

**OPINION 6**  
GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS  
LOSING RELEVANCE

**WORLD 9**  
RUSSIA DOWNPLAYS JET'S  
ENCOUNTER WITH US DRONE

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX FALLS 344 PTS, NIFTY  
SLIDES BELOW 17,000 MARK

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SINDHU OUT OF  
ALL ENGLAND  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
11 SPORT

## Party infighting no cause for floor test call, says SC

SC's landmark observation comes in Sena split hearing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Noting down the split in Shiv Sena, the Supreme Court on Wednesday observed that the Governor of a State cannot lend his office to effectuate a particular result and call for a trust vote merely on the ground of differences between MLAs of a ruling party, as it can topple an elected Government. "It will be a sad spectacle for democracy," a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud observed while taking forward the hearing on the events that unfolded during the June 2022 Maharashtra political crisis triggered by a revolt in the then undivided Shiv Sena by MLAs loyal to Eknath Shinde. "But the majority members then broke bread with the others for three years! All of you were in a happy marriage and what happened suddenly? Three years you cohabit and



then suddenly you say we are done... enjoy the fruits of the political office!! Someone has to answer this," observed the CJ on the Shiv Sena split. The bench made the observations after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Maharashtra Governor, narrated the sequence of events and said there were various materials before the Governor, including a letter signed by 34 Shiv Sena MLAs, a letter from Independent lawmakers withdrawing support to the Uddhav Thackeray Government, and another of the Leader of the Opposition, that prompted him to order a trust vote. BS Koshiyari, the then Governor of Maharashtra, had asked Thackeray to face a floor test to prove his majority. Thackeray, however, resigned in the face of imminent defeat, paving the way for the appointment of Shinde as

the new Chief Minister. "Difference of opinion among MLAs within a party can be on any ground like payment of development fund or deviation from party ethos but can that be a sufficient ground for the Governor to call for the floor test? Governor cannot lend his office to effectuate a particular result. Calling for a trust vote will lead to toppling of the elected Government," the bench said. The bench, also comprising Justices MR Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha, said a letter by the Leader of Opposition does not matter in the instant case because he will always keep on writing that the Government has lost majority or MLAs are not happy. The letter from MLAs that there was a threat to their security is also not relevant in this case, it said.

"The only thing is that a resolution of 34 MLAs which said that there was widespread discontent among the party cadres and legislators...Is this sufficient ground to call for a trust vote? Although, in hindsight we can say that Uddhav Thackeray had lost the mathematical equation. "But the fact is the Governor cannot enter this domain which would precipitate the matter. People will start ditching the ruling party and the Governor will end up toppling the Government. This will be a sad spectacle for democracy," the SC observed. The bench also said the Governor should have questioned the (Shiv Sena) MLAs that they were in a "happy marriage" with the Congress and the NCP for three years and then suddenly what happened in a day that they wanted to lead the alliance. "Three years you cohabited in an alliance, and one fine day, you decided for divorce. The rebel MLAs became ministers in another dispensation. Governor has to ask these questions to himself. What were you fellows doing for such a long time and now suddenly you want a divorce," the court said.

## Opp MPs march to ED office over Adani row; TMC, NCP skip demo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders of several Opposition parties on Wednesday urged the ED to initiate an investigation into the Adani Group over allegations of corrupt practices, including money laundering through shell companies. In a letter emailed to the ED Director SK Mishra, the parties told the probe agency that "it cannot turn around and abdicate its jurisdiction." The letter has been signed by leaders of Congress, CPI, CPM, JD(U), SS (UBT), RJD, DMK, JMM, AAP, IUML, VCK, Kerala Congress and others. The Opposition's march to the ED office was stopped by the police at Vijay Chowk and



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and others during a march of Opposition MPs from Parliament House to ED office on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

they returned to the Parliament complex. Even though 200 MPs of Opposition parties participat-

ed in the march to the ED's office to present a memorandum for a probe into the Adani issue, the Congress' UPA part-

ners, the NCP and the TMC did not join the protest. However, the TMC separately staged a protest in front of the Gandhi statue in Parliament complex over the LPG price hike and demanded answers from the Government. TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the party would not participate in the Opposition's march and would stage its own protest. In their letter, the Opposition parties told the ED Director, "We are acutely aware of how in the recent past, the ED has also zealously pursued cases of alleged political favouritism, including sharing concurrent jurisdiction with the SEBI and CBI."

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## McMahon Line China, Arunachal international boundary, says US

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON

Even as China continues to claim Arunachal Pradesh as its territory, the US has said the north-eastern State is an integral part of India and Washington recognises the McMahon Line as the international boundary between the two neighbouring countries. This reiteration in its senate late on Tuesday came weeks

after China tried to change the status quo of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh in December last year. It led to a clash between the troops of both the countries leaving several of them injured. The US recognises the McMahon Line as the international boundary between China and Arunachal, said a bipartisan Senate resolution which sees Arunachal Pradesh

as an integral part of India. "At a time when China continues to pose grave and gathering threats to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, it is critical for the United States to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our strategic partners in the region, especially India," said Senator Bill Hagerty, who along with Senator Jeff Merkley introduced a resolution in the Senate.

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## CAPSULE

**COP ALLEGES SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY SHO**  
Noida: The Noida Police have launched an enquiry after a sub-inspector accused her police station's in-charge of sexually harassing her, officials said on Wednesday.  
**NIA: PAK-BASED TERROR HANDLERS IDENTIFIED**  
New Delhi: A dozen suspects having links with Pakistan-based terror handlers were identified, leading to multiple raids in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, NIA said on Wednesday. P5

## India invites Pak Def Min to SCO meet

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ ISLAMABAD

Despite strained relations between the two countries, India has invited Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif to attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to be held in New Delhi in April. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto may also be invited for the SCO meet in May in Goa. However, Pakistan is yet to announce its decision about both the Ministers' participation. India currently holds the presidency of the SCO. As President of the SCO, India is set to host a series of meetings. The invitation for the Defence Ministers' meet was reported on Wednesday by the Express Tribune newspaper of Pakistan. Diplomatic sources told the newspaper that the Indian Government shared the formal invitation with the Pakistan Foreign Office on Tuesday. There was no immediate confirmation from New Delhi on the Pakistani media report. India earlier invited Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, as well as shared an invitation for the meeting of Foreign Ministers of SCO, the report said.

Continued on Page 2

## Vacate Yamuna floodplains within 3 days or pay ₹50K, face razing: HC to jhuggis

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed slum dwellers on the Yamuna floodplains here to vacate their jhuggis within three days failing which they will have to pay ₹50,000 each to the DUSIB and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) shall proceed with the demolition. The court passed the order after being informed that a committee headed by the Lieutenant Governor has issued directions to clean the Yamuna in view of the January 9 directions of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) which took note of the pollution level. "Strict action may be permitted to be taken by police...the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) concerned of the area will render all support during the said action," the court said dismissing a plea by the residents. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which has been tasked with the demolition of jhuggis, told Justice Prathiba M Singh that the NGT had revived the matter pertaining to pollution of the Yamuna, pursuant to which a high-level committee on January 27 passed directions to



take immediate steps to control pollution of the river and remove encroachments there. Advocate Prabhshah Kaur, appearing for the DDA, submitted that the residents had come back to the same place twice after the removal of encroachments. Taking note of the submission of the counsel for DDA, the judge asked the counsel representing the residents, "You are occupying river Yamuna. Do you know how much damage is being caused to it?" The court was hearing a plea by residents of Moolchand Basti located on the Yamuna floodplains at Bela Estate, Rajghat, claiming the DDA and Delhi Police officials visited them in August 2022 and threatened them to vacate their jhuggis which will otherwise be demolished.

Continued on Page 2

## CUET in 3 shifts; JEE-NEET merger to be announced 2 yrs in advance

New Delhi: The Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG will be conducted in three shifts this year instead of two and plans for its merger with crucial entrance exams like JEE and NEET will be announced at least two years in advance, said UGC chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar. Kumar said the UGC and the National Testing Agency are prepared to ensure that the second edition of CUET-UG is glitch free. See P5

## Land-for-jobs: Lahu, Rabri, Misa get bail

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Wednesday gave bail to RJD leader Lahu Prasad, his wife and former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, daughter Misa Bharti and others in connection with a case related to the alleged land-for-jobs scam. The CBI did not oppose their bail pleas. Granting relief to the accused on a personal bond of ₹50,000 and one surety of the like amount each, the court posted the matter for further proceedings on March 29.

Continued on Page 2

## After TTE-cops' spat goes viral, Railways to stop ticketless uniformed goons in tracks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI


In a swift action aimed at disciplining ticketless uniformed passengers, the Indian Railways has directed train conductors to prepare a diary note of policemen travelling without tickets and forward it to the departments concerned, including zonal Railways, to initiate proper action against the errant cops.



UP Police were heard intimidating the train conductor and threatening to throw him out of the moving train between Lucknow-Kanpur. The video sparked outrage on social media and people lashed out at the local police for the daily

nuisance caused by the uniformed men, forcing passengers to share space with them. Referring to the incident on board the Amarnath Express 15097, Bhagalpur to Jammu Tawi, on March 10 that was shared by Jha, the Northern Railway in an order to all the TTEs directed that they should take note of ticketless policemen and immediately convey the description to the Railways which will further escalate the matter to departments concerned for action.

In the video, two policemen can be seen engaged in a verbal duel with the TTE. Some rough language was used with both sides claiming that the Railways were their ancestral property. However when the TTE mentioned that it was his duty to stop any unauthorised or ticketless passenger in the larger interest of bona fide travellers, one cop and his subordinates threatened to throw him out of the running train. "The policemen's unruly behaviour is unwarranted and hence the TTEs must nab ticketless men in uniform," said the order by Divisional Commercial Manager, Lucknow Division.



### CALL TO BECOME 'SANNYASI'

Those who have resolved to establish HINDU SANATAN DHARM as National and World Religion and to make INDIA MOST POWERFUL NATION in the world

**Class 12th Pass, Graduate and Post-Graduate young men and women are invited.**

You are cordially invited to become a Sannyasi at the Sannyas Mahotsava being organized from Chaitra Pratipada March 22 to March 30, 2023, Ram Navami, of the Hindu New Year. On Ram Navami, 100 stoic scholars and intellectuals will be initiated into Sannyas at this historic and divine grand occasion. Those who cannot attend the nine-day Sannyas ceremony due to exams or any other reasons, must register themselves in advance by calling 8954555999 and 8954555111, from 6 am to 10 pm, and those who can come may come anytime from March 20th.

Enrolling for this great cause will offer the opportunity to not only study and graduate with a degree/s in Yog (BA, MA, BAMS and BYNS) but also in Philosophy, Ved Shastra, Sanskrit Grammar and Sanskrit Literature (BA and MA). With the aim of training future leaders with the visions of our ancient sages, this drive will be ensuring infusion of sage-like personality traits, character and leadership qualities among the young men and women who would be pledging to be Sannyasi. These youth with training in the ideologies of great Indian saints and sages are expected to play a crucial role in making India (Bhāratvarsh) a World Guru. Patanjali will take care of the needs of these Sannyasi brothers and sisters for the rest of their lives, who pledge to devote themselves towards establishing Yog Dharm, Ved Dharm and Sanatan Dharm.

Patanjali has done what had never been done in the past thousands of years and aims to achieve more milestones in the next 5-10 years. It has resolved to run a movement to serve Yog, Ayurved, Swadeshi and Sanatan Dharm to save the country from Macaulay's conspiratorial education system and loot of medical mafia and ensure economic, ideological, and cultural freedom as well as the freedom of education and medicine. Even in history, religion has succeeded in doing what could not be done through political and economic powers. Therefore, those youths are welcome who wish to devote their lives to the cause of Rashtra Dharm and Sanatan Dharm for realizing the dreams of great men like Veer Savarkar, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maharishi Dayanand, Swami Vivekanand and Golwalkar Guruji, who wanted to create an integral Hindu nation and supremely glorious India.

It is our belief which the world has also witnessed that the seemingly ordinary yet immensely valiant people, irrespective of caste and community, have been behind all great revolutions. Therefore, valiant and patriotic youth from all over India (Bhāratvarsh) is urged to join the Sannyas Mahotsava at Patanjali on New Year Ram Navami and cultivate personality, character and leadership qualities, like great sages to create a new history of character building, nation building and create a yogic era by adopting Sannyas and getting educated at Patanjali University and Sannyas Ashram under the holy tutelage of Yog Rishi Swami Ramdevji and Pujya Acharya Shri Balkrishnaji.

Parents of any caste and region, willing to bring glory to their clan by educating their talented progeny under the tutelage of revered Swami ji and Pujya Acharya ji, as well as raising their children as true descendants of sages and dedicate them to the nation and Sanatan Dharm may send their children to Patanjali. And, youth whose parents are unwilling to listen to the calling due to their excessive attachment or ignorance, may also come to Patanjali Yogpeeth even without the consent of their parents. Most of the sannyasis including revered Swamiji, Pujya Acharyaji, or even Maharshi Dayanand had to opt for this route to Sannyas.

Register to become a Sannyasi, Brahmachari contact at: PATANJALI SANNYAS ASHRAM, PATANJALI YOGPEETH, HARIDWAR

**8954555999, 8954555111**

info@patanjalisannyasashram.com www.patanjalisannyasashram.com



# CG urges DGCA to install alarms, CCTVs to curb unruly flyer behaviour

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a note of the increasing incidents of "disruptive and unruly passengers" on flights in the last few months, the Delhi Commission of Women (DCW) has come out with recommendations to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to prevent such incidents.



In a letter to the DGCA Director General Vikram Dev Dutt, the DCW chairperson Swati Malhi said that the commission has drafted detailed recommendations on the amendments that should be made to the prevalent guidelines so that cases of sexual harassment and misconduct by passengers on flights are dealt with strictly on flights and in airports.

The first one was on November 26, 2022, when a man reportedly flashed his private parts and urinated on a 70-year-old woman on an Air India flight from New York to New Delhi. The other one was

reported on December 6, 2022, in which a man again urinated on the seat of his fellow woman passenger on an Air India flight from Paris to New Delhi.

"Media has reported recent cases of harassment and misconduct by passengers in two flights, one on November 26, 2022 in which a man reportedly flashed his private part and urinated on a 70-year-old woman in an Air India flight from New York to New Delhi and another on December 6, 2022, in which a man again urinated on

the seat of his fellow woman passenger on an Air India flight from Paris to New Delhi. It has been reported that both these men were in a highly inebriated state," the panel said. It said it has taken suo-moto cognizance of these incidents and issued a notice to DGCA, seeking details of the action taken by them along with the guidelines issued by the regulator to airlines for tackling such cases.

In response, the panel was provided a copy of certain guidelines by DGCA along with a copy of the advisory issued by DGCA dated January 1, 2023 to be followed by all airlines. "Upon examining the guidelines and the advisory, the commission has observed that these do not provide specific instructions to airlines to properly handle, report, and redress cases of sexual harassment of female passengers at airport or on flights. Further, they don't list out any steps to deal with highly intoxicated passengers,"

it noted. The recommendations include action against highly intoxicated persons, including preventing such persons from boarding the aircraft, protocols to handle such passengers on plane and severely limiting alcohol intake on flights. It has also proposed action against persons indulging in sexual harassment on flights.

These include registration of FIR against the offender, setting up an independent committee to probe the complaints of sexual harassment from passengers headed by a retired woman judge, increasing punishment against such passengers including increasing time period for which they can be put on no-fly list from six months to two years, sensitising airline staff and setting up protocols for using restraining devices on passengers indulging in sexual harassment in case all other means of stopping him on flights fail.

# Adopt Human Factors Engineering in indigenous weapons: CDS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Wednesday stressed the need for developing indigenous weapon systems suitable for Indian soldiers and emphasised the need for incorporation of the Human Factors Engineering (HFE) right at the stage of qualitative requirements and designs.

He made this observation while inaugurating a two-day workshop on Human Factors Engineering in Military Platforms here. The workshop has been organised by Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS), a Delhi-based laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The aim of the workshop is to evolve a policy framework and practices to ensure scientific implementation of Human Factors Engineering (HFE) in the defence sector, thereby

providing an impetus to the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The HFE is a science concerned with the design of tools and systems by taking into account human capabilities and limitations for safe and effective use.

In his address, the CDS called for incorporation of the HFE right at the stage of qualitative requirements and designs to make indigenous weapons suitable for soldiers. He also stressed on the point for creating a synergistic approach and policy framework for the implementation of the HFE through involvement of Integrated Defence Staff

taking into consideration both long drawn battles and short duration special operations. Speaking on the occasion, DRDO Chief Samir V Kamat highlighted the initiatives taken by the DRDO for implementation of HFE

as integral part of the product development cycle to ensure that the products are developed not only for Indian soldiers but are also available for export. He emphasised that in the age of Artificial Intelligence and system autonomy for defence equipment, the HFE will play an equally important role. Director Generals, Directors from DRDO Headquarters and laboratories working on futuristic defence technologies, senior scientists; representatives from Strategic Planning, Army Design Bureau, Armoured Corps, Infantry, Warship Design Bureau, Indian Air Force and senior officials of several defence industries and defence PSUs are attending the workshop.

# Political colour not taken into account for providing job opportunities: WB Edu Min

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal education minister Bratya Basu on Wednesday asserted that he is "accountable" to all eligible and qualified youth when it comes to providing job opportunities, and no discrimination will be made on the ground of political affiliation.

Basu, talking to news channel, also stressed that he was the minister of Bengal, not of any party, and only those who have cleared eligibility tests will be given jobs.

The ruling TMC government had been facing the heat over various school recruitment-related scams detected by the central agencies, with many party leaders and ministers arrested for their alleged involvement in the irregularities. "My job will be to facilitate job opportunities for every eligible and educated youth. I am not the education minister for supporters of a particular political party, I am the minister for every resident of the state," he stated.

Asked about a video doing the rounds in which he was purportedly seen asking activists of the TMC to give jobs to qual-

ified partymen, the minister said that just a "portion of the entire conversation at a meeting, after the 2021 polls, was being circulated by people with vested interests". PTI did not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

"The meeting was held after the TMC's landslide win in 2021 assembly polls. I had merely indicated that I, as a senior leader, was entitled to recommend two-three qualified persons for jobs in my department after the requisite test and interviews. Such things were in practice in the past, too," the Dum Dum MLA explained.

Basu contended that he has always believed in upholding probity and integrity of his post. To a question on scams involving School Service Commission appointments and Teacher Eligibility Test under former minister Partha Chatterjee, who is currently in jail, Basu said, "Investigations are underway... We will not stand by anyone who has done something wrong."

Chatterjee was removed as the cabinet minister and suspended from the TMC, shortly after his arrest in connection with the SSC scam.

# Coast Guard conducts 4th edition of table top exercise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard Region (North East) conducted a fourth edition of table top exercise under the aegis of Colombo Security Conclave in Kolkata. Apart from Indian Coast Guard, representatives from various national stakeholders in maritime domain also participated in the three-day exercise starting Tuesday.

