





POST-POLL VIOLENCE

Fact-finding team of Cong-CPM in Tripura

**PTI ■ AGARTALA**

An eight-member delegation comprising leaders of the CPI(M), the CPI and the Congress arrived here on Friday on a fact-finding mission to take stock of the post-poll violence in Tripura.

The team is expected to stay in the State till March 12 after which it will submit a report and the issue will be raised in Parliament which convenes from March 13, CPI MP Binoy Viswam had tweeted on Thursday. Senior CPI(M) leader of the state, Pabitra Kar, said the delegation will be split into three teams for visiting the affected districts of West Tripura, Sepahijala and

Khowai. As many as 1,200 incidents of post violence were reported in the state ever since the announcement of Assembly election results on March 2, Kar claimed.

“The exact number of injured as well as the extent of damage could not be ascertained because countless incidents took place since the announcement of election results.

A process has already been initiated to compile an authentic report on the post-poll violence”, Kar said.

Most of the post-poll violence cases were reported from Sepahijala and Khowai districts where a few persons were injured and shifted to

nearby health facility , Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Law and Order, Jyotishman Das Chowdhury said on Saturday.

Chief Minister Manik Saha who visited the injured persons at GBP hospital on Friday asked the police to take stern action against the miscreants in order to maintain peace and tranquility.

The Tripura Assembly election results were announced on March 2.

The BJP-IPFT Government returned to power in the state for the second consecutive term as the BJP bagged 32 seats in the 60-member Assembly while its alliance partner IPPT got one seat.

Walkout in Assam Assembly over

Maha MLA’s ‘dog meat’ remark

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

A Maharashtra MLA’s remarks about purported dog meat eating habits of people of Assam led to noisy scenes in its Assembly on Friday, with opposition legislators disrupting Governor Gulab Chand Kataria’s speech and later staging a walk out.

As the Opposition MLAs stood up and shouted slogans, seeking to know what action has been taken against the Legislator, Kataria had to cut short his speech to 15 minutes.

MLA Bachchu Kadu had reportedly proposed in the Maharashtra Assembly that stray dogs be sent to Assam to control their rising population, as they are consumed by locals in the northeastern State.

The issue was first raised by Congress Legislator



Assam Governor GC Kataria with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary arrives for the Budget Session of the Assembly, in Guwahati on Friday.

Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, who questioned the Assam Government’s “inaction” against Kadu, pointing out that a police team from the State had recently reached New Delhi to arrest party leader Pawan Khera over alleged remarks against the Prime Minister.

The matter was again brought to the fore in the House by the Opposition when it reassembled after a brief break. AIUFD MLA Rafikul Islam urged Speaker Biswajit Daimary to take suo motu cognisance for breach of privilege against Kadu’s remarks and “make him come to the Assam Assembly and apologise”.

Islam’s colleague Aminul Islam claimed that Kadu was among the MLAs, who had camped in Guwahati last year during the change of Government in the western State.

Tiger, tigress released in

MP Park’s enclosures to revive big cat population

PTI ■ BHOPAL

A tiger and tigress were on Friday released into enclosures in Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district in Madhya Pradesh by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in a bid to revive the big cat population in the facility, officials said.

While the tiger was captured in October last year after it strayed into the sprawling premises of the Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology (MANIT) in Bhopal, the tigress that was released into MNP was brought from Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, they said.

The tiger, after its capture from MANIT, was released in Satpura Tiger Reserve in October, and has been brought to MNP from STR.

A plan to release another tigress did not work out as it could not be captured at Panna Tiger Reserve, these officials added.

The translocation of the two big cats took place to mark the birth anniversary of former Union Minister Madhavrao Scindia, the father of Jyotiraditya Scindia. MNP, incidentally, is named after their ancestor Madho Rao Scindia.

Chouhan and Scindia pulled a lever each to release the two big cats from their cages into the enclosures, the officials said, adding five tigers in all, comprising two males and three females, will be translocated to MNP to revive the big cat population.

The tiger and tigress have been released, MNP director Uttam Sharma told PTI.

Int’l Women’s Day

celebrated at AIWC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

International Women’s Day was celebrated at All India Women’s Conference Head Office in Delhi. The focus of the programme was this year’s theme — DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality. Digital equity of women.

Informative programmes depicting women’s power through dramas, song, and self-defense demonstrations were part of this program.

On this occasion, president Kalyani Raj, secretary-general Manju Kak and treasurer Upasana Singh shared their views on women empowerment and gave new ideas in this direction.

Young member from Greater Noida branch, Kriti Naren and team gave a PP presentation.

JNU reflects cultural unity of India: Prez

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu said on Friday that Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is a relatively young institution and it presents a lively reflection of the cultural unity of India. Speaking at the sixth convocation of the university, Murmu noted that the number of women research scholars has outnumbered men at the institute this time, terming it as an important indicator of social change.

“JNU is a relatively young university. I look at it as a meaningful and historical significance that JNU began to function in the year of the centenary celebration of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi in 1969,” she said.

“It is situated in the beautiful Aravalli hills. Students



from all over India study at the university and live on campus together which helps widens their perspective about the country and the world.

The university presents a lively reflection on the cultural unity of India amid the diversity,” the President said. She said that JNU is known for its progressive practices and rich contributions in terms of social sensitivity, inclusion and women empowerment. “Students and faculty of JNU have made impressive

contributions in various fields such as education and research, politics, civil service, diplomacy, social work, science and technology, media, literature, art and culture,” she noted.

Murmu said that the vision, mission and objectives of JNU were articulated in its founding legislation. “These ideals include national integration, social justice, secularism, a democratic way of life, international understanding and scientific approach to problems of society”, she said.

ED searches

Lalu’s family..

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The searches also covered premises linked to Lalu’s daughters Ragini Yadav, Chanda Yadav and Hema Yadav, former RJD MLA Syed Abu Dojana, Amit Katyal, Navdeep Sardana and Praveen Jain in places such as Patna, Phulwari Sharif, Delhi-NCR, Ranchi and Mumbai, officials said. About two dozen locations were searched along with an escort of central security forces, they said. Dojana briefly appeared on a balcony of his palatial house in Patna to declare to media persons waiting outside that “I don’t know what these people are trying to search at my place”. “I only know this much that we are paying the price for not cowing

down before the BJP,” he said. Premises of companies like Brahma City Pvt Ltd, Elite Landbase Pvt Ltd, Whiteland Corporation Pvt Ltd and Meridian Construction India Ltd were also searched.

The alleged scam pertains to the period when Lalu Prasad was the railway minister in the UPA-1 Government. It was alleged that during the period, 2004-09, various persons were appointed to Group D positions in various zones of the Indian Railways, and in lieu, they transferred their land to family members of Lalu, the then Minister of Railways, and A K Infosystems Pvt Ltd. The officials said Ragini Yadav and Chanda Yadav were ex-directors in AK Infosystems Pvt Ltd, which allegedly received a land parcel from a candidate.

Hema Yadav is alleged to be a ‘beneficiary’ of two land parcels, received in lieu of jobs in the Indian Railways, the sources said. Katyal, according to the ED, is a ‘close associate

of Lalu Prasad, as well as an ex-director of A K Infosystems Pvt Ltd. It is alleged that Lalu’s family, including his wife and former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, ‘sold four such land parcels illegally acquired at the cost of ₹7.5 lakh to a company called Meridian Construction India Ltd, owned and controlled’ by Dojana, for a ‘consideration’ amount of ₹3.5 crore.

RJD leader Manoj Jha alleged that the CBI and the ED were following ‘someone else’s script’ in conducting searches against Opposition leaders and asserted the ED ‘raids’ against his party leaders were a ‘reaction’ to the change in Government in Bihar in August last year.

The CBI has filed a charge sheet in the case against Lalu, Rabri and 14 others under charges of criminal conspiracy and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, and all the accused have been summoned on March 15, offi-

cials had said. The ED case, filed under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, stems from this CBI complaint.

Both Lalu and Rabri were questioned by the CBI in this case recently.

It is alleged by the CBI that no advertisement or public notice was issued for appointment but some residents of Patna were appointed as substitutes in different zonal railways located at Mumbai, Jabalpur, Kolkata, Jaipur and Hapur, it is alleged. As a quid pro quo, the candidates, directly or through their immediate family members, allegedly sold land to the family members of Lalu at highly discounted rates, up to one-fourth to one-fifth of the prevailing market rates, the CBI had alleged. Tejashwi, after the questioning of his parents by the CBI recently, has told reporters that the then Railway Minister Lalu had ‘no powers’ to give employment in exchange for favours.

Sisodia

sent to...

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The judge referred to a string of accusations levelled against Sisodia by the ED in his order for remanding him in the custody of the central agency for “detailed and extensive interrogation and confrontations”.

“Thus, as per allegations made in this remand application, the accused was instrumental at every stage of formulation as well as implementation of the excise policy and he appears to be connected not only with generation of proceeds of crime, but also its repayment or re-coupment,”

the judge said.

“Therefore, in view of the above, Sisodia is being remanded to the custody of ED for a period of seven days ie. Till March 17 for the purposes of his detailed and extensive interrogation and confrontations and he shall be produced before this court on that day,” the judge said.

The lawyer for the Enforcement Directorate alleged Sisodia made false statements to the agency about the ‘scam’ and that it wanted to unearth the modus operandi adopted by the perpetrators and confront him with the other accused.

The ED’s counsel Zohab Hossain also claimed before the special court that Sisodia destroyed his phones, an important piece of evidence in the investigation.

According to the ED’s remand papers, Sisodia generated ‘kickbacks’ and proceeds of crime of more than ₹290 crore. “Proceeds of crime of at least ₹292.8 crore (calculated as on date which is likely to increase during the course of investigation) is attributable in respect of the role of Sisodia...,” the ED said in its remand papers while seeking his custody. Sisodia, it alleged, “Conspired with other persons and actively involved in formation of faulty policy against

kickbacks...Sisodia has played role in generation, transfer, concealment of the proceeds of crime and projected the same as untainted.” The ED also alleged Sisodia used/changed/destroyed 14 phones/IMEIs and only 2 phones could be recovered during the raids conducted by the CBI in this case.

The AAP politician, it claimed, not only used the SIM subscribed on the name of his PS Devender Sharma but also handsets purchased under various names. The claims of the ED counsel were contested by a battery of lawyers representing Sisodia.

Senior advocates Dayan Krishnan, Mohit Mathur and Siddharth Aggarwal said the excise policy was accepted by the Lieutenant Governor who must have examined it. Sisodia’s lawyers while opposing the ED’s plea for his custody, said it is the executive’s job to make policy which goes through several layers of scrutiny. “How can ED look into policy making in money laundering case?” the AAP leader’s counsel asked the court. “The ED has not found a single penny from my client...The case is entirely based on hearsay,” the lawyers said.

There was heavy security within and outside the Rouse Avenue Courts where Sisodia

was produced before special judge M K Nagpal amid protests by his Aam Aadmi Party and the rival BJP.

The ED counsel said, “the movement of tainted money through hawala channels was also being probed, claiming Sisodia was part of the “money laundering nexus”.

The agency, in its 57-page remand paper moved by Special Public Prosecutor N K Matta and advocate Mohd Faizan Khan alleged Sisodia got the policy formulated and implemented in such a way so as to allow illegal gains to certain persons and entities against kickbacks.

“He took various decisions as a part of GoM (group of ministers) and as the excise minister which ultimately resulted into huge loss to the exchequer and illegal gains to specific persons/entities against kickbacks,” the ED said.

Special judge Nagpal said specific evidence has come on record during the investigation that Sisodia had got incorporated certain material clauses in excise policy, which were not even discussed in the GoM. These clauses, he said, were allegedly inserted by Sisodia for the benefit of the South liquor lobby.

The ED told the court that Sisodia’s statements were recorded on March 7 and 9 in which he did not reveal the truth.

Categorising terror

dangerous...

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“The tendency of categorisation of terrorism based on the motivations behind terrorist acts is dangerous and goes against the accepted principles that ‘terrorism in all its forms and manifestations should be condemned and there cannot be any justification for any act of terrorism, whatsoever”, she said at the First Reading of the Draft Resolution on 8th Review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS).

Underlining that there cannot be good or bad terrorists, Kamboj said such an approach “will only take us back to the pre-9/11 era of labelling terrorists as ‘Your Terrorists’ and ‘My Terrorists’ and erase the collective gains the international community has made over the last two decades”.

“Moreover, some of the terminologies such as right or right-wing extremism, or far right or far left extremism open the gate for misuse of these terms by vested interests. We, therefore, need to be wary of providing a variety of classifications, which may militate against the concept of democracy itself,” she said.

India also asserted that states that provide shelter to

terrorists should be called out and held accountable for their deeds, a veiled reference to Pakistan.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a ‘unique global instrument’ to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter-terrorism. Through its adoption by consensus in 2006, all UN member states agreed for the first time to a common strategic and operational approach to fighting terrorism.

“The Strategy does not only send a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable in all its forms and manifestations but it also resolves to take practical steps, individually and collectively, to prevent and combat terrorism,” according to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

The UN General Assembly reviews the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy every two years, “making it a living document attuned to Member States’ counter-terrorism priorities”.

Kamboj stressed that it is important to protect the secular nature of the strategy. She said India strongly condemns all kinds of terrorist attacks irrespective of religion, belief,

culture, race or ethnicity.

“We strongly condemn terrorist attacks motivated by Islamophobia, Christianophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Sikh, anti-Buddhist, anti-Hindu prejudices,” she said.

She noted that the 7th Review of the strategy took into account attacks motivated by Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism only while failing to address the rest.

“A more sagacious approach would be to keep this reference broad, abandoning thereby a list-based approach in the current Review,” she said.

Cautioning against the use of technology by terrorist organisations, Kamboj said, “As if we had less on our plate, the online space has become another frontier for terrorist groups to achieve their nefarious goals. The easy accessibility, affordability, anonymity, untraceability, and universal reach offered by new and emerging communications, financial, and other technologies, have played out as an exogenous multiplier factor exacerbating the terrorist threat manifold,” she said.

She also noted that the Special Meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, held in India in October last year and the Delhi Declaration adopted on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes has highlighted this threat and also the need

for a holistic approach to address this threat.

Kamboj appealed, “we may preserve the unity of unequivocal support to the strategy and not surrender the ‘consensus’ to exclusivist and narrow approaches. A unified, multi-lateral action against terrorism has never been so inevitable as it is today”.

The global strategy is composed of four pillars- addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

Kamboj said it is important to preserve the balance among all pillars and attempts to dilute the language of the second and third pillars will be a ‘self-defeating goal’, she said.

She added that ideally, the technical update should also have taken into account the activities and significant contributions of some International fora such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), due to which member states known for their laxity on terror financing were compelled to take preventive actions, another apparent reference to Pakistan.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known that my Clients Smt. Mumli, W/o Late Pancham R/O S-146/12, Adarsh Basti, Mohanmadpur, New Delhi-110066 has severed all connections and relations with her Daughter-in-Law Kusum, Grand-daughter Komal, Kashish & Grand-son Vansh for their malicious activities, disrespect, abuses and disobedience towards my client. My client shall not be liable for any acts, deeds or things done by Daughter in Law Kusum, Granddaughter Komal, Kashish & Grandson Vansh and they shall not be entitle or inherit any right, title or interest in any of the movable and/or immovable assets of my client.

Ombir Sangwan (Advocate)  
Enrl No. D/894/95  
Patiala House Courts, New Delhi-110001

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it inform to the General public at large that the following documents ie. (1) Possession Letter of Flat (2) Allocation Letter of Flat (3) NOC Letter of Electric & water of Flat(4) Allotment letter of Scooter Garage no.209 in respect of Flat no. 374 on First Floor, SFS Flats Shiekh Sarai phase - 1 New Delhi 110017 vide DDA file no. F-10(97) 80 LAB (H) SFS issued by DDA Have been Lost at Malviya Nagar Main Market New Delhi 110017 Whoever Find the above said documents may kindly return to Deputy Director LAB (H) SFS on 3rd Floor D-Block DDA Office INA New Delhi 110023 or Mr. D Srinivas S/o Shri D.S. Prakash Rao R/o C-374 on first floor SFS Flats Shiekh Sarai phase 1 New Delhi 110017.

BSES

**BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi**

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR SHORT TERM PURCHASE OF POWER FOR THE PERIOD 01<sup>st</sup> April 2023 TO 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**  
Tender No. Head (PMG)/BRPL/ETender/2022-23/1648

In accordance with the guidelines for short term procurement of power notified by the Ministry of Power and directions issued by Hon’ble DERC, BRPL has floated power procurement tender with the General Terms and Conditions for purchase of power and same is available on e-Bidding portal [www.msctcecommerce.com](http://www.msctcecommerce.com).

Bidders are requested to kindly visit above website and submit the competitive purchase offers on [www.msctcecommerce.com](http://www.msctcecommerce.com).

Last date of bid submission is 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023 up to 15:000 HRS and Opening of nonfinancial technical Bids is 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 11:00 HRS

Address:- Head PMG, BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd., BSES Bhawan, 2nd Floor, D-Block, Nehru Place, New Delhi – 110019 (Tel: 49209037, Fax: 011-49209454)

Regd. Off:- BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 Corporate Identification No.-U40100DL2019-C111527 Telephone No. -+91 11 4910 7235 Website - [www.bsesdelhi.com](http://www.bsesdelhi.com)



**I, Jitendra Prakash Singhal, S/o Prem Chandra Gupta, R/o-27B, Nilgiri-1, Block C72, Sector-34, Noida-201301, changed my name to Jitendra Prakash for all future purposes.**

**PD(90295)A**

**I, Kavita Singhal, W/o Jitendra Prakash, R/o-27B, Nilgiri-1, Block-C72, Sector 34, Noida-201301, changed my name to Kavita Gupta for all future purposes.**

**PD(90296)A**

2 die...

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“Young children and old age persons with comorbidities are the most vulnerable groups in the context of seasonal influenza. So far, Karnataka and Haryana have confirmed one death each from H3N2 influenza,” the Ministry said.

Seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses which circulate in all parts of the world, and the cases are seen to increase during certain months globally.

“India every year witness-

es two peaks of seasonal influenza: one from Jan to March and other in the post monsoon season. The cases arising from seasonal influenza are expected to decline from March end. State surveillance officers are therefore fully geared to meet this public health challenge,” the Ministry said in the statement.

Dr. Rajkumar, Senior Consultant-Internal Medicine, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Delhi said, “We have been witnessing a spike in viral infection cases during extreme colds (in the months of December and January) in India. People who have underlying multiple health-related conditions or weakened immune systems are more

susceptible to developing severe symptoms and may take longer to recover from the illness.

“The H3N2 may be more severe because of the fact, in the last three years, people were using masks extensively and this H3N2 could not enter the body. Hence there was a lack of adequate antibodies to fight against this.

“With reduced or no masks now, this virus is spreading fast. Those with compromised immunity against it are feeling the heat. In fact, this compromised immune system may be the reason and it is postulated that it probably is making people more vulnerable towards viral infection. This is especially witnessed during the changing

season, which can further affect the immune system thus resulting in infections being more aggressive and long-lasting.

“Furthermore, changes in temperature and humidity can also affect the survival and transmission of viruses, making them more aggressive,” noted Dr Rajkumar.

The IDSP-IHIP data from health facilities indicates that during January, 3,97,814 cases of acute respiratory illness or influenza like illness (ARI/ILI) were reported in the country, which increased slightly to 4,36,523 during February, it said.

In the first nine days of March, this number stands at 1,33,412 cases, the statement said.



# Restrict power subsidy to the deserving: LG

## Saxena asks CS to apprise CM of lapses

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a move aimed to keep rich and well-off sections in the national Capital out of the power subsidy scheme, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday directed the Chief Secretary to consider restricting the domestic electricity subsidy to the users consuming either 1-3 KW of power or 1-5 KW of power as per statutory advisory of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) issued in 2020.

This is likely to cover near-

ly 95 per cent of the consumers but also save nearly Rs 316 crore per year.

