country. "A very productive meeting," Somalia's national security adviser, Hussein Sheikh-Ali, tweeted after the Washington gathering.

Public Notice

This is to inform General Public that Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gupta & Mrs. Vineeta Rani Gupta acquired the Entire Basement and Entire Ground Floor without roof rights, built up Property Bearing No. Abbey Khand-II/67, area measuring 223.45 Sq. Mtrs. (except First Floor without roof rights), Situated at Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, (U.P.), vide Sale Deed dated 01.07.2010, (Doc. No. 17561), Now, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gupta & Mrs. Vineeta Rani Gupta are mortgaging the above said property to Axis Finance Limited, by mortgaging the said property. In case anyone has any objection regarding mortgage of the said property, the same may be raised within 7 days of this publication to Mr. Munesh Chavani Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-4TL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

Public Notice

This is to inform general public that Mr. Dayanand Bhardwaj & Smt. Juli Bhardwaj have acquired the Land area measuring 40 * 50 = 90 sq. yards, out of Khata No. 313 and Khata No. 315, situated at Gagan Vihar Colony, Gram Bahmura known as Bhupura, Pargana Loni, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. vide Sale Deed Dated 16.09.2002, Doc No. 5199, Sale Deed dated 07.11.2006, Doc No. 11531 & Regd. GP dated 08.09.2010. Now, Mr. Dayanand Bhardwaj & Smt. Juli Bhardwaj are mortgaging the above said property with Suryoday Small Finance Bank & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Munesh Chavani Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-4TL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

Public Notice

To be known to all that I, T R Jayanthi W/o Kishore Kumar Alias K.S. Kishore Kumar, Cont. 93103 - 90804, Email: jayaku6789@gmail.com, R/o. 297 04 MIG Flats, Prasad Nagar Karol Bagh Delhi - 110005 has applied for the conversion of aforesaid property. The documents like original share certificate respected Flat No. 213, Vishwas Nagar Evacee's Plot Purchaser CGHS Ltd Known As Vishwas Apartment Plot No. 64 Sector 23 Dwarka New Delhi-75, issued by DDA, of aforesaid property have been lost. An F.I.R. to this effect has been lodged in police station on dated 23.02.2023. Any person(s) claiming any right, having any objection or found in possession of original document may write/contact with the below named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice & can personally contact- Deputy Director (GH) C-block, 2nd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given to the Public that originals Builder Buyer Agreement Shop No. 3 G/F 78 Guru Amar Das Bhawan Nehru Place New Delhi 110019 in original lost while coming to Green Park from East of Kailash and reported and lodged Fir on 04/03/2016 vide SO No. 430/2014 LR No. 211973/2016 in respect to Shop No. 3, G/F, 78 Guru Amar Das Bhawan Nehru Palace, New Delhi-110019 as well as all other concerned documents of the said property has also been misplaced. All person are hereby informed not to deal carry our any transaction with any one on the basis of the said missing document(s). If any one has already carried out or being carried out kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which the claims of such persons will be deemed to have waived and/or abandoned. Dated this 28th day of February, 2023 Prem Kumar Sharma (Advocate), Enrollment No. R/180/1993 D-3, H.K.M. Nagar, Alwar, Rajasthan

Public Notice

"It is to be informed to the public at large that Mr. Gurmeet Singh S/o Sh. Gurba Singh, r/o 2/408, Subhash Nagar, Tagore Garden, New Delhi, who is owner of the Property i.e. Third Floor with roof rights, built up Property Bearing No. 11/13, situated on Plot No. 88, Block-H, area 148.5 sq. yds., out of total area 297 sq. yards, situated in Shivaji Park, Village Madipur, Delhi, heretofore referred to as said property, having acquired the same by virtue of Sale Deed dated 20.02.2023 executed by Sunder Pal Singh, Manbir Singh Sahni & Smt. Malka Kaur (Registration No. 1174 dated 22.02.2023), which was supposed to be deposited by Law Firm (on the panel of Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited) namely RAHEJA ASSOCIATES, having office at D-142, LGF, Lajpat Nagar-1, New Delhi, has been lost by one Ajay Kumar S/o. Sh. Madheshwar Bhagat, who is working as a Field Executive-Legal in said Law Firm RAHEJA ASSOCIATES, and in this regard a Lost Report has been lodged vide LR No. 198586/2023 dt. 28-02-2023. If anybody found the same, Pls return at the address mentioned below. Whosoever is having any objection to said mortgage OR any Person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Public Notice

SARV PRIYA MAHAJAN CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY Ltd 202, Vardhaman Avon Shopping Plaza, LSC, C-Block Market, Saraswati Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi-110034 In pursuance to rule 19(2) of DCS rules, 2007, applications are invited from general public of Delhi who fulfill the conditions laid down in rule-19 & 20 of DCS Rules, 2007 for filling up three vacancies in Sarv Priya Mahajan CGHS Ltd. (Regd. No. 1364-49 for three bedroom flat (Tentative cost of flat 1.5 crore) (having Approximate 90.88 meter carpet area), which has arisen due to resignation of members, Interested persons can collect the application form in person from society office i.e. 202, Vardhaman Avon Shopping Plaza, LSC, Saraswati Vihar, Pitampura, Delhi-34 between 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. free of cost and the same have to be deposited along with the amount of Rs. 83,50,380/- which includes Share money, admission fee, land & Construction money through Pay order/ Demand Draft within 15 days of issue of this notice in favour of The Sarv Priya Mahajan Co-operative Group Housing Society Ltd. Further at the time of applying membership, applicant has to deposit the Equalization charges as prescribed in the DCS Act & Rules. President-Sarv Priya Mahajan CGHS Ltd

Public Notice

"It is to be informed to the public at large that Mr. Gurmeet Singh S/o Sh. Gurba Singh, r/o 2/408, Subhash Nagar, Tagore Garden, New Delhi, who is owner of the Property i.e. Third Floor with roof rights, built up Property Bearing No. 11/13, situated on Plot No. 88, Block-H, area 148.5 sq. yds., out of total area 297 sq. yards, situated in Shivaji Park, Village Madipur, Delhi, heretofore referred to as said property, having acquired the same by virtue of Sale Deed dated 20.02.2023 executed by Sunder Pal Singh, Manbir Singh Sahni & Smt. Malka Kaur (Registration No. 1174 dated 22.02.2023), which was supposed to be deposited by Law Firm (on the panel of Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited) namely RAHEJA ASSOCIATES, having office at D-142, LGF, Lajpat Nagar-1, New Delhi, has been lost by one Ajay Kumar S/o. Sh. Madheshwar Bhagat, who is working as a Field Executive-Legal in said Law Firm RAHEJA ASSOCIATES, and in this regard a Lost Report has been lodged vide LR No. 198586/2023 dt. 28-02-2023. If anybody found the same, Pls return at the address mentioned below. Whosoever is having any objection to said mortgage OR any Person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

VIPUL KR. RAHEJA (Advocate)
Chamber No. 55, Civil Side, Tis Hazari Courts,

UN nuclear watchdog finds uranium enriched to 83.7% in Iran

AP ■ VIENNA

Inspectors from the United Nations nuclear watchdog found uranium particles enriched up to 83.7 per cent in Iran's underground Fordo nuclear site, a report seen on Tuesday by The Associated Press said.

The confidential quarterly report by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency distributed to member states likely will raise tensions further between Iran and the West over its programme.

That's even as Tehran already faces internal unrest after months of protests and Western anger over sending bomb-carrying drones to Russia for its war on Ukraine.

The IAEA report only speaks about "particles," suggesting that Iran isn't building a stockpile of uranium enriched above 60 per cent — the level it has been enriching at for some time. The IAEA report described inspectors discovering on January 21 that two cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Iran's Fordo facility had been configured in a way "substantially different" to what had been previously declared. The IAEA took samples the following day, which showed particles up to 83.7 per cent purity, the report said.