Giving details here on Wednesday, officials said the Colombo Security Conclave was formed in year 2011 as a trilateral maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The roadmap of activities was further expanded in year 2022 and adopted by the member countries including India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius with Bangladesh and Seychelles participating as observer countries.

During the proceedings, discussions were held on various topics pertaining to challenges in maritime domain such as tackling threats from Anti National Elements, Marine Pollution Response, Search and Rescue and Damage Control at sea.

Colombo Security Conclave underlines regional co-operation and shared security objectives concerning all littoral nations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It aims to make maritime security, Marine Pollution Response and Maritime Search and Rescue priorities for the region.

The coming together of six Indian Ocean region countries indicate the development of sub-regionalism on a common maritime and security platform and is significant in a wider global context as well. Coordination and collaboration amongst the maritime neighbours holds the key for maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean Region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Security and growth for all in the Region - SAGAR and neighbourhood first policy are the prime initiatives for the IOR and bears testimony to India's policy priorities.

A cooperative environment and collaborative mechanism in the maritime neighbourhood of IOR is essential to address the oceanic challenges thereby ensuring maritime safety, security and protection of marine environment.

# Opp MPs march to ED office over Adani row...

From Page 1

"We are also aware of the limited remit of the Supreme Court Commission appointed on the subject. We point this out so as to remind the ED that it cannot turn around and abdicate its jurisdiction on these or other grounds. In light of the above, we, the members of the Opposition, ask that you take immediate action on the above-mentioned allegations."

The letter further claimed that over the last three months, several crucial pieces of evidence had been made available against the Adani Group in the public domain. "Yet, the ED, which claims to pursue such cases with vigour and fairness, is yet to launch even a preliminary enquiry into these very serious charges.

As a result, we are constrained to file this official complaint so that the ED is compelled to investigate a relationship that has serious implications not just for our economy but most importantly, our democracy."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that the police was not allowing the Opposition MPs of 18 parties to march in protest and present the case for a detailed investigation into the Adani issue. The police said the Opposition MPs were not allowed to march as Section 144 CrPC was imposed in the area.

Sharing the contents of the letter on Twitter, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said, "Leaders and MPs of 16 Opposition parties, who were going to hand over a complaint letter demanding a probe into the Adani scam to the ED, were stopped from reaching the ED's office this afternoon."

The Opposition leaders said this case involves serious and far-reaching charges of corporate fraud, political corruption, stock-price manipulation through fraudulent means, and the misuse/monopolisation of public resources to benefit a single corporate group.

In the letter, the leaders said that the Adani Group companies were accused of having established a network of offshore shell firms and offshore funds controlled by parties related to the Adani Group for the purposes of "artificially inflating stock valuations and to give a distorted picture with regard to the group companies' financial health".

The Adani Group has however rubbished all the charges made against its companies and denied any "wrongdoing" as earlier alleged by the US-based Hindenburg report.

The Opposition also mentioned recovery of drugs made from Mundra port in September 2021, alleging there has been absolutely no serious investigation into the company charged with running the port on whose watch this grave crime occurred.

# McMahon Line China, Arunachal international...

From Page 1

"This bipartisan resolution expresses the Senate's support for unequivocally recognising the State of Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India, condemning China's military aggression to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control, and further enhancing the US-India strategic partnership and the Quad in support of the free and open Indo-Pacific," he said late Tuesday. The resolution, which comes following the biggest

clash between India and China in the Eastern Sector along the LAC in six years, reaffirms that the United States recognises the McMahon Line as the international boundary between China and the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh.

The resolution also pushes back against People's Republic of China (PRC) claims that Arunachal Pradesh is PRC territory, which is a part of the PRC's increasingly aggressive and expansionist policies.

"America's values supporting freedom and a rules-based order must be at the center of all of our actions and

relationships around the world, especially as the PRC government pushes an alternative vision," Merkley said.

"This resolution makes clear that the United States views the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh as part of the Republic of India-not the People's Republic of China-and commits the US to deepening support and assistance to the region, alongside like-minded international partners and donors," he said.

The bipartisan Senators' resolution condemns additional China's provocations, including the People's Republic of China's use of military force

to change the status quo along the LAC, construction of villages in contested areas, publication of maps with Mandarin-language names for cities and features in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, and expansion of PRC territorial claims in Bhutan.

Furthermore, the resolution commends the Government of India for taking steps to defend itself against aggression and security threats from the People's Republic of China.

These efforts include securing India's telecommunications infrastructure; examining its procurement process-

es and supply chains; implementing investment screening standards; and expanding its cooperation with Taiwan in public health and other sectors.

The resolution serves to further strengthen the US-India bilateral partnership regarding defense, technology, economics, and people-to-people ties and promotes enhancing our multilateral cooperation with India through the Quad, the East Asia Summit alongside our partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and other international fora. This resolution is co-sponsored by Senator John Cornyn.

# India invites Pak Def Min...

From Page 1

The Chief Justice, however, skipped the meeting of the SCO Chief Justices and instead Justice Muneeb Akhtar attended the meeting through a video link recently, it said.

China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are members of SCO.

The Foreign Ministers' meeting is scheduled for May in Goa while the Defence Ministers' huddle will be held in New Delhi in April. The Pakistani Government has said it has not yet taken a decision on whether Foreign Minister Bilawal or Defence Minister Asif will attend the meetings in

India. Bilawal and China's Qin Gang are among the Foreign Ministers of the SCO member nations invited by India for the meeting it is scheduled to host in May. The Pakistan Foreign Office has said the decision will be taken at an appropriate time.

If the Pakistani Foreign Minister attends the meeting in person, it will be the first such visit from Islamabad to India since 2011. Then Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar visited India that year. Khar is currently serving as the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

In May 2014, then-Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif visited India to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony.

In December 2015, then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Pakistan and days later, Modi made a brief visit to the neighbouring country.

The ties between India and Pakistan came under severe strain after India's warplanes pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp in Pakistan's Balakot in February 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack.

The relations further deteriorated after India announced the withdrawal of Jammu and Kashmir's special powers and the bifurcation of the erstwhile State into Union Territories in August 2019.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

My Client, Smt. Chand Rani W/o Lt. Sh. Narendra Singh is owner of Erro First Floor With Roof Rights area measuring 100 Sq. Yds. & Front Half Portion of Second Floor with Roof Rights area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. Built on Southern Side Portion of Property Bearing No. 14/No. 17, A2 Block, Sant Nagar, Baran, Delhi-84 & H. No. 39, Gali No. 20, A2 Block, Sant Nagar, Baran, Delhi-84 and other if any and also from immovable properties due to their misconduct. My client shall not be responsible for their acts.

Sd/- Abhishek (Advocate) Enrolment No.: 5256/2017 Ch. No.: X-16A, Civil Wing, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi M.No. 9999984/794

**OFFICE OF NAGAR PARISHAD, PATHARIA DISTT DAMOH**  
(FIRST CALL)  
Section-1  
Notice Inviting E-Tenders

NIT No. 596/597 Dated: 10-03-2023

Online Lump sum bid for the following AMRUT 2.0 works are invited from registered contractors and firms of reputed fulfilling eligibility criteria:

S. No.	Tender ID	Work	Probable Amount (In Lacs)	Completion Period (months)
1.	2023_UAD_259484_1	Survey, Investigation, Design and Execution of Repair, Maintenance and Additional Construction of anicut for Out Flanking Portion of Existing Anicut having length 30.0 m and 4.5 m height Across River Sonar including construction of bank protection work i.e. construction of retaining wall, river bed protection work, energy dissipation work, etc as per given in detailed scope Work For Patharia Town Under Amrut 2.0 augmentation of water supply system including construction of bank protection work	Rs. 327.70 Lacs	12 months including rainy season
2.	2023_UAD_259485_1	Survey, Soil Investigation, Design, and Execution of various works for augmentation of water supply system including Providing, Laying, Jointing, Testing and Commissioning of Distribution network including excavation, refilling, road cutting /dismantling, restoration to its original condition, providing and fixing required valves (Sluice, Air, Scour etc.) Specials, fittings, flow meters. Construction of valve chambers and House service connections, as required as per scope of work.	Rs. 342.96 Lacs	24 months including rainy season

1. Interested Bidder can view the NIT on website [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) and [www.mpurban.gov.in](http://www.mpurban.gov.in)

2. The Bid Document can be purchased only Online from 10:30 Hrs of 11-03-2023 to 17:30 Hrs of 11-04-2023

3. Amendment to NIT, if any, would be published on web site only, and not in Newspaper.

4. GST shall be paid separately as per norms.

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# Land-for-jobs: Lalu, Rabri...

From Page 1

Lalu Prasad, 74, who underwent a kidney transplant recently and was in a wheelchair, reached the Rouse Avenue court around 10 AM but proceedings were delayed. The family appeared before Special Judge Geetanjali Goel around 11 AM. The case relates to alleged appointments made in the Indian Railways in return for land parcels gifted or sold to Lalu Prasad's family when he was Railway Minister between 2004 and 2009.

The CBI, in its charge-sheet, alleged that irregular appointments were made in the Railways, violating norms and procedures of Indian Railways for recruitment.

As a quid pro quo, it alleged, the candidates directly or through their immediate relatives and family members sold land to Lalu Prasad's family members at highly discounted rates up to one-fifth of the prevailing market

rates. On February 27, Special Judge Goel issued summons to the accused persons, including Lalu Prasad, Rabri Devi and Misa Bharti, and directed them to appear before the court on March 15.

Giving bail to Lalu and family members, the judge noted that the charge-sheet was filed without arrest, except in the case of one person who is on bail at present. In July 2022, the CBI arrested Bhola Yadav, who was Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Lalu Prasad when he was Railway Minister, in the case. The charge-sheet was filed on October 10 last year for offences of criminal conspiracy and corruption against 16 accused people.

# Vacate Yamuna floodplains within 3 days or pay ₹50K, face razing: HC to jhuggis

From Page 1

The DDA's counsel told the court the residents had also filed a contempt petition but no contempt case had been made out against the authorities.

She submitted that the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) said in an affidavit that the residents were not entitled to rehabilitation as their "basti" did not figure in its notified list.

The court directed the DDA to proceed with the demolition after three days and said that no further indulgence will be shown to

the petitioners or their families. It also disposed of the contempt plea observing that no contempt was made out and said "You cannot use contempt proceedings to threaten officials".

The court said the residents had concealed certain material facts, as recorded in its order of August 17, 2022, regarding earlier litigations challenging eviction by their fathers and grandfathers which had attained finality till the Supreme Court. When the matter was listed on January 13, the court stayed the proposed demolition considering the harsh winter.



# Capital's old excise policy gets six-month extension

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has extended the old excise regime, which allows only State corporations to retail liquor in the Capital, for the next six months. Under this policy, there will be five dry days during this period, which includes Mahavir Jayanti on April 4, Good Friday on April 7, Eid-ul-Fitr on April 22, Buddha Purnima on May 5 and Eid-ul-Zuha on June 29. The sale of alcohol will be prohibited on these days to maintain the solemnity and sanctity of these occasions.

This is the second extension of the old excise policy after the scrapping of the AAP's excise policy. The existing excise policy, which was set to expire on March 31, will now be valid until September 30.

Sources said the Government has directed the Excise Department to formulate a new excise policy at the earliest. According to officials, the three-member committee tasked with the responsibility of



formulating a new policy hasn't submitted its report yet. With the finalisation of the report and its approval by the Government set to take some more time, sources said the Excise Department would have to extend the current policy.

"Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday approved the extension of the existing Excise Policy for another six months. The decision was made to ensure the continuity of the existing excise regime, while the Excise Department formulates a new policy. The existing Excise Policy, which was set to expire on March 31, 2023, will now be

valid until September 30, 2023. In addition to the extension of the existing policy, the Government has directed the Excise Department to formulate a new Excise Policy at the earliest," the Delhi Government said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Delhi Government scrapped its Excise Policy 2021-22 and withdrew it on August 31 last year after a CBI probe was recommended by Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena into alleged irregularities in its implementation. Former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also held the charge of the

Excise Department, was recently arrested by the ED in connection with the alleged liquor scam.

The old regime, which was prevalent before November 17, 2021 and was replaced with a more-contemporary policy in 2021-22, was brought into force from September 1, 2022 for six months after the new policy ran into rough weather and the Government and senior department officers faced allegations of irregularities and corruption. The 2021-22 policy, which earlier got two extensions, was withdrawn on August 31, 2021.

Scrapping the policy, the Excise Department stated that given the fact that the new policy couldn't achieve the objective of fetching greater revenues and that it had been flagged with many a issues being probed by agencies, Delhi Government had decided to revert to the old policy prevalent till November 16, 2021. There are over 600 liquor stores and over 960 hotels, bars and clubs in Delhi.

# Delhi witnesses major traffic jams

Closure of Nehru Place-IIT carriageway on Chirag Delhi flyover and large stretch of NH 48 results in snarls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi commuters were subjected to excruciating traffic jams due to the closure of the Nehru Place-IIT flyover for 50 days, while a large stretch of the NH 48 (Delhi-Jaipur Highway) between Rangpuri and Rajokari has been closed for 90 days due to the construction of the Dwarka Expressway leaving vehicles stuck on the road for hours.

Keshav Kumar, a trader, said, "The situation in the south and southeast Delhi area is the same. I came from Noida and thought that the Ashram flyover will give relief, but had no idea about the bumper-to-bumper traffic in Chirag Delhi. Now, I have to go to Gurugram and I am planning to take the metro due to the traffic situation."

Vrinda Bhatia, who works in central Delhi, said she reached home on Tuesday after spending two hours on blocked roads. "I work in central Delhi and live in Gurugram. On Tuesday, the traffic situation was smooth in the morning

when I was going to work. "However, when I was returning home, it seemed like the whole of Delhi had choked. It took me two-and-a-half-hours to reach Gurugram. Today, I took a metro to office and am thinking of continuing this till the stretch reopens," Bhatia said. Several other commuters also shared updates of the traffic situation on Twitter. One of them said he had been stuck for 35 minutes and moved only 150 metres at Chirag Delhi.

Others said there were massive traffic jams at Ashram and also heavy traffic between Kapashera to Rajokari. The commuters also took alternate routes to reach their destinations.

"We were getting regular updates about the closure of Chirag Delhi flyover and the portion on NH-18 through news and social media.

"Since Monday, I have been taking the Bijwasan route to go to Gurugram. Though there is more traffic than usual, the stretch is more convenient than the main NH-48," Ankit Upadhyaya, an MNC employee, stated.



The traffic was also affected in west Delhi due to construction work, with traffic police asking people to avoid the stretch.

"Movement of traffic is slow from Raja Garden towards Britannia Chowk due to construction work of Punjabi Bagh flyover. There is a delay of 10-15 min to commute this stretch. Kindly avoid the stretch," Delhi Traffic Police tweeted. On Tuesday, PWD Minister Atishi directed officials to complete the maintenance work of the Chirag Delhi flyover within a month as against 50 days.

The Minister held a meeting with senior officials of the public works department (PWD) to resolve the issue on a priority basis.

The Delhi Traffic Police have suggested alternative routes for the commuters of Chirag Delhi flyover and Delhi-Gurugram to avoid the inconvenience.

The commuters heading towards Dhaula Kuan, AIIMS, Defence Colony are advised to take a right from under the Nehru Place flyover and head towards Lala Lajpat Rai Marg following Moolchand Hospital flyover for their destination.

# Permission for public meeting on Kashmir at GPF denied

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has denied permission for a public meeting on Kashmir at the Gandhi Peace Foundation on Wednesday, citing the possibility of law and order disturbance.

The event was scheduled at 2 PM at the venue and the speakers at the event included Delhi University professor Nandita Narain, Hussain Masood, retired judge of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, CPI (M) leader MY Tarigami, filmmaker Sanjay Kak, Mir Shahid Saleem, Chairman of United Peace Alliance, and Anil Chamadia, a senior journalist.

In a communication to the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Station House (SHO) of IP Estate police station said, "Information/local input has



been received that some anonymous group is planning/organising public meeting on 'Media Blackout in Kashmir' at 3 PM on March 15, 2023 at Gandhi Peace Foundation. Efforts to get the details of members of the anonymous group have been made but the same could not be verified.

"There is discreet input of disturbance in law and order situation in view of organising

this above public meeting. In view of the above, you are requested to cancel the booking and intimation may kindly be sent to the undersigned at the earliest."

According to Narain, one of the speakers of the event, the public meeting was organised by several student and teacher groups. "The speakers were informed about the cancellation, just when they were about

to leave for the event. It was not a protest but a public meeting. It was being carried out in a hall and the police had nothing to do with it.

"This is what is happening. They are entering colleges to stop events. There was to be a discussion on media blackout in Kashmir but this cancellation shows that it is happening everywhere," she said. Narain claimed that the police had "tried the same thing" with the Bharat Bachao programme at HKS Surjeet Bhavan on March 11 and 12, but the organisers managed to get a court order allowing the programme to be held.

"This outrageous cancellation at the last minute only serves to reinforce the widely known fact about the suppression of free speech, not only in Kashmir but all over India, including in its capital Delhi," she alleged.

Last week, the Delhi High Court allowed the holding of a national seminar of the members of a collective called "Bharat Bachao" and asked the organisers to provide a list of participants and their details to the police. At that time, Gade Inna Reddy and Mondru Francis Gopinath, members of Bharat Bachao, a collective of scholars, had approached the court with a grievance that the Delhi Police unilaterally denied them permission to organise the private programme, titled "Understanding Fascism in Present India Context", two days before the event was to be held.

Justice Tushar Rao Gedela had asked the parties to cooperate with each other to ensure that the seminar is held in a peaceful atmosphere and there is no untoward incident.

# Yamuna riverfront to be developed on lines of Sabarmati in 5 years: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Wednesday said the Yamuna riverfront at Millennium Depot will be developed on the lines of the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad within a span of four to five years.

"There are plans to develop a riverfront in Delhi. But it will take time, say another four to five years. We have identified a site near Millennium Depot which will be developed as per norms," Saxena said.

Talking about the project, he said the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will draw up plans and maps for the riverfront development. The plan is at an initial stage at the moment.



"The length of the stretch will be finalised once the plans are drawn. The DDA, being the land owning agency, will take up the project," he added.

An official, requesting anonymity, said that they have started drawing a concept plan and landscape plan on the riverfront project.

"It will be a massive project and is currently at a nascent

stage. We have got the Millennium Depot land and have started drawing up the plan. Development like this takes time and a lot of analysis," he said.

Explaining the roadmap for the project, he said that scientific consultations will be held to ascertain the kind of grass and plants that can be planted there.

# BJP to intensify protest against Kejriwal Govt in excise case



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP will intensify its protest against the liquor policy of the Arvind Kejriwal government by holding a door-to-door campaign and making people aware about it at markets and metro stations across the city. BJP leaders said the party will launch the campaign on March 16 and it will run till March 26.

"The BJP believes that chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was 'directly involved' in the liquor policy scam and he should resign on the basis of morality. If he does not do so, the BJP will force him to resign," alleged

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, asserting the BJP will continue the struggle till Kejriwal steps down from his post.