Taking a strict note of the same, the LG has asked the Chief Secretary to direct the Power Department to place the statutory advice of DERC before the Council of Ministers and decide over the same within 15 days.

"As per the DERC, even then the electricity subsidy will roughly cover 91 per cent or 95 per cent of the total consumers availing subsidy and would save around Rs 316 crore/Rs 200 crore of the public exchequer per year, as the case may be, since the consumers having fixed load above 5 KW were not strictly poor consumers and should not be extended the benefit of subsidy," Lt Governor said in his



noting.

The LG has also asked the Chief Secretary to apprise the Chief Minister of the said lapses of Transaction of Business Rules (ToBR) by the then Power Minister and request him to instruct all Ministers in Delhi Government to scrupulously follow the provisions of the ToBR.

"The record of the file

shows that the Department placed the above statutory advice of DERC before the Power Minister for appropriate action. However, the then Minister (Power) decided to continue with the existing policy. The existing policy for granting electricity subsidy was decided by the Council of Ministers.

Therefore, as per Rule 7

read with Entry 19 of the Schedule of ToBR, the statutory advice of the DERC proposing to review existing policy of the Government involving saving of the government revenue should have been placed for consideration and decision of the Council of Ministers."

"The Minister is not competent to take a decision in a matter which falls within the purview of the Council of Ministers as per ToBR. The process prescribed in the ToBR has not been followed while dealing with the said statutory advice of the DERC," the Lt Governor noted. "Therefore, Chief Minister may be apprised about the aforesaid lapses of the TOBR by the then Hon'ble Minister (Power) and may be requested to instruct all the Ministers-in-Charge of all

departments of GNCTD to scrupulously follow the provisions of Transaction of Business of GNCTD Rules.

Further, the Power Department, GNCTD be directed to place the aforesaid statutory advice of DERC for consideration and decision of the Council of Ministers and to process it as per ToBR for taking final decision on the advice of DERC, preferably within 15 days," the L-G noted.

The Chief Secretary in its report under Rule 57 of the ToBR, submitted to LG, VK Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also pointed out the same discrepancy.

The report points out that the power department not only failed to lay the statutory advice of DERC for consideration of the LG but also the same was

not placed before the Cabinet for its consideration and the approval of the Finance Department was not taken before going ahead with the existing subsidy scheme.

"However, the power department, in complete violation of the Transaction of Business Rules (ToBR), has put DERC's "statutory advice" in abeyance and continued with the existing power subsidy scheme without the approval of the Cabinet and the financial approval despite the same involving a financial implication of Rs 316 crore.

"Earlier, in 2018, the DERC had asked the Delhi Government to switch to DBT for transferring power subsidy directly into the bank accounts of the consumers but the AAP government continued paying

the subsidy to the private dis-coms," Raj Niwas officials said.

The Chief Secretary's report is a part of the detailed factual report dated 19.12.2022, submitted to the LG in the matter of a complaint related to non-payment of outstanding dues by DISCOMs to State Gencos.

"Since matter involves financial implications to the tune of Rs. 316 Crores/Rs. 200 Cr. per year, therefore, the Competent Authority to decide this matter was the Cabinet.

Also, advice of Finance Department was not taken by the officials of Power Department in this regard. Further, from Cabinet Note & Decision dated 18.05.2021, it is observed that Cabinet was also not apprised about the statutory advice of the DERC.

# OYO founder's father falls to death from 20th floor

Police: No suicide note found, no plaint given by family so far; probe begins

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The father of Ritesh Agarwal, founder and Group CEO of OYO, died after allegedly falling from the 20th floor of his house at a society in Gurugram on Friday afternoon. The incident reportedly took place at a gated apartment located in DLF Phase-5 in sector 54 of Gurugram. Police said they have initiated inquest proceedings under Section 174 of CrPC. No suicide note has been found from the spot and no complaint has been given by the family so far, police said.

According to the police, they received information at around 1 pm from DLF security that a person has fallen from the 20th floor F Tower in



DLF's The Crest, where Oyo Rooms founder Ritesh Agarwal's father Ramesh Agarwal died after falling off the 20th floor of the building, in Gurugram, on Friday

PTI Photo

DLF Phase-5 The Crest Society sector 54 and he has been taken to Paras Hospital for treatment.

DCP (east) Virender Vij in a statement said, following information a team along with SHO sector 53 visited the incident spot and during the inspection, the person was identified as Ramesh Parsad Agarwal who was rushed to Paras Hospital.

"Agarwal was brought dead in the Paras Hospital after taking the statement of deceased son Aashish Agarwal. We inquests report U/S 174 CrPC. SHO Sector 53 and the scene of

crime team visited the place of occurrence for inspection. Postmortem has been carried out and the body has been handed over to the family," Vij said.

Preliminary investigation suggests that it appears to be a case of accidental death but the actual reason will be known after a detailed investigation, they said. It is being said that the son, daughter-in-law and wife were present when Ramesh fell from the balcony of the society.

"The body had multiple fractures. It appears that the victim died after falling from

the high-rise," said Dr Sudhir Chaudhary who conducted the autopsy.

"I was in the basement of the society when I heard a loud noise around 1 pm.

"I immediately rush to the spot and found that a man in a pool of blood was lying near the security check of the society. The police were also present on the spot," a resident of the society requesting anonymity said.

In a statement, Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and Group CEO, OYO, said, "With a heavy heart, my family and I, would like to share that our guiding light and strength, my father, Ramesh passed away on March 10. He lived a full life and inspired me and so many of us, every single day. His death is a tremendous loss for our family. My father's compassion and warmth saw us through our toughest times and carried us forward."

"His words will resonate deep in our hearts. We request everyone to respect our privacy in this time of grief," he said.

# Saurabh, Atishi take charge of their depts



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After day they were sworn in as Ministers in the Arvind Kejriwal-led Cabinet, newly-appointed Ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj and Atishi took charge of their departments at Delhi Secretariat on Friday.

"Today, I took the charge at Delhi Secretariat. We have started taking foreword the work of Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain to make the city a better state to live in.

"It is our resolve to serve the people of Delhi by following the instructions of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with staunch honesty," said Bharadwaj after taking the charge.

Both Atishi and Bharadwaj held introductory meeting with head of their departments.

Bharadwaj has been assigned the responsibility of Health, Water and Industries and Urban Development while Atishi has been allotted the portfolios of Education, PWD, Power and Tourism. Meanwhile, Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Friday nominated AAP MLA Somnath Bharti as vice-chairman of Delhi Jal Board.

He is set to replace



Bharadwaj.

Bharti, a former Delhi Law Minister, is a legislator from the Malviya Nagar constituency. He was first elected from the seat in 2013.

"Members are hereby informed that Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly, is pleased to nominate Somnath Bharti, Member in place of Bharadwaj as vice-chairperson in Delhi Water Board as per the provisions of Section 3(2)(i) of Delhi Water Board Act, 1998," Delhi Assembly Secretariat said in a statement.

Bharadwaj will look after Health, Urban Development, Water and Industries departments.

Bharti later said, "That Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal considered me worthy of such an important responsibility as the vice-chairman of Jal Board shows his greatness and I am grateful to him from the bottom of my heart.

"The Chief Minister has many dreams regarding Jal Board. To fulfil those we have to work hard. Bharadwaj has done a great job as the deputy chairman of the Jal Board.

"We will work together to fulfil every dream of the honorable chief minister regarding the Jal Board," he added.

## To swell tax revenue, Govt to act against tax defaulters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Finance Minister Kailash Gahlot on Friday reviewed the department of trade and taxes ahead of presenting the Budget in the Delhi Assembly. During the meeting, officials informed the Minister that the department has collected a total of Rs 31462.62 crores in taxes till February 2023 which include Rs. 26096.79 crores from GST and Rs. 5365.83 crores from VAT.

The total tax collected from petroleum products in 2022-2023 was Rs.4169.18 crores whereas in 2021-2022, it was Rs.3739.41 crores.

"In order to augment revenue from taxes in Delhi, the Delhi Government identifies and takes regular action against tax defaulters. Also, from time to time, the Government does mandatory field verification of suspicious taxpayers and initiates necessary action as per the DGST Act, 2017.

Meetings with market and trade associations through outreach camps are organised regularly to sensitise them about the latest notifications, circulars, amended provisions of DGST, the benefits of tax-paying and the repercussions of tax evasion.

"Their grievances are also addressed during these outreach camps," the Delhi government said in a statement. The statement further said that Delhi is the third state in the country to implement the Document Identification Number (DIN) in the indirect tax administration.

The department informed the Minister that they are collating all the data (both offline & online) of pending recovery cases since 2005. They are also sending SMSes to the taxpayers as a reminder to deposit the tax.

## Probing video of harassment of Japanese woman on Holi: Police

New Delhi: Delhi Police on Friday said they have launched an investigation after a video on social media showed a group of men allegedly harassing and groping a Japanese woman on Holi. They said they have taken notice of the video and verifying whether it is of a recent incident or an old one.

The video showed a group of men smearing colour on a foreigner, who seemed uncomfortable around them. It also one of the men smashing an egg on her head. She can be heard saying "bye bye" in the video.

Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) Chairperson Swati Maliwal said she was issuing a notice to Delhi Police to examine video and arrest the perpetrators. "Very disturbing videos getting viral on social media showing sexual harassment with foreign nationals on Holi! I am issuing notice to Delhi Police to examine these videos and arrest perpetrators," she said.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Tibetan Youth Congress protested near the Chinese Embassy on the 64th Tibetan National Uprising Day on Friday, police said. Raising slogans against Chinese Government's "hard-line policies" and "illegal occupation of Tibet", several of them were detained and taken to Mandir Marg police station as they tried to march towards the embassy.

The Delhi Police had put up barricades around 2 km from embassy and imposed Section 144 of the CrPC, which prohibits the assembly of four or more people, in the area as a preventive measure. More

# AAP, BJP slug it out on Sisodia, Jain's arrest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP and the Opposition BJP in the national Capital upped the ante in their war of words on Friday, drawing inspiration from Bollywood and Indian epics to settle political scores on social media.

The heated yet amusing slugfest between them raged through the day over AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, both currently in Tihar jail in alleged corruption and money laundering cases, respectively.

On Friday morning, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal talked about the demon king Hiranyakashyap tried to stop Prahlad from worshipping. Later in the day, the Delhi BJP retweeted a poster of Jain and Sisodia mimicking Govinda and Sanjay Dutt from the 2001 film Jodi No. 1. The poster, first shared by BJP leader Parvesh Verma, read, "Produced by Arvind Kejriwal, in Tihar theatres now". Along with the poster, Verma tweeted in Hindi that it's just the beginning, the "real mastermind" Kejriwal is still to go to jail.

Earlier, Kejriwal said some people are considering themselves to be God and have put behind bars those who are serving the country and children.

He said the demon king Hiranyakashyap too had wrongly believed himself to be the God and tried to stop Prahlad from worshipping Him. "But they could not stop Prahlad then and they won't be able to stop him now," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi, appar-



BJP leaders and workers raise slogans during a protest against the Delhi Government near AAP headquarters in New Delhi on Friday

RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

ently referring to Sisodia as Prahlad. Later, the Delhi BJP retweeted a poster of Jain and Sisodia mimicking Govinda and Sanjay Dutt from the 2001 film Jodi No. 1. The poster, first shared by BJP leader Parvesh Verma, read, "Produced by Arvind Kejriwal, in Tihar theatres now".

Separately, at a Press conference, AAP leader Sanjay Singh alleged that if a leader joins the BJP, that person becomes "Raja Harishchandra", who is synonymous with absolute adherence to the truth, and actions are taken against all others.

"The bigger the corrupt, the bigger the officer they become. This is the new slogan of the BJP. If you are a BJP leader, you are King Harishchandra," he

alleged. Earlier, Delhi BJP leaders staged a protest against the Kejriwal government in connection with excise policy scam case in which former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia is in jail.

They raised slogans against Kejriwal and demanded his resignation. There was heavy police deployment in the central part of the city. The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, where the AAP office is located, was barricaded to restrict the movement of vehicles.

Delhi Working BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, MPs Ramesh Bidhuri and Praveesh Sahib Singh, State General Secretary Kuljeet Singh Chahal, Co-incharge of Assam

Pawan Sharma, MLA Abhay Verma and former State President Adesh Gupta addressed the protesters.

"Several workers of BJP have gathered near the AAP office demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Delhi BJP will intensify this protest. The Vidhan Sabha will start from March 17 and all MLAs of the BJP will demand the resignation of Kejriwal. The protest will continue till Kejriwal tenders his resignation," said Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said.

BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri said Kejriwal used to praise all his ministers and called them staunchly honest, but today all of them are behind bars for corruption or forgery.

## Retired ITBP jawan shoots self dead in Palam house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A retired Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawan on Friday allegedly shot himself dead with his licensed revolver at his house in south-west Delhi's Palam village.

The deceased, identified as Sudhir Kumar (48), hailed from Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh and retired as a head constable two months ago, they said. Information regarding the incident was received at Palam police station at around 8:30 am, they said.

The main door of the house was found bolted from the inside. When the police entered the house after breaking a window, a person was found lying unconscious on the floor, a senior police officer said. The body bore bullet injuries on the forehead and chest, he said. Kumar's wife, in her statement, said that her husband was an alcoholic and she had gone to her parent's house following an argument with him, he added.

She also said her husband had a licence for the revolver, police said. No suicide note was recovered from the spot, police said, adding the family members did not suspect any foul play.



Security personnel guard outside ED office before the arrival of AAP leader Manish Sisodia in connection with Delhi Excise scam, in New Delhi, on Friday. The city court sent Sisodia to ED custody till March 17, after the federal agency sought the former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister's remand to further unravel the conspiracy through which he was alleged to have generated proceeds of crime of more than Rs 290 crore

PTI Photo

# Tibetans protest near Chinese Embassy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Tibetan Youth Congress protested near the Chinese Embassy on the 64th Tibetan National Uprising Day on Friday, police said. Raising slogans against Chinese Government's "hard-line policies" and "illegal occupation of Tibet", several of them were detained and taken to Mandir Marg police station as they tried to march towards the embassy.

The Delhi Police had put up barricades around 2 km from embassy and imposed Section 144 of the CrPC, which prohibits the assembly of four or more people, in the area as a preventive measure. More



Cops detain a member of the Tibetan community during a protest on the anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day, outside the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on Friday

RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

than 60 members of the Tibetan Youth Congress staged a brief protest near the barri-

cades placed a couple of km away from embassy, a senior official said. "As they tried to



# ‘UNSC expansion vital to give voice to developing nations’

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

Underlining the need for making the voice of developing countries and unrepresented regions heard at the international forum, India has said the expansion in permanent and non-permanent categories of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is "absolutely essential."

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, also said the expansion of both categories is the only way to bring Security Council's decision-making dynamics in line with contemporary geo-political realities.

The remarks by Kamboj came during her address late Thursday to the Informal Meeting of the Plenary on the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) in the UN. "We need a Security Council that better reflects the geographical and developmental diversity of the United Nations today. A Security Council where voices of developing countries and unrepresented regions, includ-



ing Africa, Latin America and the vast majority of Asia and the Pacific, find their due place at the table," Kamboj said. She said to achieve this objective, an expansion of the 15-nation Council in both categories of membership is absolutely essential.

The meeting was convened meeting on two clusters - the size of an enlarged Security Council and working methods of the Council and the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. In a significant development in the slow-moving reform process, for the time, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform were webcast. President of the 77th session of

the UN General Assembly Csaba Korosi termed this as a "game-changing approach" and expressed gratitude to Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) Co-Chairs Permanent Representative of Kuwait Ambassador Tareq Albana'i and Permanent Representative of Austria Ambassador Axel Marschik.

Terming this development as a "recent evolution within the Inter-Governmental Negotiations", Kamboj voiced appreciation for the co-chairs for recommending a webcast of the first segment of each of the IGN meetings and establishing a specific website to act as a repository of the recordings of the webcasts as well as of the letters, decisions and other docu-

ments related to the IGN process, as well as links to the statements of the member states. India and other G-4 nations of Brazil, Germany and Japan have repeatedly said the IGN is constrained by a lack of openness and transparency. Kamboj asserted that on the issue of the size of the Council, there already exists a convergence among the members. "We all agree that the Security Council's size should be expanded in order to make it more legitimate and representative" she said.

The UNSC currently is composed of five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the UK and the US and 10 elected non-permanent members who serve two-year terms. India completed its tenure as a non-permanent member of the Council in December last year.

Kamboj added that the Council would be more transparent, efficient, and effective if its working methods were revised and updated. The methods would need to be adapted to the size and composition of a reformed Council.

# US for fruitful Indo-Pak dialogue, can facilitate it too, says State Dept

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

A day after the US Intelligence community cautioned against the possibility of a conflict between India and Pakistan, Washington has said it supports a constructive dialogue and meaningful conversation between India and Pakistan. It also said it is for New Delhi and Islamabad to decide on the nature of that dialogue adding the US is ready to play its role if they agree.

India is a global strategic partner of the United States, the Biden administration also said late Thursday amidst a series of high-level of exchanges between the two countries.

These comments came a day after the American intelligence community told lawmakers in Washington that it apprehends increased tension between India and Pakistan and India and China with the possibility of a conflict between them. It also noted that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India



is more likely than in the past to respond with military force to "perceived or real" provocations from Pakistan.

This evaluation on Wednesday forms part of the annual threat assessment of the US intelligence community. It was submitted to the US Congress by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence during a Congressional hearing.

Meanwhile, as regards a dialogue between India and Pakistan, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price, in response to a question, refused any mediating role for the US for talks between India and Pakistan late Thursday in Washington. "Because these

are decisions for the countries themselves. If they agree on a particular role for the United States, the United States is prepared to, as a partner to both countries, support that process in any way that we responsibly can," Price told reporters at a news conference.

"Analysts believe that the United States has the power and authority to mediate between the two partners. Pakistan and India are partners of yours, so why don't you just mediate?" he was asked.

"Ultimately, it is not for the United States to determine the modalities or the way in which India and Pakistan engage one another. What we support is constructive dialogue, meaningful diplomacy between India and Pakistan, in the first instance to resolve longstanding conflicts," Price said.

The United States, he said, supports constructive dialogue. "We support diplomacy between India and Pakistan to resolve, again, another set of longstanding disputes. We are a partner. We are willing to support that process in any way that they deem appropriate.

But ultimately, these are decisions that India and Pakistan themselves are going to have to make," he said. On ties between India and the US, Price said "Our message to India and about India is consistent. India is a global strategic partner of the United States.

The engagements we've had with our Indian partners at the ministerial level, at the leader level, at all levels has been in furtherance of deepening the already extensive ties between our two countries. These are ties that are political in nature, diplomatic, economic, security and importantly, people-to-people ties."

There is a vibrant Indian diaspora in this country, he said, adding that there is quite a bit of interest on the part of the American private sector in India, exchange students.

"There are various ways in which our two societies are intertwined. So every time we have an opportunity to meet with our Indian counterparts, it is an effort to deepen what is that already quite extensive global strategic partnership," Price said.

# India, Oz ink pacts for ties in innovation, sports

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Australia on Friday decided to further strengthen their ties in the fields of Defence and bolster security co-operation in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region during the first annual summit here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese.

The two leaders also focused on concluding an ambitious trade pact this year and the two sides also inked four pacts enabling cooperation in areas of sports, innovation, audio-visual production and solar power.

The two Prime Ministers, who jointly watched the fourth cricket test match between the two countries in Ahmedabad on Thursday, also discussed ways to boost cooperation in clean energy, trade and investment, defence and secu-

urity, critical minerals, migration and mobility, supply chains, education, culture and sports.

In his comments, Albanese said Modi and he agreed on concluding the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) as soon as possible. "I am hopeful that we will be able to finalise it this year," the Australian prime minister, who is on a three-day visit to India, said.

Last year, India and Australia finalised the Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (ECTA) and it came into force in December last. The two sides are now working on the CECA.