"Iran informed the agency that 'unintended fluctuations' in enrichment levels may have occurred during the transition period," the IAEA report said. "Discussions between the agency and Iran to clarify the

matter are ongoing."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to questions regarding the report, details of which had been circulating for about a week. The IAEA report said that it would "further increase the frequency and intensity of agency verification activities" at Fordo after the discovery.

A spokesman for Iran's civilian nuclear program, Behrouz Kamalvandi, sought last week to portray any detection of uranium particles enriched to that level as a momentary side effect of trying to reach a finished product of 60 per cent purity.

However, experts say a great variance in the purity even at the atomic level would appear suspicious to inspectors. Iran's 2015 nuclear deal limited Tehran's uranium stockpile to 300 kilograms (661 pounds) and enrichment to 3.67 per cent — enough to fuel a nuclear power plant. The US' unilateral withdrawal from the accord in 2018 set in motion a series of attacks and escalations by Tehran over its programme.

Iran has been producing uranium enriched to 60 per cent purity — a level for which non-proliferation experts already say Tehran has no civilian use.

The IAEA report put Iran's uranium stockpile as of February 12 at some 3,760 kilogram (8,289 pounds) — an increase of 87.1 kilograms (192 pounds) since its last quarterly report in November. Of that, 87.5 kilograms (192 pounds) is enriched up to 60 per cent purity.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To Whomsoever It may concern this is to inform the General Public that following share certificate of M/s. HICKS THERMOMETERS INDIA LTD having its registered office at A-12, 13 & C-26, INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, ALIGARH registered in the name of Sh. Bhagwandas Makhlajani the following Shareholder/s have been listed by them.

Sr. No.	Name of the Shareholder/s	Folio No.	No. of Shares
1.	BHAGWAN DAS MAKHLAJANI	B 056	50

These shares have been lodged for transfer/transmission in the name of Sh. PRAKASH MAKHLAJANI, nephew of Late Sh. Bhagwandas Makhlajani. Any person who has any claim in respect of the said share certificate/s should lodge such claim with The Board of Directors / Secretary, Hicks Thermometers India Ltd. A-12, 13 & C-26, Industrial Estate, Aligarh within 15 days of publication of this notice after which no claim will be entertained and the Company shall proceed to issue Duplicate Share Certificate/s.

Date: 02.03.2023
Place: Delhi
Sd/-
Prakash Makhlajani

OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED

CIN No: L28219HR1989PLC030347
Regd. Office: 17-18, Roz-Ka-Meo Industrial Estate, Tehsil Nuh, District Mewat, Haryana - 122103
Website: www.okplay.in Email: info@okplay.in Tel: +91 124 2362335-36 Fax: +91 124 2362326

NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the members of OK Play India Limited will be held through Video Conferencing ("VC") / Other Audio-Visual means ("OAVM") on Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 12:30 P.M. to transact the Special Business, as set out in the Notice of EGM. The venue of the said meeting shall be deemed to be the Registered Office of the Company at Plot No.17, Roz-ka-Meo Industrial Estate, Tehsil-Nuh, District-Mewat, Haryana-122103.

The EGM is being convened in compliance with the applicable provisions of Companies Act, 2013 and the rules made thereunder read with General Circular No. 14/2020 dated April 8, 2020/General Circular No. 17/ 2020 dated April 13, 2020, General Circular No. 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, General Circular No. 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, General Circular No.39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, General Circular No. 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021, General Circular No. 20/2021 dated December 8, 2021, General Circular No. 3/2022 dated May 5, 2022, and General Circular No. 10/2022 dated December 28, 2022, (collectively "General Circulars") Issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (the MCA) and Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) vide its circular no. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD/1 C/IRP/2020/79 dated May 12, 2020, circular no. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD 2/CI/RP/2021/11 dated January 15, 2021, circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD2/CI/RP/2022/ 62 dated May 13, 2022 and circular no. SEBI/HO/CFD/POD-2/CI/RP/2023/6 dated January 5, 2023, (collectively "SEBI Circulars") have permitted holding of EGM without physical presence of the members at the venue through Video Conferencing (VC) or Other Audio-Visual Means (OAVM).

Members may further note that in pursuance of above stated circulars, the Members can attend and participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM only. Detailed instructions for joining the EGM are provided in the Notice of EGM. The Company has sent the Notice convening EGM on Wednesday, March 01, 2023 through electronic mode to the Members whose email addresses are registered with the Company and/or Depositories in accordance with the Circular issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

As per the SEBI Circulars, no physical copies of the Notice of EGM will be sent to any Member. Members who have not yet registered their email addresses are requested to follow the process mentioned below for registering their email addresses to receive the Notice of the EGM electronically and to receive User ID and password for e-voting:

Physical Holding	Demat Holding
Please send ISRT, SH-13 and ISR-2(if signature not matched with company record to MAS Services Limited T-34 2 nd Floor, Okhla Industrial Are, Phase-II, New Delhi 110020	Please contact your Depository Participant (DP) and register your email address as per the process advised by DP. Please also update your bank detail with your DP for dividend payment by NACH if declared by company.

Members may note that the Notice of the EGM is also available on the Company's website i.e. www.okplay.in, website of the Stock Exchange where the shares of the Company are listed, i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited at www.evoting.nsdl.com in due course of time. The above information is being issued for the information and benefit of all the members of the Company and is in compliance with the MCA Circulars and the SEBI Circulars issued from time to time.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 of the Act and Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended and Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 and Secretarial Standard on General Meeting (SS-2), the Members are provided with the facility to cast their votes on all resolutions as set forth in the Notice convening the EGM using electronic voting system (e-voting) provided by NSDL. The voting rights of Members shall be in proportion to the equity shares held by them in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on Saturday, March 18, 2023 (cut-off date). The remote e-voting period shall be available during the following period:

Commencement of remote e-voting period Wednesday, March 22, 2023 (9:00AM)
Conclusion of remote e-voting period Friday, March 24, 2023 (5:00PM)

During this period, the Members may cast their vote electronically. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by NSDL thereafter. Those Members, who shall be present in the EGM through VC/OAVM facility and had not cast their votes on the Resolutions through remote e-voting and are otherwise not barred from doing so shall be eligible to vote through e-voting system during the EGM.

The Members who have cast their votes by remote e-voting prior to the EGM may also attend/participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM but shall not be entitled to cast their votes again.

Any person, who acquires shares of the Company and become a Member of the Company after the Notice has been sent electronically by the Company and holds shares as on the cut-off date, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request to helpdesk at evoting@nsdl.co.in. However, if he/she is already registered with NSDL for remote e-voting, he/she can use his/her existing User ID and password for casting the votes.

In case of any queries of any queries pertaining to e-voting, members may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQs") and the e-voting manual available at www.evotingindia.nsdl.com, under help section or contact at toll free number 1800 1020 990/1800 224 430. In case of any grievances relating to e-voting, please contact at the designated email ID, evoting@nsdl.co.in. Mr. Puneet Kumar Pandey, Practising Company Secretary has been appointed as the Scrutinizer the remote e-voting process before/during the EGM in a fair and transparent manner.

The details of the EGM are available on the website of the Company at www.okplay.in NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com, BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com.

For OK Play India Limited
Sd/-
Meenu Goswami
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Place : New Delhi
Date : 01-03-2023

Mkt comeback: Investors richer by ₹3.2 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth climbed ₹3.20 lakh crore as markets staged a smart comeback on Wednesday after falling in the last eight trading sessions.

The BSE Sensex rallied 448.96 points or 0.76 per cent to settle at 59,411.08. During the day, it jumped 513.33 points or 0.87 per cent to 59,475.45. In the past eight days, the BSE benchmark tumbled 2,357.39 points or 3.84 per cent.

The bounce back in the equity market added ₹3,20,574.19 crore taking the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms to ₹260 lakh crore (₹2,60,93,075.59 crore) at the end of trade.