Bidhuri said that Kejriwal is the real mastermind of the liquor scam.

"The cabinet meeting of the Delhi government in which the decision to implement the liquor policy was taken, was presided over by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. In the same meeting, an unconstitutional decision was taken to increase the commission of liquor contractors from 2 per cent to 12 per cent.

# CM assures uninterrupted water supply in Delhi during summer



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the city stares at water crisis in the peak summer months, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday assured uninterrupted water supply during the summer after a high-level meeting with Water Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj, Forest Minister Gopal Rai, and other stakeholders. During the meeting, a detailed presentation was made by Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and its preparations to ensure

ample water supply during summer.

During the meeting, the CM instructed officials to recharge ground water, increase water availability through tube wells, bring uniformity in the quality of water extracted from lakes, and treat the ammonia present in water coming from Haryana.

The CM emphasized the importance of timely utilisation of available water and preventing its wastage. The CM further directed that all tube

wells be made operational and that faulty ones be repaired within 24 hours. Additionally, he called for expeditious construction of new tube wells and sewage treatment plants (STP) to increase water availability. Officials were also directed to submit a plan within a week to treat the ammonia present in water that comes from Haryana to Delhi. The Chief Secretary has also been directed to coordinate with the DDA to settle any land related issues in this project.

# Min holds surprise check of hosps

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj conducted a surprise inspection at GTB, Jag Pravesh Chandra and Aruna Asaf Ali Hospitals on Tuesday night. During the inspection, Bhardwaj visited various wards of the hospitals. He met the patients undergoing treatment, inquired about their health and checked the arrangements.

Bhardwaj instructed the hospital administration to avoid the practice of referring patients directly to big hospitals for treatment and examination. The Health Minister also instructed that immediate relief should be provided to patients in medico-legal cases as soon as the legal process is completed. Also, the Minister directed the hospital administration to remove the clutter and provide affordable and quality health care to the patients and improve cleanliness. Along with this, instructions were given to provide affordable and quality health facilities to the patients.

Expressing displeasure over the absence of several senior doctors in the hospitals, he



instructed that appropriate action be taken against them. Bed-sheets were not changed in many wards in the hospitals. He said that there is a possibility of infection in patients due to lying on dirty bed sheets. The hospital administration was directed to change the bed-sheets of the patients on priority basis.

Notably, people are admitted to the hospitals in emergency during night and providing immediate relief to the patients is the priority. Sometimes major surgeries have to be performed at night only. The Health Minister

inquired about the availability of X-ray machines and other equipment in the hospitals. He instructed the administration to ensure immediate fixing of the non-functional monitor machines.

He further said if patients coming to hospitals in the evening require ultrasound, CT-scan and other medical tests, then instead of referring patients directly to big hospitals under the Delhi Arogya Kosh, the hospital administration should provide treatment facilities to the patients in small hospitals at their own level as well.

# Govt establishing 2 new campuses of Ambedkar University, says Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Government Education Minister Atishi on Wednesday said that the Government is establishing two new campuses of the Ambedkar University to increase the number of seats and has prioritised re-conceptualisation of technical institutes.

Reviewing projects for higher education, the minister instructed officials to prepare an action plan for modernisation and expansion of all universities and technical education institutions of the Delhi government.



"In Delhi, 2.5 lakh children pass out of class 12. But despite having talent and ability, only one lakh of these children get admission in any university. Taking cognisance of this, the Delhi government started increasing the capacity of its universities," Atishi said.

She also directed officials to expedite the construction work of the Rohini and Dheerpur campuses of the Ambedkar University and said the new campuses will address all academic needs of students.

"The Delhi government is working with a vision of changing the country through education. After the Dheerpur and Rohini campuses of the university are ready, more than 26,000 students will be able to get admission here," the minister said.

Both the campuses will have multi-storey academic blocks, convention block, health centre, auditorium,

administrative block, library block, amphitheatre, guest house, separate hostels for girls and boys. Residential units will also be constructed.

Atishi said that two state-of-the-art academic blocks will be constructed in Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Shahdara for 10,000 students. The first phase of the project was reviewed by the Delhi education minister on Wednesday.

There are a total of 11,000 seats in the current 19 ITIs of the Delhi government, where more than 30,000 applications are received every year, according to the Directorate of Education.

# 3 puppies fall to death from 7th floor in Noida

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three puppies died allegedly after falling from a seventh floor apartment in a group housing society in Greater Noida (West), police said on Wednesday.

The police said they have questioned the pet's owner and have sent the bodies for post mortem to ascertain the cause of death. According to an official, the incident took place at Gaur City under Bisrakh police station limits on Tuesday.

"We came to know about the incident this morning through Twitter. After this, the pet owner Shekhar Chauhan was called to the police station

and questioned," Bisrakh Station House Officer Anil Kumar Rajput said. He was later let off and the bodies of the puppies, who were around 45 days' old, have been sent for post mortem.

Chauhan has been accused of brutality against animals with the episode finding its way on social media. However, he claimed innocence, stating that he had been taking care of the mother dog since three years and other puppies, according to police.

"The autopsy report is expected by Thursday and will confirm the cause of death. We have not yet received any formal complaint from anyone in this case," Rajput said.

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# US Prez panel recommends extension of retrenched H1-B workers' grace period

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

In a likely relief to scores of professionals including Indians, who have lost their jobs in the US, a presidential advisory sub-committee there has recommended the federal government to extend the grace period for H1-B workers from the existing 60 days to 180 days. It will provide enough opportunities for the workers to find a new job or other alternatives.

"The immigration sub-committee recommends the Department of Homeland Security and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to extend the grace period for H1-B workers, who have lost their jobs, from 60 days to 180 days," Ajay Jain Bhutoria, member of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, said late Tuesday in Washington.

In his presentation, Bhutoria highlighted the significant challenges faced by H1-B workers laid off from



their jobs. The current 60-day grace period presents numerous hurdles, including finding a new job within a tight time-frame, complex paperwork for transferring H1-B status, and delays in processing at USCIS, he said. As a result, many H1-B workers are forced to leave the country which could result in a loss of skilled labour for the United States, he told members of the advisory commission.

Bhutoria advocated for the extension of the grace period, citing the need to support highly skilled tech employees who he said are essential to the economic growth of the United

States. The extension would also provide affected employees with more time to navigate the complex and time-consuming process of finding new employment opportunities and transferring their H1-B status, he said.

Members of the commission, recognising the importance of supporting and retaining highly skilled tech employees, supported the move.

Bhutoria's recommendation to extend the grace period for H1-B workers is a critical step towards ensuring that highly skilled tech employees can continue to contribute to

the economic growth of the United States without fear of losing their status.

H1-B visa holders face significant consequences when they are laid off from their jobs. After termination, they have a 60-day grace period during which they must either leave the United States, seek a change of immigration status, or have another employer file an H1-B petition on their behalf. If they do not do so within 60 days, they are considered to be in violation of the terms of their non-immigrant visa.

However, if a new employer files a new H1-B petition for the visa holder within 60 days of a previous employer's termination, the change of employer petition will typically be granted even if there was a gap in the employee's H1-B status.

H1-B workers encounter many barriers that make it difficult for them to complete all requirements for maintaining their status within the current 60-day grace period. The job market can be challenging, which is especially true for

workers in specialised fields, he said.

Tech companies typically conduct four to five rounds of interviews, which take several weeks before a candidate is offered a job.

Even if an H1-B worker is able to find a new job within 60 days, the process of transferring their H1-B status can be time-consuming and complex given the significant amount of paperwork.

Additionally, based on delays happening at USCIS, this process can take longer than 60 days to complete. This can result in the loss of skilled labour for the United States as these workers may not be able to return unless they get a new H1-B, which may take years.

It is only a question of time before the companies' economy transitions from a few months of slowdown to a boom period, which brings about a significant increase in commercial activities and opens up new opportunities for highly skilled tech employees to support the economic growth, Bhutoria argued.

# BJP, Cong war over Rahul, Adani disrupts Parl again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The proceedings in Parliament were disrupted for the third straight day on Wednesday as the political slugfest between the BJP and the Congress over Rahul Gandhi's democracy remarks and the Adani issue intensified and the Opposition parties took to the streets.

The BJP stepped up the ante against Rahul Gandhi, saying India's democracy is not in peril but the Congress has been brought to "political perdition" by the people while the Opposition party escalated its offensive, accusing the government of "undermining and weakening" democracy in the country by stalling Parliament to save a businessman.

The Congress along with several other opposition parties also took out a protest march from Parliament House to hand over a complaint to the Enforcement Directorate on the Adani issue. However, they were stopped by the police at Vijay Chowk.

In Lok Sabha, opposition members stormed into the

Well of the House, raising placards and slogans, demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani matter while the BJP slammed Rahul, accusing him of insulting India and cast aspersions against the Speaker of the House. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla repeatedly urged the members to return to their seats and allow the house to run. "This house is meant for holding discussions and dialogues. Let's talk about policy and have a good discussion on issues related to public welfare. If we want people's welfare and consider this house a temple of democracy, I will request that

at least don't comment on this house," Birla said.

"It is not right to comment, either inside (the house) or outside. Talk about issues and policy here. It is not right to bring placards like this here. I am warning you. This is wrong," he said.

Rajya Sabha proceedings were also disrupted amid uproar over the BJP's demand for Gandhi's apology for his "democracy under attack" remark made in London.

Both houses have failed to transact business so far in the second leg of the Budget session of Parliament that began on Monday.

# NHAI begins use of steel slag for making roads on trial basis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In line with Centre's 'Waste to Wealth' mission and encouraging environmentally sustainable National Highways construction, trial use of 'Steel Slag' in road construction has been initiated by central road making agency NHAI. This initiative will help to address challenge of shortage of material used in development of the National Highways, and could replace natural aggregates such as sand, gravel, or crushed stone with the waste material from the steel industry.

To construct India's first Pavement Quality Concrete (PQC) with steel slag, The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) started trials for its possible use in road construction. The authority permitted Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) to construct one km long trial patch in Raigarh district for PQC of Panvel - Indapur section of NH 66 near Mumbai where 100% natural aggregates were replaced by steel slag derived aggregates. The results from the trial have been encouraging.

Slag contains a range of



refined metal materials, including copper, steel, and aluminium. Given the durability of slag, it prevents highways from breaking or changing shape over time. Slag also prevents corrosion. This is the new addition to the several innovative resources like old tyres, garbage, plastic, construction and demolition debris, glass, shingles et used in construction activities of roads, highways.

A senior Road Transport Ministry official said NHAI has been encouraging the innovative use of new alternative material like use of plastic waste, building & construction waste etc. and the road constructed by use of steel slag is an example of converting waste

into wealth. "Use of such material in road construction shall make construction more economical and will promote circular economy and resource efficiency.

The NHAI has already been using garbage as recycled materials which is also way to limit waste production. "By recycling waste materials, we can limit resource extraction, reduce our environmental impact, and avoid overfilling landfills.

With ever growing population there are more cars on the roads and as we need to construct and repair more highways we shall need resources at a affordable cost," added the official.

# Bill in LS to empower commanders of Tri-service with disciplinary powers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha to empower the commander-in-chief and officer-in-command of the Tri-service commands with disciplinary powers. Till now, personnel from the army, IAF and navy are governed by their respective acts.

Tri-services were formed nearly 20 years ago to have a joint fighting organisation with the three Services pooling their weapons and personnel. Andaman and Nicobar Command was the first such tri-service command.

The bill will enable the inter-services organisations to exercise control over all the personnel serving and attached under their command but belonging to different services. The bill is titled 'Inter-services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill'.

"The proposed Bill will essentially empower the Heads of the Inter-services Organisations to exercise effective command, control and discipline on all personnel of regular Air force, Army and



Navy and to persons of other, who are serving in or attached to an Inter-services Organisation, without amending the respective Acts," the statement of objects and reasons of the bill said.

The bill will empower the central government to constitute Inter-services Organisation. Such an organisation may include a joint services command — comprising of units or service personnel of Air Force, Army and Navy. They may be placed under the command of the Commander-in-Chief or the Officer-in-Command. Power under the bill will also be available to Inter-services Organisations constituted before the commencement of new law.

Presently, the service personnel of Air Force, Army and

Navy are governed by the provisions of the Air Force Act, 1950, the Army Act, 1950 and the Navy Act, 1957. Only officers of the respective services are empowered to exercise disciplinary powers over the service personnel under the respective Service Acts.

This has a direct impact on command, control and discipline of the Inter-services Organisations like Andaman and Nicobar Command or Defence Space Agency, and joint training establishment like National Defence Academy or National Defence College, as the Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of such Inter-services Organisations are not empowered to exercise disciplinary or administrative powers over the personnel belonging to other services.

# Former French Embassy official escapes from India, despite CBI probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding a CBI probe against a former employee of the French Embassy here who allegedly perpetrated a massive fraud by issuing visas to hundreds of people, including his parents, on the basis of fake documents without the knowledge and approval of sanctioning authority, the accused has escaped from India.

The CBI had booked a former French mission official Shubham Shokeen and another former employee Aarti Mandal in the case on the basis of a complaint from the Embassy of that country.

It was alleged that Shokeen issued visas on the basis of forged documents after accepting illegal gratification of Rs 50,000 per application without the knowledge and approval of the head of the visa department of the embassy from January 1, 2022 to May 6, 2022.

Shokeen dealt with 324 files relating to requests to issue visas during the period, according to the FIR.

The CBI was on the trail of



Shokeen after registration of the case but it found that he had escaped the country before the FIR was lodged by the agency in December, officials said.

During the searches, the CBI seized the passports of Shokeen's parents -- No. U6107931 belonging to his father Samunder Singh and U1489667 belonging to his mother Anita Shokeen -- on which 'ETATS SCHENGEN' visa stickers bearing numbers 601039921 and 601039919 respectively were pasted.

The Schengen visa allows a person to travel across 27 countries in Europe seamlessly.

The purported visa issued by the French Embassy was valid for five years from January 3, 2022 to January 2, 2027 and authorised multiple entries and stay for 90 days in France, they said.

# BCI allows foreign lawyers, law firms to practise in India on international issues



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Shedding its decades' long Opposition, the Bar Council of India (BCI) on Wednesday took a significant decision to permit foreign lawyers and law firms to practise in areas such as foreign law, international legal issues and arbitration matters, saying that the legal fraternity here may be left behind if it slips over the matter.

The decision to notify the Bar Council of India Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers and Foreign Law Firms in India, 2022 has evoked mixed reactions from bar leaders and eminent lawyers.

While Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President and senior advocate Vikas Singh termed the BCI rules allowing foreign Lawyers and law firms as "non-starter" for being "cumbersome", senior lawyer Rakesh Dwivedi hailed the decision saying Indian lawyers "must raise" the standards and out-compete their foreign counterparts.

The BCI, which was initially opposed to the entry of foreign lawyers and foreign

law firms in India in any form, took the decision keeping in mind the changed circumstances and the best interests of Indian lawyers. "Time has come to take a call on the issue. Bar Council of India is of the view that opening up of law practice in India to foreign lawyers in the field of practice of foreign law; diverse international legal issues in non-litigious matters and in international arbitration cases would go a long way in helping the legal profession/domain grow in India to the benefit of lawyers in India too," the notification said.

The standards of Indian lawyers in proficiency in law is comparable with the international standards and the legal fraternity here is not likely to suffer any disadvantage in case law practice in India is opened up to foreign lawyers in "a restricted and well controlled and regulated manner on the principle of reciprocity," it said. The notification said the rules will also help address the concerns expressed about flow of Foreign Direct Investment and making the country a hub of International Commercial Arbitration.

# Govt assures Parl panel concerned over reduction in funding for MGNREGA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns raised by a parliamentary panel over the reduced fund allocation for the MGNREGA scheme, the Government assured that there is "no dearth of money" if the demand arises for the wage employment.

The Standing Committee on Rural Development, which submitted its report in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, said the budget estimates for MGNREGS have been reduced by Rs 29,400 crore for 2023-24



when compared to the revised estimates of 2022-23. The panel also said that it was concerned to note the continuous pendency in the disbursement of the Centre's share of funds under wages and material components of the scheme in respect of several states/Union Territories.

"The Act governing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides 'Right to Work' to such deprived sections of the rural populace who are willing to work. It is a last resort of succour for the jobless section who don't have any other means to feed them and their family members," the report said.

"The role and importance of MGNREGA were visible during the corona pandemic times when it acted as a ray of hope for the needy in times of distress," it said.

# Peptides from snake venom could prevent, treat Parkinson's, Alzheimer's

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Peptides — amino acids that make up certain proteins derived from the skin — derived from snake venom nerve growth factors hold promise as future therapeutic applications for preventing and treating neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease (PD) and Alzheimer's disease (AD), Indian scientists have found.

PD and AD are some of the most common neurodegenerative disorders. Medications or effective therapeutics are still

lacking to stop, slow, or prevent these diseases.

However, giving a ray of hope to lakhs of such patients and their family members, Prof. Ashish Kumar Mukherjee, Director, Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati, an institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), and his team worked on the snake venom and found it to be a treasure house of drug prototypes for various biomedical applications. "They can be moulded into candidate life saving drug prototypes, like cancer, cardio-

vascular disease, and covid-19. They found prospects in the nerve growth factor from snake venom, a minor component of the venom characterized by Prof. Mukherjee and his group.

"It possesses neurogenesis properties (triggering sprouting of neurites from a cell) by binding to the Tropomyosin receptor kinase A (TrkA) receptor, the high-affinity nerve growth factor receptor of rat pheochromocytoma PC-12 cells. However, drug development from a native toxin of snake venom is tedious," said a statement from the DST here.

# Ozone layer not only poses threat to human health but also disrupts insects' chemical mating signal

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) layer at the lower level of earth is not only posing threat to human health, it is also causing disruption in the chemical mating signal — pheromones — of insects like male fruit flies. According to a study, female flies were found to be less interested in males exposed to ozone and much slower to respond to their courtship behavior.

This is likely to accelerate the global decline of insects which are already on the path of extinction due to various anthropogenic reasons.

Ozone is created in the atmosphere by a chemical reaction when two pollutants, often emitted by cars or industry, combine in the presence of

sunlight, and has been shown to interfere with plant photosynthesis and growth. While a layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere helps block harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation from reaching Earth, at ground level it is a major component of the smog polluting most big cities. The researchers said their findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, raise concern that ozone pollution may be contributing to the global decline of insects.

"Male fruit flies exposed to ozone pollution may struggle to recognise members of the opposite sex and show an interest in other males instead," the research suggests.

Study author Professor Bill Hansson, head of the Evolutionary Neuroethology Department and co-founder of



the Max Planck Centre on next Generation Insect Chemical Ecology, said: "Insects and their pheromones have evolved over millions of years. In contrast, the concentration of air pollutants has only increased dramatically since industrialisation.

"It is unlikely that the communication systems of insects, which have evolved over the course of evolution, will be able

to adapt to new conditions within a short period of time if pheromones are suddenly no longer there. "The only solution to this dilemma is to immediately reduce pollutants in the atmosphere."