Modi said the bilateral security cooperation is an important pillar of India-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership. "Today we discussed maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region, and enhancing mutual defence



Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomes Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese during a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, on Friday, PTI Photo

and security cooperation," he said. China has adopted an aggressive stance in the region.

"In the field of defence, we have made remarkable agreements in the last few years, including logistics support for each other's militaries. There is also regular and useful exchange of information between our security agen-

cies, and we discussed further strengthening this," Modi said. The Prime Minister also noted that mutual cooperation to develop reliable and strong global supply chains also figured in the discussions. Albanese described his country's relationship with India as "multi-faceted" and said he was looking forward to hosting

Modi in Australia for the Quad leaders' summit in May and then returning to India in September for the G20 summit."Prime Minister Modi and I discussed the strength of our economic relationship demonstrated by the entry into force of the landmark India Australia economic cooperation and trade agreement," he said.

On the comprehensive economic cooperation agreement, he said this "transformational deal" will realise the full potential of the bilateral economic relationship.

"I am proud of the existing cooperation between Australia and India on solar and hydrogen, two technologies that are critical to our energy transition goals and the opportunities for us to work more closely to secure critical mineral supply chains," Albanese said. "I'm pleased that today we have exchanged terms of references for the Australia India Solar

Task force," he said. The visiting Prime Minister said Modi and he discussed the increasingly uncertain global security environment and committed to strengthening the Australia-India defence and security partnership to address shared challenges as well as to work towards an open, stable and prosperous Indo Pacific.

"I welcome increased defence information sharing between Australia and India, including in the maritime domain," he said. Albanese said Australia is honoured to be hosting the Malabar naval exercise this year.

"I am also pleased to report that officials have made significant progress on a new migration and mobility partnership arrangement. This arrangement will promote and support the mobility of students, graduates, academic researchers, business people and other professionals," he said.

# ‘India can be a torch-bearer for Global South’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Friday said India is in a unique position to provide leadership in the Global South and there can be no solution to climate challenges without the country being central to it.

Addressing a gathering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, Albanese announced the appointment of Tim Thomas as the first chief executive officer (CEO) of the Centre for Australia-India Relations, which will start functioning later this year.

"India is in a unique position to provide leadership in the Global South. There can be no solution to climate challenges without India being central to that. In the face of a changing climate, both Australia and India have begun to heed such warnings with the seriousness they deserve. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarkable goal for India to install 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030 will have a profound impact on the global energy transition.

The global move to a clean energy economy is here. And it is shifting gears quickly. To get a sense of what is possible, look at what India has already achieved. Between 2018 and 2021, India increased solar generation by 31 terawatt-hours. That is enough power for 24.7 million (2.47 crore) Indians," he said.

Albanese stressed that Australia will become a renewable energy superpower, given its location. "India will be too, and therefore, there are great opportunities to collaborate and work together. Australia is blessed with natural resources and critical earth minerals that can help in the production of renewables.

Hence, this partnership will help India meet the growing energy demands," he said.



Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese addresses an event at IIT Delhi, in New Delhi, on Friday. PTI

Noting that education is about helping an economy grow as it is key to productivity, new ideas and more efficiency, Albanese said, "I very much want to see growing numbers of Australian and Indian students to have the experiences of living and studying in our respective countries, and to bring those experiences home. Think of it as human cross-pollination."

"Through it we draw from each other's strengths and add to our own and in the process, each of us becomes something greater. Of course, joining up our best minds is not just desirable, it is a necessity, especially where the globe's biggest challenges are concerned," he added.

Talking about the Centre for Australia-India Relations, Albanese said it will work "across governments, industry, academia and community to build greater understanding of the Australia-India relationship and support opportunities that arise from our growing connections". He asserted that India's development has been "extraordinary".

"The perception of India in the world (today) is very different from what it was in 1991, when I visited the country for the first time, and this is a great tribute to the people essentially," the Australian prime minister said.

# We cannot stop natural disasters but we can minimise damage: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday batted for a "proactive rather than reactive" approach and the use of future technologies in handling natural disasters to minimise damage.

Inaugurating the third session of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) here, the PM said, "We cannot stop natural disasters but we can come up with systems to minimise damage from them."

"We have to be proactive rather than reactive. What was the situation in the country (earlier) for being proactive and what is the situation now? Even after five decades of Independence, there was no law in the country to tackle disasters," Modi asserted.

After the 2001 earthquake in Kutch, Gujarat was the first State to come up with a Disaster Management Act, he said. On the basis of this act, the Centre enacted the National Disaster Management Act in 2005, he said.

Subsequently the National Disaster Management Authority was set up. Traditional housing and town planning process should be enriched with future technology to better manage disaster planning, and added real-time assessment of resilience of local infrastructure was the need of the hour, he said.

"Tradition and technology are our inherent strength. We can use it to build model for disaster resilience not only for India but for the entire world," he said.

The PM further said there is a need to develop models of housing or town planning at the local level. "We need to



encourage use of advanced technology in these sectors, be it local construction material or construction technology," Modi said. He said India now responds quickly to disasters across the globe and takes initiatives for developing resilience infrastructure.

Recognition and reforms are necessary to strengthen disaster management. Recognition refers to understanding the probability of a disaster and areas where it can strike in future and reforms means system to reduce the chances of disaster, he said.

Modi said it should be a matter of pride for every Indian that the entire world has applauded the country's disaster relief work after the massive earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. The massive earthquake last month killed at least 50,000 people and injured many more in these two countries.

"The way India has developed relief and rescue related human resource and technology capacity has helped the country in saving lives during natural disasters," he said.

The NPDRR, chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is a multi-stakeholder platform constituted by the government to facilitate dialogue and share experiences, views, ideas, action-oriented research and explore opportunities in the area of disaster risk reduction.

# Covid pandemic forced judiciary to adopt modern methods: CJI



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said on Friday the COVID-19 pandemic forced the judicial system to adopt modern methods to impart justice and the goal now must be to evolve judicial institutions and not wait for another pandemic to take active decisions.

Speaking at the 18th meeting of the chief justices of the Supreme Courts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states, Chandrachud highlighted the steps taken by the Indian judiciary with the onset of the pandemic.

He said since the pandemic, the district courts in India heard 16.5 million cases, the High Courts 7.58 million cases, while the Supreme Court heard 3,79,954 cases through video-conference.

"In conclusion, the pandemic forced the judicial system to adopt modern methods to impart justice. But our goal must lie in evolving our judicial institutions as a matter of principle, and not wait for another pandemic to take active decisions," the CJI said at a joint interactive session.

The Supreme Court and the High Courts also actively monitored the areas of human rights violations during the pandemic, he said.

# Cong slams Dhankhar over criticism of Rahul's remarks

New Delhi: The Congress on Friday hit out at Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar for his criticism of Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the UK, saying that the Rajya Sabha chairman is an umpire and cannot be a cheerleader for any ruling dispensation.

The Congress' reaction came after Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Dhankhar attacked Rahul Gandhi for his comments regarding microphones being turned off in Parliament, and said he would be on the "wrong side" of the Constitution if he stayed silent on the issue.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh noted that at an event on Thursday to mark the launch of a book, the vice president made certain remarks on Gandhi's speech delivered in the United Kingdom. "There are certain offices which require us to shed our prejudices, our party allegiances and compel us to rid ourselves of whatever propaganda we

may have imbibed along the way. The office of the Vice President of India, an office on which the Constitution bestows the additional responsibility of being the Chair of the Rajya Sabha, is foremost amongst these," Ramesh said.

The vice president's statement on Rahul Gandhi, therefore, was surprising to say the least, he said. "He (Dhankhar) rushed to the defence of a government from which he is constitutionally required to be at arms-length and in a manner that was both confusing as well as disappointing," Ramesh said.

He said Gandhi has not said anything abroad that he has not said several times here. "And unlike certain other individuals, his stand does not vary depending on where he sits," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader argued that Gandhi's statement was factual and representative of the reality on the ground. PNS

# ‘If diagnosed early, kidney diseases can be cured’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Limited salt and potassium intake, quitting smoking and increased physical activity are some of the lifestyle changes besides awareness which can go a long way in not only checking kidney degeneration but also prevent it, health experts have said here.

On the World Kidney Day marked on March 9, they said if detected early, kidney diseases can be treated in the initial stages itself before it becomes a life-threatening burden on the individual and families. Kidney diseases occur in five stages with kidney failure being the last one. But it's pos-



sible to completely treat the disease in the first and second stages itself, if detected early, said Dr Himanshu Verma, HoD (Nephrology), Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi, in his presentation on the last day of the virtual webinar 'Kidney Manthan' organised by AIMIL Pharmaceuticals. "Hence, it is important that people are made aware about causes and ways to

prevent renal diseases," he said at the event spanning six days which saw participation of at least 35 health experts from allopathy and ayurveda from across the country.

They discussed threadbare causes, challenges and how preventive measures like lifestyle changes can ensure health of the vital organ. The experts also deliberated on how alternative Ayurvedic medicines like herbal formulation NeeriKFT have the potential to heal the damaged cells of an ailing kidney.

In this connection, they cited various studies with the latest one being conducted by researchers from Jamia Hamdard's Centre of

Excellence that have proved efficacy of the NeeriKFT, composed of time-tested herbs like punarnava, varuna, giloy, gokhru and palash in protecting the kidney. Published in the Journal of Biosciences, the Jamia research suggests that the ayurvedic formulation is effective in regulating the functions of at least 6 gene variants causing kidney dysfunction.

Stating that patients with diabetes and high blood pressure would be at highest risk of kidney disease, Dr Verma who touched upon the topic 'Conservative management in chronic kidney disease' further recommended keeping the body mass index (BMI) between 20-25, walking for 30

minutes every day for five days a week, reducing the consumption of pain-relieving medicines, balanced intake of water and quitting smoking etc. As effective ways to protect the vital organ.

Dr Sanchit Sharma, executive director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals, said the outcome of the six days long churning on the vital topic, which is assuming endemic proportion, shows "we need to adopt an integrated approach towards kidney healthcare. Also, as more and more people are looking towards Ayurveda for holistic treatment of various kinds of diseases, it is important that players in sector focus on evidence-based research."



# Bengal Govt work comes to halt

Babus defy TMC Government, enforce near total strike to press for 39% DA

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a show of solidarity and defiance a large section of government workers cutting across political affiliations on Friday ignored the TMC Government's orders and joined the general strike called by a joint action committee of 18 employees' unions — dominated mainly by the CPI(M)'s frontal organisation Coordination Committee — demanding immediate implementation of 39 per cent Dearness Allowance (DA) as ordered by the Calcutta High Court and State Administration Tribunal.

This, even as an inflexible State Government which had warned the workers of breakage in service hardened its stance directing all the departmental heads to record attendance reports of the 5-6 lakh strong employees by 5 PM for future punitive measures.

Though senior Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim said that, "90 to 95 per cent of Government workers attended office ignoring the strike call given by a section of mischievous Left unions who do not want the people to enjoy the fruits of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's developmental works," reports from all over the State showed the strike call getting a good response at all levels.

Curiously in many places like in North Dinajpur, Balurghat, Bankura, Burdwan, Midnapore and Kolkata members of even the Trinamool Congress workers' unions joined the strike saying they were against "wasteful expenditures incurred by the Government to purchase votes by depriving the workers their rightful DA demands."

In the backdrop of "massive response" to the strike call experts said, "that Bengal



Police personnel attempt to stop Students' Federation of India (SFI) activists during their march towards West Bengal Legislative Assembly to protest against the alleged dismal education system and corruption, in Kolkata on Friday. PTI

had never witnessed so complete a strike in Government offices ever since the Trinamool Congress came to power in 2011, it should not auger well for the TMC administration."

Friday's strike showed that "Mamata Banerjee's grip over the administration is gradually slackening," said BN Chakrabarty, a political analyst.

Cut to Kolkata. Demonstrators picketed before the gates of State Government offices and educational institutions often forcing those who wanted to join duty to go back. At places like Writers Building, Bikash Bhavan, Khadya Bhavan, Swastha Bhavan, and Kolkata Municipal Corporation and other Government offices demonstrators squatted in front of the gates throughout the day.

The scene was no different in district and sub-divisional

headquarters, BDO, municipalities and panchayats as all these places recorded thin attendance. The BJP and the Congress too had supported the strike which meant that attendance educational institutions and Government offices in North Bengal, too, suffered heavily though Minister Udayan Guha personally took rounds of schools and colleges to ensure that the teachers signed the attendance registers.

At North Bengal University where Democratic Students' Organisation had called a separate strike, heated exchanges between the DSO and TMC students' wings led to fistfights and the police had to intervene to restore peace.

Earlier, the State administration had through a notice declared that no leave would be allowed on March 10 insisting

absence from work could cause a breakage in service.

A State Finance Department communique earlier said that all the Government offices including those receiving grants-in-aid would remain open on March 10 making it compulsory for the workers to join duty.

"No casual leave or any other kind of leave for absence either in the first half of the day or in the second half or for the whole day shall be granted to any employee on March 10," the order said adding "absence of employees on that day will be treated as dies-non (break in service) and no salary will be admissible unless such absence is covered by hospitalisation of the employees or if there is bereavement in the family, severe illness and absence continuing prior to March 9."

## SFI demands immediate union polls, holds rally

PTI ■ KOLKATA

It was a bad day for the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC Government as students added to the chaos that was already taking place in the State due to the strike by Government employees.

Demanding immediate holding of students union elections in colleges and universities in the State, around 300 activists of the Students Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI(M), took part in a rally from Calcutta University campus on College Street to West Bengal Assembly building on Friday.

Amid strict police presence along the entire 2 km stretch from College Street to the Assembly premises, around 20 SFI activists, led by State unit secretary Srijan Bhattacharya, reached one of the outer gates of the Assembly, scaled the iron fencing and shouted slogans against the Trinamool Congress Government.

Police personnel, present at the spot, had a trying time in dispersing them and the commotion continued for around 15 minutes even as the House was in session inside.

Several protestors were detained for demonstrating in the Assembly area and taken to Lalbazar. SFI state committee member Subhajit Sarkar said "despite attempts by police to halt our march towards the Assembly building, the administration did not succeed. This is our moral victory. We could reach out to Assembly and make ourselves heard".

# Gold case: Swapna makes fresh allegations against CPM brass

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The war of words between Swapna Suresh — the prime accused in the multi-crore case involving gold smuggling through diplomatic channels — and the CPI-M leadership took a new turn on Friday morning with the former accusing the Marxists and the associates of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan of hatching a plan to murder her.

"A person by the name of Vijesh Pillai, who claimed that he was representing MV Govindan, the CPI-M State secretary, met me at my residence in Bengaluru on Friday and asked me not to disclose anything against the Honourable Chief Minister of Kerala or his family members to anybody. I was offered Rs 10 crore by him while the family of the Chief Minister offered me Rs 30 crore in lieu of my silence over their roles in these scams," said Swapna Suresh in a post on her social media.

But Vijesh Pillai, while speaking to reporters said he has not met Swapna previously and does not know anything about the woman. Within seconds Swapna posted a photo-

graph of her and the controversial Pillai holding a one-to-one meeting.

Swapna in her post also disclosed that Pillai had asked her not to give the names of UAE-based Yusuf Ali and Ravi Pillai to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or to any other investigation agencies. "Pillai offered me safe passage to either Jaipur or Haryana and later to a European country where I would get a new identity," Pillai warned me that if I do not listen to him the CPI-M leadership would finish me off," alleged Swapna.

Though Pillai denied all reports about the one-hour-long meeting with Swapna, he said that the discussion was featured on a web series he was planning to make on her. "I wanted her to disclose all the evidence she had with her as no programmes could be made without the proof of allegations. Anyway, I have filed a case against her with the State police chief through e-mail," said Pillai.

MV Govindan, State CPI-M secretary, who is busy undertaking a Kerala Prathirodha Yatra from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram

to save the State and its people from the tentacles of the RSS, told media persons at Idukki that the script prepared by Swapna and the Opposition parties fell flat as it lacked credibility and reliability.

However, Leader of the Opposition VD Satheeshan, said that there was no reason to disbelieve Swapna Suresh as she had stated that there were still more information with her. This is the first time the controversial lady is dragging the names of Yusuf Ali and Ravi Pillai into the controversy. Both the business magnates enjoy close rapport with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Later in the day the CPI-M issued a statement terming the allegations baseless and a bunch of blatant lies. Despite the rejoinders issued by Vijesh Pillai and the CPI-M, Swapna Suresh remained adamant and said that she stood by what she stated in the social media. "All evidences are with the ED and the court. My intention is only to save the people of Kerala from the humongous corruption perpetrated by the chief minister and his family," she said in a posting made in the evening.

# Modi to kick off dev projects in poll-bound K'taka

Mar 12 visit to see PM launch, dedicate works of ₹16K crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit the poll-bound Karnataka on March 12 where he will dedicate and lay the foundation stones of projects worth around Rs. 16,000 crore . In Mandya, South Karnataka, the Prime Minister will dedicate the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway to the nation. The project involves six-laning of the Bengaluru-Nidaghatta-Mysuru section of NH-275. The 118-Km-long project has been developed at a total cost of around Rs 8480 crore. The project will reduce the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru from around three hours to about 75 minutes.

Besides, Modi will also lay the foundation stone for Mysuru-Khushalnagar four lane highway. Spread over 92 Km, the project will be developed at a cost of around Rs 4130 crore. The project will boost connectivity of Kushalnagar with Bengaluru and will help halve the travel time from about five to only 2.5 hours. In Hubballi-Dharwad , the Prime Minister will dedicate IT Dharwad to the nation.

The foundation stone for the institute was also laid by the Prime Minister in February 2019. Developed at a cost of over Rs. 850 crore, the institute currently offers four-year B.Tech. programs, inter-disciplinary five-year BS-MS program, M.Tech. and Ph.D. programs.

This apart, Modi will inaugurate the longest railway platform in the world at Sri Siddharoodha Swamiji Hubballi Station. The record has been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records recently. The 1507 m long platform has been built at a cost of about Rs. 20 crores.

Modi has visited the state for about six times this year.

# Pandit staff to be put up in hotels for their safety

1K rooms for 2.2K people identified by J&K admin

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory administration in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has decided to provide hotel accommodation facilities to Kashmiri Pandit Prime Minister package employees in Srinagar to ensure their safety and security.

According to official sources, about 1,000 hotel rooms have been identified for accommodation of PM Package employees in Srinagar.

About 2,200 PM Package employees are to be provided accommodation in Srinagar by the Divisional Administration, official sources said.

The announcement has been made barely one week after the PM Package employees, sitting on a dharna in Jammu since May 12, decided to suspend their ongoing protests and resumed their duties in the Valley.

Demanding safety of their lives, these employees were sitting on a dharna inside the office premises of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner

(Migrants) here in Jammu after the killing of Rahul Bhat on May 12.

They were demanding relocation to safer areas outside the Valley. Last year, a total of 29 civilians were killed by terrorists, including 21 locals (six Hindus, including three Kashmiri Pandits, and 15 Muslims) and eight from other States. Sanjay Sharma, a Kashmiri Pandit bank guard was targeted in Achan Village of Pulwama on February 26. Later he succumbed to his injuries in the local hospital.

According to the official spokesman of the UT administration, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri on Friday chaired a meeting of senior officers before deciding to provide the accommodation facility to PM Package employees.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar; Director Estates Department Kashmir; Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) J&K Srinagar; Chief Engineer, PW (R&B) Department Kashmir, Senior Superintendent of Police Security Kashmir, ACR Srinagar and other officers.

The officers held a detailed discussion over the issues of accommodation, pattern of room sharing, security and other matters.

He also directed the officers concerned to frame the criteria for allotment of accom-

modation to married and unmarried employees.

He asked Deputy Director Estates to hold talks with stakeholders about additional accommodation available for the employees.

The meeting also deliberated over the accommodation charges to be paid to hoteliers per individual.

Under the PM's Development Package, 2015 (PMDP-2015), 6,000 transit accommodations have been approved to provide accommodation to Kashmiri migrant employees in the Valley.