"Markets witnessed a relief rally after 8 sessions of losses, as broad-based buying on the back of short-covering and uptick in European and select Asian indices aided the sentiment. The recovery was expected as the market had witnessed relentless selling over



the past week or so due to weak global cues and slowdown concerns," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said. From the Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki, Tata Steel and Tata Motors were the major gainers. Power Grid and HDFC Bank were the laggards from the pack.

In Asian markets, Japan, China and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. Equity exchanges in Europe were trading in the green. The US mar-

kets ended lower on Tuesday.

"The Indian market was oversold and needed encouraging domestic triggers to show signs of revival. The manufacturing PMI reported was better than predicted at 55.3, even though India's Q3 FY23 GDP statistics came in slightly below expectations at 4.4%. Solid global markets, bolstered by strong Chinese manufacturing data, also ignited optimism in the domestic market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader equity market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.38 per cent and midcap index advanced 1.35 per cent.

All the sectoral indices ended higher, with metal rallying 2.61 per cent, commodities jumping 2.30 per cent, IT (1.36 per cent), tech (1.28 per cent), industrials (1.25 per cent), bankex (1.15 per cent) and capital goods (1.11 per cent).

Pay heed to sustainability: Piyush Goyal to biz leaders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday urged business leaders to focus on sustainability and ensure all their actions respect nature.

He said that India is committed to ensuring that sustainability and inclusive growth are going to be the defining features of its growth story.

"I urge all business leaders to focus on sustainability and ensure all our actions respect nature," he said while addressing the CII's India Europe Business and Sustainability Conclave.

The minister said that India's partnership with the UK and the European Union are two significant elements in the global effort to make the world a better place to live in.

"Technology and finance are going to play an important role in a sustainable lifestyle. I urge the world leaders to recognise that we all have to con-



tribute our fair share to energy efficiency to make the world a better place to live in," Goyal said. He added that developed and developing countries need to have different goals and timelines.

"We need to be sensitive to each other's needs, potential goals and roadmap towards sustainability. India is among the top five performers when it comes to benchmarking our work towards the NDCs (Nationally determined contributions)," he added.

Speaking at the event, James Cleverly MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and

Development Affairs, UK, said that the free trade agreement (FTA), being negotiated between the two countries, would help in further enhancing economic ties.

There is an aim to double the bilateral trade by 2030 and both countries are moving in that direction.

Representatives of the business world have told that they want to see an agreement which reduces unnecessary trade barriers, that help customers and businesses to get access, he added.

"We want to help Indian exporters gain access to UK markets," Cleverly said adding UK businesses see huge investment opportunities in India.

"FTA can and must deliver practical and real benefits for businesses ...In both our countries," he said.

The agreement, he said, will also send a strong signal to the whole world that the two countries are committed to building a strong partnership.

GST collection rises 12% to ₹1.49 lakh crore in February on buoyant economic activities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections rose 12 per cent to more than ₹1.49 lakh crore in February as domestic economic activities and consumer spending on high-end goods gained momentum.

However, the collections are lower than January mop up of ₹1.58 lakh crore, which was also the second highest monthly revenue figure since the rollout of GST on July 1, 2017.

"₹1,49,577 crore gross GST revenue collected in February 2023; 12 per cent higher than GST revenue in same month last year," the finance ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

Generally, February being a 28-day month, witnesses a relatively lower collection of GST revenue, the ministry said.

During the month, revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) were 15 per cent higher



while revenues from import of goods was 6 per cent higher compared to the same month last year.

KPMG in India Partner, Indirect Tax, Abhishek Jain said this indicates a growing self reliance within the domestic market and is a positive sign for the Indian economy.

As per the ministry data, out of the gross GST revenue, Central GST was ₹27,662 crore, State GST was ₹34,915 crore, Integrated GST was ₹75,069 crore (including ₹35,689 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess was ₹11,931 crore (including ₹792 crore collected on import of goods).

The Cess collection of Rs 11,931 crore was the highest since implementation of GST.

Coal India production rises 14% during April-Feb this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL produced ₹619.7 million tonnes (MT) in the April-February period of the current fiscal, registering a year-on-year growth of 14.3 per cent. The maharatna firm had produced 542 MT of coal in the year-ago period.

"This is a 100 per cent achievement against progressive target. With a quantum gain of 77.3 MT CIL is well on its way to breach the production target of 700 MT of FY'23," Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement.

All the subsidiaries of the coal behemoth have logged growth over previous year.

The Dhanbad-based Bharat Coking Coal Ltd has already wrapped up its annual production target of 32 MT on 27 February.

On progressive basis, CIL has consistently maintained a high double-digit production



growth since the beginning of the fiscal.

CIL began its 700 MT target chase with an asking growth rate of 12.4 per cent.

"The company is aiming to augment the growth further in March'23 and any increase would have supplementary influence over the target," a senior official of the company said.

Despite being a shorter month, CIL's output last month stood at 68.8 MT, the highest for the month in any year till now. This represents a growth of seven per cent compared to February last year.

Sebi bans Anugrah Stock, 5 others from securities market for up to 7 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred Anugrah Stock & Broking and five other entities from the securities market for up to seven years in a case pertaining to providing unregulated portfolio management services (PMS).

The others banned by the regulator are the brokerage house's directors — Paresch Mulji Kariya and Sadhana Paresch Kariya — Teji Mandi Analytics, its director Anil Gopal Gandhi and Om Sri Sai Investments, an associate entity of Anugrah Stock, as per its order.

In addition, Sebi has levied a penalty totalling ₹8 crore on Anugrah Stock, its directors and the associate entity and the fine needs to be paid within 45 days.

These four entities were engaged in providing Derivative Advisor Services (DAS) which was in the nature of portfolio management services (PMS) while promising



assured returns to the prospective clients. These activities were being carried out without seeking requisite registration under the PMS rules, Sebi said in its 60-page order on Tuesday.

While indulging in such activities, they committed series of violations including stock brokers norm, PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules and PMS rules, it added.

Also, these four entities have been prohibited from the securities market for seven years, while two entities — Teji Mandi Analytics and its director Anil Gopal Gandhi — have been restrained from the securities market for a period of five years.

NSE gets Sebi nod to launch WTI crude oil, natural gas futures contracts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange on Wednesday said it has received approval from markets regulator Sebi to launch the rupee-denominated NYMEX WTI crude oil and natural gas futures contracts in its commodity derivatives segment.

The launch date for these contracts will be announced soon, NSE said in a release.

Last month, the exchange signed a data licensing agreement with CME Group. The pact allows the bourse to list, trade and settle rupee-denominated NYMEX WTI crude oil and natural gas derivatives contracts on its platform.

The addition of these contracts will expand NSE's product offering in the energy basket as well as its overall commodity segment. These contracts are designed to provide the market participants with a more efficient way to manage their price risk, the release said.

Rupee gains 8 paise to close at 82.50 against US dollar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The rupee appreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as a positive trend in domestic equities and easing crude oil prices supported investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.48 against the American currency and finally settled at 82.50 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 8 paise over its previous close of 82.58.

During the trading session, the rupee touched a high of 82.36 and a low of 82.61 against the dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.39 per cent to 104.45.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures declined 0.41 per cent to USD 83.11 per barrel.

Rupee traded strong as the



dollar faced hurdles near 105 along. Moreover, weakness in crude oil prices also supported the local unit, with WTI taking resistance at \$77 per barrel, said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities.

"Major strength was seen from the positive trend in capital markets, which led to gains for the rupee.

"US PMI data later in the evening can give further cues to dollars and other currencies," Trivedi said.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 448.96 points or 0.76 per cent to end at 59,411.08, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 146.95 points or 0.85 per cent to 17,450.90.