Like fruit flies, many insects communicate using pheromones that are released into the air — and this is particularly important when it comes to finding a mate.

## INBRIEF

**DEF MIN WORKSHOP ON DEFENCE EQUIPMENT**  
New Delhi: A one-day workshop on 'Simplification of Trial Processes for Defence Equipment' was organised here on Wednesday under the aegis of Acquisition Wing of Ministry of Defence. In line with government's vision of Make in India, the workshop was aimed at having a free exchange of ideas among all stakeholders involved in the trials of defence equipment prior to their induction into the armed forces, defence ministry officials said.

**436 CAPF PERSONNEL DIED BY SUICIDE IN 3 YRS**  
New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday was informed that 436 personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF) have died by suicide in the last three years. Giving these details, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said, a task force has been set up to identify relevant risk factors as well as relevant risk groups and suggest remedial measures for prevention of suicides and fratricides in CAPFs.

**IAF CHIEF FELICITATES SPORTSPERSONS IN FORCES**  
New Delhi: IAF chief V R Chaudhari on Wednesday here felicitated meritorious sportspersons of the force who have excelled at National and International arena. Giving details, IAF officials said 26 sportspersons, who had won medals at National and International fora, three teams of Indian Air Force who were winners at Inter Services and National Championships and support staff were felicitated during the ceremony.



# Exchequer lost ₹876 cr in Green City proj: Suvendu

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Fighting with its back against the wall against a glut of corruption charges, a new scam seems to have exploded in the face of the Mamata Banerjee Government.

Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari has alleged that the State Government has suffered a cumulative loss of Rs 876 crore thanks to an undervalued deal it struck with a construction company engaged in the much touted Green City Development Project at the colonial locality of Alipore in upmarket South Kolkata. The project is coming up within 500 metres of the Chief Ministers official residence.

In a tweet tagging both Governor CV Anand Bose and the Enforcement Directorate Adhikari has said that he has urged the Governor to enquire into a major scam wherein 5.6 acres of land belonging to Correctional Administration Department at Alipore is being disposed of at undervalued rate under the Alipore Green City



Development Project causing a loss of Rs 876 crore to the exchequer. According to Adhikari the construction company—whose name he has provided to the authorities concerned—has acquired prime land in Alipore, Kolkata for a paltry Rs 414 crores.

This money has been paid in exchange for 1 million square feet of saleable area with estimated gross sales value in excess of Rs 2,300 crores, he has said. The BJP leader goes on to say that assuming an all-inclusive cost of construction of ultra-premium apartments being Rs 5,500 per sq.ft and 20 percent profit margin on revenue of Rs 2,300 crores; the cost realized

from the State of plot of land should have been Rs 1,290 crores. While the State Government has not responded officially to Adhikari's claims a senior Trinamool Congress leader and a minister from South Kolkata said that the Leader of the Opposition was trying to disrupt the development projects taken up by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

In every instance the BJP is trying to stall the Government initiative... they are trying to malign the State Government and Bengal as a whole... the people will not take the insult of the Chief Minister lying down... they will give an adequate reply in the elections, the Minister said adding instead of targeting the Bengal Government Adhikari should talk about the scams in BJP-led Governments of MP, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

What happened to the Morvi bridge collapse case that left more than a hundred people dead... why is he silent on that... this is because he is trying to derive more points from

his bosses in Delhi, the TMC leader said adding whatever reply that has to be given will be given by the Government.

He said the leaders who have been seen on camera accepting bribe in Narada pay-off case have no right to speak on such issues. The TMC have been alleging that the leaders like Adhikari who were sunken neck deep in corruptions had crossed over from the TMC to the BJP to save their skin. BJP is a washing machine where the scammers from other parties migrate to get Mr Clean certificates, he said.

With a number of senior leaders including former number two in the Mamata Banerjee Cabinet Partha Chatterjee, MLAs, district presidents, district board members and State level leaders going to jail in a host of scams related to school service recruitment, cow and coal smuggling, chit fund cases ruling Trinamool Congress and its supremo Mamata Banerjee has been under pressure as never before in the 25 years of the partys existence.

# Mumbai woman chops mom's body, hides pieces for 3 months

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a macabre incident, a 24-year-old woman allegedly killed her widowed mother, chopped the latter's body into several pieces and hid them in plastic bags and hid the bags cupboard and other places of her home for three-long months before her ghastly crime came to light on Tuesday night.

On Wednesday morning, the Kalachowki Police arrested the accused woman—identified as one Rimple P Jain—for the blood curdling murder of her mother Veena Prakash Jain (55) at the Jains first floor residence in Ibrahim Kasam Chawl, Peru Compound at Lalbaug in south-central Mumbai.

Ironically enough, the police uncovered the ghastly killing of Veena Jain late on Tuesday night while they were investigating a missing complaint of her filed by the deceased woman's elder brother Sureshkumar Phulchand Porwal. Sureshkumar lodged a complaint with the police after his niece (the accused woman)



refused to let his son meet his sister Veena. Within an hour of the registration of the offence, a police landed at Jains residence only to sense a stench emanating from inside the house. After initial resistance, the accused woman let the police inside her home.

Before long, the investigators found big and small pieces of Veena's body, wrapped in plastic bags and stored in the cupboard and other places inside Jains home.

Confirming the development, Assistant Commissioner of Police Pravin Munde said: During the search of Jains home, our team found the body pieces stuffed in plastic bags. There was a stench all over the place.

The pieces of the body were in an advanced state of

decomposition. We immediately summoned the Forensic Team to investigate the full home and sent the victims body to KEM Hospital for an autopsy. The accused daughter Rimple was placed under arrest immediately afterwards. While the motive behind the gruesome crime has not been established yet, the murder is believed to have been committed on November 26, 2022.

The body pieces were in an advanced state of decomposition, there was a deathly stink in the entire home, maggots and insects crawling around the place... We immediately summoned the Forensic Team to investigate the full home and sent the victims body to KEM Hospital for an autopsy, said an official, who is part of the probe team.

After Rimples arrest on Wednesday morning, the police team recovered an electric marble cutter, a sickle and a knife—used to kill, chop and carve the woman's body into pieces. What has come as a surprise is that the sensational crime—in which Rimple dismembered the body of her

mother—had not been noticed by people in the most-congested Lalbaug area of south-central Mumbai.

Sureshkumar told the police that despite several attempts and visits, he could not meet his younger sister for the past three months. Every time I tried to meet my sister, my niece Rimple made excuses like she has gone out or she is resting, he said.

The Jains have been living at Lalbaug since 2005. Late Veena and Rimple had moved to Lalbaug from Virar in the neighbouring Palghar district 16 years ago, after the death of the family head Prakash Jain. Veena's brother Sureshkumar used to support her with monthly financial help, said an official. Having claimed that her mother suffered a fall, Rimple told the police that after her mother's fall, she brought the former home where she died.

During the questioning, the accused woman made several contradictory statements arousing suspicion among the investigators which eventually led to her arrest.

# Work hit as Maha Govt staff strike enters 2nd day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Lakhs of Maharashtra Government employees on Wednesday continued their strike on the second day to demand the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), a day after Chief Minister Eknath Shinde appealed to them to resume work. Smooth functioning in government hospitals and offices was affected due to the agitation.

Vishwas Katkar, the convenor of the committee of nearly 35 state government employees, semi-government employees and teachers, said employees from 36 districts have joined the ongoing strike. He rejected Shinde's appeal made in the Assembly on Tuesday and insisted that their demands be met.

On Monday, Shinde had also announced a panel comprising senior bureaucrats to look into the demand of state government employees to revert to the Old Pension Scheme. The panel will give its report in a time-bound manner, he said. Katkar said the



state government employees held similar protests in 2018, following which a panel was formed but there was no movement on its report. The employees also resorted to strike in 2022.

However, there was no progress on the fulfilment of the demand. Sumitra Tote of the Maharashtra Nursing Association said its branches in 30 districts are participating in the strike. Opposition leader Ajit Pawar on Wednesday said the health machinery in Maharashtra has collapsed while other essential services are affected due to the ongoing strike by the state government

employees. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, Pawar asked the government to intervene to end the stir.

In the last two days of the strike, the health machinery has completely collapsed. The incidence of H3N2 flu is rising and the strike is impacting the common citizens. In a hospital, more than 150 surgeries are pending. The process to conduct panchamas of (crop losses) due to recent unseasonal rains has stopped due to the strike, he said.

Pawar also said the administration, education, health, and other essential services have taken a hit.

# Jolt for Uddhav as ex-Min joins Shinde

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra's former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray suffered another major jolt on Tuesday, as the party's former minister Dr Deepak Sawant quit his party and joined the ruling Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

A day after his close aide and senior party leader Subash Desai son Bhushan Desai joined the ruling Shinde-led Shiv Sena, Dr Sawant—who was the state public health minister from 2014 to 2018 in the previous BJP-Shiv Sena government—joined the Shinde-led Shiv Sena at the party headquarters at Balasaheb Bhavan in south Mumbai.

Welcoming Dr Sawant into his party fold, chief minister Eknath Shinde said that the Sena (UBT) had compulsorily retired former—by first dropping him

from the State Cabinet and later denying him ticket for legislative council polls in 2018.

Dr Sawant is a staunch follower of Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray. He has worked extensively to reduce malnutrition in tribal areas of Maharashtra. He has reached telemedicine to remote areas of the state. We will benefit from his experience, Shinde said.

He has always been away from the limelight and worked quietly. I am impressed by his work. I welcome him in the Shiv Sena, Shinde said.

Expressing his happiness over his decision to join the Shinde-led Sena, Dr Sawant said: I do not aspire to be a minister. But, I want my skills and experience to be used by the party. I have decided to work with Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde... I don't know why no work was assigned to me by Uddhav ji.

# BJP trying to balance between BSY's influence on voters, new aspirants

DEEPA K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Barely just over one month away from Karnataka Assembly poll, the BJP is trying hard to fine-balance former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa's influence over the voters and the demand from the new saffron aspirants to limit the say of the Lingayat strongman in the ticket allocations.

Sensing rumblings from the emerging hopefuls, the BJP high command has already chosen not to appoint Yediyurappa as the chairman of the State Election Campaign Committee and instead gave the post to the Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

The latest flash point between Yediyurappa and those in the party who want him to not to spread his wings too much has been around former son BY Vijayendra who also happens to be BJs state Vice-President. Vijayendra has been accused of gross interfer-

ence in the administration by a faction of the BJP leaders while his father was the Chief Minister. The premature announcement by Yediyurappa that Vijayendra would be contesting from Shikaripura assembly seat, the traditional constituency of the former CM, has raised many a eyebrows in the state leadership.

BJPs National General Secretary CT Ravi, Vokkaliga, has publicly raised objections to Yediyurappa's announcement that his son Vijayendra would contest from Shikaripura in the coming assembly elections in the state.

Ravi said that decisions on candidates cannot be made in their kitchen or home and that the decision will be made by the party's Parliamentary Board. Incidentally, Yediyurappa after his forced exit as CM was placated by the BJP central leadership and inducted into the parliamentary board, the highest decision making body of the party.

Ravi, a former state Minister hailing from the second most influential caste Vokkaliga, said that the winnability factor will decide who gets the ticket.

You have raised a question about Vijayendra. The decision on whether he should get a ticket or not will be taken by the parliamentary board. It will not happen in the kitchen. Who gets the ticket or not will be decided based on the winnability factor and it will be based on a survey. And this survey will not take place in the family, said Ravi.

Many state BJP leaders are objecting to the continuation of Yediyurappa dynasty in the state unit. BJP had denied Lok Sabha ticket to Ananth Kumars wife after the former a senior leader and central minister passed away in 2018.

The party itself is preparing not to be too dependent on the Lingayat votes and for sometime cultivating Vokkaliga belt in the old Mysore region.

# NIA raids in J&K over OGWS' links with Pak-based handlers

New Delhi: Following identification of a dozen suspects having links with Pakistan-based terror handlers, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted multiple searches in Jammu and Kashmir, and Punjab.

In June 2022, the NIA had registered a suo-moto case against Over Ground Workers and cadres of various proscribed outfits and their offshoots, who were operating under pseudo names on the commands of their Pakistani commanders or handlers, the NIA said in a statement.

In follow up operations in 2022, searches were conducted at 14 locations in six districts of Jammu and Kashmir including Srinagar, Baramulla, Pulwama, Anantnag, Budgam and Kathua and one location in Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab, the agency said.

# CUET to be conducted in 3 shifts: UGC chief

Merger with JEE, NEET will be announced two years in advance

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG will be conducted in three shifts this year instead of two and plans for its merger with crucial entrance exams like JEE and NEET will be announced at least two years in advance, according to UGC chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar.

In an interview to PTI, Kumar said the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Testing Agency (NTA) are prepared to ensure that the second edition of CUET-UG is glitch free. With respect to experience of students last year, I do agree that

at few centres there were glitches and this year we are taking care of all issues related to those kind of experiences that students went through. We will make sure that this time students have to focus only on exams and not on any possible glitches and how are we doing that.

We are doing that by identifying centres well in advance and by looking at infrastructure that is available including the computers, bandwidth, technical personnel at centres, so that the second edition is glitch free, he said.

I agree there were several glitches during exam last time but this year all issues have been ironed out. Keeping in mind experience of students, a plan has been chalked out and we are ready to ensure that candidates just have to worry about exam and not any glitches, he said.

# ED questions former auditor of K Kavitha

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday questioned and confronted Butchibabu Gorantla, alleged to be a former auditor of BRS leader K Kavitha, with the statements of another arrested accused in the money laundering case linked to the excise scam.

His deposition comes a day before the scheduled second summons in the same case for K Kavitha, the daughter of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, before the agency.

Butchibabu is out on bail following arrest by the CBI in the connected case relating to irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped excise policy. He is also expected to be confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman Arun

Ramachandran Pillai, arrested by the ED on March 6. Pillai is also alleged to be linked to Kavitha, a BRS MLC.

The agency recently informed a local court that Pillai and Butchibabu were staying at a Hyderabad five-star hotel in mid-March, during the period when the GoM report on the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy was being formulated.

It has been revealed that the hotels business centre has been used by the said persons staying there, the ED said, adding it has sought details from the hotel on this and it was awaited. It is crucial to interrogate Pillai in ED custody while confronting him with the hotel records so as to investigate the link between South Group and Vijay Nair/GoM at the time of policy formulation, the ED had said.

# PM to attend Quad, G-7 summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit three countries in May to attend high profile meetings including the Quad summit and G-7 meeting. The three nations include Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea's Port Moresby.

Kicking off his visits, the Prime Minister will first attend the G-7 summit in Hiroshima,

Japan from May 19-21. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, who is set to hold a bilateral summit with Modi in New Delhi on March 20-21, is likely to extend the invitation to him for attending the G-7. Japan is holding the presidency of this grouping for this year.

India and Japan will review the whole gamut of their bilateral and strategic ties during talks here Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Fumio. Announcing his visit, ministry of external affairs said last week both the Prime Ministers will also discuss regional issues of mutual interest besides their priorities for their respective Presidencies of the G7 and G20.

Prime Minister Modi will then travel to Papua Guinea's Port Moresby on May 22 to take part in the India Pacific summit.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
My client, SMT NUTAN SHARMA D/O SH. NARAYAN DAS SHARMA R/O 2081 Ward No-14 Magapura Bagpat UP is owner of Property No.1226/1 The Floor with roof rights - Old No.1392 Plot No.67, Khasra No. 978/399 to 393 situated in village Sikaripur Ram Nagar Loni Road Ilaesa Shikaripur, Delhi. The last title document of this property i.e. registered sale deed dated-16.01.2013 executed by Smt. Parvaneer Kaur W/o Sh. Jasdev Singh in favour of Sh. Singh and Smt. Lata Rani vide reg no 223 dated-16.01.2013 SR IVA Delhi has been lost and in this regard NCR Ref No. LP.237225/2022 has been registered. Now, this property is under sale which is going to be mortgage with IFL Home Finance Limited, Any Person/Bank/ Financial Institution Having Any claim/right, lien any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/ Adv. Vishal Mehra, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under address through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Vishal Mehra (Advocate) E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 Mobile No. 9811215181

**Public Notice**  
This is to inform Public at large that some original GPA registered as document No. 1435 Book IV dated 24.01.1989 in favour of Sh. Joginder Singh has been misplaced/lost somewhere w.r.t property WZ-82, Varinder Nagar, Village Tihar, New Delhi, part of property No. VA. 141A/Khasra No. 791, Village Tihar, New Delhi. All people are hereby informed not to deal or carry out any transactions with anyone on the basis of the said missing document. And if someone find it, please return to mentioned below address:  
Senders Details and address: Sh. Joginder Singh, WZ-82, Varinder Nagar, Village Tihar, New Delhi.

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (Order 5, Rules 20 of the Code of Civil Procedures)**  
IN THE COURT OF SH. SANJEEV KUMAR AGGARWAL, LD. DISTRICT JUDGE (COMMERCIAL COURT)-01, ROOM NO. 308, CENTRAL, TIS HAZARI COURTS, DELHI  
SUIT NO. CS COMM No. -2914/2019  
Next Date of Hearing- 29.04.2023  
ICICI BANK LTD. ...Plaintiff  
V/S. ...Defendant  
DILIP CHHABRIA DESIGN PVT. LTD. ...Defendant  
To, 1. DILIP CHHABRIA DESIGN PVT. LTD. THROUGH ITS DIRECTOR MR. BINTO DILIP CHHABRIA HAVING ITS OFFICE AT: KHASRA NO-22/11/2/1P VILLAGE KHERKI DUJALA, NATIONAL HIGHWAY-8 GURGAON, HARYANA- 122001 2. BINTO DILIP CHHABRIA, S/O SH. DILIP KISHAN CHHABRIA, DIRECTOR, R/O 21, SANJAY PLAZA, A.B. NAIR ROAD, SILVER BEACH, JUHU, MUMBAI- 400049  
WHEREAS you are intentionally evading the service of summons of the court, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 29.04.2023 the day fixed for the final disposal of the above mentioned case, it will be heard and determined as ex-parte. Given under my hand and the seal of the court, this 17.02.2023.  
District Judge (Commercial Court)-01, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

# Nations cannot operate in silos: Health Min

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that the countries cannot operate in silos specifically in the health sector in what has been the Covid-19 pandemic lesson, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said that the 'One Earth, one health' vision can become a reality only with active global collaboration where countries don't think of only themselves but of collective global outcomes.

"We live in an interdependent world, wherein not just countries but the health of the human population is equally affected and influenced by

the health of the surrounding environment and animals," he said at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Partnership Summit 2023.

The global pandemic has demonstrated that no country is immune from adverse developments in any country, and also that our actions impact the health and wellbeing of our eco-system.

It is time India takes the lead in realising the 'One Earth, one health' vision with a holistic policy-making environment and align it with the philosophy of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, he said at the summit themed One Health: Integrated, Collaborative and

Multisectoral Approach to Optimal Health. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has a strong political will to lead in innovative research and technology supported solutions which are commercially viable with universal acceptability, he asserted.