At present, except two, construction is underway on all the sites. According to official sources, "At least 1,200 houses will be ready by April 2023, and 2700 by December 2023".

Earlier, in December 2022 a parliamentary panel recommended to the Union Home Ministry to set a timeline for the completion of construction of the remaining transit accommodations for migrants in Kashmir Valley and ensure that the deadlines are adhered to.

In its report tabled in the Parliament, the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee of Ministry of Home Affairs has said that it is disappointed to note that precious time of four years has passed just in deciding the issue of construction of transit homes on private or Government lands.



JD(United) Bihar president Umesh Kushwaha with RJD leader Bhola Yadav, Congress leader Sameer Kumar Singh and others shows the candidates' list for Bihar Legislative Council elections at a Grand Alliance press conference, in Patna on Friday. PTI

**PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank** | Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

**Whereas**  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Physical Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Pervinder Singh Batar/ Namrata Batar/ De Rigi Tours/ LBDEL0002386817	Unit No.203, 1st Floor, Paras Trade Centre, Sector-2, Gwal Pahari, Gurgaon/ March 06, 2023	June 19, 2021 Rs. 27,25,118/-	Delhi/ NCR

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

**Date : March 10, 2023**  
**Place : Delhi/NCR**  
**Authorized Officer**  
**ICICI Bank Limited**

**ICICI Bank** | Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005

**PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]  
**Notice for sale of immovable assets**

This E-auction Sale notice for sale of Immovable asset is being issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the following borrower(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Gaurav Madan (Borrower) Ms. Pallavi Madan (Co-Borrower) QZDEL00005017511	Plot No.24 A, Old Plot No.24, First Floor, Rear Side (Without roof right), Block B1, Gali No. 5, Kharsa No. 104/13, Vil-Palamb, Rajapur, New Delhi-110059. Area: 50 Sq. Yds.	Rs. 20,87,383/- (As on March 03, 2023)	Rs. 17,10,000/- (Rs. 1,71,000/-)	March 24, 2023 from 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM	April 21, 2023 from 12:00 noon onwards

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposahub.com>). The Mortgagees/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till April 20, 2023 before 5:00 pm failing which, this secured asset will be sold as per schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before April 20, 2023 before 5:00 pm and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before April 20, 2023 before 5:00 pm along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before April 20, 2023 before 5:00 pm, Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the E-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 9599281817/ 8584874809

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Auggeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Hecta Proptech Private Limited have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/n4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/n4p4s)

**Date : March 10, 2023**  
**Place : Delhi/NCR**  
**Authorized Officer**  
**ICICI Bank Limited**

# Raj Govt made false promises to martyrs' widows: Rathore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister and BJP leader Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore on Friday attacked the Ashok Gehlot-led-Congress Government in Rajasthan for making "false promises" to the widows of martyrs in the State and paralysing governance in the border State.

Rajasthan is to go to Assembly polls before the year-end and the BJP is hoping that the State which has never returned a party twice consecutively to power would give it an opportunity to rule by ousting the Congress.

Addressing a Press conference here Rathore said the State Chief Minister did not meet the "aggrieved widows" of the Pulwama martyrs who only wanted to put up an statue and sought implementation



of the promises made by the Rajasthan Government Ministers. He alleged that police "misbehaved" with the widows.

He said the Ministers of the Gehlot Government had made tall promises to the widows but forgot them soon.

The BJP leader accused the Congress Government of allowing "leakage of question papers" and demoralising the genuine candidates and alleged paralysis in the State's governance.

# Eight farmers end life in Maha daily, says Ajit

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Ajit Pawar on Friday accused the State Government of being insensitive to farmers' problems. Eight farmers end life in Maharashtra every day, he claimed after initiating a debate on the farmers' issues in the Lower House.

"The Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis Government is insensitive to the problems of Maharashtra's farmers. Farmers' morale has plummeted because of the Maharashtra Government's anti-farmer policies," he said. "Everyday eight farmers commit suicide in the State," the Nationalist Congress Party leader asserted.

Farmers in the State are



facing challenges such as poor harvests and crop loss due to unseasonal rains, Pawar said.

They have to throw away their produce sometimes because of low prices, he said. Pawar also alleged that electricity connections to agricultural pumps are being disconnected for non-payment of power bills.

Electricity bills of farmers should be waived as they are facing the impact of inflation,

Pawar said. The economy of Maharashtra as well as the country cannot grow if farmers are in distress, the NCP leader said.

Farmers in Maharashtra were also having trouble getting crop loans, and as nationalised banks do not entertain them they have to go to money lenders, he said. If they cannot repay the loan they have to take the extreme step of ending life, he added.

Insurance companies do not pay out crop insurance if farmers face losses due to heavy or unseasonal rains, Pawar said. Production costs have increased due to rising prices of fertiliser, he said, adding that unless fertiliser prices are brought under control, farmers in Maharashtra will not get any profit.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

# New India

## PM Modi’s response will be tough, but to ‘real’, not ‘perceived’, provocations

The American intelligence community has submitted a report to the lawmakers which says that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is more likely than in the past to respond with military force to “perceived or real” provocations from Pakistan. This is not a very accurate assessment of the situation. It is true that India no longer responds to the attacks by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists merely by strongly condemning ‘dastardly deeds’; four years ago, Balakot followed Pulwama. Our diplomats have also worked hard to convince the world that Pakistan is the jihad factory, funding and training Mujahidin terrorists all over the world. At the same time, the Government is leaving no stone unturned to neutralize sleeper cells and stop terror finance. The effects are also visible; in the last many years, there have been no major terror strikes against civilians, as was the case in the 2000s. According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal, in 2001, there were 1,067 fatalities of civilians and 590 of security personnel. In 2005, the corresponding figures were 521 and 218, and in 2019 (the last year till which these figures are available) 40 and 78. It needs to be mentioned here that the efforts to boost national defence and internal security never made India a bellicose neighbour to either Pakistan or China. PM Modi did his best to improve ties with Islamabad. He invited his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif to his first swearing-in ceremony in May 2014. In December 2015, he made an unscheduled trip to attend Sharif’s granddaughter’s wedding.

Yet, he neither lowered his guard nor let the personal bonhomie to eclipse security concerns. So, 11 days after the Uri attack that killed 18 Indian soldiers, he ordered the Indian Army carry out surgical strikes on the night of September 28-29, 2016, resulting in the killing of a large number of terrorists. Therefore, while it is correct that India’s response to the “real” provocations from Pakistan would be swift and severe, there would be no jingoistic action occasioned by any “imaginary” threat. Either from Pakistan or from China. This becomes evident from the fact that before the Chinese perfidy in June 2020 in Galwan, PM Modi made all efforts to improve relations with Beijing. He met Chinese President Xi Jinping 18 times till Galwan. And even after June 2020, he took real measures like banning Chinese apps and bolstering security at the Line of Actual Control rather than firing verbal salvos at China. More importantly, he gave an unprecedented impetus to the Quad, the security arrangement involving India, the US, Japan, and Australia. This is a real and efficacious measure to check the dragon which has been running amok under Xi. China’s unease with it is visible; it has blamed the Quad of ‘encirclement’, of being ‘an Asian Nato.’ In a nutshell, PM Modi has, to a large extent, transformed India’s approach to national defence and security. The approach of New India is firm without being chauvinistic.



Students of Gajera Vidhanbhavan arrange plastic cover of pens, to give message, 'Save Environment', in Surat

# Develop digital literacy skills to make a change

## The ability to use technology, communication tools and networks along with proper netiquette is extremely essential

For a person or an organisation accessing their work digitally, it becomes important to find, evaluate and effectively use the pool of online information. Also, one must have the ability and intent to create and share content digitally.

The covid-19 pandemic has taught the people of India, especially the elderly how to adapt to new technologies to facilitate their tasks. It has also provided them with an effective means against loneliness and social isolation caused by confinement. Today everyone is surrounded by the digital world in some way or other be it paying online bills, booking movie tickets, shopping, ordering food from their favourite restaurants, or even signing contracts in just one click but at the same time it becomes important to talk about the highly rated term Digital Literacy for individuals who are still disconnected or are very little related to the digital world.

At its core, digital literacy is the ability to use digital technology to access, understand and use information effectively and efficiently.



According to the American Library Association, digital literacy is defined as the ability to use information and communication to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills. Professionals such as an educator, architects, doctors, warehouse operators, contractors managing construction sites and many more require digital communication at some point in time for searching or extracting information from across varied digital channels. Moreover, the biggest advantage of digital content being accessible on personal devices often makes an individual retain the information for a long time and enhances the knowledge. The best part

about going digital is that a user does not require the mandatory skills of coding to be successful but what forms the utmost importance is digital literacy.

It becomes necessary for an individual, especially the nation builders of the future—the children, to develop digital literacy skills for these skills are going to help them in creating their future as many businesses today are setting up their own online applications which require submission of resumes through email. To develop digital literacy skills, a child should start using technology in everyday life for simple tasks such as reading a blog and articles, writing an email and sending it to its near and dear ones or joining an online community that will help in connecting with others and many more.

Parents too can help develop digital literacy skills at home by monitoring the use of technology in terms of time being spent online, websites being accessed, and interactions done by them over social media. When such skills are inculcated at an appropriate age will the child

know the limitations of technology and understand the dangers and precautions that the use of this digital technology requires. Though the biggest disadvantage associated with the use of technology is that it will make a person addicted, socially isolated, obese or even anxious at the same time improve academic performance, and creativity due to interaction with different people, enhanced communication skills followed by multitasking and many more outweigh the risks.

Today digital consumption has become a part of our daily lives. As we look to the future, it's clear that digital literacy will continue to play increasingly important roles in everyone's life. Proper knowledge and effective usage of online practices will help in increasing safety. Digital literacy is the building block of the digital India vision.. In a world where AI is deployed at scale, understanding how to adopt AI systems and knowing where to apply Machine Learning capabilities will be a major component of digital literacy. (The author is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)



SAKSHI SETHI

# Why do street dogs bite?

## One must look at the context for answers. To curb this menace, we must look at the root cause of the problem

Periodic furores over street dogs biting humans raise the question of whether they are innately ferocious and a menace to people. Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989) wrote in Man Meets Dog, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of the friendship and the strength of the spiritual ties with which he has bound himself to man." Lorenz should know. An Austrian zoologist, ethnologist and ornithologist, and recipient of the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl Von Frisch, he is regarded as one of the founders of modern ethnology as well as the study of animal behaviour.

There have been innumerable instances of dogs dying or risking death to save humans. JN Gupta, a member of the Indian Civil Service, was commissioner of the Burdwan division in Bengal in the early 1920s. His official residence was at a place called Chinsurah on the Ganges, in which he bathed every day. One evening, a crocodile moved to attack him. While the others watched in horror from the shore, a stray dog, whom he fed occasionally, jumped on the head of the crocodile. This disoriented the latter so completely that Gupta could wade ashore, where the stray dog joined him with a leap. Thenceforward, he became a much-loved member of the Gupta family.

In Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights, Steven M Wise, founder and president of the United States-based Nonhuman Rights Project, and a noted scholar of jurisprudence pertaining to animal issues, cited the instance of the primatologist, Roger Fout's dog, Brownie, diving under the family's backing pick-up truck which was about to hit his nine-year-old brother Ed. He quotes Fout, who was then four years old, as writing subsequently that not a family member "doubted for a while that Brownie had sacrificed her own life to save my brother."

Dogs instinctively protect children and babies. On 25 May 1996, the Bengali daily, Aajkaal, carried on its front page a report, by Pinaki Majumdar, along with



a photograph by Tapan Mukherjee, of three stray dogs guarding an abandoned newborn baby—a girl—near a dustbin in a Kolkata street. They remained there from May 23 night to May 24 morning when they followed her to a local police station to which she was taken by some local people, returning to their own turf only after the baby was taken to a home. They had not even gone to look for food in the interim.

In Tumkur, Karnataka, three dogs saved the life of a newborn baby abandoned by its mother in the Devarayanadurga reserved forest. According to a report in the Bangalore edition of The New Indian Express of March 10, 2007, fearing social ostracization, the mother, a young girl made pregnant by a forest department employee who subsequently refused to marry her, went into the forest with a person and delivered the baby. She and the person then came away but three dogs from the village, who had accompanied them into the forest, stayed back guarding the baby. The next morning, their barks attracted the attention of a man who had gone into the forest and who, bringing

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION IS A VIGOROUS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CANINE BIRTH CONTROL PROGRAMME WHICH WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE STREET DOG POPULATION

ing the baby back to the village, returned it to the mother after finding her. The episode ended happily. The villagers patted the dogs profusely and resolved to get the girl married to the man who had made her pregnant.

These are just a few examples from a long narrative of warm dog-human ties that date back to the later stone age or the Neolithic Age, which began around 10,000 BCE when, according to Lorenz in Man Meets Dog, the first human settlements came up. Dogs had already become domesticated by then. The period since then has witnessed the evolution of a relationship that has led canines to be called "man's best friend."

One has to look for the causes of street dogs biting humans in the circumstances in which these occur. While a growing number of street dogs have referral homes or individuals or animal welfare organisations feeding and caring for them, the overwhelming majority search for food near restaurants, roadside food stalls, shops, homes and dustbins. They are shoofed off, beaten with sticks and/or stoned at most places, leaving them hungry, injured and

resentful. Again, when bitch-litter, puppies are often killed or taken away and abandoned somewhere else by people who don't want them around. Bitches react, sometimes by biting. Besides, they tend to become aggressive not only towards their tormentors but humans as a species. Hence, cases of attack on people who have not harmed them in any way and pre-emptive attacks to prevent harm to puppies.

The ultimate solution is a vigorous implementation of the canine birth control programme which would significantly reduce street dog populations and, consequently, the scope for conflictual situations arising between them and humans. In the interim, feeding and caring for street dogs should be encouraged as well-fed and contented canines are less likely to be aggressive than hungry and angry ones. Also, the feeders and carers can play a most useful role in catching street dogs, which would not run away from them, for the canine birth control programme.

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Satish Kaushik's untimely departure



With the passing of the famous Bollywood actor Satish Kaushik, Indian cinema lost one of its true legends who will be best remembered for partying with some of the famous characters such as Manu Manek Mudra and advocate Sadhuram. He was a truly creative genius who won hearts of his fans, thanks to his wonderful acting and direction, especially with his comedy roles, he was a multi-talented artist, a wonderful actor known for comedy roles,

great director, comedian and screenwriter. He was the alumnus of the 1978 batch of The National School of Drama New Delhi, one of the foremost theatre training institutions in India. who went on to give many top hits in films like Mr India, Tere Naam and Roop Ki rani choron Ka Raja. but Satish will be most remembered for writing the dialogues of 1983 Jaane Bhi Do Yaro. He was an incredible comedian who brightened our lives with his laughter, he was sharp with a great knack for making us laugh. he will be immensely missed by the film fraternity and millions of admirers. Thank you Satish, you were a genius for making us laugh, It will be appropriate to call him the icon of comedy who gave a new direction to humour, your legacy will stay forever. I express my condolences to his family, fans and friends, may god give them the strength to bear this grief, RIP Satish Kaushik. Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

dering standards similar to those followed by other regulated entities like banks or stock brokers. Digital currency and assets like NFTs (non-fungible tokens) have gained traction globally over the last couple of years. However, India till last year, did not have a clear policy on either regulating or taxing such asset classes. The notification revealed that Exchange between virtual digital assets and fiat currencies, exchange between one or more forms of virtual digital assets, transfer of virtual digital assets, safekeeping or administration of virtual digital assets or instruments enabling control over virtual digital assets, and participation in financial services will be now be covered by Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

### DEMENTIA IS A BIG PROBLEM

Sir — As per the report, more than 10 million older adults aged 60 or over in India have dementia, comparable to the prevalence rates for countries such as the US and the UK, according to a first-of-its-kind study. Dementia leads to impairment of

mental processes, such as memory, thinking, reasoning and judgement, and thus seriously impairs an individual's ability to perform daily functions. According to a study published in the journal Nature Public Health Emergency Collection, by 2050 people over 60 years of age are predicted to constitute 20 per cent of the total population in India. The latest research, published in the journal Neuroepidemiology, used an artificial intelligence (AI) technique known as semi-supervised machine learning to analyze data from 31,477 older adults. The international team of researchers found that the prevalence rate of dementia in adults aged 60 or over in India could be 8.44 per cent equating to 10.08 million older adults in the country. The prevalence of dementia was greater for those who were older, was females, received no education, and lived in rural areas, the researchers found.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SPORTS IN EDUCATION

For all-round development of children sports are as vital



The significance of incorporating sports in education has been widely acknowledged because sports foster holistic development by improving physical and psychological well-being while also enhancing cognitive capacities. As stated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning), holistic education integrates physical education and sports with the education curriculum. While participating in sports and taking part in physical activities outside of the classroom, the students learn real-life lessons through the fundamental principles of sports such as fair play, working as a team, spirit of winning and losing, cooperation, discipline, tolerance, respect for rules etc.

Given the benefit it provides for social and personal growth, increasing access and participation in sports is a key development objective. These abilities help in promoting social cohesion among communities and cultures and are necessary for future engagement in group activities and professional life. NEP 2020 further stress upon the interaction of sports in pedagogical approaches that utilize physical activities including indigenous sports in pedagogical practices to help in developing skills such as col-



laboration, discipline, taking initiative and responsibility, self-direction, teamwork and citizenship etc. It focuses on sports integrated learning in the classroom to help students adopt fitness as a lifelong attitude and achieve the related life skills as laid down in the FIT India movement Education t. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) which is in the formulation stage will include sports, fitness and other aspects of the school curriculum. The "FIT India" movement has been initiated to take the nation forward on the path of fitness and wellness with a vision to bring about behavioural changes and move towards a more physically active lifestyle. The main goals and objectives of this movement are to promote fitness as easy, fun and free; spread awareness on fitness and various physical activities that promote fitness through focused campaigns; encourage indigenous sports; make fitness reach every level.

The mandate of FIT India is to create awareness about the importance of physical activity and to encourage schools to incorporate sports from an early stage which is a prerequisite if we want to develop athletes of the highest calibre who can compete at the international level. Several new and innovative initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen the impact and spread awareness of FIT India as a movement. The centrally sponsored scheme of "Samagra Shiksha" has been aligned with this policy. Under the scheme, an annual sports grant has been provided to all government schools with an additional sports grant of Rs 25,000 available to schools from where at least two students have won medals at the National level. FIT India Mission encourages schools to organize a FIT India School Week in November/December. States should be encouraged to prioritise one game "One state, One sport" outlook based on the available talent pool, natural interest and available infrastructure. This will bring a focused approach and also allow for the optimum utilization of existing resources in the state. To develop active sporting culture, there is a need to organize games at local, district, state and national levels. As is evident, sports talent lies in rural areas and underprivileged families where budding sports persons are tough due to their upbringing in difficult conditions. The hilly areas with tough living conditions have the potential of generating good athletes. The nation needs more leagues and competitions at different levels on higher frequencies to increase participation and to provide the necessary platform for young athletes to hone their skills. Our schools, colleges and universities possess large untapped potential. The need of the hour is to provide sports facilities to the upcoming sportspersons, provide them facilities and a conducive environment to nurture themselves.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman of the Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh)

# Setback for China in Himalayan Kingdom



The election of the nominee of the eight parties' alliance including the Nepali Congress, has isolated pro-china forces headed by ex-PM Oli



Politics is a game of uncertainties besides being an intriguing feeding of weary and fatigued cynicism about the whole exercise of democracy and it holds true to political turmoil in Nepal which is poised to have yet another central government after the withdrawal of support by the former prime minister, K P S Oli's faction on Feb 27, 2023, thereby reducing present Prachanda's government in minority.

The election of eight parties' nominee, Ram Chandra Poudel as the next President of Nepal will pave the way for the formation of a new coalition central government headed by Pushap Dahal 'Prachanda' as the new combination will have required a majority of 138 MPs in the house of 275.