Gold jumps ₹475; silver falls ₹1,225

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped by ₹475 to ₹55,955 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at ₹55,480 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, plummeted by ₹1,225 to ₹63,825 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹55,955 per 10 grams, up ₹475 per 10 grams," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities. In the overseas market, gold was trading higher at \$1,833 per ounce while silver was marginally up at \$21.04 per ounce.

"COMEX gold strengthened above \$1,830 per ounce in the Asian trading hours on Wednesday, as the dollar eased from recent highs," Sriram Iyer, Senior research analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

Axis Bank completes Citi India's retail biz buy, pays ₹11,603 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI | MUMBAI

Axis Bank on Wednesday said it has completed the acquisition of Citibank's retail business in India for a final cash consideration of ₹11,603 crore.

The sale excludes Citibank's institutional client businesses in India. The third-largest private sector bank said the acquisition, announced first in March last year, will not necessitate any new capital requirements and stressed that the attrition numbers on customers are much better than expected.

A total of 2.4 million Citi customers in the country have consented to bank with Axis Bank after the deal as against 3 million at the time of announcing the deal, managing director and chief executive Amitabh Chaudhry told



reporters in Mumbai.

He said 96 per cent or 3,200 of the Citi employees have joined the bank now.

The core capital buffer will go down by 1.70 per cent from the 15.55 per cent reported in December, Chaudhry said, committing to fund and grow the business.

The entire integration will happen over the next 18 months, Chaudhry said, adding that there will be a hit of Rs 1,500 crore to be taken as implementation costs which will be amortised as the costs are incurred.

Chaudhry said the bank account details, cheque books, product benefits and privileges, debit card details will be the same for the Citi customers who are joining as Axis Bank customers.

Axis Bank is the fourth-largest issuer of credit cards with a total base of 8.6 million cards and the deal will add about 2.5 million credit cardholders, making it one of the top three cards businesses in the country.

Last year, Axis Bank agreed to purchase Citibank's India Consumer Business from Citibank NA (acting through its branch in India) and the NBFC Consumer Business from Citicorp Finance (India) Limited (CFIL), as going concerns, without values being assigned to individual assets and liabilities to either business.

All listed Adani Group firms gain; Adani Enterprises shares jump 15%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stocks of all the ten listed Adani Group firms ended with gains on Wednesday, continuing the positive momentum amid a recovery in the broader equity market.

Adani Enterprises stock jumped 14.70 per cent to settle at ₹1,564.55 on the BSE. In intra-day trade, it rallied 15.83 per cent to ₹1,580.

In two days, the company's stock has climbed 31 per cent. The market valuation of Adani Enterprises has jumped ₹42,219.95 crore in two days.

Adani Transmission advanced 5 per cent, Adani Green Energy rose 4.99 per cent, Adani Wilmar gained 4.99 per cent, NDTV rallied 4.99 per cent and Adani Power climbed 4.98 per cent.

Domestic aviation sector expected to fly back into profitability next fiscal: Crisil

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic airlines industry is expected to fly back into profitability next fiscal, for the first time since the outbreak of Covid, amid easing cost pressures and reduction in leverage to support credit profiles, a report said on Wednesday.

As per the report by credit rating agency Crisil, the industry is also likely to pare its net loss by as much as 75-80 per cent year-on-year to ₹3,500-4,500 crore this fiscal, compared with around ₹17,500 crore last fiscal.

Strong recovery in passenger traffic and easing cost pressures are supporting this turnaround in operating performance of airlines, Crisil said.

The projections are based



on Crisil Ratings analysis of three airlines that account for around 75 per cent of domestic air traffic.

Domestic and international passenger traffic recovered to 90 per cent and 98 per cent, respectively, in the nine months through December this fiscal, compared with the corresponding period of fiscal 2020 (pre-pandemic).

Business and leisure travel rebounded strongly even as international scheduled services resumed, it said and added that the festival season has accelerated recovery in the second half.

India will be cheapest 5G market: Bill Gates

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates on Wednesday said India has "great" digital network and high levels of smartphone usage with "very good" connectivity and added this will be the cheapest 5G market.

Under the G20 presidency of India, a session on 'Building resilient and inclusive economies- the Promise of Digital Public Infrastructure' was held on Wednesday in New Delhi.

Microsoft co-founder Gates, who addressed the session, appreciated India's competitive private market, reliable



and low-cost connectivity, and went on to say this will be the cheapest 5G market.

India has great digital network and very high percentage of people using smartphones, he noted.

IGIA T2, T3 gates to be DigiYatra-enabled: DIAL

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi International Airport Limited, a GMR Airport Infrastructure Limited-led consortium that operates and manages Delhi's IGI Airport, on Wednesday announced that all entry and boarding gates of Terminal 2 and 3 of the Airport will become DigiYatra-enabled by the end of March 2023. Following the installation, around 40% of all daily domestic travellers will be able to get seamless access to the airport terminals right up to boarding, officials said.

DigiYatra is a digital platform for air travellers in India that makes the process of air

travel more convenient and efficient for passengers by using facial recognition technology.

Videh Kumar Jaipuria, CEO DIAL, said, "Since the launch of DigiYatra, it has significantly reduced the time of passengers for entry into terminals, security check areas, and boarding gates. We are also encouraged to see the gradual growth in passenger numbers using DigiYatra. At present, around 2,500 passengers are using DigiYatra every day and we aim to ensure that more and more passengers are using it."

Delhi is witnessing a gradual increase in DigiYatra users since its launch on December 1, 2022, by Minister of Civil

Aviation, Sri Jyotiraditya Scindia. At present, around 2,500 passengers are using DigiYatra at Delhi Airport's Terminal 3 every day.

All they have to do before coming to the airport is to register their face on the DigiYatra app and validate the same with the Aadhaar repository from the comfort of their home. Upload travel barcodes and share them with the airport. This will save them from getting into a queue for entry into the terminal for security checks.

The credentials shared by passengers on the DigiYatra app remain on their mobile phones.

TVS Motor records 1.97% dip in sales in February

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Two- and three-wheeler maker TVS Motor witnessed a 1.97 per cent decline in sales in February with sales of 2,76,150 units, the company said on Wednesday. The city-headquartered company had sold 2,81,714 units during the corresponding month of last year. Total two-wheeler sales in February 2023 marginally fell to 2,67,026 units from 2,67,625 units recorded in the same month of last year.

Two-wheeler sales in the domestic market grew by 28 per cent to 2,21,402 units from 1,73,198 units sold in February



2022. Sales of motorcycles dropped to 1,26,243 units in February 2023 as compared to 1,43,523 units recorded in the same month of last year.

Scooter sales witnessed a 21 per cent jump by registering 1,04,825 units in February 2023 from 86,616 units sold in February 2022, the company said. On its electric vehicle business, TVS Motor said it recorded its highest ever sales of 15,522 units in February

2023 breaching the 15,000-mark as compared to 2,238 units sold in the corresponding month of last year.

TVS iQube electric scooters have been receiving a heartening response from customers. It is now available in more than 100 cities across 200 touch points, selling more than 10,000 units for the fourth consecutive month with a strong order pipeline, the company said.

On exports, the city-based firm said the total sales under international business in February stood at 53,405 units as against 1,07,574 units sold in February 2022.

Foden stars as Man City advances in FA Cup

AP ■ LONDON

Phil Foden was in danger of becoming one of the forgotten players at Manchester City this season.

Maybe not anymore. The England winger is over his injury problems and back in favor with City manager Pep Guardiola — and is repaying the faith with goals as the English champions head into the final stretch of the season on the hunt for more trophies.

Foden scored in each half in City's 3-0 win at second-tier Bristol City in the FA Cup on Tuesday, helping the team secure a place in the quarterfinals.