It is therefore our collective responsibility as a human race to not only protect ourselves but also ensure that our actions result in protecting the environment we co-exist in, he stressed. The vision of one earth, one health brings into sharp focus the importance of our actions and eco-friendly policies, he elaborated.

Applauding Indias leading role in indigenous research and wealth of traditional therapies, Mandaviya highlighted that each country can have its own model of achieving the vision.

It is, however, important to learn from each others best practices to enrich our models and work in synergy with each other to ensure that collective actions leave behind a healthier world than the one we inhabit, he stated. Lending the progress of initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat and the success of Co-Win platform that is now shared as a public digital good, Mandaviya emphasised that health is perceived as seva -- service to others.

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**Whereas**  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Sudhir Digambar Chitnis/ Sailee Sudir Chitnis/ LBGUR00001034148/ LBGUR00002063124	Flat No 801, 8th Floor, Tower- 21, Orchid Green, Sohna Road, Gurgaon/ 09 March, 2023	June 19, 2021 Rs. 27,03,115/-	Delhi

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.  
Date : March 16, 2023  
Place : Delhi/ NCR  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**  
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.  
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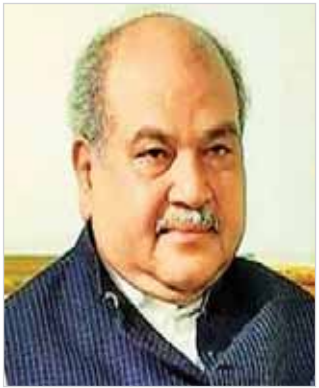
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Junking zero-sum mindset

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar says that farming and industry are complementary to each other

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar's comment that farming and industry are complementary to each other shows that thinking on economic matters in our country has come a long way. There was a time when the two major sectors of the economy were often pitted against each other, almost as if they were in a cutthroat competition with each other. This phony antipathy was the result of a zero-sum mindset that, in turn, was begotten by socialism and its cognate ideologies. The rich fatten at the expense of the poor, industrialists prosper by exploiting workers, and so on. This thinking thrives on various kinds of polarisation that intellectuals peddle — the rich-poor fight, the capitalist-proletariat contradiction, the urban-rural divide and, lately, the digital divide. The votaries of socialism, communism, etc., cannot imagine a world in which people can collaborate and cooperate with each other to create wealth which is shared, though unequally, by all. It is a well-known fact — that is well-known to all save the orphaned progeny of Marx, Lenin, and Mao — that wealth is created; and this creative process is a win-win situation for all sections of society. All of them grow and prosper together, not at the cost of each other. This is what Tomar meant when he said that industries cannot function without farmers and farmers without industries. Speaking at a special session organised during the 28th edition of the Partnership Summit-2023 of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), he talked about a dialogue programme between industry and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).



It is customary in our country for ministers to laud their prime ministers and chief ministers. However, Tomar's comment on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's integrated vision for the overall and balanced development of the country is important. Modi constantly tries to rise above the departments because whatever programmes the government has, they are for India, for the people of the country, Tomar said. He mentioned PM Gati Shakti, which seeks to break silos in the infrastructure projects. The Minister said that agriculture is a priority sector for all of us which needs the support of technology, research, and industry. This, he added, will make farmers prosperous and strengthen the agricultural economy. That is another statement that deserves to be lauded, for it goes against conventional wisdom which is about keeping the farm sector away from anything, be it science, technology, or meaningful policy interventions. Science and technology are good for all of us, but genetically modified crops will result in an apocalypse; economic reforms help the country and should be introduced in all sectors, but in agriculture there should be no reforms. It was such convoluted, antediluvian public discourse that birthed the movement against the three pro-prosperity farm laws of 2020. It is gratifying to note that the Agriculture Minister is junking zero-sum thinking.

### PICTALK



A farmer unloads freshly harvested pumpkins from a camel on the outskirts of Prayagraj

# Global institutions losing relevance

Global institutions have not lived up to the expectations; their response to the recent pandemic, conflict, climate change has been less than satisfactory



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the the conference of Foreign Ministers of G-20 countries, has given a significant statement that multilateralism is in crisis today. Foreign Minister Jaishankar has also echoed similar sentiments. Significantly, ever since India took over the presidency of G-20 countries, discussions on many issues including global institutions are gaining momentum in the world.

Global institutions, mostly from the UN system, have been recognized to have a formidable role, earlier in the first bipolar world after World War II and even later in the uni-polar world led by the United States. In times of conflicts, natural or man-made disasters or even in normal times on issues faced by humanity; the countries of the world have been looking towards the United Nations and its several other bodies. Not only International Labor Organization, World Health Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) etc. have had a special role in the world. GATT before 1995 and later WTO have been known as the rule makers for governing world trade.

But today, questions are being raised on not only the functioning of these organizations and institutions, their capacity for global leadership, but also on their intentions. The capacity of global governance of these institutions has come under scrutiny amidst pandemics, conflicts, climate change and increasing food insecurity in the world and increasing and unsustainable debt in many countries. From the beginning of the pandemic to its management, the The World Health Organization has not only proved to be a failure but has also been seen to be blatantly biased in favour of China. From ILO to UNDP, all the other organizations of the United Nations, rather than being institutions of global governance, are turning out to be no more than talking shops.

For example, the World Health Organization, which was expected to fulfil its responsibility of protecting people's health in



the world at the time of the pandemic, could not even give an unbiased opinion about the origin of the Covid19 pandemic. When there was a natural expectation in the world that patents on medicines, vaccines and medical equipment needed for the treatment of people during the Corona pandemic, should be suspended and all types of treatment and vaccines should be available free of royalty, to the people, then the WTO's Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Council, first failed to decide on the matter; and later also when the decision of relief was made, it was too late and too little. This has exposed the gross insensitive functioning of the World Trade Organization towards humanity, amidst the dominance of MNCs and developed countries.

Every year 'United Nations Climate Change Convention (COP) is organized by the United Nations, which discusses the issue related to climate change and its solutions thereof. For this, at a climate change conference held in Kyoto, Japan, it was agreed that by the year 2012, countries with high emissions of greenhouse gases will have to reduce their emissions, while others were expected to keep their emissions at the same level and some others were also allowed to increase emissions keeping in view their growth needs. This agreement is also known

as the 'Kyoto Protocol'.

Though this treaty was honoured by member countries, many conferences held after Kyoto, could not make any headway including the latest United Nations Climate Change Conference, that is, COP27, which concluded only in November 2022. A few years ago, an agreement was reached at this conference that the world's rich countries would provide US\$ 100 billion every year to developing countries so that they could build capacity in their respective countries to manage issues related to climate change.

The reality is that while there is a need for huge investment and usage of modern technology to overcome global warming, the developed countries have so far failed to discharge their responsibility and the United Nations and its conventions and Institutions are proving to be no more than talking shops in this regard, organising conferences and discussions. Most of these global institutions are more than 75 years old and have lost their relevance.

Today, When India assumed the presidency of G-20 countries, it was the need of the hour to underline the need for new thinking and a new global governance system to find solutions to the challenges before the world. In the constitutions of the present global institutions, ideals like international brotherhood,

peace, development and cooperation are much highlighted, but they are only in papers, the reality is that the big countries of the world themselves are not following these principles. Significantly, the G-20 group, which is the most powerful group of the world's big nations today, from where 85 per cent of the world's GDP comes, where two-thirds of the world's population lives in these countries and from where 75 per cent of the world's total trade comes. India has chosen the theme of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' in the year of the presidency of G-20 countries. To realise this theme, we will have to motivate the world towards a new global order, with an objective of global consensus to solve problems like financial instability, terrorism, conflicts and food and energy insecurity in the world. It remains to be seen how far we move in this direction in the coming months at various level meetings and conferences of the G-20 group of countries. We have to decipher what PM Modi has said that the current global governance and institutions have failed to deal with the global financial crisis. G20 nations are expected to make meaningful efforts, to deal with the impending crisis on humanity and bring prosperity to the world.

(The author is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi)



THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION COULD NOT EVEN GIVE AN UNBIASED OPINION ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### RESTORE RAILWAY CONCESSION TO SENIOR CITIZENS

Sir — While travelling in Indian railways, senior citizens were earlier granted a concession - 50 per cent to women and 40 per cent to men of their railway fare, but the practice was withdrawn during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the Railways are running the trains in a normal way, they should restore the concessions granted to different categories of passengers as used to be before Covid 19.

It is mentioned that earlier, a parliamentary committee has also recommended that senior citizen concessions be reviewed and restored "urgently". The concession which was earlier available to the senior citizens in pre-COVID times needs to be restored so that the vulnerable and the genuinely needy senior citizens could avail of the facility in their respective travelling classes.

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

### CONTENDER FOR THE BOOKER PRIZE

Sir — Congratulations to Tamil writer Perumal Murugan who has been selected for the International Booker prize long list for 2023, the Booker Prize Foundation announced on Tuesday. Murugan makes it to the prestigious list with his 2016 book "Pyre", translated from Tamil by Aniruddhan Vasudevan. "Pyre", tells the tale of an inter-caste couple who elope, setting in motion a story of terrifying foreboding. The 56-year-old is the first Tamil writer to make it to the long list of 13 works. Last year, Hindi writer Geetanjali Shree became the first Indian writer to win the award, which celebrates translated works, for her book "Tomb of Sand".

The prize jury termed Murugan a "great anatomist of power and, in particular, of the deep, deforming rot of caste hatred and violence". Murugan, who is based in Salem in Tamil Nadu, described "Pyre" as a very important book of his "Pyre" deals with honour killing. Honour

### Oscar honour for India



seas audiences. While Naatu Naatu captures our emotive dance style, Elephant whispers delves deeper into the intricacies of family life. It speaks of love, empathy and the beauty of living a simple life with family. The latter is also the first ever Tamil film from India to win the coveted Oscar award for best short documentary film.

One major takeaway from this remarkable success story overseas is the expansion of its canvas and inexorable market forces. Another important aspect is the fact that ideas and perceptions that do not necessarily conform to mainstream cinema can strike the right chord in the international cinematic landscape. Considering India's poor track record at international podiums, this win is sure to ignite the spark of creativity inherent in the Indian film industry. Now, it is up to storytellers, artists, and filmmakers to grab the opportunities that underlie Indian cinema to make a mark in international cinema.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

killing is a very big problem in our country, I hope more people get to know about this issue after his recognition.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### DEADLY DOG BITES

Sir — Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi patted his back (in every election speech or other) in India or diaspora of the foreign land when he said that he has changed poor Indian's lives by making toilets in every home. But what's a pity, in India's capital Delhi's Vasant Kunj two brothers, Anand (7) and Aditya (5), were attacked and killed by stray dogs in two days. Because the Basti (slum area) where they live did not have toilets and were being sent to the forest to defecate and urinate. Is it not proving Modi's other hype on toilets?

Whatsoever, these incidences are not stray, but due to fatal incidences take the headlines. Moreover, the dogs, which killed two brothers, are in a forest area and are not in a residential area. But in

the residential area, similar attacks leaving the human injured are very common. They become much more dangerous at night and men who professionally are late-night workers are attacked the most. A simple choice must be undertaken: whose life is more precious to us, a human life or a dog's life? Hence, it's high time dogs should be controlled like in developed countries. None of them should be left free without an owner's Aadhaar tagged to it and its mouth belted. The remaining street dogs should be moved to a fenced area managed by city/municipality corporations so that problem is resolved forever. If required laws should be immediately changed to deal with the present situation effectively. Sharing in the family's sorrow. My sincerest condolences, with love and comfort.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Impact of social media influencers on children

It is important to make children aware of the impact of influencers on their lives as they can easily get carried away



SAKSHI SETHI

A recent survey found that overall screen usage among teens increased by 17% from 2019 to 2021. Not only this, in terms of daily screen usage, it was found that for the children in the age group of 8-12 years, the average usage increased to almost five hours from four hours, and for teens in the age group 13 - 18 years, the average increased to almost eight hours from seven hours. What does this imply?? In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "The children of today will make the India of tomorrow. The way we bring them up determines the future of the country."

However, the question remains are the parents, teachers, peers and all those responsible towards the well-being and development of the so-called Generation Alpha (Gen alpha) determined to groom them for the future? Are they all a helping hand in making them realise their potential by teaching them values with their life examples, providing them with an environment that is safe to live in and above all giving their precious time to listen to them? The answer



to all such questions won't be a cent per cent yes but rather a majority no.

Today, in this so-called technologically advanced, fast-moving world, where everyone is too engrossed in work and needs to be relieved from peer pressures, the best shortcut is media consumption on screens which is gradually turning out to be an addiction. Be it a five-year-old or a ninety-year-old, everyone needs a smartphone without realising its repercussions.

In simple terms, social media influencers refer to users on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry through their skills such as vloggers, bloggers, YouTubers, Podcasters or unboxes, thereby having access to the large

audience especially children for they tend to spend maximum time watching social media. The impact of such influencers on the lives of the young audience can be either positive or negative and is a matter of great concern. There is no doubt that the influencers have the best communication skills and engagement with their audience. Children often tend to get influenced by these influencers as they offer various online content containing humour, excitement, games and motivation so frequently that they can relate to it without realising that their precious time is being wasted by watching content that is not so relevant. Some influencers give the children the resources and inspiration to learn about their interests and explore them.

They use their social media platform to spread social awareness. However, at times these influencers end up promoting unrealistic standards. They present a clean and humorous version of their lives which results in a sense of comparison thereby leading to a negative impact on the lives of the children,

resulting in anxiety, low self-esteem, depression and in the worst case scenario may even lead to suicidal attempts. At times, food and beverage companies often turn to such media influencers to promote their product through sponsored posts so that when these posts are reflected, they get fixed into a child's brain as authentic, thereby promoting unhealthy food such as junk food, alcohol, etc.

What matters is how children critically think and respond to the contents viewed by them and that is where the role of the parents, teachers and peers come into play. It is important to make children aware of the positive and negative impact of social media influencers on their daily lives. Having regular and healthy conversations to find out what the child likes to watch on social media can be a good approach. In case the child wants to engage in social media parents need to be supportive at every level which will gradually avoid isolating the child and open the lines of communication about social media presence.

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





## FIRST COLUMN

## THE RISING THREAT OF GLAUCOMA IN INDIA

Glaucoma is one of the biggest challenges in India as millions of people are affected by it



NIKKHIL K MASURKAR

Glaucoma is a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide, including in India. It affects around 12 million people in India, with almost 10% of them having already lost their vision to the disease. Unfortunately, over 90% of glaucoma cases in the country remain undetected due to the complexities of identifying and managing the condition. As a result, many patients in India are needlessly blinded by glaucoma each year. The risk is particularly high for individuals over the age of 40, with one in 20 Indians in this age group either currently affected by glaucoma or at risk of developing it in the future.

Glaucoma is a devastating condition, with one of its major challenges being that most individuals affected are often unaware of it until it's too late, leading to irreversible vision loss. The economic burden of glaucoma blindness is significant not only for the affected individuals but also for the healthcare system, the government, and society as a whole. It increases healthcare costs, impairs the quality of life, and requires expensive rehabilitation for the blind, all of which affect a nation's economic growth. Early detection and timely treatment are crucial in preventing the consequences of this "silent thief of sight." As most cases of glaucoma occur among the productive age group, preventing early blindness is not only a matter of saving individuals' sight but also of preserving a nation's economy.



Raising public awareness and knowledge of glaucoma is critical in promoting public health-seeking behaviour for regular eye check-ups, which increases the likelihood of identifying undetected cases. It is also clinically beneficial and cost-effective to delay visual field deterioration and improve treatment compliance. Conversely, a lack of awareness leads to late detection and poses a management problem in preventing blindness from glaucoma. Unfortunately, poor public awareness and knowledge about glaucoma represent a significant gap. In developed countries, less than 50% of people with glaucoma are aware of it. This is even worse in developing countries, where few people know about glaucoma. Raising public awareness and knowledge of glaucoma is a critical means of addressing the devastating consequences of the disease.

## Tackling the growing incidences of glaucoma:

To increase public awareness of glaucoma, it's important to launch campaigns and eye screenings to educate people about the condition. Community outreach programs can also be utilized to disseminate information about glaucoma, its symptoms, and the importance of regular eye check-ups. Additionally, novel methods such as stunts can be used to capture people's attention and raise awareness. To address the problem of glaucoma, it's important to support in-country healthcare systems and work with governments and local partners to ensure the integration of eye care services within primary healthcare. This means ensuring that people have access to eye care services, particularly those in underserved areas so that they can receive early detection, referrals, and follow-up care for glaucoma. Encouraging behavioural change is an essential aspect of managing glaucoma. One way to do this is by promoting regular eye checks, which the WHO recommends as one of the best interventions against glaucoma. By raising awareness of the importance of regular eye checks, we can encourage people to seek care early and improve the chances of detecting glaucoma at an early stage. Additionally, it is important to raise awareness of the long-term nature of glaucoma management. By educating patients about the long-term nature of glaucoma management and the benefits of continued use of eye drops, we can reduce patient dropout rates and improve the effectiveness of treatment. Every individual has the right to sight, regardless of where they live. As we mark World Glaucoma Week, we urge governments and international organizations to collaborate in addressing glaucoma as a public health issue. By working together, we can tackle this silent thief of sight and ensure that people have access to effective prevention, screening, and treatment services.

(The writer is President, of Entod Eye Health Foundation)

## The 'Altasian' alternative to China

The trade war between US and China is forcing high-tech companies to lower their reliance on China



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE



First, it was the US-China Trade War triggered by President Donald Trump in 2018 by imposing tariffs and other trade barriers on China to force it to change its unfair trade practices and intellectual property thefts. Then came the Covid pandemic that severely disrupted the global supply chain of which China was the most important link, and ever since the Western multinationals which have created huge manufacturing bases in China taking advantage of its infrastructure and cheap labour have been trying to relocate their factories away from China, benefiting other emerging economies of Asia.

China is a global manufacturing hub for multinational companies, especially for consumer electronics. Exported electronic goods worth \$1trn in 2021, out of a global total of \$3.3trn. But foreign companies have now started to look beyond China. The ongoing trade war between US and China is also forcing high-tech companies dependent on the use of semiconductors to rethink their reliance on China. Between 2020 and 2022 the number of Japanese companies operating in China fell from around 13,600 to 12,700. Sony is moving its production of cameras from China to Thailand, Taiwan's Foxconn, Pegatron and Wistron, which assemble gadgets for Apple, are planning to shift their bases to India; Samsung has already slashed its Chinese workforce by more than two-thirds since a peak in 2013. Dellis is also reported to be planning to stop using Chinese-made chips by 2024. Google is shifting the outsourced production of its newest Pixel smartphones from China to Vietnam. Asian economies stand to benefit hugely from these shifts; for example, the share of iPhones made in India is expected to increase from around 5 per cent in 2021 to almost 25 per cent in 2025.