Out of 52,628 votes, Paudel got 33,702 votes whereas his rival, Subas Nembang could garner the support of 15,518 votes only. Five out of a total of 831 federal and provincial lawmakers were invalid where as 312 votes from the federal lawmakers and 514 votes from the provincial assembly members were found valid.

The withdrawal of the support by the CPN-UML faction headed by Oli was intended to destabilize the Prachanda government but in vain which has given a big setback to China as the former PM is considered a diehard supporter and loyalist of Dragon.

But The election of eight parties' nominee, Ram Chandra Poudel as President of Nepal will pave the way for the formation of a new coalition central government headed by Pushap Dahal 'Prachanda' as the new combination will have required a majority of 138



AT PRESENT, PRACHANDA'S GOVERNMENT IS SAFE AS EIGHT OUT OF 12 PARTIES ARE SUPPORTING IT, WHICH INCLUDE A MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, NEPALI CONGRESS

MPs in the house of 275. The withdrawal of the support by the CPN-UML faction headed by Oli was intended to destabilize the Prachanda government but in vain which has given a big setback to China as the former PM is considered a diehard supporter and loyalist of Dragon.

Nepali congress candidate and former speaker, Poudel supported by prime minister, Prachanda, emerged victorious in a direct contest as he was supported by eight out of 12 political parties including Nepali Congress, the CPN (Unified Socialist, Madhav Nepal), the CPN (Maoist Centre, Prachanda), the Nagarik Unmukti Party, the Janamat Party, the Janata Samajbadi Party, the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party and the Rashtriya Janamorchha.

Contrary to Ex-PM, Oli could muster the support of four parties only which has been responsible for the humiliating defeat of his candidate, Rabi Lamichhane. Oli's party, CPN.UML was a coalition partner in the Prachanda government but Ex-PM withdrew the support on Feb 27, 2023, following the prime minister's decision to support the opposition-backed candidate for the post of President.

The president and vice-president are elected through an electoral college consisting of federal lawmakers and members of provincial assemblies whose vote weightage is different.

**Good news for india**  
Nepali congress headed by Sher Bahadur Deuba had fielded its candidate Ram Chandra Poudel for the post of President which was scheduled for March 9.

Poudel's candidature was seconded by the President of Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, Mahanta Thakur, Congress vice-president Purna Bahadur Khadka, Nagarik Unmukti Party Chairperson, Ranjita Shrestha, Chairman of the Rastriya Janamorchha, Chitra Bahadur KC and Maoist Centre's Hitraj Pande.

With support from eight political parties, Poudyal's victory in the presidential election was certain.

The tenure of the current president, Bidya Devi Bhandari, will end on March 12. Bhandari had earned the wrath of the Nepali Congress when she refused to invite the single largest party in parliament to form a new government in 2020 after the defeat of the Oli government on the floor of the house.

The Nepali Congress, the largest party in the general election with 89 seats had stood by Prachanda during the trust vote on January 10, 2023, and political equations changed when the new prime minister favoured presidential poll through consensus which was rejected by Oli who immediately withdrew his party's support.

**No immediate threat to Oli**

At present, Prachanda's government is safe as eight out of 12 parties are supporting it which include a major opposition party Nepali Congress, Prachanda's Maoists Centre, Madhav Nepal, EX PM's Unified Socialists, Nagarik Unmukti Party, the Janamat Party, the Janata Samajbadi Party, the Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, and the Rashtriya Janamorchha. The revival of the Pre-poll alliance of five parties and assured support of four parties cross the mark of 138 required for a simple majority in the house of 275 which includes NC(89 MPs), Prachanda's Maoists Centre(32), Madhav Nepal, EX PM's Unified Socialists(10) and Rashtriya Swatantra Party led by former TV journalist Ravi Lamichhane(20).

EX PM Oli's party CPN(UML) having 79 MPs in parliament stands isolated and it has been rendered irrelevant despite its withdrawal of support from Prachanda's government. It may be recalled that Prachanda's party had contested the Nov.2020 parliamentary and provincial elections as a partner of the five-party alliance led by the Nepali Congress which left the alliance after it refused to give Prachanda any of the two key posts viz. the president or the prime minister.

(Writer is a political analyst who covered Nepal for six years. This is the first part of a two-part series on Nepal. The views expressed are personal)

# Reviving rural tourism in Punjab

G-20 Summit is an excellent opportunity to support rural tourism in Punjab

The presidency of G-20 is a unique opportunity for India to show global leadership and will have made the world realize the theme

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". In Punjab, the heritage holy city of Amritsar is all set to host a G-20 meeting during 15-17 March on education and 19-20 March on labour. As a part of the G20 summit, Punjab has also an opportunity to showcase its rich heritage, must explore the potential of its rural tourism and position itself as a major tourist destination. In previous G-20 summits, various host countries have also shown their unique food, culture and heritage being eternal parts of international diplomacy that transcend boundaries and barriers.



(The Writer is Vice-Chairman of the Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board. Views expressed are personal)

Punjabis are robust and are renowned for their warmth and hospitality, and should strive to give an impetus to our rich culture, craft and cuisine. The swaying green fields of Punjab would welcome the world's most powerful countries leaders who are representing 85 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), 75 per cent of global trade and 66 per cent of the world population, making it the premier forum for international economic cooperation.

Among G-20 countries like the US, and European Union and South Africa rural tourism practices continue to be popular. The seeds of rural tourism were first sown by an Italian National Legal Framework passed in 1985.

Villages of Punjab are rich in tradition and cultural heritage but unfortunately due to economic distress, the younger rural generation migrates abroad. To overcome problems like lack of social recognition and respect, lack of adequate farm income, etc. the young generations are not willing to take up agriculture as a profession. Thus, the time has come for the policy-makers to successfully harness the potential of rural tourism as a policy, promotional activities and incentives for an agriculturist-entrepreneur to set up a functional farm for the recreational purpose of visitors. It can be seen as an additional and sustainable source of income for the rural population with the existing resources they have.

Punjab having rich holy heritage sites need linkage with rural tourism in all three cultural/geographical regions. In Majha, Sachkhand Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar-witnesses maximum tourists, in the Malwa region Sri Muktsar and Sri Fatehgarh Sahib and Sri Anandpur Sahib and Sri Chamkaur Sahib in Doaba region lie between rivers Ravi, Beas, Satluj and Ghaghar and Ranjit Sagar Dam are the most rejoiced destinations in India. Farms all over Punjab exemplify the simplicity, Wetland Hari-Kepattan and Wild sanctuaries Harike and Shivalik ranges are natural wonders as well as calmness and refreshment to the core.

Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion

Board(PHTPB) initiated the Farm Tourism Scheme in 2013 to promote rural tourism and farms for the home stay but it is not more than some guidelines and did not scale up at large due to a lack of rural-tourism policy having a holistic approach. Out of the total of 13,006 villages, there are only 43 rural tourism sites registered with PHTPB and nine villages were selected for the Rural Tourism Cluster scheme of the government of India, which need more to be explored and developed as there is an imbalance in the distribution of these sites. Out of 43, there are 29 rural tourism sites in the periphery of Chandigarh's neighbouring districts of Mohali, Ropar, Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib. On the other hand, there are

11 districts(Half of Punjab) that do not have even a single rural tourism site through a national strategy on rural tourism that has been approved based on an overarching theme of sustainable and responsible tourism.

For the farmers, it is not only a brand new source of income but also much easier than planting and harvesting crops. The new income comes without the frustrations of irregular weather, volatile prices and fear of droughts, pests and plant disease, but there are some significant barriers due to the lack of familiarity with tourist expectations. The transition from traditional agriculture to rural tourism is quite a challenge for the farmers. At least in all 148 blocks, PHTPB should create

Rural Tourism Clusters and do it in the community by using some Panchayat funds to create lodging, food and safari for tourists. Policy and subsidies directly targeting rural tourism are important and equally necessary for the sound utilization of local resources and the creation of essential services for tourists in a specific region to increase rural income. Thus farmers can turn their farmlands parallel into tourist destinations and open their doors to tourists to share more about what they do. This innovative nature of resilient, sustainable, inclusive and responsible tourism, is focused on safe mobility, crisis management, resilience, inclusiveness, green transformation, digital transition, investment and infrastructure in rural areas.



# Iran, Saudi Arabia agree to restore ties

MAJOR DIPLOMATIC WIN FOR CHINA

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed on Friday to reestablish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after seven years of tensions between the Mideast rivals.

The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated with China lowers the chance of armed conflict between the nations — both directly and in proxy conflicts around the region.

The deal, struck in Beijing this week amid its ceremonial National People's Congress, represents a major diplomatic victory for the Chinese as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States slowly withdrawing from the wider Middle East.

It also comes as diplomats have been trying to end a years long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi

Arabia are deeply entrenched.

The two countries released a joint communique on the deal with China, which brokered the agreement. Chinese state media did not immediately report the agreement.

Iranian state media posted images and video it described as being taken in China of the meeting.

It showed Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, with Saudi national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban and Wang Yi, China's most senior diplomat.

"After implementing of the decision, the foreign ministers of the both nations will meet to prepare for exchange of ambassadors," Iranian state television said. It added that the talks had been held over four days.

The joint statement calls for the reestablishing of ties and the reopening of embassies to happen "within a maximum period of two months."

In the footage aired by Iranian media, Wang could be

heard offering "whole-hearted congratulations" on the two countries' "wisdom."

"Both sides have displayed sincerity," he said. "China fully supports this agreement."

China, which last month hosted Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, is also a top purchaser of Saudi oil. President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh in December to attend meetings with oil-rich Gulf Arab nations crucial to China's energy supplies.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Shamkhani as calling the talks "clear, transparent, comprehensive and constructive."

"Removing misunderstandings and the future-oriented views in relations between Tehran and Riyadh will definitely lead to improving regional stability and security, as well as increasing cooperation among Persian Gulf nations and the world of Islam for managing current challenges," Shamkhani was quoted as saying.

Shortly after the Iranian announcement, Saudi state media began publishing the same statement. Tensions have been high between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The kingdom broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts there.

Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier, triggering the demonstrations. The execution came as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, then a deputy, began his rise to power.

The son of King Salman, Prince Mohammed at one point compared Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler, and also threatened to strike Iran.

In the years since, tensions have risen dramatically across the Middle East since the US unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. Iran has been blamed for a series of attacks in the time since, including one that targeted the heart of Saudi

Arabia's oil industry in 2019, temporarily halving the kingdom's crude production.

Though Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels initially claimed the attack, Western nations and experts have blamed the attack on Tehran.

Iran long has denied launching the attack. It has also denied carrying out other assaults later attributed to the Islamic Republic.

Beyond the regional politics, religion also plays a key role. Saudi Arabia, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that Muslims pray toward five times a day, has long portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation.

Iran's theocracy meanwhile views itself as the protector of the Islam's Shiite minority.

The two powerhouses also have competing interests elsewhere, such as in the turmoil now tearing at Lebanon and in the rebuilding of Iraq after decades of war following the US-led 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute who long has studied the region, said Saudi Arabia reaching the deal with Iran came after the United Arab Emirates reached a similar understanding with Tehran.

"This dialling down of tensions and de-escalation has been underway for three years and this was triggered by Saudi acknowledgement in their view that without unconditional US backing they were unable to project power vis-a-vis Iran and the rest of the region," he said.

Prince Mohammed, now focused on massive construction projects in his own country, likely wants to finally pull out of the Yemen war as well, Ulrichsen added.

"Instability could do a lot of damage to his plans," he said.

The Houthis seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognised government into exile in Saudi Arabia.

## US supports dialogue between India-Pak

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States supports a constructive dialogue and meaningful conversation between India and Pakistan, the Biden administration said Thursday reiterating that it's for New Delhi and Islamabad to decide on the nature of that dialogue.

The US is ready to play its role if they agree, it added. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price, in response to a question, refused any meditating role for the US for talks between India and Pakistan.

"Because these are decisions for the countries themselves. If they agree on a particular role for the United States, the United States is prepared to, as a partner to both countries, support that process in any way that we responsibly can," Price told reporters at a news conference.

"Analysts believe that the United States has the power

and authority to mediate between the two partners. Pakistan and India are partners of yours, so why don't you just mediate?" he was asked.

"Ultimately, it is not for the United States to determine the modalities or the way in which India and Pakistan engage one another. What we support is constructive dialogue, meaningful diplomacy between India and Pakistan, in the first instance to resolve longstanding conflicts," Price said.

"Our message to India and about India is consistent. India is a global strategic partner of the United States. The engagements we've had with our Indian partners at the ministerial level, at the leader level, at all levels has been in furtherance of deepening the already extensive ties between our two countries," Ned Price said. "These are ties that are political in nature, diplomatic, economic, security and importantly, people-to-people ties," he said.

# UN watchdog reports rise in drug seizures in India

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

There has been significant increase in seizures of drugs in India over the past five years, with the darknet and maritime routes emerging as the preferred modes of trafficking, according to a UN narcotics watchdog.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in its 2022 Annual Report, released on Thursday, also noted "proactive regulations" by India to deal with the illicit manufacture of large quantities of synthetic drugs.

The report said there has been a significant increase in seizures of drugs over the past five years, with the darknet and maritime routes emerging as the preferred modes of trafficking.

In the period 2017–2022, heroin seizures increased from 2,146 kg in 2017 to 7,282 kg in 2021.

There has also been an increase of more than 70 per cent in seizures of opium, from 2,551 kg in 2017 to 4,386 kg in 2021, and a more than 90 per cent

increase in seizures of cannabis, from 3,52,539 kg in 2017 to 6,75,631 kg in 2021, the report said, citing information reported by the Narcotics Control Board of India.

The report said that port officials in India have reported seizures of large quantities of heroin detected in shipping containers, including almost 3 tons detected in Gujarat in September 2021, "which suggests there has been an expansion of drug trafficking along the southern route and through the Arabian Sea."

In Asia, India reported that seizures of cocaine amounted to 364 kg in 2021.

In the previous three years, such seizures averaged only about 40 kg. The record level of seizures in 2021 was attributable to a single seizure involving 300 kg of cocaine discovered in a container that had originated in Panama and transited through Antwerp, Belgium, and Colombo.

In March 2022, Sri Lanka Customs at the port of Colombo found 350 kg of

cocaine in a container that had arrived from Panama via Belgium and Dubai, United Arab Emirates; the consignment had been destined for India.

In 2020, nine countries in Asia reported the seizure of a total of 1.2 tons of tramadol, a substance not under international control, of which India accounted for almost the entire amount intercepted.

That was a significant increase over 2019 when India seized 144 kg of tramadol and other countries in South Asia reported combined seizures of 70 kg.

"The seizure operations in India led to the dismantling of a major international criminal network trafficking tramadol and other psychoactive substances that exploited the darknet," it said.

It further said that as global demand for synthetic drugs such as pharmaceutical opioids and illicitly produced methamphetamine, MDMA and ketamine continues to grow, illicit manufac-

turing and trafficking organisations are expected to increase their global activities.

"India, which is home to a large chemical and pharmaceutical industry, has witnessed the rise of commercial chemical factories that have been adapted to illicitly manufacture large quantities of synthetic drugs and their precursors," the report said adding that this development has been driven by the availability of highly qualified but underemployed chemists, who are susceptible to recruitment by criminal organisations.

"To address that situation, more proactive regulations are being developed and coordination among government agencies is being improved in order to facilitate the early detection and scheduling of new psychoactive substances," it said. In addition, the regulation of online drug sales is being improved, and both traditional and digital investigative capacities are being enhanced.

...proposes to double economic aid to Pak

## Banga wins more support

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A coalition of 55 leading academics, economists, including three Nobel laureates, have endorsed the nomination of Indian-American Ajay Banga as the next President of the World Bank, describing him as the right person to lead the international financial institution as a "force multiplier" at a critical moment for the world economy.

Banga, 63, was nominated by US President Joe Biden as the next President of the World Bank last month.

In an open endorsement letter published on Thursday, 55 advocates, academics, executives, luminaries, and former government officials supported the business leader's nomination to the post of President of the World Bank, indicating that the former MasterCard



CEO's candidacy is gaining ground.

The four Nobel laureates to endorse Banga are Dr Joseph Stiglitz, recipient of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences; Dr Michael Spence, recipient of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences and Professor Muhammad Yunus, recipient of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

"A truly global citizen, Ajay has extensive experience living and working in developing

economies. Importantly, as a leader with a deep appreciation for the global south, he intuitively understands that economic growth can only be sustained if people and nature thrive together, not apart," the letter said.

It added that Banga understands the World Bank must serve as a force multiplier by setting the correct agenda and then catalysing action across governments, the private sector, multilateral development banks, civil society, and philanthropies.

"Banga possesses a rare combination of leadership; track record of building successful alliances across the public, private, and social sectors; and experience working in developing countries for tackling some of the most critical challenges facing our world," the endorsement letter added.

## King Charles III gives Duke of Edinburgh title to Prince Edward

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's King Charles III has conferred the title of Duke of Edinburgh upon his youngest brother Prince Edward to mark his 59th birthday, Buckingham Palace announced on Friday.

The Dukedom was last created for the King's late father, Prince Philip, in 1947, upon his marriage to then Princess Elizabeth, who held the title of Duchess of Edinburgh before ascending to the throne as Queen Elizabeth II in 1952.

It was widely expected that the title would pass on to Edward as per the wishes of his father, who died in April 2021, and will be held by him for his lifetime.

"His Majesty the King has been pleased to confer the Dukedom of Edinburgh upon Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and Forfar, on the occasion of His Royal Highness's 59th birthday," Buckingham Palace said.

"The new Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh are proud

to continue Prince Philip's legacy of promoting opportunities for young people of all backgrounds to reach their full potential," the palace said.

Prince Edward – 13th in the line of succession to the British throne – becomes the Duke of Edinburgh almost two years after the death of his father, Philip, who held the title for more than 70 years.

His wife, Sophie, the former Countess of Wessex, is now the Duchess of Edinburgh and their 15-year-old son James, Viscount Severn, becomes 14th in line to the throne as the new Earl of Wessex – the title previously held by Edward.

To mark their new titles, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh will be in the Scottish capital on Friday for a reception to mark the first year of conflict in Ukraine.

To formalise the change, the 74-year-old monarch issued a new Letters Patent, a document from a British sovereign issued under the Great Seal of the Realm.

# Biden reveals \$6.9T budget, pitches tax hikes on billionaires

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden on Thursday unveiled a USD 6.9 trillion annual budget for the year 2024, which proposes a hefty tax on the rich, massive spending on social measures and investment on building key infrastructure.

The budget was termed a "non-starter" by the Republicans who have a majority in the House of Representatives.

Biden at a rally in Philadelphia asserted that his budget reflects what "we can do to" lift the burden on hard working Americans and it would reduce the deficit this year by USD 160 billion.

"To support working parents, my budget expands access to affordable childcare for millions of families. And it's going to invest in paid family medical leave," Biden said, adding that his budget also invests in elder care and home care and restores the child tax credit.

Biden said the budget will deliver funding to help the US lead the world again. "My budget also invests in critical issues that matter to families, increasing the supply of affordable housing, lower rental costs, and make it easier to buy a home, all of which will generate economic growth and prosperity," he said.

Asserting that he brought down

### ...proposes to double economic aid to Pak

**Washington (PTI):** US President Joe Biden has proposed to double the economic support fund to cash-strapped Pakistan to USD 82 million for fiscal 2024 to help its recovery from devastating floods, diversify the energy supply, and support activities to build emergency preparedness capabilities.

"Assistance to Pakistan will expand private sector economic growth; strengthen democratic institutions; and advance gender equity and women's empowerment," the State Department said.

In Pakistan, the assistance will support the country's recovery from devastating floods, diversify the energy supply, and support activities to build emergency preparedness capabilities," said the State Department's budgetary proposal



President Joe Biden speaks about his 2024 budget proposal at the Finishing Trades Institute on Thursday

which was sent to Congress.