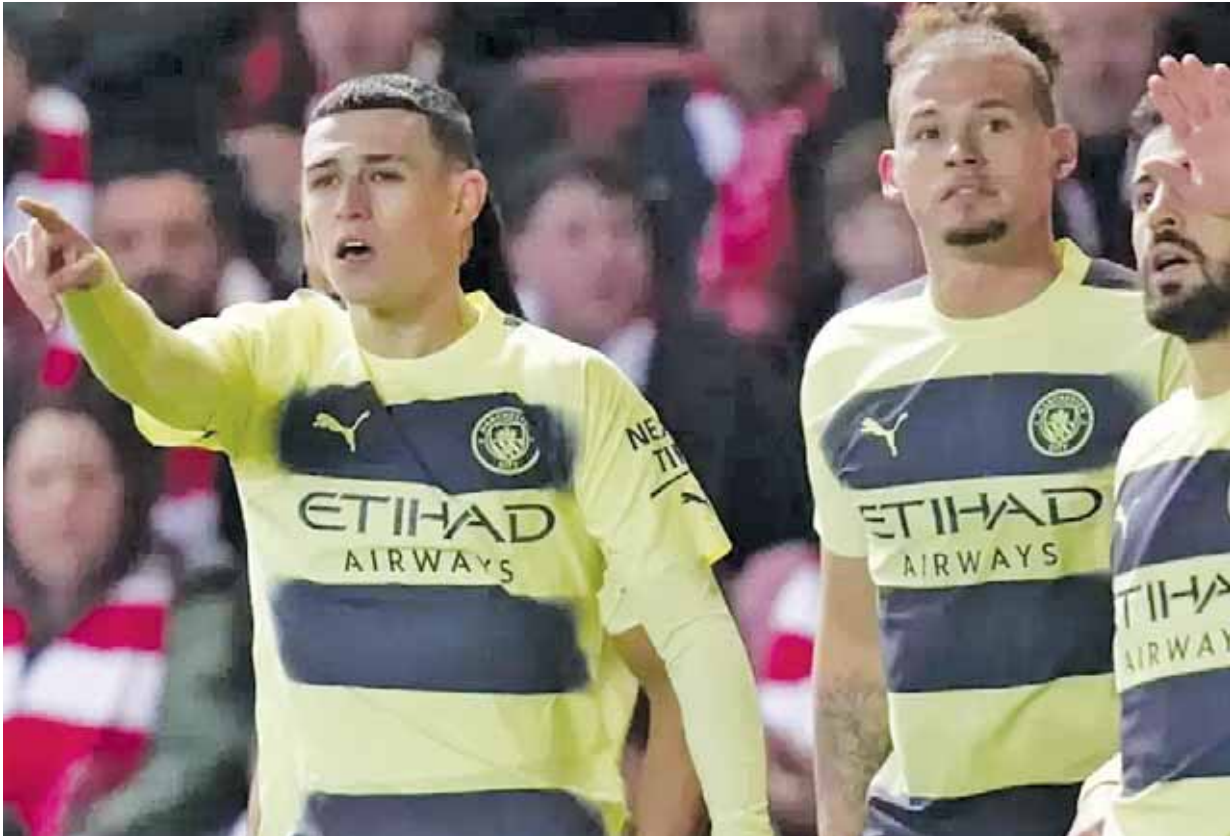
Kevin De Bruyne netted the other goal at Ashton Gate as City stayed on course in a competition it last won in 2019.

Foden lost his place as a regular starter at City just before the World Cup and after returning from the Qatar tournament has been overshadowed by fellow wingers Jack Grealish and Riyad Mahrez.

Now Guardiola has an embarrassment of riches in the wide positions with Foden over some foot injuries and shining again. He scored against Bournemouth on Saturday and was probably City's best player against Bristol City on a night star striker Erling Haaland was rested.

"This season he struggled a bit and was a bit down," Guardiola said of Foden. "But now he's back for the best bit of the season. His impact has been amazing. Football pays off when you work like he does."

Foden converted a cross from Mahrez in the seventh



minute to give City the lead and then provided the side-footed finish — via a deflection from a covering home defender — to make it 2-0 in the 74th.

"I feel 100% fit now and comfortable," Foden said.

"(It has) been one of the worst parts of my career but everyone goes through them and it is how you react."

De Bruyne curled in City's best goal of the game in the 81st from outside the area.

City has reached at least the

semifinals in five of the last six seasons.

LEICESTER STUNNED

There will be at least one non-Premier League team in the last eight of the FA Cup.

Blackburn, which plays in the second-tier Championship, provided the shock of the evening by winning 2-1 at Leicester, the 2021 champion.

Tyrhys Dolan capitalised on a sloppy pass out from the back by Daniel Amartey to

open the scoring for Blackburn before Sammie Szmodics dribbled through the soft center of Leicester's defense before poking in a finish shortly after half-time. Kelechi Iheanacho scored his customary FA Cup goal — it's now 18 in his last 24 appearances in the competition, more than any other player in that time — but Leicester couldn't grab an equalizer.

Leicester can now focus all its attention on staying in the Premier League. The team is

only three points above the relegation zone.

FULHAM'S SENSATION

Manor Solomon scored for a fourth straight game to help Fulham beat Leeds 2-0 and continue its excellent season, in which the London club is also impressing in sixth place in the Premier League.

Solomon is an Israel winger who joined on loan from Shakhtar Donetsk in the offseason but missed almost the entire

first half of the season because of injury.

Now that he is healthy, he has been starting off the bench — his previous three goals came as a substitute — but was handed a start against Leeds and scored again after playing a one-two with Aleksandar Mitrovic and curling into the far corner. Joao Palhinha's opening goal was even better, the Portugal midfielder intercepting a pass out from the back by Tyler Adams and bending in a shot off the post from 30 meters.

In the second half, there were five U.S. Internationals on the field at Craven Cottage — Tim Ream and Antonee Robinson for Fulham and Weston McKennie, Brenden Aaronson and Adams for Leeds.

Fulham reached the last eight for the first time in 13 years.

BRIGHTON ADVANCES

Brighton advanced to the quarterfinals for the fifth time in its history and the first time since the 2018-19 season, when the team lost to Man City in the semifinals.

A 30th-minute goal from Evan Ferguson, who tapped in from Kaoru Mitoma's square ball, earned a 1-0 win at second-tier Stoke.

DRAW FOR QUARTERFINALS

The draw for the quarterfinals takes place Wednesday after the remaining last-16 matches are completed. Those games include Manchester United hosting West Ham and Tottenham visiting second-tier Sheffield United.



Djokovic holds on in Dubai, extends winning streak to 18

AP ■ DUBAI

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic held on to beat Czech qualifier Tomas Machac 6-3 3-6 7-6 (1) at the Dubai Championships in his first match since winning his 10th Australian Open title.

Djokovic's first-round victory on Tuesday came a day after the 35-year-old Serb broke the record for the most time spent at No. 1 in the professional tennis rankings by a man or woman.

Djokovic was a bit rusty on his return from a few weeks off after overcoming a hamstring problem in Australia to win his record-equaling 22nd Grand Slam singles title. He led 4-1 in the third set Tuesday before the 130th-ranked Machac forced a tiebreaker.

"He was giving me all kinds of trouble, but I guess when it mattered I found another gear," Djokovic said in his on-court interview.

"I haven't played much ten-

nis (recently), so I'm hoping as the tournament progresses I can raise the level."

Djokovic, who next faces Tallon Griekspoor, is 13-0 this season and extended his overall winning streak to 18 matches.

A presentation was held after Tuesday's match to recognize Djokovic's 378th week in the ATP's top spot, surpassing Steffi Graf's 377 leading the WTA.

"As a young boy growing up in Serbia, I dreamt of two things — winning Wimbledon and being No. 1 in the world. I've been blessed to achieve both of my childhood dreams, several times," he said.

Also on Tuesday, third-seeded Daniil Medvedev beat Matteo Arnaldi 6-4 6-2 to extend his winning streak to 10 matches. Fourth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime defeated Maxime Cressy 7-6(4) 3-6 6-3 and Botic van de Zandschulp beat sixth-seeded Karen Khachanov 7-5 6-2.