But despite all these shifts, the Chinese economy remains too strong and too large to be replaced by a single or a couple of Asian economies. That is why The Economist magazine has come up with a term called ALTASIA, a network of 14 economies stretching in a crescent from Hokkaido in northern Japan, through

South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, all the way to Gujarat can together counter and even outmatch China's economic and manufacturing strengths. Altasian economies have distinct strengths, from Japan's high skills and deep pockets to India's low wages and are in a position - if they can work together - to present themselves as a very viable and reliable alternative to China leveraging their comparative advantages, so that some countries can manufacture sophisticated components while others can assemble them into finished gadgets. This has the potential of changing the geopolitical and geoeconomic equations between the existing global order dominated by China and the US. The Chinese mouthpiece Global Times dismisses it as a "far-fetched idea" that makes no economic sense: "any talks about replacing China's manufacturing sector is political rhetoric", but in so reacting, it also recognises the

The numbers are convincing enough for an alternative Asian supply chain to look viable, as it has got many distinct advantages over China as well. Altasia's Collective labour force of 1.4bn, of which 155m have a college education dwarfs China's 950m with 145m with a college education. In contrast to a fast-ageing China, the Altasian population is poised to expand yet for quite some time. They also enjoy a wage advantage over China; hourly manufacturing wages in India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam are below \$3, compared to China's \$8.31. The region is already an export powerhouse: its members sold \$ 634bn worth of merchandise to America in the 12 months till September 2022, as compared to China's \$614bn. A model for the Altasian

economy also already exists - Japanese companies have been engaged in building supply chains in South-East Asia for decades, and even its neighbour, South Korea, has done so. In 2020, South Korean firms' total direct investments in ASEAN that include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and politically unstable Myanmar, as well as in Bangladesh reached \$96bn, exceeding its investments in China, unlike a decade ago when their investments in China were nearly twice as large as in Altasia.

Altasian countries have attained substantial economic integration. India could not join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) due to its limitations, but all other Altasian countries save Bangladesh and Taiwan are already members, as is China. RCEP has created a single market in intermediate products, easing regulatory barriers to complex supply chains that run through several countries. Most Altasian countries are also members of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, an American initiative.

Five of them - Brunei, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam - belong to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which is a reincarnation of the earlier Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) from which the US under President Trump had pulled out in 2017. ASEAN has a free trade agreement with India (AIFTA), and a Comprehensive Economic Partnership with Japan. Altasian countries also enjoy formidable trading heft, being the centre of global production of much sought-after, and also geopolitically fraught, semiconductors. Malaysia already exports around 10 per cent of the world's chips by value, more than the

USA. ASEAN countries account for more than a quarter of global exports of integrated circuits, easily surpassing China's 18 per cent. Qualcomm opened its first research-and-development centre in Vietnam in 2020 and its revenues from Vietnamese chip factories tripled between 2020 and 2022.

But then there are many hurdles too. Not all the Altasian countries are evenly poised in terms of infrastructure and manufacturing efficiency to replace China overnight. The World Bank's latest logistics-performance index (2018), which measures countries' efficiency in areas like customs, transport infrastructure and logistics regulation, shows a wide range of variations from 2.58 out of a total of 5 for Bangladesh and Cambodia to 4.03 for Japan and 4 for Singapore (China is ranked 27th with a score of 3.61 and India 44th with a score of 3.18). It will be difficult for such diverse economies to work as a single entity like China. Altasia's future also hinges on India with its huge market, but India itself has to overcome several formidable roadblocks for better integration. From the Free Trade area to Customs Union to Common Market to the Economic and Monetary Union is a long way. It has taken almost 50 years for Europe since 1950 to forge an Economic and Monetary Union with a single currency. But given the current geopolitical realities and the urgency facing the world, it may not take as much time today if the countries can harness their strengths and overcome their weaknesses displaying purpose, determination and willingness to accommodate the disadvantaged countries.

(The author is a former Director General at the Office of the CAG of India and is currently a professor at the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management)



THAT IS WHY THE ECONOMIST MAGAZINE HAS COME UP WITH A TERM CALLED ALTASIA, A NETWORK OF 14 ECONOMIES

## Community radios are reviving folk traditions

Community radios connect well by playing local folk songs which are not played by other media platforms

Community radios nurture the development of cultural traditions and facilitate a resurgence of pride in local traditions in the face of globalised knowledge systems, helping communities reclaim their cultural identities. In doing so, it has helped to enhance cultural identity and community pride. Let us demonstrate this with examples of some community radios operational from different regions of the country. Alfaz-e-Mewat, a community radio station based in Mewat, Haryana, caters to about 225 villages in its catchment community. In the Mewat region, traditional folk singers known as the merasis narrate the history and folklore of the region through their songs. Unfortunately, the number of



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

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

traditional artists is dwindling in the region and this musical tradition is slowly disappearing. In a bid to preserve it, Alfaz-e-Mewat has archived several kisse (stories in a musical format) with local artists and is encouraging new artists to come to the station and record songs from merasi tradition which are dedicated show called Kisse Kahani (Stories and Songs) which is broadcast daily. The station plays songs associated with the seasons of the year known as mausam ke geet (songs of the season) and sawan ke geet (songs of the monsoon). Another community radio in Haryana, Gurgaon ki Awaaz which caters to migrant communities from Bihar and Garhwal has built a large archive of local folk songs

from Haryana called raginis. The station also meets the need of its migrant communities by playing Bhojpuri and Garhwali folk songs as well as Bagheli folk songs from Kanpur. Listeners are free to call and request songs from any of their collections in their show Apni Pasand, where the song is played along with the name of the person who requested it and the details of their native village. In Orcha, Madhya Pradesh, Radio Bundelkhand has built a significant archive of Bundeli songs through a programme called Bundeli Idol. The programme encouraged people to record a Bundeli song and send it to the radio station; these songs were then played on air, and listeners were asked to vote for their favourite song/artiste and one

with the maximum number of votes was declared Bundeli Idol. Through this programme, Radio Bundelkhand was able to build a repository of over 950 folk songs and promote over 150 local folk singers.

Over the years, many community radio initiatives were launched to fulfil the need for the promotion and preservation of local art forms and knowledge. Coming to South India, Sangham Radio, started in 2008 in Machnoor Village in Medak District is run, primarily, by Dalit women from the region, and was set up by the Deccan Development Society (DDS). Way back in 1996, at a consultation with the Regional Communication Adviser from UNESCO, the women from the sanghams

expressed their interest in running a radio station to articulate 'locally relevant issues, in their language, and in their own time'. It is also the first community radio station to be run entirely by women in Asia. The sanghams emphasised and worked towards autonomy in several areas such as food production, agriculture, seeds, natural resources management, market, health and media. In Mananthavady, Wayanad, Radio Mattoli broadcast to communities who speak several diverse languages in their listenership zone. Radio Mattoli caters to roughly 19 per cent of Adivasi communities in Kerala who live in Wayanad. Apart from Malayalam, Adivasi communities such as Paniya, Kurichi, and

Kattunaikan speak their language; many of these languages, like Garhwali, do not have a written script and are to a large extent preserved, orally. Radio Mattoli broadcast shows in multiple local languages spoken by the communities in the catchment area. These shows produced and anchored by community members from the Adivasi communities in the region, facilitate the creation of a constantly evolving, oral repository of the languages spoken in the communities. For community radio stations, local language and cultural traditions are inextricably linked to the idea of selfhood. Their work on local cultural practices is located on the desire to provide a platform for how people from the community see and

experience the world. Local cultural traditions are not featured in deeply embedded ways that offer insights into how communities interpret their worlds. Emphasis on local cultural traditions is part of their focus on the knowledge systems of community members. The language in which community radios broadcast and the idioms and tropes employed in the programmes are an integral part of the cultural fabric of the community. The intersection of technology with existing traditions across communities allows for new forms and methods of articulation and helps in providing a platform for cultural forms and traditions that are not featured on other media platforms.

(Concluded)



Temporary relief for Imran ... as Lahore court halts his arrest till Thursday

PTI ■ LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

In a temporary relief for Imran Khan, a Pakistani court on Wednesday ordered the police to stop its operation outside the former prime minister's residence in Lahore to arrest him in a corruption case, amidst clashes between the security personnel and his supporters.

The Zaman Park in Lahore where Khan lives remained under siege for the last two days and the government sent the elite Rangers to aid police teams who struggled on Tuesday to muscle their way through a ring of enraged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters to arrest party chairman Khan.

The police, with their riot gear on, closed in on Khan's home to comply with the court orders to arrest the 70-year-old cricketer-turned-politician in



Supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan take cover after riot police officers fire tear gas to disperse them during clashes, in Lahore on Wednesday. AP/PTI

the Toshakhana case.

However, the police withdrew from the area after the Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered them to stop their operation at Zaman Park till 10 am on Thursday.

The LHC summoned the Punjab inspector-general, chief secretary and Islamabad police (operations) head on a petition filed by PTI leader Fawad

Chaudhry seeking order for the government to stop the police action at Khan's residence.

Khan's party on Tuesday challenged the police operation in the Lahore High Court, requesting it to direct the government to end its bid to arrest the party chief.

IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar appeared before the court and told it that police had

to launch the operation as Islamabad police had brought an arrest warrant for Imran Khan in the Toshakhana gifts case. We had to implement this order under the law. He said some 59 policemen have been injured during the clashes with the PTI workers," a court official told PTI.

"The PTI advocate told the court that the sessions court Islamabad had issued the order to ensure the presence of Khan in the court on March 18 in the Toshakhana gifts case... why police operation was launched to arrest him four days before, requesting it intervenes to save human lives," the official said.

LHC's Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh asked the PTI counsel whether the Islamabad High Court is hearing the PTI plea to cancel the arrest warrants of Khan in the Toshakhana case.

Staff level agreement with IMF 'within a few days': Sharif

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the staff-level agreement with the IMF will be reached "within a few days" as the cash-strapped government has accepted even the "toughest conditions" of the global lender for reviving the stalled US\$ 1.1 billion loan tranche. Sharif said that joint efforts were being made by both his economic team and other national institutions to make the process a success.

"The IMF's toughest conditions have been met and we will sign the staff-level agreement within a few days," Sharif said in an interview with Geo News on Tuesday.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has repeatedly made similar statements. Pakistan's economy is in dire straits. The country is awaiting a much-needed US\$ 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the



Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF). The funds are part of a US\$ 6.5 billion bailout package the IMF approved in 2019, which analysts say is critical if Pakistan is to avoid defaulting on external debt obligations.

He also said that he sees "more burden" coming on the already inflation-hit public as Pakistan scrambles to secure the IMF's conditions for reviving the stalled loan

tranche. The prime minister spoke at length on multiple national issues, including the one-year performance of his government, the economic situation, elections, the Toshakhana record, and party matters. He said at the time of assuming government, he did not know that Imran Khan has agreed on such conditions with the IMF which he later backed out of to undermine Pakistan in the world as well as among global institutions.

"This is why the IMF is making us accept those conditionalities and seeking their implementation. No doubt, these conditions have burdened the common man," he admitted. Pakistan has implemented a series of policy measures including increased taxes, higher energy prices and increasing interest rates to the highest in 25 years to unlock funding from its stalled US\$ 7 billion loan programme from the IMF.

Sri Lankan unions end strike

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's state-sector trade unions on Wednesday called off their daylong strike to protest against the envisaged tax reforms after President Ranil Wickremesinghe pledged to give them an opportunity to discuss the issue with the IMF which has set this as a precondition for a crucial bailout package. The trade unions of doctors, ports, banks, electricity and teachers observed a day-long strike with the hope to convert it to a continuous protest action.

They want the government to roll back the high personal taxes which the government had claimed was a necessity as part of the reforms demanded by the IMF to unlock the US\$ 2.9 billion bailout package.

President Wickremesinghe's secretary Saman Ekanayake in a letter sent today to the doctors' trade union said: "The Hon President has directed me to inform you that he wishes to continue the dialogue with the trade unions to resolve the issues"

"An opportunity would be provided to the trade unions to discuss tax reforms with the IMF," he said. The trade unions collectively launched the strike opposing what they termed raising personal taxes on monthly incomes from 6 per cent to over 33 per cent.

"We have been pledged direct talks with the president so we have decided to temporarily suspend our continuous strike action," Chamil Wijesinghe, the doctors' trade union spokesman, said.

Earlier in the day, the doctor's strike caused inconvenience at hospitals throughout the island as they only maintained emergency services. Schools remained shut as the students were turned away.

The railways said only 21 train services were operated during the peak hours due to the strike.

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Prachanda to take vote of confidence on March 20

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" will hold a vote of confidence in Parliament on March 20 after the culmination of the vice-presidential election on Friday, officials said on Wednesday.

The second round of vote of confidence comes after Nepal's second largest party in Parliament — CPN-UML — in February decided to withdraw its support to the "Prachanda"-led government in the wake of a renewed political equation in the run-up to the presidential election, dealing a jolt to the two-month-old ruling coalition.

The major reason for the breakup of the alliance between Prachanda and former prime minister KP Sharma Oli was because the Maoist leader decided to support senior Nepali Congress (NC) candidate Ram Chandra Paudel for the President's post.

The vote of confidence will be held on March 20 after the culmination of the vice-presidential election on Friday, officials said.

"Prachanda" is currently holding consultations with leaders of the ruling eight-party alliance on this issue, sources said. With the support from the NC and the eighty-party alliance, the Prachanda-led government is expected to comfortably survive the vote of confidence in Parliament.

The eight-party alliance includes the Nepali Congress, CPN-Maoist Centre, CPN-Unified Socialist, Nagarik Unmukti Party, Janamat Party, Janta Samajwadi Party, Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party and Rastriya Janamorchha. In the 275-member House of Representatives, the UML has 79 lawmakers. Prachanda needs only 138 votes in parliament to continue his term as the prime minister.

With the three major parties, NC (89), CPN-Maoist Centre (32) and

RSP (20), Prachanda is poised to sail through the trust vote, with support of at least 141 lawmakers.

In January, "Prachanda" had comfortably secured a vote of confidence in the House of Representatives, with almost unanimous support from both his alliance of seven parties and the opposition. He received the support of 268 of the 270 lawmakers who were present in parliament — the highest number of votes a prime minister has ever received in a vote of confidence in parliament.

The latest trust vote also comes at a time when "Prachanda" is facing heat from the country's Supreme Court for ordering a writ petition against the 68-year-old for claiming responsibility for over 5,000 deaths during the country's decade-long insurgency.

Prime Minister "Prachanda" is also planning to expand his cabinet after the vote of confidence, sources said.

China, Russia & Iran hold joint naval drills

Beijing (AP): Naval forces from China, Iran and Russia — all countries at varying degrees of odds with the United States — are staging joint drills in the Gulf of Oman this week, China's Defence Ministry has announced. Other countries are also taking part in the "Security Bond-2023" exercises, the ministry said Tuesday without giving details. Iran, Pakistan, Oman and the United Arab Emirates all have coastline along the waterbody lying at the mouth of the strategic Persian Gulf. "This exercise will help deepen practical cooperation between the participating countries' navies ... and inject positive energy into regional peace and stability," the ministry statement said. The exercises scheduled for Wednesday through Sunday come amid heightened tensions between the U.S. and China over a range of issues, including China's refusal to criticise Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine and continuing support for the Russian economy. The U.S. and its allies have condemned the invasion, imposed punishing economic sanctions on Russia and supplied Ukraine with defensive arms. Iran and the U.S. have been adversaries since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979 and the taking of U.S. diplomats as hostages.

China has dispatched the guided missile destroyer Nanning to take part in the drills centered on search and rescue at sea and other non-combat missions. The three countries held similar drills last year and in 2019, underscoring China's growing military and political links with nations that have been largely shunned by the U.S. and its partners. Last week, China hosted talks between Iran and chief Middle Eastern rival Saudi Arabia that resulted in an agreement between them Friday to restore full diplomatic relations after seven years of tensions. While the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have long-standing military and political ties, relations have frayed over the 2018 killing of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of the kingdom's leadership and cuts in production by the OPEC+ oil cartel that the administration said was helping Russia.

New protests over French pension bill

AP ■ PARIS

Opponents of French President Emmanuel Macron's pension plan are staging an eighth round of strikes and protests Wednesday as a joint committee of senators and lower-house lawmakers examines the contested bill. The latest step in the legislative process to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 is prompting a peak of political tensions and one key question: Will the bill command a parliamentary majority? Meanwhile, unions are hoping that demonstrations across the country will further show workers' massive opposition to the plan, promoted by Macron as central to his vision for making the French economy more competitive.

Wednesday's meeting of seven senators and seven lawmakers from the National Assembly is meant to find an accord on the final version of the text. The Senate is expected to approve it on Thursday, as its conservative majority is in favour of raising the retirement age. The situation at the National Assembly is much more complicated, however. Macron's centrist alliance lost its majority in legislative elections last year, forcing the government to count on conservatives' votes to pass the bill. Leftists and far-right lawmakers are strongly opposed to the measure. The head of the conservative Republicans, Eric Ciotti, who himself has a seat at the National Assembly, said in



the Journal du Dimanche newspaper that "the highest interest of the nation ... commands us to vote for the reform." But conservative lawmakers are divided and some are planning to vote against or abstain, making the outcome in the lower house hard to predict. With no guarantee of a majority, Macron's government is facing a dilemma: A vote Thursday afternoon in the National Assembly would give more legitimacy to the bill, if adopted, but there's a risk it would be rejected.

Another option would be to use a special constitutional power to force the bill through parliament without a vote. But such an unpopular move would prompt immediate criticism from conservatives' votes to pass the bill. Leftists and far-right lawmakers are strongly opposed to the measure. The head of the conservative Republicans, Eric Ciotti, who himself has a seat at the National Assembly, said in

lodge it with the constitutional council, a higher French legal body, to challenge the democratic legitimacy of the move. Train drivers, school teachers, dock workers and others are expected to walk off the job on Wednesday.

Thousands of tons of garbage is piling up on the sidewalks of Paris and other French cities amid a continuing strike against the pension plan. In Paris, garbage collectors and sanitation agents announced that they will continue the strike until at least March 20.

Public transport is expected to be disrupted, including the Paris metro as well as high-speed, regional and Paris suburban trains. France's aviation authority, the DGAC, said 20 per cent of the flights at Paris-Orly airport have been canceled, and warned about potential delays. Protesters gathered at several areas including sites for the 2024 Olympics.

Retrieve her! Sunaks told by police to put pet dog on leash

PTI ■ LONDON

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty were "reminded of rules" by the police after they were spotted walking their dog in Hyde Park here without a lead - in an area where dogs are not allowed to roam free, officials said. In a clip posted on TikTok, Sunak's two-year-old Labrador Retriever, Nova, is seen wandering around near the edge of Serpentine lake on Saturday, in an area where signs clearly state that dogs must be kept on leads to avoid disturbing the local wildlife, the Telegraph newspaper reported. The 42-year-old Indian-origin prime minister and his family



were filmed apparently breaking the rules of Hyde Park in central London. The police officer involved was one of the prime minister's close protection team, the BBC reported. The Metropolitan Police force

said: "An officer, who was present at the time, spoke to a woman and reminded her of the rules," apparently referring to Sunak's wife Akshata.

The police said the dog was then put back on the lead, adding they would take no further action. It is not clear when the video was filmed. A Downing Street spokesperson said it would not comment on the video when asked if Sunak would apologise.