The budget proposes to give Pakistan USD 82 million for fiscal 2024, beginning in October, under the Economic Support Fund category.

the deficit of USD 1.7 trillion more than any president in American history, Biden said his latest budget is going to reduce the deficit by nearly USD 3 trillion over 10 years.

The budgetary proposals call for imposing a 25 per cent minimum tax on the wealthiest 0.01 per cent of households, quadrupling a one per cent surcharge on corporate stock

buybacks, restoring the top marginal income tax rate to 39.6 per cent. It proposes to raise the corporate income tax rate from 21 per cent to 28 per cent.

"No billionaire should be paying a lower tax than somebody working as a schoolteacher or a firefighter or any of you in this room. So, my plan is to make sure the corporations begin

to pay their fair share. It used to be 35 per cent. We cut it down to 21 per cent. I think we should be paying 28 per cent," he said.

"There's going to be a real fight in that but we should be paying more than 21 per cent. And I made clear under my plan, and I made this commitment when I ran and I haven't broken it yet and I never will," he said.

Acknowledging that there are sharp differences with the Republicans, Biden said he is willing to sit down with them to talk and negotiate.

"My budget is about investing in America and all of America, including places and people and folks who have been forgotten. Amid the economic upheaval of the past four decades, too many people have been left behind or treated like they're invisible. Not anymore," he said.

The opposition Republican party was very critical of the budget. "President Joe Biden's budget is a reckless proposal doubling down on the same Far Left spending policies that have led to record inflation and our current debt crisis," said Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Majority Leader Steve Scalise, Majority Whip Tom Emmer, and Republican Conference Chairwoman Elise Stefanik in a joint statement.

"After passing trillions of dollars in new deficit spending that we cannot afford, over the next 30 years, the national debt will be nearly twice the size of the entire economy. In the next ten years, the federal government will spend over USD 10 trillion on interest alone," they said.

Vice President Kamala Harris said the administration is investing in the full potential of the American people.



Hundreds of used cars covered in snow in Corby, Northamptonshire, England on Friday. The Met Office has issued warnings for northern England, the Midlands, North Wales and Northern Ireland, where "significant disruption" to transport and power supplies is expected.

## Ukraine recovers power supply

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's capital restored most of its power supply on Friday, officials said, as the country again responded swiftly and defiantly to the latest Russian missile and drone barrage targeting critical infrastructure.

In what has become a familiar Russian tactic since last fall, the Kremlin's forces struck Ukraine from afar amid months of grinding battlefield stalemate on the front line in eastern areas. The apparent aim is to weaken Ukraine's resolve and compel the Ukrainian government to negotiate peace on Moscow's terms.

Ukrainian authorities scrambled to counter the bombardment's consequences, part of a recurring cycle of urban smash-and-repair that has brought little change in the course of the war that recently moved into its second year.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said in an assess-

ment that "these missile strikes will not undermine Ukraine's will or improve Russia's positions on the front lines."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said the Russians are striking civilian infrastructure, because they can't efficiently target Ukrainian military assets.

"The Russians lack data about the location of Ukrainian troops and weapons, so they are targeting civilian infrastructure and using the same old methods of attacking civilians to sow fear and panic in the society," he said. "Ukraine has survived the winter and Russia's strikes on the energy system in the spring hardly make any sense."

Power and water were restored in Kyiv, said Serhii Popko, the head of the city's military administration. Popko said that about 30 per cent of consumers in the capital remained without heating and that repair work was ongoing.

The electricity supply was restored to more than nine in 10 consumers in Ukraine's

northeastern Kharkiv region, local officials said, while power was also restored to a third of consumers in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region.

The Russian onslaught was the largest such attack in three weeks, deploying more than 80 Russian missiles and exploding drones.

The barrage, which also damaged residential buildings, killed six people and left hundreds of thousands without heat or running water. The salvo was noteworthy for the range of munitions the Kremlin's forces used, including hypersonic Kinzhal cruise missiles that are among the most sophisticated weapons in Russia's arsenal.

Even so, the bombardments on energy infrastructure that gathered pace last fall have become less frequent.

"The interval between waves of strikes is probably growing, because Russia now needs to stockpile a critical mass of newly produced missiles directly from industry," the UK Ministry of Defence said in an assessment Friday.

## No red carpet for Oscars

**London (AP):** Many things about the Academy Awards have changed over the years, but for the past six decades there has been at least one constant: The red carpet. The hues have varied over the years, but it has always been some shade of red. Until this year. On Wednesday outside the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, workers unspooled a champagne-coloured carpet as Jimmy Kimmel, who is hosting the 95th Oscars on Sunday, presided over the occasion.

"I think the decision to go with a champagne carpet over a red carpet shows how confident we are that no blood will be shed," Kimmel said.

The decision to change the colour came from creative consultants Lisa Love, a longtime Vogue contributor, and Raúl Avila, the creative director for the glamorous Met Gala in New York. This year the carpet will be covered, in part to protect the stars and cameras from the weather, but also to help turn the arrivals into an evening event.

## Senate files cloture motion for Garcetti's nomination

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The nomination of Eric Garcetti for US Ambassador to India moved a step closer to being confirmed by the Senate as it adopted a cloture motion, indicating that the ruling Democrats have the support of a super-majority for his selection for the key position.

Such a move by Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer came a day after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at its business meeting voted 13-8 in favour of his nomination. Garcetti's nomination is pending before the US Congress since July 2021, when he was nominated for the prestigious diplomatic posting by President Joe Biden.

His nomination was not brought to the Senate floor for a vote during the last Congress as the ruling Democratic Party did not have enough support to get the 52-year-old close aide of Biden through.

On Thursday afternoon, a

Senate clerk read and brought the nomination of Garcetti to be Ambassador of the US to India on the Senate floor.

"I send the cloture motion to the desk," Schumer said on the floor which was adopted by a voice vote.

A cloture motion is a procedural motion that, if adopted, limits further debate on the matter at hand. It allows the majority to defeat efforts by the minority to delay or obstruct proceedings on a matter by showing the matter has the support of a super-majority. After that, the clerk read a message from 16 senators. "We, the undersigned senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule 22 of the standing rules of the Senate do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of executive counter number 65, Eric Garcetti of California to be ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of India," the clerk said.



# 8 killed in Jehovah’s Witnesses shooting

**AP ■ HAMBURG (GERMANY)**

A former member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses shot dead seven people, including an unborn child, at a hall belonging to the congregation in the German city of Hamburg before killing himself after police arrived, authorities said Friday. Eight people were wounded, four of them seriously. There was no immediate indication of a possible motive for Thursday night’s attack, which stunned Germany’s second-biggest city, but prosecutors said there was no evidence for a terrorist link. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, a former Hamburg mayor, described it as “a brutal act of violence.”

Hamburg’s top security official said officers who arrived just minutes after receiving the first emergency call at 9.04 pm.

A special operations unit that was nearby reached the site at 9.09 pm and was able to separate the gunman from the congregation, Hamburg’s state Interior Minister Andy Grote said.

“We can assume that they saved many people’s lives this way,” he told reporters during a news conference. Grote called the shooting “the worst crime



Armed police officers and emergency services near the scene of a shooting in Hamburg, Germany on Thursday

that our city has experience recently.”

Officials said the gunman was a 35-year-old German national identified only as Philipp F., in line with German privacy rules. He fired more than 100 rounds during the attack. Hamburg police chief

Ralf Martin Meyer said the man had a weapons license and legally owned a semi-automatic pistol.

He said the suspected shooter was previously investigated after authorities received a tip that he might not be suitable to bear firearms, but

was found not to have broken rules.

Police did not use their own firearms, a police spokesman said.

The head of Germany’s GdP police union in Hamburg, Horst Niens, said he was convinced that the swift arrival of

a special operations unit “distracted the perpetrator and may have prevented further victims.”

Germany’s gun laws are more restrictive than those in the United States, but permissive compared with some European neighbours, and shootings are not unheard of.

Last year, an 18-year-old man opened fire in a packed lecture at Heidelberg University, killing one person and wounding three others before killing himself.

In January 2020, a man shot dead six people including his parents and wounded two others in southwestern Germany, while a month later, a shooter who posted a racist rant online killed nine people near Frankfurt.

In the most recent shooting involving a site of worship, a far-right extremist attempted to force his way into a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur, Judaism’s holiest day, in October 2019. After failing to gain entry, he shot two people to death nearby.

The German government announced plans last year to crack down on gun ownership by suspected extremists and to tighten background checks.

## IS claim attack on Taliban Governor in Afghanistan

**AP ■ ISLAMABAD**

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that killed the governor of Afghanistan’s northern Balkh province and two other people at his office.

The regional affiliate of IS — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — is a key rival of the Taliban. The militant group has increased its attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021. Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan’s Shiite minority.

Thursday’s attack in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif killed three people, including governor Daud Muzmal, and injured four others, said local police spokesman Mohammad Asif Waziri.

The Islamic State late Thursday claimed responsibility for the attack, naming the assailant as Abdul Haq al-Khorasani.

It said Khorasani passed through all security measures to enter the official building and carry out the attack.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s chief spokesman, said Muzmal was killed “by the enemies of Islam.” He said an investigation is underway, but provided no further details.

Muzmal is one of the most senior Taliban officials to have been killed since they took power in mid-August 2021 as US and NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years of war.

In recent months, the Taliban cracked down on IS. Their security forces killed several regional members, including leaders, in separate operations in February.

## Kim Jong-un supervises frontline artillery drill

**AP ■ SEOUL**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un supervised a frontline artillery drill simulating an attack on an unspecified South Korean airfield as he called for his troops to sharpen their combat readiness in the face of his rivals’ “frantic war preparation moves,” state media said Friday.

The North Korean report came a day after South Korea’s military detected the North firing at least one short-range ballistic missile toward the sea from a site near the western coastal city of Nampo and raised the possibility that more missiles may have been launched from the area simultaneously.

The launch came as South Korea and the United States prepare to kick off their biggest combined military training exercise in years to counter the growing threat of Kim’s nuclear arsenal, which he has aggressively expanded in recent years despite the North’s deepening economic isolation and pandemic-related difficulties.

Pyeongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency said that Kim urged his troops during Thursday’s exercise to be prepared at any time to “overwhelmingly respond to and contain” the military action of the North’s enemies, which he said were proceeding with “all sorts of more frantic war preparation moves.”

He said frontline assault units should steadily intensify various simulated drills to prepare for a broad range of real-war situations and sharpen



their capabilities to carry out their two main “strategic missions, that is first to deter war and second to take the initiative in war.”

Kim’s comments were in line with an escalatory nuclear doctrine the North set into law last year, which authorizes pre-emptive nuclear strikes in various situations where it may perceive its leadership as under threat, including conventional clashes.

The North Korean report did not specify what types of artillery were involved in Thursday’s exercise or how many rockets were fired. Some of the North’s newer short-range weapons targeting South Korea includes large-sized multiple rocket launchers that experts say blur the boundaries between artillery and ballistic missile systems. North Korea describes some of its more advanced short-range systems as tactical weapons, which experts say communicates a threat to proactively use them during conventional warfare to blunt the stronger conventional forces of South Korea and the United States.

## Nepal SC issues show-cause notice to PM

**Kathmandu (PTI):** The Supreme Court of Nepal on Friday issued a show cause notice to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda on a writ petition seeking a criminal investigation against him for the killing of 5,000 people during the decade-long Maoist insurgency in the country. The petition brought by advocate Gyanendra Aran and other victims of Maoist insurgency was registered on Tuesday, Supreme Court sources said, adding that another writ by Kalyan Budhathoki was in the registration process.

Advocates Aaran and Budhathoki, who are also conflict victims, filed separate writ petitions at the Supreme Court demanding that Prachanda be investigated and prosecuted for admitting to being responsible for the killing of at least 5,000 people during the decade-long Maoist insurgency.

During a preliminary hearing on Friday, a single bench of Justice Ishwor Prasad Khatriwada ordered the defendants including the prime minister to submit a written response within 15 days on what actually had happened and why not to issue an order as demanded by the petitioners. The apex court said issuing an interim order was not necessary, citing there are not enough reasons to pass the order in the current context. The petitioners had demanded that the court issue an interim order to arrest Prachanda, the 68-year-old prime minister.

The order further states it would be appropriate to resolve various questions raised by the petitioners with regard to constitutional provisions, international practices and the apex court’s verdicts in connection with the transitional justice delivery only through the final hearings. The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

## Parl backs Xi for 3<sup>rd</sup> term as Prez

**PTI ■ BEIJING**

China’s ceremonial Parliament on Friday unanimously confirmed an unprecedented third five-year term for Xi Jinping as President and head of the military, paving the way for him to stay in power for life amid the slowdown of the economy and increasing tensions with the US and EU.

Much on the expected lines, 2,952 legislators of the National People’s Congress (NPC), often described as the rubber stamp Parliament for its routine endorsement of the Communist Party’s proposals approved Xi, the 69-year-old “core leader”, as President and the Chairman of the all-powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the high command of the two



million strong world’s largest military.

All his predecessors retired after two five-year terms. But Xi will continue, perhaps for life, as a new powerful leader of the world’s second-largest economy, heading the party, the military and the presidency, which observers say will have wider implications for China inter-

nally and externally, especially for the immediate neighbour India, considering the aggressive postures struck by the Chinese military in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Xi, known as a ‘princeling’ as he was the son of former vice-premier Xi Zhongxun who was persecuted by party founder Mao Zedong for his

liberal views, rose to ranks steadily, becoming vice president under the previous President Hu Jintao.

While Xi had the image of a sedate leader in his previous postings, he transformed himself into the most ambitious and powerful leader soon after he took over the leadership of the party in 2012, immediately followed by the Presidency and Chairman of the CMC by carrying out an unprecedented campaign against corruption in which over a million officials were punished.

## Eye on extended rule, Erdogan seeks election on May 14

**AP ■ ANKARA**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is seeking to extend his two decades in power, on Friday formally set the country’s parliamentary and presidential elections for May 14 — a month earlier than scheduled despite last month’s devastating earthquake.

The elections could be the country’s most significant vote in decades. It will determine whether the country will take a more democratic path or continue on the increasingly authoritarian course set by the strongman politician.

Erdogan has ruled over Turkey since 2003 — first as prime minister and as president since 2014 — but this year’s elections could be his most


challenging. The country is struggling with a troubled economy, soaring inflation and the aftermath of the powerful earthquake that killed more than 46,000 people and left hundreds of thousands of people across 11 Turkish provinces sheltering in tents or temporary accommodation.

Many have criticised his government’s response to the earthquake and accuse it of failing to prepare the earthquake-prone country for a disaster in waiting. Experts have pointed at lax enforcement of building codes as a major reason why the earthquake was so deadly.

Earlier this week, Turkey’s disparate opposition parties, including nationalists, Islamists and conservatives, ended month of uncertainty that had frustrated supporters of the

anti-Erdogan bloc and nominated a joint candidate to run against Erdogan. The six opposition parties, which have pledged to roll back the erosion of rights and freedoms, united behind Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the 74-year-old leader of the centre-left, secularist Republican People’s Party, or CHP.

“May our decision to renew the elections be beneficial for our country, our nation, the Turkish Grand National Assembly and our political parties,” Erdogan said after putting his signature on a decision confirming the election date. The Supreme Electoral Council will now determine the electoral calendar. A runoff presidential election would be held on May 28 if none of the candidates secure more than 50 per cent of the vote.




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**E-Tender Enq. NO.440/P-II/EMP-W 12246 Dtd. 07-03-23**

Dy. Chief Engineer / Headquarter (Procurement Cell-2) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No.2023, POWER 98369, 1 for Breakdown, Periodical, Preventive and Shut down maintenance of 220KV/ 132 KV Substation/ Switchyard & 66KV Substation/ Switchyard & 11 KV Micro Hybrid Substation/ Switchyard all transformers and allied equipment like Breakers, Superstructures, cables etc along with 11KV/6.6 KV lines and all Transformers (GTs, STs, UATs etc.) installed at Stage-II & III, operation & maintenance of Transformer Oil filtration sets etc under EM-IV cell, GGSSTP, Ropar. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07-03-23 onwards.  
**Note:** Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

76155/12/1473/2022/21930

RTP-27/23



**UJJAIN SMART CITY LIMITED**  
Mela Office, Kothi Road, Ujjain (M.P.) 456001 Ph. 0734-2525856

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

**No USCL/245 Tender ID: 2023, UAD\_258955\_1 Date:- 09.03.2023**

Ujjain Smart City Limited Invites Interested parties for “Investigation, Survey, Design, Widening & Reconstruction of Road including Construction and Retrofitting of Underground Utilities along select road near Ramghat Area in Ujjain- 2nd call.” Interested bidders may purchase and submit their proposals online at [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in).

<b>Earnest Money Deposit</b>	<b>Rs. 9,91,829/-</b>
<b>Cost of Document</b>	<b>Rs. 20,000/-</b>
<b>Probable Amount of Contract</b>	<b>Rs. 9,91,82,966/-</b>
<b>Pre Bid Meeting Date</b>	<b>16.03.2023</b>
<b>Last date for submission of Technical and Financial Bid (Online)</b>	<b>23.03.2023 up to 17:00 hrs</b>


For more details, please visit <https://mptenders.gov.in>. Any Corrigendum or amendments shall be published on this website only.

**For, Ujjain Smart City Limited**



**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
TENDER NOTICE  
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

N.I.T. No.	49 (A,B)/22-23/WE
Name of work with its location	(A) Annual General repair & white washing, painting of staff quarters and service buildings for the period ending 30.06.2023 in the S/o SSE/W/E/SSB under ADEN/E-IV (B) Annual General repair and white washing, painting of staff qtrs. and service building for the period ending 30.06.23 in the S/o SSE/W/DKZ-II under ADEN/E-IV.
Approx. cost of work	(A) 9999998.65 (B) 8999962.14
EMD amount	(A) 200000.00 (B) 180000.00
Completion period of work	(A) 03 Months (B) 03 Months
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Closing date of tender on 31.03.2023 at 15:00 hrs.
Website particular notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.	Above tender available on website i.e. <a href="http://www.irops.gov.in">www.irops.gov.in</a>
<b>128-W/269/OET/22-23/WE/NIT/49 (A, B) Dated: 10.03.2023</b>	
<b>SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 753/23</b>	



**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Engineer-I, Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites e-tender on the prescribed form for the under noted work.

**Name of work with location, cost of work and Earnest money :** Replacement of 9 Units old Type-I quarters of Block T-81 with standard Type-II quarters at Panipat on DUK section under ADEN/PNP.

**Approx. cost :** Rs. 57,10,361.18/-  
**Earnest Money :** Rs. 1.14,200/-

**Earnest Money should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only.**  
**Note:** FDR or Demand Draft will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter No. 2015/CE-1/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016

**Completion Period :** 1. 06 Months 2. 08 Months

**Date and Time of submission of tender and opening of tender :** Upto 15:00 hrs. on 17.03.2023 opening of e-tender at 15:00 hrs on 17.03.2023.

**Website particulars, published-tender notice location etc complete details of tender can be seen and website where the tender form can be downloaded :**  
Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. [www.irops.gov.in](http://www.irops.gov.in)  
**Similar nature of work :** 1. Construction of Building/quarter.

**Note:** All attachments must be self attested by the tenderers and the affidavit should be submitted in the new format attached with tender conditions as per Annexure-XXIV is compulsory.

**No.:** 128-W/280/Tender Notice/22-23/WJ/(NIT-62) **Dated:** 09.03.2023 **747/2023**

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## French, British leaders bid to mend ties

**AP ■ PARIS**

French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak meet Friday in Paris for a summit aimed at mending relations following post-Brexit tensions, as well as improving military and business ties and toughening efforts against Channel migrant crossings. The French-British summit, the first since 2018, is set to show a “new chapter” is opening in relations between the two countries, according to Macron’s office. Such an event was previously held almost every year.

Relations between the U.K. and France chilled amid post-Brexit wrangling over fishing rights and other issues, and hit rock-bottom under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who took delight in needling the French.