Triple-jumper Aishwarya gets four-year ban; has 21 days to appeal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top triple-jumper Aishwarya Babu has been banned by the National Anti-Doping Agency's (NADA) disciplinary panel for four years for using a prohibited anabolic steroid.

The 25-year-athlete was dropped from the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022, along with sprinter S Dhanalakshmi after testing positive for the steroid, which is on the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) prohibited list.

Aishwarya has time till March 6 to file an appeal against the ban after receiving the ban notice from NADA's Appeal Panel on February 13.

The athlete, who had tested positive for Ostarine — a drug that falls in the category of selective androgen receptor modulator (SRAM) — was tested during the National Inter-State Championships on June 13 and 14, last year in Chennai.

Aishwarya had won the triple jump gold in the championships with a national record-breaking lunge of 14.14 metres.

Having been provisionally suspended in July last year, Aishwarya has already served six months of her four-year ban.

NADA said the substance Aishwarya used was an "anabolic steroid" listed under WADA's 2022 prohibited. It added that the athlete had not taken a therapeutic use exemption (TUE) for it.

Aishwarya had said in her submission that she "did not take any prohibited substance in order to enhance" her performance.



The athlete added that she had suffered an injury in the past when her shoulder had dislocated while lifting weights in the gym in February 2021.

She took treatment and recovered from this injury.

Aishwarya added that in the run-up to the National Inter-state Championships, she pushed herself too much, which led her to the "painful discomfort on the same place (shoulder)".

Fearing her injury might resurface if she "continues her training with same vigour", she discussed this issue with her colleague, Jagdish, who is also an athlete. Jagdish suggested her to take Ostarine tablet claiming that it is completely safe and would help her get rid of the pain and heal the muscle.

NADA's disciplinary panel questioned why Aishwarya did not approach a hospital or a registered medical practitioner for treatment, adding that the athlete "totally disregarded the rule and took Ostarine tablets on advice of her colleague."

FIFA faces questions for supermodel role before Women's WCup

AP ■ GENEVA

FIFA's choice of Brazilian supermodel Adriana Lima as its first global fan ambassador five months before the Women's World Cup was described as "tone deaf" by the former leader of the soccer body's task force for women's soccer.

Lima's appointment to "develop, promote and participate in several global initiatives" was announced by FIFA on Monday hours before the former Victoria's Secret runway model helped present the fan prize in Paris at its annual award ceremony.

"Seriously, FIFA, is this the fan engagement ambassador we need as the (Women's World Cup) approaches?" wrote Moya Dodd, who was part of the co-hosting bid campaign for her native Australia and New Zealand, on her Twitter account.

Dodd, a former FIFA executive committee member and longtime advocate for women's soccer, used the hashtag "tonedeaf" and posted the glamor photo from the profile of Lima's Twitter account that has 2.4 million followers.

A former Australia national-team player, Dodd also recalled recent speculation FIFA could sign the Saudi Arabia tourism board as an official sponsor of the month-long tournament that starts July 20.

"Honestly baffled by the marketing strategy. First FIFA wants to send an LGBTQ-friendly audience to Visit Saudi," Dodd wrote.

"Now it's targeting who exactly?"

Lima was photographed Monday in Paris at the FIFA gala event with its president Gianni Infantino and posted on Twitter her new role "means the world to me."



She also posted to her 15.4 million followers on Instagram: "It is a great honor to be part of the FIFA Family."

"As a fan myself, I hope to connect at a greater level this family to the life of this beautiful sport: the fans!" she wrote.

Teenaged Fruhvirtova, top Indian players in action at ITF Women's Open

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The 15-year-old Brenda Fruhvirtova, who qualified for the Australian Open main draw and is the youngest player in the top-250, will be the star attraction along with home favourites Ankita Raina and Karman Kaur Thandi when the ITF Women's Open begins here on March 6.

Fruhvirtova had become the fifth-youngest qualifier in the Australian Open history. The Czech player is the younger sister of world number 54 Linda.

Raina (ranked 241) and Thandi (ranked 267) will lead the Indian challenge at the KSLTA Stadium.

"It was a great time for tennis fans during the (ATP) Bengaluru Open and we are ready to bring another week full of exciting tennis action with KPB Trust ITF Women's Open. This



underlines the status of Bengaluru and KSLTA as one of the premier tennis destinations in the country," said KSLTA secretary Maheshwar Rao.

Former world No. 30 Misaki Doi of Japan, France's Amandine Hesse and Valentini Grammatikopoulou of Greece are among the other international

players participating in the event.

The main draw will begin from March 7 while the qualifying matches will be played on March 5 and 6.

CONCACAF to start 2026 World Cup qualifying in March 2024

AP ■ MIAMI

Thirty-two Central American and Caribbean nations will start qualifying matches for the 2026 World Cup in March 2024 as part of a competition in which teams will play up to 12 matches to reach the tournament.

The United States, Mexico and Canada receive automatic berths as co-hosts of the World Cup, to be played in June and July 2026. The number of possible matches was reduced from the 20 Canada played to reach last year's tournament in Qatar.

The Confederation of North and Central American and Caribbean Association Football said Tuesday that qualifying will start with a first round in March 2024 involving the four lowest teams in the FIFA rankings as of November 2023, who

will play a home-and-home series in which the highest-ranked team meets the lowest-ranked.

If current rankings were used, No. 206 Turks and Caicos Islands would play No. 210 Anguilla, and No. 208 U.S. Virgin Islands would play No. 209 British Virgin Islands.

CONCACAF's remaining 28 teams in qualifying will join in a second round to be played in June 2024 and June 2025. There will be six groups of five teams in a single round-robin, with each nation hosting two matches.

Costa Rica, Panama, Jamaica, El Salvador and Honduras appear likely to be the highest-ranked teams in qualifying.

First- and second-place teams in each group advance to a 12-nation final round that includes three groups of four



teams. A double round-robin will be played in autumn 2025, and each group winner will qualify for the first 48-nation World Cup.

CONCACAF also said the four quarterfinal winners from CONCACAF Nations League A this November will qualify for next year's Copa América, the

South American championship that was moved from Ecuador to the United States. The four quarterfinal losers will participate in a Copa América play-in in March 2024, to be held at a central site, and the two winners also will qualify for the 16-nation tournament, which includes 10 teams from South America.

Nations League A will be expanded to 16 teams from 12 for the 2023-24 tournament. The group stage will be played this September, October and November, with a new quarterfinal round added in a home-and-home format in November.

The 12 lowest-ranked teams will be in a pair of six-team groups that has each team play four games, and the top two nations in each group will advance to the quarterfinals along with the four highest-ranked teams as of March 2023,

who have automatic berths. The highest-ranked teams are likely to be the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica and Canada.

Quarterfinal winners advance to the final round, to be played in March 2024.

League B will remain four groups of four and League C three groups of three. There will be promotion of the four League B group winners from the 2022-23 Nations League but no relegation, and League C group winners will be promoted to Group B.

After the 2023-24 tournament, the fifth- and six-place teams in League A will be relegated, the four League B group winners will be promoted, the four League B last-place teams will be relegated and the three League C group winners will be promoted along with the top second-place nation.



Just Fontaine, who scored 13 goals at 1958 World Cup, dies

AP ■ PARIS

Just Fontaine, the French soccer great who scored a record 13 goals at the 1958 World Cup, has died. He was 89.

Fontaine's former club Reims announced his death on Wednesday.

Fontaine took six games to achieve his feat at the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, when he was a last-minute inclusion on the French squad.

Entering the tournament, the Moroccan-born Fontaine was a little-known forward outside of the French league. Yet he tormented opponents with his speed and finishing touch — and even with someone else's boots. He had to borrow a pair of cleats after damaging his own boots in practice.