This is not the first time a video has got the prime minister in trouble. It comes less than two months after Sunak was fined by police for failing to wear a seatbelt in a moving car.



In this photo released by the Syrian official news agency SANA, Syrian President Bashar Assad steps off the plane as he arrives at Vnukovo airport in Moscow, Russia on Tuesday. Assad landed in Russia Tuesday where he is scheduled to meet top ally President Vladimir Putin. AP/PTI



# Russia downplays jet's encounter with US drone

AP ■ KYIV

Russia does not rule out "constructive dialogue" with the United States even though relations between Moscow and Washington are in a "deplorable state," the Kremlin's spokesman said a day after the US reported that a Russian fighter jet struck the propeller of a US surveillance drone over the Black Sea. US officials accused Russia of attempting to intercept the unmanned aerial vehicle, which American forces brought down. Asked Wednesday if the incident could inflame tensions with Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated the Russian Defense Ministry's statement that Russian jets didn't use their weapons or impact the U.S. drone. Peskov described US-Russia relations as being at their lowest point but added that "Russia has never rejected a constructive dialogue, and it's not rejecting it now." U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the drone was flying in international airspace and over international waters when the encounter with the Russian fighter took place Tuesday. He

stressed that the drone's presence over the Black Sea was not an uncommon occurrence. "It is also not uncommon for the Russians to try to intercept them," Kirby said, adding that such an encounter "does increase the risk of miscalculations, misunderstandings." The MQ-9 Reaper drone has not yet been recovered and it was unclear whether it would be, he said. "The last thing that we want, certainly the last thing that anybody should want, is for this war in Ukraine to escalate to become something between the United States and Russia, to have this actually... expand beyond that," Kirby said, speaking Wednesday on CNN. At the Pentagon, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the intercept by the Russian jet was part of a "pattern of aggressive, risky and unsafe actions by Russian pilots in international airspace." He said Russia must operate its aircraft in a safe manner. "Make no mistake, the United States will continue to fly and to operate wherever international law allows," Austin said in opening remarks before a virtual meeting of a

# Russia wants to recover debris of US drone from Black Sea

Kyiv (AP): Russian authorities say that they will try to recover the fragments of a US surveillance drone that American forces brought down in the Black Sea after an encounter with Russian fighter jets. Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said in remarks televised Wednesday that Russia planned to search for the drone's debris. "I don't know if we can recover them or not, but we will certainly have to do that, and we will deal with it," Patrushev said.

"I certainly hope for success." U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the drone was flying in international airspace and over international waters when the encounter with the Russian fighter took place Tuesday. He stressed that the drone's presence over the Black Sea was not an uncommon occurrence. Kirby said the MQ-9 Reaper drone had not yet been recovered and it was unclear whether it would be. Patrushev claimed the drone incident underlined the U.S. engagement in the hostilities in Ukraine. Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, also noted that Russia has the capability to recover the drone's fragments.

U.S.-led effort to coordinate Western military support for Ukraine. While encounters between Russian and NATO aircraft are not unusual — before the invasion of Ukraine, NATO plans were involved in an annual average of 400 intercepts with Russian planes — the war has heightened the significance and potential hazards of such incidents. The secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, Oleksiy Danilov, tweeted Wednesday that the drone incident was "a signal from (Russian President Vladimir) Putin that he is ready to expand the conflict zone, with drawing other parties in." Separately, the U.K.

defense ministry said British and German air force fighter jets were scrambled Tuesday to intercept a Russian aircraft flying close to Estonian airspace. The U.K. and Germany are conducting joint air policing missions in Estonia as part of NATO's bolstering of its eastern flank. The defense ministry said the Typhoon jets responded after a Russian air-to-air refueling aircraft failed to communicate with Estonian air traffic control. The Russian plane did not enter the airspace of Estonia, a NATO member. On the ground in Ukraine, the fighting ground on. At least three civilians were killed and another 23 wounded in the country by Russian strikes over the previous 24 hours, Ukraine's presidential office said Wednesday morning. In eastern Ukraine's partially occupied Donetsk province, where much of the heaviest fighting has been concentrated, Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said a total of 14 cities and villages were shelled. That included Kramatorsk, a city where some of Ukraine's military forces are based. In embattled Bakhmut, where Russian forces have pressed a months-long assault

# Putin rejects theory about Ukrainian role in pipeline blasts

Moscow (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday dismissed as "sheer nonsense" allegations that Ukrainians could be behind the blasts that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea last year, and again pointed the finger at the U.S. Putin spoke after The New York Times, The Washington Post and German media published stories last week citing unidentified U.S. and other officials as saying there was evidence Ukraine, or at least Ukrainians, may have been responsible. The Ukrainian government has denied involvement.

Germany's Die Zeit newspaper and German public broadcasters ARD and SWR reported that investigators believed five men and a woman used a yacht hired by a Ukrainian-owned company in Poland to carry out the attack. German federal prosecutors confirmed that a boat was searched in January but have not confirmed the report- ing findings. Putin rejected the notion as "sheer nonsense." "Such an explosion, so powerful and at such depth, could only be conducted by experts backed by the entire potential of a state that has relevant technologies," he said in televised remarks. The Russian leader insisted that the U.S. had a motive to stage the explosion, saying it wanted to halt supplies of cheap Russian natural gas to Germany and to provide it with more expensive liquefied natural gas. The Kremlin last week described the claims about Ukrainian involvement in the explosions as part of a cover-up by the West. Putin on Tuesday poured scorn on European leaders for keeping quiet about the incident, charging that their attitude reflected what he described as Europe's subservient position in relation to the U.S. "The Europeans have lost a gene of independence, sovereignty and national interest," Putin said with a smirk.

# Xi moots Global Civilisation Initiative

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday proposed a Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI), calling for respect for the diversity of civilisations at a world political parties' conference organised by the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC). In a video address to the 'Dialogue with World Political Parties' meeting, 69-year-old Xi, who last week was endorsed for an unprecedented third term as President and military chief by China's ceremonial Parliament, said tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilisations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's modernisation process. The political parties' conference was held by the CPC ahead of US President Joe Biden's proposed second

Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, South Korea, and Zambia on March 29-30, 2023. Several world leaders including Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' have agreed to take part in it virtually, according to reports. China, which was not invited to the first summit of democracy held by Biden in 2021, accused Washington of using democracy as a "weapon of mass destruction" to "stoke divisions and confrontation". Over 100 world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attended the first summit. The Chinese Foreign Ministry on Wednesday sharply criticised the "so-called Summit for Democracy", saying it blatantly drew an ideological line between countries and created division in the world. "It was a preposterous show in violation of the spirit

of democracy and exposed the US's hegemony in the guise of democracy, which has been criticised and opposed by many countries," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media conference here. The GCI is the third global initiative proposed by Xi in recent months after the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) under which China has clinched a peace deal between arch-rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia. As a part of the agreement brokered by China, the two countries have agreed to establish diplomatic ties and improve their relations. In his address to the world political parties' meet, Xi was quoted by the official media as saying that countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilisation dialogue and cooperation.

# Panel discusses issuing EADs to those waiting for green card for over 5 yrs

Washington (PTI)

A presidential advisory commission has discussed the possibility of issuing employment authorisation cards in early stages of green card application, a move if approved by the Biden administration would end the agonising wait for a green card. The recommendation proposes that the Department of Homeland Security's US Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS-USCIS) grant employment authorisation documents (EADs) and travel documents to individuals who have approved I-140 employment-based visa petitions in the EB-1, EB-2, EB-3 categories, and who have been waiting in the visa backlog for

five or more years regardless of whether they have filed applications for adjustment of status. Members of the President's Advisory Commissioner for Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander commission on Tuesday held a detailed discussion on the proposal moved by eminent Indian-American and its member Ajay Jain Bhutoria, who in his presentation highlighted the challenges faced by H1B visa holders in the United States. During the meeting, which was webcast live, members of the commission sought further information on this recommendation and decided to bring it up in the next full commission meeting.

# 'Nazi' references to UK policy: BBC sportscaster's tweet revives debate

AP ■ NEW YORK

The references seem endless, and they can come from anywhere. In recent days, Pope Francis compared Nicaragua's repression of Catholics to Hitler's rule in Germany. In Britain, a BBC sportscaster likened the nation's asylum policy to 1930s Germany, resulting in his brief suspension and a national uproar. For Holocaust and anti-Nazi scholars and organisations, the two sentiments were understandable — but concerning. Invoking Hitler and Nazi Germany, they warn, often serves to revive a familiar and unwelcome line of argument. "We have to be aware of, and confront, contemporary instances of discrimination,

hate speech and human rights abuses across the world," says Rafal Pankowski, a Polish sociologist who heads the anti-Nazi NEVER AGAIN Association. But he added: "Of course, the historical analogies must not be overused and devalued. The label Nazi should not be trivialized and reduced to a term of abuse against anybody we don't like." Last week, Pope Francis was quoted as criticizing the government in Nicaragua, where religious leaders have been arrested or fled, for acting as "if it were a communist dictatorship in 1917 or a Hitlerian one in 1935." Nicaragua responded by proposing to suspend Vatican ties. Around the same time, the

BBC's Gary Lineker tweeted that a new asylum policy announced by Britain's Conservative government was "immeasurably cruel" and included language "not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s." The bill, intended to stop tens of thousands of migrants a year from reaching the country in small boats across the English Channel, would bar asylum claims by anyone who reaches the United Kingdom by unauthorized means and compel the government to detain and deport them "to their home country or a safe third country." At first, the broadcaster suspended Lineker, his highest paid TV commentator. But it reversed its action on Monday and praised Lineker as a "valued part of the BBC."

# Biden on gun control: 'Do something big'

Monterey Park (AP)

The grief is still suffocating, the anger still visceral, President Joe Biden said Tuesday, in this suburban Los Angeles community where a gunman stormed a dance hall and killed 11 in January. He announced fresh federal measures to curb gun violence but emotionally declared there must be more. "Do something. Do something big," he implored. "I'm determined to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines," Biden told the families of some of the victims who were in the audience for his remarks, along with the 26-year-old who wrestled the semiautomatic pistol away from the gunman. Biden's rhetoric has grown ever stronger about guns — he routinely calls for banning assault weapons — in pushing a gun-control platform even tougher than during the Obama administration when he was vice president. He has been emboldened by his midterm elections when his regular talk of gun control didn't result in massive Democratic losses, and he's expected to continue to argue for strong changes as he moves toward a 2024 reelection run, his aides say.

# Erdogan hints Turkey may ratify Finland's NATO membership

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suggested Wednesday that his country could soon ratify Finland's application to join NATO, allowing for the possibility of the country joining the military alliance separately from Sweden. Alarmed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine a year ago, Finland and Sweden abandoned decades of nonalignment and applied to join the alliance. All 30 NATO members have approved their applications, and 28 have ratified their accession. Only Turkey and Hungary have failed to do so. Turkey's government accuses Sweden of being too soft on groups that it deems to be terror organizations and existential threats, including Kurdish groups. Ankara has said, however, that it has fewer problems with Finland's membership. Asked by reporters whether Turkey could ratify Finland's membership following a visit by Finnish President Sauli Niinistö later in the week, Erdogan responded: "God will, if that is for the best."

"Whatever the process is, the process will function. We will do our part. We will keep our promise. We will meet with the president on Friday and fulfill the promise we made," he said. Speaking during a visit to Berlin on Wednesday, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson noted there have been increasing indications over recent weeks that Turkey is prepared to ratify Finland's membership before Sweden. He said that "we are prepared for that situation as well." "We don't hide at all that we preferred to be ratified together, to make the whole journey hand in hand," Kristersson said. But "I've always also expressed the fact that every... country in NATO makes their own ratification decisions and we have full respect for that." The Swedish leader said that there has been "very good progress" and "we do believe... that we are ready for ratification, and we respect that only Turkey can make Turkey's decisions." "Of course, we hope for a rapid ratification process after the Turkish election," he said. Erdogan is seeking a third consecutive term in office in May 14 elections.

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Ph: 9111292728, kumar@advocatesadvocates.com

**Public Notice** This is to inform General Public that Mr. Hakan Dhanu Arora & Mrs. Binika Arora acquired the First Floor without Roof Rights, area measuring 60 Sq. Mtrs., Freehold Plot No. 5737, situated at Residential Colony Mohan Nagar, Kamalshahi Sakari Sini Ltd. sector 3, Ghaziabad, U.P. vide GPA, ATS & Will dated 16.05.2013, (Doc. no. 39757), Unlawful sale, Binika Arora died on 25.10.2014 and leaving behind her legal heirs namely: (1) Mr. Hakan Chand Arora, (2) Mrs. Rita Wadhwa, (3) Mr. Sharat Arora, (4) Mr. Hakan Dhanu Arora, (5) Mrs. Binika Arora, (6) Mr. Sharat Arora, (7) Mrs. Binika Arora, (8) Mr. Sharat Arora, (9) Mrs. Binika Arora, (10) Mr. Sharat Arora, (11) Mr. Sharat Arora, (12) Mr. Sharat Arora, (13) Mr. Sharat Arora, (14) Mr. Sharat Arora, (15) Mr. Sharat Arora, (16) Mr. Sharat Arora, (17) Mr. Sharat Arora, (18) Mr. Sharat Arora, (19) Mr. Sharat Arora, (20) Mr. Sharat Arora, (21) Mr. Sharat Arora, (22) Mr. Sharat Arora, (23) Mr. Sharat Arora, (24) Mr. Sharat Arora, (25) Mr. Sharat Arora, (26) Mr. Sharat Arora, (27) Mr. Sharat Arora, (28) Mr. Sharat Arora, (29) Mr. Sharat Arora, (30) Mr. Sharat Arora, (31) Mr. Sharat Arora, (32) 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# Sensex falls 344 pts, Nifty slides below 17,000 mark

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Benchmark BSE Sensex trimmed all its early gains to close down by 344 points at a five-month low on Wednesday due to heavy selling in banking, financial and telecom stocks as lingering concerns over banks' health and high inflation dented sentiments.  
Besides, persistent foreign capital drain from the domestic market and the sliding rupee kept the pressure on equities, traders said.  
Falling for the fifth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 344.29 points or 0.59 per cent at 57,555.90. During the session, it touched a high of 58,473.63 and a low of 57,455.67.  
The broader NSE Nifty declined 71.15 points or 0.42 per cent to end at 16,972.15, with 28 of its stocks ending with losses. IndusInd Bank was the biggest loser in



the Sensex pack, shedding nearly 2 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries, HDFC twins, SBI, HUL, Tata Motors, Nestle India and Axis Bank.  
On the other hand, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Titan and L&T were among the gainers, rising up to 3.03 per cent.  
In Asian markets, Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended in the green. However, European equity markets were trading with significant losses in the afternoon trade. Major indices on Wall Street settled higher in the overnight trade.  
Meanwhile, the rupee declined 25 paise to close at 82.62 against the US dollar on Wednesday.  
International oil benchmark Brent crude gained 0.72 per cent to USD 78.01 per barrel.  
Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 3,086.96 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

# Stocks fall on Wall Street on renewed fears about banks

**AP ■ NEW YORK**  
Stocks are back to falling on Wall Street Wednesday as worries worsen about the strength of banks on both sides of the Atlantic.  
The S&P 500 was 1.5 per cent lower in morning trading, while markets in Europe fell more sharply as shares of Switzerland's Credit Suisse tumbled to a record low.  
The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 482 points, or 1.5 per cent, at 31,672 as of 10:15 am Eastern time, while the Nasdaq composite was 1.2 per cent lower.  
Credit Suisse has been fighting troubles for years, including losses it took from the 2021 collapse of investment firm Archegos Capital. Its shares in Switzerland sank more than 22 per cent following reports that its top shareholder won't pump more money into its investment.  
Wall Street's harsh spotlight has intensified across the banking industry recently on worries about what may crack next following the second- and third-largest bank failures in US history last week. Stocks of US banks tumbled again Wednesday after enjoying a brief, one-day respite on Tuesday.  
The heaviest losses were focused on smaller and mid-size banks, which are seen as more at risk of having customers try to pull their money out en masse. First Republic Bank sank 7.7 per cent, a day after soaring 27.7 per cent. Huntington Bancshares dropped 5.7 per cent.  
Larger banks weren't hit as hard but still fell. JPMorgan Chase slid 3.6 per cent.  
Much of the damage is seen as the result of the Federal



Reserve's fastest barrage of hikes to interest rates in decades. The Fed has pulled its key overnight rate to a range of 4.50 per cent to 4.75 per cent, up from virtually zero at the start of last year, in hopes of driving down painfully high inflation.  
Higher rates can tame inflation by slowing the economy, but they raise the risk of a recession later on. They also hurt prices for stocks, bonds and other investments. That latter factor was one of the issues hurting Silicon Valley Bank, which collapsed Friday, because high rates forced down the value of its bond investments.  
The US government announced a plan late Sunday to protect depositors at Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, which regulators shut over the weekend, in hopes of shoring up confidence in the banking industry. But markets have since swung from fear to calm and back again.  
Some of this week's wildest action has been in the bond market, where traders are rushing to guess what all the chaos will mean for future Fed action. On one hand, stress in the financial system could push the Fed to hold off on hiking rates again at its meeting next week, or at least refrain from the larger rate hike it had been potentially signaling.  
On the other hand, inflation is still high. While taking it easier on interest rates could give more breathing space to banks and the economy, the fear is such a move by the Fed could also give inflation more oxygen.  
Weaker-than-expected economic reports released Wednesday may have allayed some of those worries. One showed that inflation at the wholesale level slowed by much more last month than economists expected. It's still high at a 4.6% level versus a year earlier, but that was better than the 5.4% that was forecast.  
Other data showed that US spending at retailers fell by more than expected last month, though spending in prior months was revised up. Manufacturing in New York state, meanwhile, is weakening by much more than forecast. Such data could raise worries about a recession on the horizon, but they may also take some pressure off inflation in the near term.



# Banks from 18 nations open 30 special vostro a/cs for trade in rupee

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Several banks, including HDFC Bank and UCO Bank, have opened as many as 30 special vostro accounts as of date to facilitate overseas trade in the rupee, a top government official said on Wednesday.  
Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said as of date, some 18 countries have already opened special vostro accounts with Indian banks.  
"About 30 banks from overseas countries have signed up with 30 banks on our side, so 30 accounts...The transaction has started in bits and pieces," he told reporters here.  
Sberbank and VTB Bank — the largest and second-largest banks of Russia, respectively — are the first foreign lenders to receive the approval after the RBI announced the guidelines on overseas trade in the rupee in July last year.  
Another Russian bank Gazprom, which does not have its unit in India, has also opened this account with Kolkata-based UCO Bank. The move to open the special vostro account clears the deck for settlement of payments in rupee for trade between India and Russia, enabling cross-border trade in the Indian currency, which the RBI is keen to promote.  
The RBI has allowed the special vostro accounts to invest the surplus balance in Indian government securities to help popularise the new arrangement.  
Last year, the RBI and finance ministry asked the top management of banks and representatives of trade bodies to push export and import transactions in the rupee.  
They want banks in India to connect with their foreign counterparts for opening special rupee vostro accounts to facilitate cross-border trade in the Indian currency rather than the popular mode of the US dollar.  
When asked about the international currency in which India is paying Russia for oil, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said as energy trade is not under sanctions, energy trade from Russia is not impacted and normal banking channels are being used for payments.