His successor, Liz Truss, ruffled French feathers last year when she said the “jury is out” on whether Macron was a friend or a foe.

But Russia’s invasion of



Britain’s Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, right, and French President Emmanuel Macron talk during their meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, Friday

Ukraine brought Britain and its European neighbors closer together in support of Kyiv, and the mood improved after pragmatic, technocratic Sunak took office in October after Truss’ brief and economically destabilizing term.

Sunak’s visit also comes two weeks before King Charles III travels to France and then Germany for his first state visits since becoming monarch, in further British efforts to build bridges with European neighbors.”The

summit will be above all an opportunity to reaffirm and deepen the close cooperation in terms of military support for Ukraine,” according to the statement from Macron’s Elysee Palace, as both countries are the only nuclear powers in the region.

A delegation of seven senior ministers from each country will take part, including those responsible for foreign affairs, defense and domestic issues.

Last month the U.K. and the EU announced a breakthrough in talks to resolve the dispute over post-Brexit trading arrangements for Northern Ireland.

Britain also has cautiously welcomed Macron’s proposal for a European Political Community, a new forum aimed at boosting security and prosperity across the continent.

Launched in October, it brings together existing EU members, aspiring partners in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, as well as Britain and Turkey.



# Industrial output rises 5.2% in Jan 2023: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production growth perked up slightly to 5.2 per cent in January from 4.7 per cent in December 2022, mainly due to good performance of the power, mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Friday.

There was an improvement on an annual as well as sequential basis. The factory output growth measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) stood at two per cent in January 2022.

As per the IIP data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the manufacturing sector's output grew 3.7 per cent in January 2023 from 1.9 per cent a year ago.

Mining output rose 8.8 per cent during the month under review compared to 3 per cent in January 2022.

Power generation also surged 12.7 per cent in January 2023 against 0.9 per cent in the year-ago month.

As per use-based classification,



the capital goods segment recorded a growth of 11 per cent in January against a growth of 1.8 per cent in the corresponding month of the last fiscal.

Consumer durables output declined by 7.5 per cent compared to a contraction of 4.4 per cent a year ago.

Consumer non-durable goods output expanded by 6.2 per cent against a growth of 3.1 per cent earlier.

Infrastructure/construction goods too posted a growth of 8.1 per cent compared to a 5.9 per cent expansion in the same month of 2022.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged 9.6 per cent growth in the month against 1.6 per cent in the year-ago period.

The intermediate goods output growth decelerated to 0.1 per cent from 2.5 per cent earlier.

# Sensex, Nifty decline 1% on selling in IT, financial shares

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty tanked more than 1 per cent on Friday due to heavy selling in IT, financial and oil stocks in line with a weak trend in the global markets.

Besides, lingering concerns over the quantum of the next interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve hit the sentiment, traders said.

Sliding for the second straight session, the 30-share Sensex tanked 671.15 points or 1.12 per cent to close at 59,135.13, as 21 of its scrips declined. The index opened lower and slid further to touch a low of 58,884.98 in the day.

The broader Nifty plunged 176.70 points or 1 per cent to close at 17,412.90, with 35 of its stocks ending in the red. The index moved in a range of 17,324.35 to 17,451.50 during the session.

"Fall in the select US banks added to the overall Global uncertainty regarding the quantum of the next Fed rate hike.

"US jobs data that would



be released late on Friday will also be crucial for upcoming Fed's meeting as it could also influence the Fed rate decision," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head — Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

Among Sensex shares, HDFC Bank fell the most by 2.58 per cent, followed by SBI (2.12 per cent), HDFC (2.09 per cent), and IndusInd Bank (2.02 per cent).

Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, M&M, L&T, Reliance, Infosys and TCS were among the major losers.

In contrast, Tata Motors, Maruti, NTPC, Sun Pharma, Power Grid and Titan were among the gainers.

Nifty closed in the red for the second consecutive ses-

sion on Friday, pulled down by negative global cues. At close, Nifty was down 1 per cent or 176.7 points at 17,412.9. Volumes on the NSE continued to be on the lower side. Broad market indices fell less than the Nifty even as the advance-decline ratio fell more to 0.60:1, said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

"European and Asian equities dropped on Friday as fears over the health of banks' bond portfolios (reflected in troubles emanating at a Silicon Valley-based lender) compounded investors' nervousness ahead of the publication of key US jobs data and next week's US Fed meet," he added.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap declined by 171.10 points or 0.69 per cent to 24,617.91 while the Smallcap fell by 165.29 or 0.59 per cent to 27,952.11.

BSE Financial Services declined by 1.77 per cent, BSE Bankex by 1.85 per cent, Capital Goods by 1.08 per cent, Realty by 1.07 per cent, Industrials by 0.85 per cent and BSE IT by 0.63 per cent.

# Increase surveillance, random sampling of food items to check adulteration, FSSAI tells States

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food regulator FSSAI's CEO G Kamala Vardhana Rao has asked states to increase surveillance and random sampling of food items to curb adulteration.

Rao also emphasised that in cases where the food samples are found to be non-conforming, the appropriate measures are required to be taken.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) "encouraged states/UTs to increase the regular surveillance, monitoring, inspections and random sampling of food products and their compliance with the laid down standards", according to a statement.

He made the remarks at the 39th Meeting of Central Advisory Committee (CAC) held under his chairmanship on March 9, 2023, at Panaji, Goa.

More than 60 officials, including Commissioners of Food Safety (CFS), representatives from states/UTs, senior officials from FSSAI and nodal ministries, and the members



representing the Food Industry, Consumers, Agriculture, laboratories and research bodies attended the meeting.

The key discussion points of the meeting included doubling of the quarterly targets of surveillance sampling of food items to 30 and increase in quarterly inspection from 15 to 20, as per Food Safety Officer (FSO).

States/UTs have also been directed to ensure testing of 10 samples of milk per day by Food Safety on Wheel (FSW) available with them. A total of 168 FSW vans are available across the country for on-the-spot food testing.

# Revamped MSME Competitive (LEAN) scheme launched

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday launched the revamped MSME Competitive (LEAN) scheme to make it more beneficial for enterprises and stakeholders.

Under the revamped scheme, the Centre's contribution will be 90 per cent of the implementation cost for hand-holding and consultancy fees as against 80 per cent previously.

The government has also done away with the requirement of setting up a special purpose vehicle in every cluster. Earlier, the implementation period for the scheme was set at 18 months.

However, under the revamped scheme it has been divided into phases - Basic (2 months), Intermediate (6 months) and Advanced (12 months).

Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Secretary B B Swain said the revamped scheme is being introduced in two phases.

The first phase will cover



the manufacturing sector while the services sector will be covered in the second phase.

"Today the ministry is launching MSME Competitive (Lean) scheme with several improvements to make it simple and beneficial for MSMEs and other stakeholders. The government's contribution to trained and qualified new consultants has been enhanced to 90 per cent apart from other benefits," he said.

In his virtual address, Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane said LEAN has the potential to become a national movement and that it aims to provide a roadmap for global competitiveness for the MSMEs in India.

# FCI sells 5.39 L tonnes wheat in 5th auction round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food Corporation of India sold 5.39 lakh tonnes of wheat to bulk consumers, including flour millers, in the fifth round of e-auction.

In the previous four rounds, about 23.47 lakh tonnes of wheat were sold under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to bulk users as part of steps to cool down retail prices of the foodgrain and wheat flour, according to the food ministry.

The next weekly e-auction will be held on March 15.

The fifth round of e-auction was conducted on March 9 and about 11.88 lakh tonnes of wheat were offered for sale from 657 depots across 23 regions of FCI.

"About 5.39 lakh tonnes of wheat has been sold to 1,248 bidders," the ministry said in a statement.

Against the average reserve price of ₹2,140.29 per quintal,



the weighted average selling price was ₹2,197.91 per quintal.

The maximum number of bids were for quantity ranging from 100 to 499 tonnes, followed by 500-999 tonnes and 50-100 tonnes, the statement said.

According to the ministry, the overall price during the auctions suggest that the market has cooled down and the prices are ruling below ₹2,200 per quintal on an average.

Out of the about 23.47 lakh tonnes of wheat sold in the four auction rounds, 19.51 lakh tonnes have been lifted by the buyers.

# Gold jumps ₹395; silver declines ₹115

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price jumped ₹395 to ₹55,540 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had ended at ₹55,145 per 10 grams.

Silver, however, declined ₹115 to ₹62,095 per kilogramme.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹55,540 per 10 grams, up ₹395 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 down at \$20.09 per ounce.



# Rupee gains 4 paise to close at 82.02 against \$

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The rupee pared its initial losses to settle 4 paise higher at 82.02 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.12 against the American currency and finally closed at 82.02 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 4 paise over its previous close of 82.06.

During the session, the rupee touched a high of 81.99 and a low of 82.14 against the dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.08 per cent to 105.22.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures declined 0.59 per cent to \$81.11 per barrel.

"The Indian rupee depreciated marginally by 0.04 per cent on Friday amid weak domestic markets. However,



the weak Dollar cushioned the downside," said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

The dollar slipped from the three-month high on weak US markets and disappointing weekly jobless claims data, which rose to 2,11,000 from 1,90,000 in the previous week.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and selling pressure from FIIs. However, weak greenback, declining US Treasury yields and a fall in crude oil prices may cushion the downside," Choudhary said.

# NITI Aayog panel pitches for capital assistance for gaushalas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A gaushalas should be helped through capital assistance and marketing of cow dung and cow urine-based formulations for application in agriculture.

Besides, the task force, headed by NITI Aayog Member Ramesh Chand, has proposed setting up a portal for online registration of all gaushalas.

The report titled 'Production and Promotion of Organic and Bio Fertilisers with Special Focus on Improving Economic Viability of Gaushalas' said that gaushalas should be liberally financed for making capital investment and working expenses at concessional rates of interest.

All grants should be linked to the number of cows, it added.

According to the report, a portal like Darpan portal of NITI Aayog should be created for online registration of all gaushalas,



which will then be eligible to get support from the animal welfare board.

Specific policy measures and support is required to encourage the commercial production, packaging, marketing and distribution of cow dung-based organic fertilisers including brand development, it said.

Further, the report said efforts should be made to attract private investments in mass scale production of organic and bio-fertiliser, bio-pesticides, soil enriching products and stimulants for use of in agriculture and various types formulations for use in households.

# Global Surfaces sets IPO price band at ₹133-140 per share

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global Surfaces Ltd, which is into processing natural stones and manufacturing engineered quartz, on Friday said it has set a price band of ₹133-140 a share for its Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The initial share sale, which opens for subscription on March 13, will close on March 15, the company said in a statement.

The IPO comprises fresh issuance of 85.20 lakh equity shares and an Offer For Sale of up to 25.5 lakh equity shares by promoters — Mayank Shah and Sweta Shah.



Funds raised through fresh issuance will be used for setting up the company's proposed facility — Global Surfaces FZE — in Dubai.

At the upper end of the price band, the company is expected to fetch ₹155 crore from the IPO.

Half of the issue size has been reserved for qualified institutional buyers, up to 35 per cent for retail investors and the remaining 15 per cent for non-institutional investors.

# Max Estates to invest ₹3,400 cr to develop four new projects in Noida, Gurugram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Max Group's realty firm Max Estates will invest around ₹3,400 crore over the next five years to develop two housing and two commercial projects in Noida and Gurugram as part of its expansion plan.

Max Estates, which is subsidiary of Max Ventures and Industries Ltd (MaxVIL), has developed three premium office complex in Noida and Delhi, comprising around 15.5 lakh square feet area and one small boutique luxury housing project in Dehradun.



# Adani group stocks end on mixed note

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani group stocks ended on a mixed note on Friday amid a volatile trend in the equity markets.

"Post the GQG deal in four Adani stocks, the share prices of the group companies have mostly risen well. Worries on margin calls related selling have ebbed as promoters have used the sale proceeds to meet the margin calls," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

The stock of Adani Enterprises fell 2.90 per cent to close at ₹1,896.45 on BSE. Its market valuation declined by ₹6,458.11 crore to ₹2.16 lakh



crore. NDTV tanked 4.90 per cent to settle at ₹233.75, Adani Wilmar nosedived 4.47 per cent to close at ₹453.30, and Ambuja Cements declined 1.66 per cent to end at ₹378.35. ACC fell 0.70 per cent to close at ₹1,847.15.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

### BSES RAJDHANI BAGS AWARD FOR BEST PERFORMANCE

**New Delhi:** BSES Rajdhani Power Limited recognised as the 'Best Performing Power Distribution Utility'. BSES Rajdhani Power Limited has received the coveted Central Board of Irrigation & Power Award 2022 for the 'Best Performing Distribution Utility' in the private sector. Union Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy, R K Singh presented the award to Amal Sinha, Director and Group CEO of BSES, and Vineet Sikka, CEO of BRPL.



### VERDICT RESERVED ON DAMEPL'S PLEA AGAINST DMRC

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court on Friday reserved its verdict on an execution petition filed by Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL) against Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) over payment of dues of an arbitral award passed in its favour. Justice Yashwant Varma of the Delhi High Court heard the arguments on behalf of DMRC, DAMEPL, the Centre and the city government and said they may file written submissions by Monday. An arbitral tribunal had, in May 2017, ruled in favour of DAMEPL, which had pulled out of running the Airport Express metro line over safety issues, and accepted its claim that running the operations on the line was not viable due to structural defects in the viaduct through which the train would pass. Earlier, the court had noted that the total amount of the award with interest till February 14, 2022 was ₹8,009.38 crore. Of this, a sum of ₹1,678.42 crore has been paid by DMRC and an amount of ₹6,330.96 crore is still due.

# Bharti-backed OneWeb announces deployment of 40 satellites launched with SpaceX

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti-backed OneWeb, the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications company, on Friday confirmed the successful deployment and contact of 40 satellites launched by SpaceX from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

The latest launch brings the total OneWeb constellation to 582 satellites.

With 582 satellites now in orbit, OneWeb will complete the global footprint of its 'Gen 1 constellation' with a launch set to take place later this month with ISRO/NSIL,



according to a release. Announcing the successful deployment of 40 satellites launched with SpaceX, OneWeb said, "This launch is OneWeb's 17th to-date and the penultimate mission as the company is set to complete its first-generation (Gen 1) LEO satellite constellation and enable global coverage in 2023".



# MAN UTD BOUNCE BACK TO BEAT BETIS

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United bounced back from a historic thrashing by Liverpool to beat Real Betis 4-1 in the first leg of their Europa League last 16 tie on Thursday, while a 2-2 draw away to Sporting Lisbon gave Arsenal work to do to reach the quarter-finals.

United equalled their heaviest ever defeat and worst since 1931 in losing 7-0 at Anfield on Sunday.

Erik ten Hag responded by naming the same starting lineup and was rewarded with a return to form.

"You see how a team reacts after a setback," said Ten Hag. "This is not the first time this season, I think you see five or six times we can reset and bounce back. This team has character so a big compliment to the team."

Marcus Rashford smashed United into an early lead with his 26th goal of the season, but Betis levelled against the run of play when Ayoze Perez fired into the far corner.

It was two of United's most fiercely criticised stars in recent days who made the difference after the break.

Antony curled a brilliant shot into the top corner before Bruno Fernandes, who Ten Hag named again as captain, headed in Luke Shaw's corner.

"Bruno was brilliant today," added Ten Hag. "He led the team from the first minute by his game in possession, making the

rhythm of the game and scored a goal so I am happy."

Wout Weghorst then netted just his second goal in 15 appearances for United by pouncing from close range six minutes from time.

Premier League leaders Arsenal were forced to come from behind to salvage a draw in the Portuguese capital.

Despite going for a first league title in 19 years, Mikel Arteta named a strong side and William Saliba headed the visitors into the lead.

Sporting equalised shortly after in near identical fashion, with Goncalo Inacio heading home Marcus Edwards' corner.

Former Tottenham midfielder Edwards then had a role in Sporting's second as Paulinho reacted quickest to finish inside the area.

Arsenal were level just after the hour mark, though, when Granit Xhaka's cross deflected off the unfortunate Hidemasa Morita and rebounded into his own net.

"Considering you concede two goals away from home and still escape with a draw you have to take some positives," said Arsenal boss Arteta.

"But we gave them too much hope by giving the ball away in our own half too many times."

## ADVANTAGE JUVE

Juventus will take a narrow lead to Germany next week after the in-form Angel di Maria scored the only goal in a 1-0 win



over Freiburg.

Jose Mourinho's Roma are also on course for the last eight after goals from Stephan El Shaarawy and Marash Kumbulla saw off Real Sociedad 2-0 at the Stadio Olimpico.

Six-time winners Sevilla may be fighting a relegation battle in La Liga, but are always a threat in the Europa League and will take a 2-0 first leg lead over Fenerbahce to Istanbul next week thanks to goals from Joan Jordan and Erik Lamela.

The game of the night saw Bundesliga surprise package

Union Berlin snatch a 3-3 draw against Union Saint-Gilloise despite having trailed three times.

Bayer Leverkusen beat Ferencváros 2-0 at home, while Shakhtar Donetsk and Feyenoord played out a 1-1 draw.

In the UEFA Conference League, Michael Antonio hit two first half goals to earn West Ham a 2-0 win at AEK Larnaca.

Villarreal were held 1-1 away at Anderlecht, while Nice and Fiorentina took 1-0 leads over Sheriff Tiraspol and Sivasspor respectively.



## Ankita, Bhosale storm into singles semis of ITF Women's Open

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India's Ankita Raina and Rutuja Bhosale displayed immense tenacity while registering three-set wins to reach the singles semi-finals of the ITF Women's Open here on Friday.

Raina, fourth seed in the tournament, fought past Dea Herdzelas of Bosnia And Herzegovina 6-1, 6-7 (7), 7-5 while Bhosale overcame eighth seeded Briton Eden Silva 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4 at the KSLTA Stadium.

Raina will face Bhosale in an all-Indian semi-final on Saturday.

The ongoing tournament - a part of the ITF Women's World Tennis Tour -- is hosted by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association (KSLTA).

Earlier, top seeded Brenda Fruhvirtova of Czech Republic entered the semi-finals with a 6-0, 7-5 victory over Indonesia's sixth seeded Madelyne Nugroho. The No. 5 seed Dalila Jakupovic also registered an easy 6-2, 6-0 win against Ikumi Yama-

zaki in the other quarter-final.

"The first set was going pretty easy and fast and in the second I was leading 5-3 but I didn't really use my chances. Then at 5-5 I broke her serve and then I held my serve to win the match," said Fruhvirtova after her win.

"I am happy that it was not a three-set match because physically I was not 100 percent — probably because of the matches and the heat as well. I am happy that I have eased through."

Later in the day, Bhosale and her Swedish partner Jacqueline Awad went down to No. 1 seeded Portuguese pair of Jorge Francisa and Jorge Matilde 6-2, 3-6, 8-10 in the doubles semi-final.

Francisa-Matilde will face Greco-British pair of Valentini Grammatikopoulou and Eden Silva in the final on Saturday. Grammatikopoulou and Silva defeated Dalila Jakupovic of Slovakia and Amandine Hesse of France 6-1, 6-3.

## PSG in race to buy Stade de France

AP ■ PARIS

French champions Paris Saint-Germain on Friday confirmed it is in the race to buy the Stade de France, the centre piece for next summer's Olympics.

The French government has launched a call for tenders to find a buyer at a price of around 600 million euros (\$635 million) for the 81,500-seater stadium, the largest in France, whose current lease expires on July 1, 2025.

PSG's announcement follows a hitherto unsuccessful bid by the club's Qatari owners to buy the Parc des Princes, which has been its home for almost 50 years, from the Paris City Council to be able to expand it.

"We are candidates for the Stade de France," a PSG source said, confirming a report in the



French sports daily L'Equipe, adding that it had not yet put in its bid.

The price of the Stade de France, which was built for the

1998 World Cup finals, was estimated at 647 million euros by the French government in 2021.

The current lease has been held since 1995 by a consortium

comprising French business groups Vinci and Bouygues.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera said the sale of the national stadium is an option, as well as granting a new operating lease.