Fontaine scored four goals in the third-place game against West Germany, but could have had five if he had taken the penalty kick.

The highest scorer at the World Cup is now acknowledged with the Golden Boot. Fontaine set the record when FIFA did not present a specific award for the tournament's top scorer.

"Beating my record? I don't think it can ever be done," Fontaine told The Associated Press in a 2006 interview.

"The person who wants to beat me has a massive task, doesn't he? He has to score two goals per game over seven games."

Playing in the days when no substitutions were allowed, France lost 5-2 in the semifinals against a Brazil team featuring 17-year-old Pele.

Fontaine, who scored in every match, gave France an early lead with the first goal Brazil allowed in the tournament. But at 1-1, France defender Robert Jonquet broke his leg. Amazingly, he played on, trying to contend with the genius of Pele, but the French defense was considerably weakened.

The record for most goals scored in a World Cup career is 16 by Germany striker Miroslav Klose, who played in four tournaments. Fontaine, who broke the record of 11 goals Hungary striker Sándor Kocsis scored at the 1954 tournament, only played at one World Cup.

Fontaine's meteoric rise as a scorer saw him get 200 goals in 213 games. He scored 30 goals in 21 games for France.

Fontaine's career was dramatically cut short when he was only 28. The Frenchman — renowned for his lightning pace and ruthless finishing — suffered a horrendous leg fracture after a mistimed tackle in March 1960.

Australia take firm control of third Test after day one

PTI ■ INDORE

Indian batters' longstanding struggles against spin were thoroughly exposed before Australia applied themselves on a rank turner to take control of the third Test on a frenetic opening day of the match here on Wednesday.

Left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann (5/16) picked up his maiden five-wicket haul as Australia skittled India out for a paltry 109 shortly after lunch on day one. Virat Kohli top-scored for India with 22 off 52 balls.

Trailing 0-2 in the series, Australia came out with a strong resolve and purpose to end the day at 156 for four, taking a 47-run lead.

Ravindra Jadeja (4/63) took all four wickets for India including that of stand-in captain Steve Smith (26 off 38) before close of play. Usman Khawaja (60 off 147) was the standout performer for Australia as he tackled the skill-full Jadeja and R Ashwin with a straight bat and soft hands.

Marnus Labuschagne (31 off 91 balls), who was bowled off a no ball early in his innings, rode on his luck to share a 96-run stand with Khawaja, the highest partnership of the series for the visitors.

Though the usually accurate Indian spinners were not relentless with their lines and lengths, Khawaja and Labuschagne rectified the "sweeping" mistakes they made in Delhi by playing straight and trusting their defense.

When India were batting, the pitch seemed unplayable but Khawaja and Co. Showed the way to the home team.

Khawaja's gritty knock also had a couple of drives on the off-side. He was also not shy of playing the reverse sweep but mostly played straight.

The southpaw hardly put a foot wrong in his crafty knock but when he did, he had to pay for it. In the 43rd over of the innings, Khawaja went for the sweep from around the off-stump off Jadeja and ended up giving a catch at deep midwick-et.

Like Nagpur and Delhi, the game is set for another three-day finish and a 100-run lead on this surface will be worth gold.

India were also guilty of bowling four no-balls.

Earlier, having lost seven of the batters by the end of the opening session, India could add only 25 more runs to their total with Kuhnemann ending with career-best figures in first-class cricket.



Rathour: The pitch offered more turn than expected

PTI ■ INDORE

The Indian team didn't factor in excessive turn on offer as it was a bad day in office despite playing spin being one of its strengths, batting coach Vikram Rathour claimed on Wednesday.

India were all-out for 109 on the opening day of the third Test, in a little over one session with Australia left-arm spinner Matt Kuhnemann picking 5 for 16 in his only second Test.

On the same pitch, visitors managed to reach 156 for four at stumps and go into day two with a valuable 47-run lead.

The ball turning square in the first hour of play, attracted a lot of attention with many criticising the nature of the surface.

However, Rathour maintained that playing on turners at home remains the team's strength.

"It is a challenging wicket for sure. More turn than what we expected. May be because of the moisture, the ball turned sharply in the morning. We could have made more runs for sure but I don't think anyone played poor or rash cricket. We just had an off day as a batting unit," Rathour said in a media interaction.

When asked about the risk of playing on turners, Rathour said they could be at the receiving end at times but remains the team's strength.

"Of course you can get out as a batting unit at times but we do prefer to play on turning tracks. That is our strength, that is where we are really good as a unit. To be fair this is a one off wicket.

"I don't think the earlier two wickets were bad wickets. It is may be drier than we expected and we saw that. It did a lot more on first day of the Test match than what we expected.



"To be fair to curators. They hardly got time to prepare the wicket. They had a Ranji season here and it is pretty late it that was decide the game will be shifted from Dharamsala. They did not get enough time," said the former India opener.

Rathour felt that wicket might have eased as the day progressed. Usman Khawaja was the stand out batter for Australia with a gritty 60 off 147 balls.

"It felt like that (that wicket eased out). I won't be able to comment on that. The guys playing the middle can tell you that better. It felt like it had gone slower later in the day. It wasn't turning as sharply as it was in the morning."

Asked, if the batters did deviate from their plans, Rathour replied in negative.

"Not really. The plan was to trust your defense and wait for the loose balls and score as many as runs you can. It was one of those days when everything

you did went into the hands (of fielders). Basically we just had an off day," he said.

Australia were guilty of playing uber-aggressive cricket in the Delhi Test. On Wednesday, the likes of Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer and Ravindra Jadeja fell while going for their strokes.

Cheteshwar Pujara tried to score off a ripper than turned back sharply from wide of off-stump.

"That was misjudgement in the length. He (Pujara) saw a ball which was outside off stump and expected it to come straighter but it turned. It was a misjudgement which can happen. On Rohit, this is how he bats , he likes to take the game on and score runs. Most days it comes off, today it didn't," said the batting coach.

"Since WTC has started, there is extra pressure to win home games"

Rathour said since the WTC began in 2019, teams feel additional pressure of winning at home because of the points system that decides qualification for summit clash.

"It is completely ICC's call (if they want neutral curators). But yeah since the WTC has started there is more pressure to win more home games. Teams want to win games when they are playing at home."

India batters have often been found wanting on turners but Rathour disagreed.

"I don't believe so. These are challenging wickets. We as a team we want to play on turning tracks. You need to bat really well to score runs. The batters have done well (in the series). Virat was exceptionally good in the last game, today also he was looking good. Rohit has played a good innings, as well as Jadeja and Axar."

Ashwin replaces Anderson as No.1 ranked Test bowler

PTI ■ DUBAI

Veteran Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Wednesday jumped to the top of the latest ICC Men's Test Bowling Rankings, replacing England pacer James Anderson.

Ashwin gained two places after taking six wickets in India's emphatic victory over Australia in the second Test in New Delhi.

Anderson dropped to second place after England's stunning loss to New Zealand in the Wellington Test.

The 36-year-old Ashwin first claimed the top honour among Test bowlers in 2015, and has returned to the top spot on several occasions since then. Ashwin bagged big wickets in India's win in Delhi, removing

Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith in the same over of the first innings before returning to pick up Alex Carey for a duck.

The off-spinner was at it again in the second innings, picking up three of the top five while his spin-bowling accomplice Ravindra Jadeja rattled through the rest of the Australia batters from the other end.

Ashwin has an opportunity to extend his latest stay in the No.1 spot in India's remaining two Tests on home soil in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy

Ashwin is the third No.1 Test bowler in as many weeks, after Anderson replaced Australia captain Pat Cummins at the summit last time around. The trio continue to make up the top



three bowlers in the latest rankings.

Anderson is now five rating points behind Ashwin, who remains on 864 points.

Jadeja's 10 wickets in the second Test against Australia also sees him move up the

Harmanpreet to be Mumbai Indians' skipper in inaugural edition of WPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was on Wednesday officially announced as the captain of the Mumbai Indians (MI) team ahead of the inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL) starting here on Saturday.