The deadline for the tenders expires on April 27 with bids to be examined next year for the possible handover of the stadium in 2025.

PSG currently play at the 48,500-seater Parc des Princes, its home since 1974.

The club signed a 30-year lease for the Parc in 2014 but recently said it would try and find a new home if it failed to buy the stadium from the Paris City Council.

The current Ligue 1 leaders want to make significant upgrades to the venue but only once they have assumed full ownership.

## Neymar arrives in Qatar for ankle surgery

AP ■ DOHA

Paris Saint-Germain forward Neymar arrived in Doha on Friday for an operation on the ankle injury that has ended his season, Qatar's official news agency said.

The 31-year-old Brazilian is facing up to four months out after suffering the injury last month playing Lille — the latest in a series of fitness problems.

Qatar-owned earlier PSG said Neymar, who became the world's most expensive player in 2017, would undergo a ligament repair operation in Doha.

"Neymar of France's PSG arrives in Doha for surgery at the Aspetar hospital," the Qatar News Agency said.

Neymar has promised to



"come back stronger" after his surgery.

His fitness has been a regular concern for PSG since signing for a world-record fee of 222 million euros (\$264m), missing more than 100 games due to injury or suspension. He has played only 49 percent of PSG's Ligue 1 matches — 112 out of 228 — since his arrival.

## Three bronzes are enough; now want to break jinx by winning gold: Lovlina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic bronze medallist in women's boxing Lovlina Borgohain is confident that her move to a higher weight category will help her break the jinx of not winning a gold in major international tournaments when the IBA Women's World Championships begins later this month.

Lovlina will be competing in the 75kg category in the championships scheduled to commence here on March 15, while earlier she won two world championships bronze and a third place at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in the 69kg category.

The focus in the prestigious tournament will be as much on India's ace boxer Nikhat Zareen retaining her gold, as it will on Lovlina breaking the jinx of not

clinching the top podium place.

The 25-year-old pugilist from Assam secured third position in both the 2018 and 2019 Women's World Championships and ended up with another bronze at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, prompting people to say the talented athlete was not giving it her best shot.

But Lovlina denied it, saying she always enters the ring with the single-minded commitment to give it her "100 per cent".

"Yes, that (not winning gold) is at the back of my mind. But I am desperate to change the colour of the medal this time around. The effort is always to play for gold medal and this time too it is no different. The preparations are going well (in Patiala) and I hope I can break that jinx on home turf," said Lovlina, who has won all the three top bronze medals in



the 69kg category, but will be competing in the upcoming championships in 75kg.

She also added that being a part of the same squad that also has reigning world champion Zareen will not put any added pressure on her to perform and aim for gold.

"I am not thinking in terms of whether the pressure is more or less on me (With Nikhat being a world champion). We have accepted we have to live with pressure; it is always there in competition."

"My focus is only on how well I can perform and concentrate on the task at hand. And that also means, not to take the added pressure of thinking about the result," added Lovlina, who has started focusing more on packing more power in her punches,

given that a higher weight category comes with more powerful opponents.

"At the end of the day what matters is our work ethic. The Gita also says work hard and do not bother about the result. I am a great believer in that."

The ace boxer said she felt more confident in the higher weight category as she did not have to bother about how many kilos she was gaining.

"I am more comfortable in this (75kg) weight category. There is no tension to control my weight. Yes, I have also changed my technique a bit to go with the higher weight category."

"The focus is on improving the power in my punches as my opponents will be much stronger than what I encountered in the 69kg category," she said.

## Murray toughs out another win, Raducanu advances

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Former world number one Andy Murray made it through another tense match on Thursday, rallying from a set down to beat Tomas Etcheverry and reach the second round of the Indian Wells WTA and ATP Masters 1000.

The Briton, who has made a habit of great escapes this year, needed three hours and 12 minutes to subdue the Argentinian 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 6-4.

"Some of the matches I've played this year I haven't deserved to win," said Murray, who won a five-setter lasting more than five hours at the Australian Open and in Doha last month overcame eight match points in four matches before falling to Daniil Medvedev in the final.

"Today, I felt like I created so many opportunities and it was one that easily could have got away from me," added Murray, who had eight break chances in the second set.

Murray, grinding back toward the top 40 after hip replacement surgery in 2019, had to fight off two break points himself in the eighth

game of the third set.

He needed five chances to get the decisive break in the next game, finally converting when Etcheverry, riding high after reaching the final in Santiago last week, double-faulted.

They arrived at match point after three hours and nine minutes, Murray missing his first chance when his drop shot attempt spun wide. Three minutes later he polished it off with an ace.

Murray improved to 7-0 in decisive sets this year and booked a meeting with 15th-seeded Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta.

After injuries threatened his career, Murray, owner of three Grand Slam titles and two Olympic gold medals, said he wants to enjoy the final act of his career.

"I really want to make the most of these last years that I've got," he said. "It's exciting to see how far I can push this and push my body."

"There are certain things that I would like to achieve before I finish playing and goals that I set myself, but the number one thing is to give my best effort every single day."

"If I do that then I'll finish my



career on a high note."

Murray was one of a string of former Grand Slam winners in first-round action as the 32 men's and women's seeds — led by Carlos Alcaraz and Iga Swiatek — enjoyed byes.

Britain's 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu rallied from a break down in each set to beat Danka Kovinic 6-2, 6-3, avenging a 2022 Australian Open second-round loss to the Montenegrin as she continued her fightback from various ailments that have slowed her 2023 campaign.

"I'm happy I stuck in," said Raducanu, who had shut down her 2022 season early with wrist trouble and hurt her ankle in her second match of 2023 in Auckland.

She pulled out of the WTA event in Austin last week with tonsillitis and withdrew from a pre-tournament exhibition here when her wrist trouble flared up.

But she said the litany of problems only made her more determined.

France's Adrian Mannarino rallied for a 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) victory

over Austrian Dominic Thiem, the 2020 US Open winner who was sidelined eight months after a right wrist injury in 2021.

In a duel of two more former Grand Slam champions, 2020 Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin beat 2017 US Open winner Sloane Stephens 6-4, 6-1.

Three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka, with two knee and two foot surgeries behind him and now ranked 100th in the world, defeated Australian qualifier Aleksandar Vukic 6-4, 1-6, 6-1.

In other matches on Thursday, Australian qualifier Thanasi Kokkinakis, ranked 94th in the world, booked a second-round clash with top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over US wild card Brandon Holt.

American Ben Shelton defeated Italian veteran Fabio Fognini 6-4, 6-1 to set up a meeting with fourth-seeded defending champion Taylor Fritz while on the women's side American Claire Liu beat Anna Karolina Schmiedlova 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to earn a shot at top seed and defending champion Iga Swiatek.

## Benzema out for Espanyol match

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid's French striker Karim Benzema, who has been dogged by fitness issues this season, will miss Saturday's La Liga match against Espanyol on Saturday but should feature in the Champions League next week.

Real are currently nine points adrift of leaders Barcelona in La Liga, making retaining the Champions League their priority for the remainder of the season. They thrashed Liverpool 5-2 at Anfield in the first leg of their last 16 tie and coach Carlo Ancelotti said on Friday that Benzema will "be available" to play the second leg in Madrid on Wednesday.

"Karim received a kick on the ankle which has swollen up. He tried to recover to be available (for Saturday's fixture) but this was not possible," Ancelotti said.

"We aim to have him in top form for Wednesday," he added.



TWO SESSIONS

# China's economy expected to grow by 5 percent in 2023

Michel Doukeris, CEO of AB InBev, the world's largest brewer, recently visited a number of eateries and bars in Beijing.

"We saw bars and restaurants with a lot of people, as well. I'm very pleased to see how consumption is quickly returning to the streets of Beijing," he said.

"The key message is that everybody is fully committed to the development and growth of China, particularly quality growth," he said, adding that his company will keep increasing investment in the country, the world's largest beer market.

That is just one example of how foreign investors

are finding the Chinese market endlessly attractive.

Experts and businesspeople believe that China will provide increasingly huge development opportunities for companies at home and abroad, especially as the First Session of China's 14<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress (NPC) and the First Session of the 14<sup>th</sup> National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) opened in Beijing on March 5 and March 4. The two sessions are sending policy signals of strengthened efforts to expand high-standard opening-up and build an improved business climate.

At the First Session

of China's 14<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivered a report on the work of the government, summarizing the work of the past five years and making suggestions for future work. The report stated that China's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow by around 5 percent this year.

The report pointed out that over the past five years, China has made fruitful achievements in economic development, scientific and technological innovation, reform and opening-up, and improvement of the ecological environment. China's GDP increased to 121

trillion yuan, registering an annual growth rate of 5.2 percent over the past five years. Its annual grain output remained steady at over 650 million metric tons for several consecutive years. Its industrial value added exceeded 40 trillion yuan. Its average yearly urban jobs growth hit more than 12.7 million. Its foreign exchange reserves have remained stable at over US\$3 trillion. Its total import and export of goods grew at an average annual rate of 8.6 percent, surpassing 40 trillion yuan.

According to the report, China will further its efforts to attract and utilize more foreign investment this year.

The report outlined several measures to achieve this goal, including expanding market access, further opening-up of the modern services sector, ensuring national treatment and improving services for foreign-funded companies, and facilitating the launch of large foreign-funded projects.

"We are greatly encouraged to see the introduction of policies and measures by the government to promote economic recovery and high-quality development, and believe it will help boost market confidence and advance market vitality," said Will Song, global senior vice-president of Johnson & Johnson, a multinational company

based in the US.

"It sends a strong signal to the international business community that China is committed to being open to the world and welcomes multinational companies' investment and development," added Song, who is also chairman of Johnson & Johnson China.

China also plans to take more action to join high-standard economic and trade agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. The country will steadily expand institutional opening-up by proactively adopting relevant rules, regulations and standards, the report said.

(China Daily, Xinhua)

FOCUS

## NPC deputy Wang Ning welcomes visitors to Yunnan for special lifestyle

"I sincerely welcome everyone to our province for experiencing the 'special Yunnan lifestyle', hoping you guys could continue to care about Yunnan, help us find more problems and give us more advice," said Wang Ning, a deputy of the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC).

In response to the online comments on Yunnan tourism, Wang, also the secretary of the CPC Yunnan Provincial Committee, said this via People's Daily Online on the occasion of the ongoing first session of the 14<sup>th</sup> NPC, adding the provincial authorities will take the cyber views seriously, in a bid to "create a bright future for Yunnan tourism" and contribute to the beautiful China initiative.

Thanking the net users for their suggestions, Wang noted that during the Spring Festival, the hit TV series Meet Yourself has greatly boosted Yunnan tourism, and a record-high of tourists travelled to the province for the week-long holiday. "Your ever-lasting care and creativity in the TV play have caused Yunnan tourism to gain momentum and rebound strongly," Wang said.

Now, a new trendy topic of "enjoying the special Yunnan lifestyle" has already formed online among tourists. As for the typical elements of the

lifestyle, Wang mentioned the Lesser Panda Manor in a Pu'er forest park, the golden sunrise on the Meili Snow Mountain, a coffee break in Baoshan's Xinzhai village, a purple-pottery tour in Jianshui old town, and others.

Tourism development has been high on the agenda of Yunnan provincial authorities. Known as a kingdom for plants and animals and the world's garden, Yunnan features dazzling landscapes and diverse ethnic customs. The weather is springlike all year round, with flowers in full blossom.

Wang noted Yunnan is a dreamy place of poetic beauty, citing the northbound journey by an elephant family, the Kunming city frequented by red-billed gulls from Siberia, the tropical rain forest in Xishuangbanna, the beautiful landscapes in Dali and Lijiang, as well as the Lancang-Mekong express trains that link Yunnan to Laos.

Yunnan has focused on the typical problems concerning local tourism, and has strictly regulated the tourist market in recent years. The Go-Yunnan app has become a new example of smart tourism in China. "We'll continue to innovate tourist products, business formats and modes, further integrating tourism into other industries," Wang said.

(People's Daily)

TOURISM

## China's resumption of outbound travel expected to revive global tourism

On the evening of March 1, Sri Lanka's tourism sector held a ceremony at Bandaranaike International Airport to welcome more than 100 Chinese tourists. Sri Lanka's Tourism Minister Harin Fernando and Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka Qi Zhenhong put on garlands for the Chinese tourists who just got off the plane. It was the first Chinese travel group arriving in Sri Lanka after China's pilot resumption of outbound group tours. Fernando said that he was pleased to welcome the first Chinese travel group and looked forward to seeing more Chinese tourists.

As China resumes outbound travel for its citizens in an orderly manner, the first Chinese group tourists to Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and other pilot countries have returned home after they were warmly welcomed in these countries.

For many years before the COVID-19 epidemic, China had been the world's largest outbound travel market, and Chinese tourists had been the world's largest overseas travel consumer group. In 2019, 155 million Chinese citizens traveled abroad. According to international tourism industry insiders, the orderly and rapid recovery of China's outbound travels will help revitalize the global tourism market and boost consumption in tourist destinations and overall economic growth prospects.

"We hope to see the return of Chinese tourists and look forward to the day when they come back," said Labovic, director of the Serbian National Tourism Administration. He disclosed in an interview that direct flights have been launched between Serbia and China and, moreover, Chinese citizens coming to Serbia do not need a visa.

At the recently held ASEAN Tourism Forum 2023, representatives of ASEAN nations expressed their wishes for the return of Chinese

tourists. Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Uno said that ASEAN tourism industry would recover strongly after China resumed outbound travel.

"I miss you as much as the Chinese restaurants in Bali's streets," said Pico, a fourth-generation Indonesian Chinese tour guide. He shared his experience during the epidemic while taking tourists on a recent tour of Bali. "When Bali's tourism industry was at its lowest point, there were hardly any tourists, many stores and restaurants were shut down, and hotels became totally inoperable. I changed jobs several times and even went to other Asian countries to look for jobs. As soon as I saw the first signs of recovery some time ago, I came back to my old job that I love," he said.

China was one of the main sources of tourists from outside Indonesia before the outbreak of COVID-19. Data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics shows that the country received 2.07 million Chinese tourists in 2019.

(People's Daily, Xinhua)

### Main projected targets for development in 2023:

- Increase GDP by about 5 percent
- Add about 12 million urban jobs
- Keep the registered urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent
- Hold increases in the CPI to around 3 percent
- Ensure that personal income basically increases in step with economic growth
- Strive for more stable and higher-quality imports and exports, and maintain a basic equilibrium in the balance of payments
- Keep grain output above 650 million metric tons
- Further reduce energy consumption per unit of GDP and the discharge of major pollutants, with a focus on controlling consumption of fossil fuels, and make steady improvements to the quality of ecosystems and the environment

### Targets achieved in 2022:

- Annual GDP grew by 3 percent
- 12.06 million new jobs were created in urban areas
- Registered urban unemployment rate dropped to 5.5 percent at the end of 2022
- Increases in the CPI held at 2 percent
- Total import and export of goods increased by 7.7 percent
- Deficit to GDP ratio controlled at 2.8 percent
- An equilibrium in the balance of payments
- Grain output of 685 million metric tons, an increase of 3.7 billion metric tons

CULTURE

## Yunnan's Lijiang offers an immersive experience of cultural charm

"Bang, bang, bang... thump, thump, thump..." The morning sun had just shed its light on the blue bricks, but the tranquility of the ancient town was already broken by a sound of tree barks being chopped and pounded. In the "Handcraft of Lijiang" studio, the intangible cultural heritage inheritor He Xiuchang was showing his manual paper-making skills.

During the 2023 Lancang-Mekong Youths Lijiang Challenge held in Lijiang from February 27 to 28, a group of young representatives from China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar,

Thailand, and Vietnam participated in a variety of activities, including a visit to the "Handcraft of Lijiang" studio. These activities enabled these Lancang-Mekong youths to experience Lijiang culture and customs.

"The traditional Naxi Dongba paper, made of a rare alpine wild herb known as Wikstroemia, is durable, moisture-proof, and moth-proof. In early times, the paper was used to record Naxi classics, scriptures, and genealogies. Having been handed down till today, it can last for more than a thousand years and is highly collectable," He explained

while letting a treadle-operated tilt hammer fall on the tree barks in a mortar.

The traditional Dongba paper-making technique involves seven steps, namely collecting, boiling, peeling, pounding, stirring, scooping, and drying. The Lancang-Mekong youths could not wait to try their hands. After a short while, the tree barks were turned into wet pulp, which was in turn applied to a board. When the pulp was dried, it was removed and became a sheet of Dongba paper.

"We all know that paper making is one of the four great inventions of ancient

China. Today's experience is just like a travel back to ancient China," Deng Zhiwen, a Cambodian student studying at Kunming University of Science and Technology, said happily.

Apart from Dongba paper, Dongba hieroglyphs are also an important part of Lijiang culture. "Mr. He, what is the Dongba hieroglyph for a chicken egg?" a young man asked He Runyuan, a Dongba hieroglyphs inheritor working at the Naxi Hieroglyphic Painting Experience Studio.

The young people were encouraged to make a guess, so Meng Dawei, a

Lao student studying at Yunnan University, was elected as a representative, and he confidently drew a big oval on the blackboard. Mr. He commented with a smile, "Yeah, an oval, but the Dongba hieroglyph for a chicken egg is more than an oval. We also need to draw a chicken above the oval to mean chicken egg." All the youths present could not help wowing a lot.

Dongba hieroglyphs are even older than oracle bone inscriptions, so they are known as the "living fossil" writing system.

In addition to experiencing the traditional

Lijiang culture, the Lancang-Mekong youths also visited a famous scenic spot in Lijiang known as the Blue Moon Valley. Seeing the clear and blue water shimmering on the lakes of different sizes, everyone cheered and cheered. In the Prayer Hall at an attraction referred to as the White Water Terrace, the youths put down their wishes for a bright future. "I've also made a wish. May everyone get what they want and have good luck," said Chen Xueting, a Thai teacher of Yunnan Minzu University.

(Yunnan Daily)

STORY

## A modern community emerges from the past

Over the last decade, Dulongjiang township, Gongshan county of Yunnan province, has seen drastic changes, which resulted in one of the most remote, closed and poorest areas in China embracing digital and modern life.

Home of one of the country's smallest ethnic groups, the Derung, Dulongjiang township used to be isolated by deep gorges and snowcapped mountains until 2014, when a tunnel provided access to the wider world.

For hundreds of years, Derung people lived a primitive life — sleeping in thatched homes, traversing rivers by rope crossing,

climbing the mountains on handmade vine ladders. But now it has been transformed.

In October 2012, our reporters visited the town to meet the residents.

The 79.6-kilometer mountain road from Gongshan county to the town had 794 bends. We departed at 8 am and arrived as the sun was setting.

In February this year, we revisited the area. This time, it took just two hours to drive there. Upon arrival, what we saw were brand-new dwellings surrounded by clear rivers. The shaky single-log bridges were replaced by sturdy modern structures.

Everybody has a mobile phone except for some of the elderly and children. E-commerce, express delivery and livestreaming are no longer something unusual. Students enjoy free education from kindergarten to senior middle school. With a permanent population of 5,000, the residents have 1,036 automobiles.

The dramatic change in fortunes of the Derung people shows how life has changed for 100 millions of people through the country's poverty alleviation and rural vitalization programs in the past decade.

(China Daily)

IN-PICS



Flowers from Yunnan are seen everywhere at the Pak Khlong Flower Market in Bangkok, Thailand. After being picked, pruned, and packaged, flowers produced in Yunnan arrive in Bangkok in less than 40 hours through cold chain logistics. Flowers shows have long become a symbol of the Chinese province by the Lancang River. They have reached not only the Chao Phraya River but also other parts of the world. As one of the world's top three emerging flower production areas, Yunnan boasts Asia's largest and the world's second largest fresh-cut flower trade center. Yunnan flowers are sold all over China and exported to more than 40 countries and regions.

(Xinhua)