Harmanpreet, who recently became the first female player ever to complete 150 T20 Internationals during the ICC T20 World Cup 2023 in South Africa, was bought for Rs 1.8 crore by Mumbai Indians at the auction last month.

WPL will be held this month in Mumbai across two venues — DY Patil Stadium and Brabourne Stadium.

"We are thrilled to have Harmanpreet as the captain of Mumbai Indians' first-ever women's cricket team," said team's owner Nita Ambani in a



media release on Wednesday.

"As the national captain, she has led the Indian Women's team to some of their most exciting wins. With Charlotte and Jhulan's support, she (Harmanpreet) will inspire our MI women's team to play their best cricket, display a sense of pride, and bring even more glory to women in sports."

Mumbai Indians will be coached by former England captain Charlotte Edwards and

the legendary Indian fast bowler Jhulan Goswami will be the team's bowling coach and mentor. Former India player Devika Palshikar will be the batting coach, while England's Lydia Greenway will be the fielding coach.

Harmanpreet led India to the semifinals of the recently-concluded T20 World Cup, where the team crashed out after a heartbreaking loss to eventual winners Australia but not before some heroics from the India captain.

Despite suffering from a bout of sickness due to which she visited a hospital on the eve of the semifinal, Harmanpreet kept India in the contest with a fluent 34-ball 52 laced with a six and six boundaries.

She was dismissed at a crucial point during the chase as India crumbled despite being in a comfortable situation.

If it wasn't for Umesh Yadav's 17 off 13 balls, India would have struggled to get past the 100-run mark.

The only wicket that came India's way in the afternoon session was of Travis Head (9), who missed a straight ball from Jadeja to be adjudged lbw.

It was a sign of desperation that India exhausted two of their three views in the first 10 overs. Labuschagne got a second life when India did not review a lbw call off Ashwin.

The great Matthew Hayden on air called the the black soil surface at the Holkar Stadium a day-three pitch and it sure behaved like one.

Three India batters including skipper Rohit Sharma (12), Jadeja (4) and Shreyas Iyer (0) perished while trying to attack.

Kohli looked assured in the middle before being trapped lbw by Todd Murphy towards the end of the session. Winning the toss for the first time in the series, India expectedly decided to bat first. Shubman Gill replaced an out-of-form K L Rahul in the playing eleven while Umesh Yadav was brought in for the rested Mohammad Shami.

Having regained match fitness, both Mitchell Starc and Cameron Green made Australia's playing eleven.

Starc's first over to Rohit was among the highlights of the morning session. Before the spinners ran through the Indian batting, Starc got the ball to swing giving the India skipper a tough time.

Rohit got a faint outside edge on the very first ball he faced but Australia did not take a review. Three balls later, Starc got the ball to swing back in and it flicked Rohit's pads. Ball tracking showed the ball would have hit the off stump but Australia did not take the review.

Spin was introduced in the sixth over and Kuhnemann got the ball to turn sharply. In the last ball of the over, Rohit stepped out to play across the line and got beaten in the flight and Alex Carey made a clean stumping.

Kuhnemann had Gill caught at first slip with the opener getting a thick outside edge while offering a forward defence.

Cheteshwar Pujara's stay lasted only four balls as Lyon got one to turn massively from wide off stump that crashed into the middle stump. The ball kept a tad low as well and Pujara was found wanting on the back foot.

When Shreyas Iyer played an attempted cut on to his stumps, India had lost half their side.



Jadeja 2nd Indian cricketer to claim 500 international wickets and 5,000 runs

PTI ■ INDORE

Star allrounder Ravindra Jadeja on Wednesday entered the record books, becoming only the second Indian player after Kapil Dev to take 500 wickets and amass 5,000 runs in international cricket.

The 34-year-old achieved the rare feat on the opening day of the third Test between India and Australia when he trapped opener Travis Head leg-before for his 260th wicket in Test cricket, which took his overall tally to 500 wickets across the three formats.

Jadeja has so far claimed 189 wickets in 171 ODIs at an average of 37.36 and in the shortest format the left-arm spinner has 51 dismissals to his name in 64 appearances.

As a valuable batter who has bailed India out from tough situations both at home and away, Jadeja's stocks have been on a constant rise in Test cricket. He has scored 2,619 runs in the longest format at an average of 36.88, with two of his three tons — including the career-best of 175 not out — coming over the last 12 months.

In 171 ODIs, Jadeja has scored 2,447 runs at 32.62 with 13 fifties and in 64 T20Is, he has

hit 457 runs at 24.05.

India's 1983 World Cup winning captain, Kapil Dev was the first from the country to achieve this feat, claiming 434 and 253 wickets to finish with a total of 687 dismissals in 131 Tests and 225 ODIs respectively.

With the bat, Kapil smacked 5,248 runs at 31.05 with 8 centuries and 27 fifties in Tests, while in one-dayers, he made 3,783 runs at 23.09 with 14 fifties and his only century in the format being the monumental 175 not out against Zimbabwe in the 1983 World Cup.

Apart from Jadeja and Kapil, the elite list includes South Africa's Jacques Kallis (25,534 runs and 577 wickets) and Shaun Pollock (7,386 runs and 829 wickets), Pakistan's Imran Khan (7,516 runs and 544 wickets), Sri Lanka's Chaminda Vaas (5,114 runs and 755 wickets), New Zealand's Daniel Vettori (6,989 runs and 667 wickets) and Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (13,445 runs and 653 wickets) also took 500 wickets and scored 5000 runs in international cricket.

IRANI CUP: Jaiswal's brilliant double hundred overshadows Easwaran ton in ROI's 381/3

PTI ■ GWALIOR

Yashasvi Jaiswal reaffirmed his status as the next big thing coming out of Mumbai's famed batting stable as his superlative double hundred propelled Rest of India to a commanding 381 for 3 against Madhya Pradesh on the opening day of Irani Cup, here on Wednesday.

Jaiswal's 213 off 259 balls was well complemented by opener Abhimanyu Easwaran's 154 (240 balls) after skipper Mayank Agarwal missed out on a run-feast on a batting belter.

The duo added a whopping 371 runs for the second wicket before both were dismissed in quick succession during the fag end of the day.

While Easwaran reached century way before Jaiswal, the Bengal right-hander paled in comparison to Mumbai southpaw's regal shot selection and the manner in which he dominated the two MP spinners -- off-break bowler Saransh Jain (0/103 in 24 overs) and left-arm spinner

Kumar Kartikeya (0/90 in 20 overs).

Both spinners failed to hit the right length throughout the day and were short on most occasions. Since they failed to stop the scoreboard from ticking, there was no pressure on batters with as many as 47 boundaries and five sixes being hit on the day.

MP bowlers toiled hard but stand-in skipper Himanshu Mantri had no answer to Jaiswal, who followed up his 265 in Duleep Trophy final with a hundred in an Irani Cup game.

Jaiswal has had an underwhelming Ranji Trophy season in which he scored only 315 runs in five games with a single hundred and an average of 45, way less than his astounding career average of 81 in 15 first-class games.

Despite not being among top 50 run-getters in Ranji Trophy, Jaiswal was selected in the Rest of India squad purely because selectors and head coach

Rahul Dravid believes in his



ability. He is someone, who like Shubman Gill, has the potential to be fast-tracked into top tier of international cricket.

At this point, there might not be any vacancy in the Indian Test Squad but once this World

Test Championship (WTC) cycle is over, Cheteshwar Pujara could well be phased out and India wouldn't mind a dominant No. 3 in the international set-up.

The difference between Jaiswal and Easwaran was very

stark. While Easwaran punished the poor deliveries, Jaiswal didn't let the good deliveries go unpunished too. Jaiswal hit 30 fours and five sixes during his innings.

There were back-foot