# India adds 23 new unicorns in 2022, overtakes China for 2nd year in a row: Report

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
India overtook China by adding 23 unicorns in 2022 while the neighbouring country created 11 such startups with valuation of USD 1 billion or more, according to a report released on Wednesday.  
For the second time in a row, India topped China creating 23 unicorns in 2022, taking the total number of such high-value companies to 96, as against China's 11 in the year, said a report by IVCA-Bain & Co.  
However, this year's number is just half of the unicorns created in 2021 when it stood at a record 44, which took the overall number to 73 in that year.  
According to the report, nine of the 23 unicorns added in the year have emerged from cities outside of the top 3 metros, indicating a shift to more democratic funding geographically. This means that funding to startups in non-metros grew to 18 per cent of the total inflows share.  
The year also many investors raising their largest ever India-focused funds, the report said, adding the SaaS (Software as a Service)-based and fintech players maintained the deal value while consumer tech declined.  
The year 2022 saw a recalibration in venture capital investments in the country as increasing macroeconomic uncertainty and recessionary fears affected investment momentum, said the Bain & Company's annual report in collaboration with the Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA).  
The report said the country added 23 unicorns notwithstanding the 33 per cent compression in the deal value faced by the domestic startup ecosystem, from USD 38.5 billion in 2021 to USD 25.7 billion in 2022.  
Decline in funding was largely over the second half of the year as macro headwinds intensified. Despite such a deep compression, early-stage companies continued to see sustained momentum buoying deal volume to over 1,600 venture capital investments in 2022.  
According to Arpan Sheth, partner at Bain & Co, overall funding saw a drop in 2022, led by a decline in late-stage large deals. The ecosystem has faced foundational shifts as VCs pivoted their focus to unit econom-

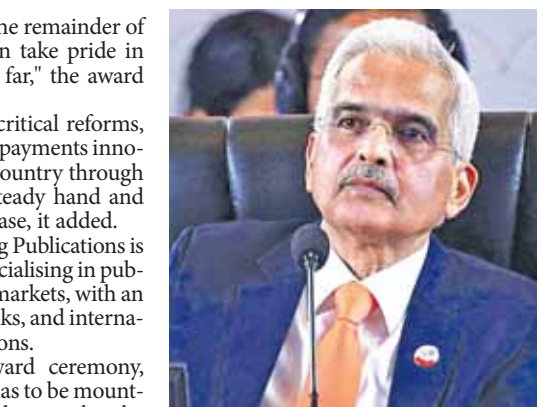


# New foreign trade policy may be released by end of this month: Commerce Secy

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government is expected to release the new five-year foreign trade policy (FTP) by the end of this month, with a view to promoting the country's outbound shipments of goods and services, a top official said on Wednesday. The current foreign trade policy (2015-20) is in force till March 31, 2022.  
Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the ministry has looked at various aspects of that FTP as the policy is basically the collection of various incentive schemes.  
They are also adding the aspect of vision into that as the ministry is targeting to take the goods and services exports to USD 2 trillion by 2030.  
"So, within that framework, we have worked out our FTP and we are expecting that it would be released by the end of this month," he told reporters here.  
FTP provides guidelines for enhancing exports to push economic growth and create jobs.  
It was first extended on March 31, 2020, for one year due to the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown.  
Das faces up to the remainder of his second term, he can take pride in major achievements so far," the award citation said.  
Das has captained critical reforms, overseen world-leading payments innovation and steered the country through difficult times with a steady hand and well-crafted turn of phrase, it added.  
The Central Banking Publications is a financial publisher specialising in public policy and financial markets, with an emphasis on central banks, and international financial institutions.  
Addressing the award ceremony, Das said, "A war effort has to be mounted, and is being mounted, to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures in continuous battle-ready mode.  
"Life in the time of Covid-19 has been one of unprecedented loss and isolation. Yet, it is worthwhile to remember that

# RBI Governor Das conferred Central Banker of 2023 award

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday awarded the 'Governor of the Year' award for 2023 by the international publication Central Banking for captaining the financial markets through the turbulent periods of the pandemic and the crippling impact of the Ukraine war.  
Former governor Raghuram Rajan was the first to be conferred the title back in 2015 from the country.  
Awarding the 66-year-old Das, who is into his second term at the Mint Road, the publication said the governor helped manoeuvre the ship as it faced multiple obstacles since his appointment in December 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war being the two major tests.  
An economy as complex as India's will likely never be free from challenges



tough times never last; only tough people and tough institutions do."  
The publication said that Indian economy came through one of the greatest threats it has ever faced with relatively minimal scarring.

All RBI governors face the difficulty of working with governments that have different priorities to the central bank, and most will have to overcome crises during their tenures. But few have had to contend with challenges on the scale that Das has met, it said, adding in the years ahead, Das will have to stand firm against interference and backsliding.  
The publication said the RBI, since the turn of the pandemic, has been actively engaged in managing the benchmark lending rate and other levers at its disposal.  
To start with, the Monetary Policy Committee, and has since May 2022 jacked up key policy rates by a whopping 250 bps to 6.50 per cent as the panel missed the inflation prints 10 of the 12 months of the year. This also had Das being forced to write to the government explaining why it lost the inflation battle. The letter is yet to be made public.

# Rupee falls 25 paise to 82.62 against US dollar

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
The rupee declined by 25 paise to 82.62 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid a strong greenback against major currencies overseas and unabated foreign fund outflows.  
Traders said negative sentiment in the domestic equity market also hit the domestic currency. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened strong at 82.32 against the dollar and traded in a range of 82.30 and 82.62. It finally settled at 82.62 (provisional) against the American currency, a fall of 25 paise against its previous close.  
This is the third consecutive day of decline in the rupee.

# Credit Suisse shares sink as key investor vows no more help

**AP ■ GENEVA**  
Battered shares of Credit Suisse lost more than one-quarter of their value on Wednesday, hitting a record low after its biggest shareholder - the Saudi National Bank — told outlets that it would not inject more money into the ailing Swiss bank.  
The turmoil in the Credit Suisse stock price prompted an automatic pause in trading of the bank's shares on Switzerland's market and brought down shares of other European banks by as much as double digits. That fanned new fears about the health of financial institutions in the wake of the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in the United States and worries about mid-sized lenders.  
Credit Suisse stock was down more than 27 per cent at around 1.6 Swiss francs in mid-afternoon trading on the SIX stock exchange on Wednesday. That's down more



than 85 per cent from February 2021.  
The Swiss exchange says the drop in Credit Suisse shares triggered a temporary, automatic pause.  
Other European banks were taking a battering amid concerns about the sector: France's Societe Generale SA dropped 12 per cent, France's BNP Paribas fell more than 10 per cent, Germany's Deutsche Bank was down 8 per cent and Britain's Barclays Bank was down nearly 8 per cent. Shares in

the two French banks were briefly suspended. The tumble came after Ammar Al Khudairy, the chairman of key Credit Suisse shareholder Saudi National Bank, told Bloomberg and Reuters that it has ruled out further investments in the Swiss bank to avoid regulations that kick in when it has a stake above 10 per cent.  
Saudi National Bank put in some 1.5 billion Swiss francs (USD 1.5 billion) to acquire a holding just under 10 per cent as Credit Suisse looked to raise funding from investors last year and roll out a new strategy to overcome an array of troubles.  
Those include bad bets on hedge funds, repeated shake-ups of its top management and a spying scandal involving Zurich rival UBS. On Tuesday, Credit Suisse published its annual report for 2022 indicating that managers had identified "material weaknesses" in the bank's internal control over financial reporting as of the end of last year.

# Edible oil imports up 12 pc to 10.98 lakh tonnes in Feb

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
India's edible oil imports rose 12 per cent year-on-year in February to 10.98 lakh tonnes on higher imports of crude palm oil, according to industry body SEA. In a statement, the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) on Wednesday said that edible oil imports rose to 10,98,475 tonnes in February from 9,83,608 tonnes in the year-ago period.  
Imports of non-edible oil fell to 16,006 tonnes in February from 36,389 tonnes in the same month last year. Total imports of vegetable oils (edible oils and non-edible oils) went up 9 per cent to 11,14,481 tonnes in February this year from 10,19,997 tonnes a year ago.



# 5G services in 329 cities across all licensed service areas: Devusinh Chauhan

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
BSNL's 5G services would be provided after rollout of 4G services all over India.  
BSNL floated a tender on October 2022 for 1 lakh 4G sites. The bid was opened on November 23, 2022.  
"The evaluation of the bid has been concluded and is under submission for approval of the Group of Ministers (GoM). 4G services will be started all over India including Maharashtra and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, within 18-24 months after placing the Purchase Order," Vaishnav said.  
Replying to a question on the merger of BSNL and MTNL, MoS Chauhan said that the Cabinet, while approving the revival package for Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) on July 27, 2022, had approved formation of a Committee of Secretaries (CoS) for detailed examination to resolve matters of Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) including merger of MTNL with BSNL.  
To another question on OTT communications services, Chauhan mentioned that the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022 released for public consultation in September, refers to 'OTT communication services' as a type of telecommunication service.



# HAALAND HITS FIVE AS CITY THRASH LEIPZIG

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Erling Haaland equalled a Champions League record with a five-goal haul to ease Manchester City into the quarter-finals at RB Leipzig's expense with a 7-0 win on Tuesday.

Haaland also set a new club record for goals in a season of 39 in the process as Pep Guardiola's men reached the last eight for the sixth consecutive season with an 8-1 aggregate victory.

"My super strength is scoring goals," said Haaland. "A lot of it is being quick in the mind and trying to put it where the goalkeeper is not."

Abu Dhabi-owned City are yet to go all the way in the Champions League, but they have never had a striker of Haaland's quality to make the difference in the latter stages before.

At just 22 he now has 33 goals in 25 appearances in Europe's premier club competition.

"Firstly, I'm proud to play in this competition, I love it," added Haaland. "Five goals! To win 7-0 is amazing."

The snowy weather was more akin to Haaland's homeland, but City did not freeze under the pressure and kept their Champions League dreams alive.

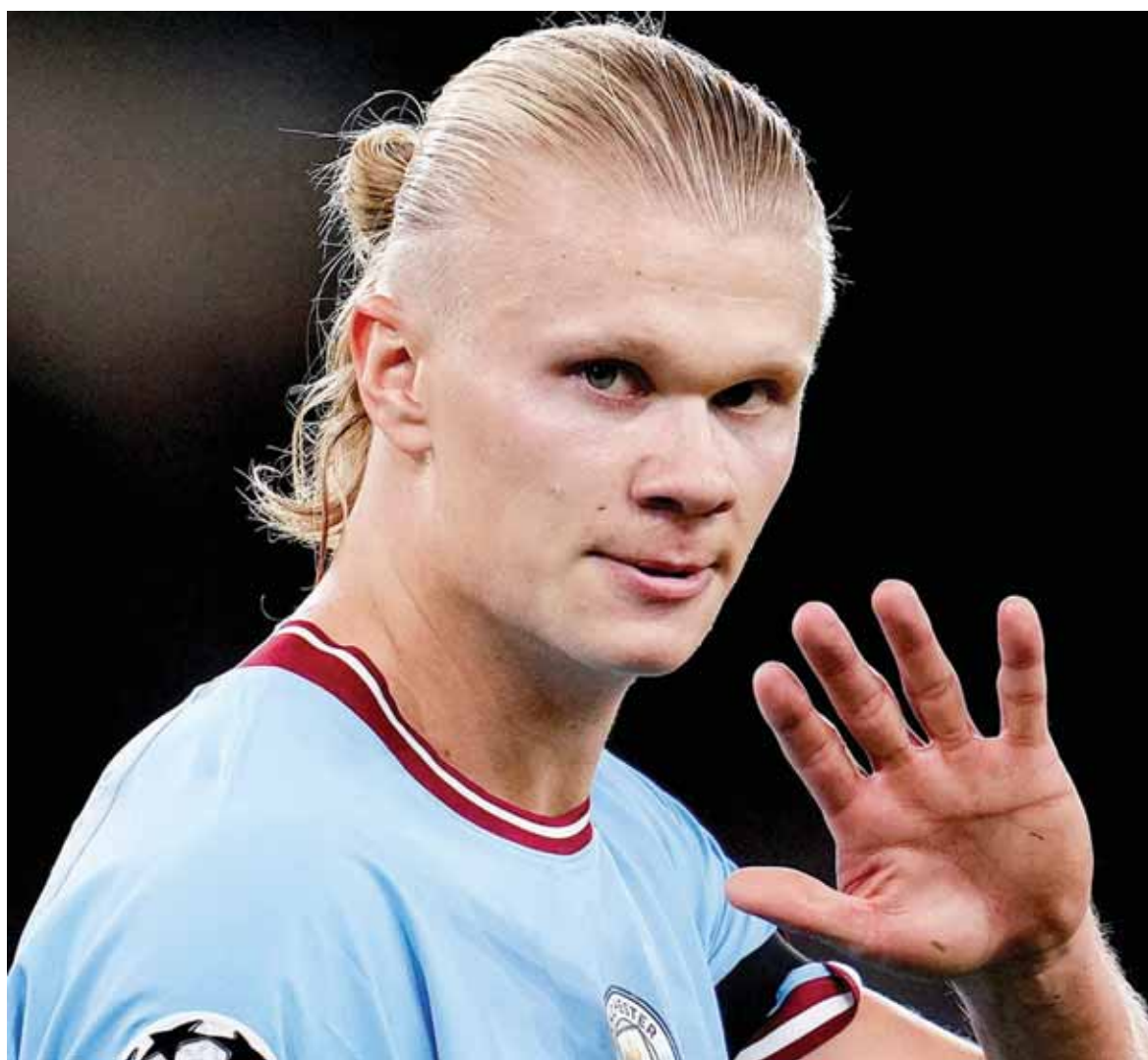
The tie was delicately balanced after a 1-1 draw in eastern Germany three weeks ago, but a Leipzig side depleted by injury never looked like a match for their star-studded opponents.

"That was an incredible performance," said Leipzig coach Marco Rose.

"They didn't allow us to control the game at all, at no stage of the game. The bottom line is disappointing for us but they really deserved it."

Guardiola had kept Kevin De Bruyne in reserve for City's 1-0 win at Crystal Palace in the Premier League at the weekend and on his return to the starting line-up, the Belgian was back to his best.

Ilkay Gundogan should have opened the scoring after just three minutes from De Bruyne's inviting



## Haaland 'ate us up' says Leipzig's Henrichs

AP ■ MANCHESTER

RB Leipzig defender Benjamin Henrichs said his side were "eaten up" by an Erling Haaland-led Manchester City who romped to a 7-0 home victory.

Henrichs was at a loss to explain how his side, who came into the match on level pegging from the first leg, could lose so convincingly.

"I think we were eaten up out there,"

he said. "I've never lost 7-0 in my career. It's a totally brutally bitter evening for us."

Henrichs said Haaland, who moved from Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund to Manchester City last season, dominated Leipzig with his physicality.

"He's a brutally physical player. He's difficult to defend and brings so much to the game. The way he played today says a lot about his quality."

Asked about a contentious first-half

penalty the German defender conceded after a VAR review, Henrichs said "we can't talk about VAR, we need to talk about our own performance."

Leipzig manager Marco Rose, who coached Haaland at Dortmund and Red Bull Salzburg, said he knew the threat posed by the Norwegian.

"I know Erling well and I know his quality — and how he can perform. When Erling sees the goal, he wants to score."

cross.

There was some fortune surrounding City's opener as VAR spotted a handball against Benjamin Henrichs that led to a penalty that neither the City players nor the crowd even noticed.

### DENIED RECORD CHANCE

Haaland fired low to Janis Blaswich's left to maintain his perfect record from the spot for City with his sixth penalty of the season.

Two minutes later it was 2-0 as Haaland teed up De Bruyne, who smashed a shot against the bar, and then showed his speed and strength to power home a header from the rebound.

Haaland had three before half-time as Ruben Dias rose highest to head Jack Grealish's corner onto the post and Amadou Haidara's attempted clearance ricocheted off City's number nine into the net.

Gundogan's classy finish into the far corner four minutes into the second half rubbed more salt into Leipzig's wounds before Haaland started rewriting the record books.

Firstly, he hammered home at the second attempt after Blaswich parried his initial header to match Tommy Johnson's record of 38 goals for City in the 1928-29 season.

Haaland set a new mark with still three months of the campaign to go when he snaffled up another rebound after Blaswich saved from Manuel Akanji.

In the process, he moved level with Lionel Messi and Luiz Adriano's record of scoring five goals in a Champions League game.

But Guardiola denied his star striker the chance of another record as he replaced him with Julian Alvarez with 25 minutes remaining.

"If he achieves all these milestones at 22 his life would be boring," joked Guardiola on making the change.

Instead, it was left to De Bruyne to have the final say as he curled a superb strike into the top corner in stoppage time.



## Inter frustrate Porto to reach CL quarters

AP ■ PORTO

Inter Milan held off Porto in a gritty 0-0 draw on Tuesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals, with a 1-0 aggregate triumph.

The Italian side, three-time winners of this competition, progressed to the last eight for the first time since 2011. For the first time since 2006, both Inter and AC Milan have reached the quarter-finals.

Clutching a one-goal advantage from Romelu Lukaku's last 16 first leg late winner, Inter set up to frustrate at the Estadio do Dragao.

Porto had the better of the game but only managed to test Inter goalkeeper Andre Onana on a few occasions and failed to make the last eight for the third time in their last five attempts.

Their finest chances came in stoppage time at the end, when Mehdi Taremi and Marko Grujic both hit the woodwork and Marcano had an effort cleared off the line.

"There are so many emotions right now, after so many years we are proud of this achievement," Inter midfield-

er Hakan Calhanoglu said.

"We made some mistakes but we did a great job, it was very difficult but I congratulate the team for the great job."

Inter have faced criticism for their domestic form but Calhanoglu said this game provided a morale boost.

"Anything can happen in the Champions League -- this match restores motivation for us," he added.

"We did a great job, we didn't score but we worked hard until the final whistle and we qualified."

Inter coach Simone Inzaghi, aiming to end a bad run of form away from home, started with Edin Dzeko and Lautaro Martinez up front, with first-leg match-winner Romelu Lukaku on the bench.

Porto have a strong recent record against Italian sides, knocking out Juventus and Roma in recent years, but the Portuguese champions could not score against Inter in 180 minutes.

They were unable to include veteran centre-back Pepe, 40, in the squad, shorn of their captain at the last minute.

# Sindhu crashes out of All England C'ship | Arteta won't compromise on Arsenal's bid for Europa & PL glory

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

There was no end to P V Sindhu's poor run as the star Indian shuttler made a first round exit from the All England Championships after losing to Zhang Yi Man of China in straight games here on Wednesday. The world number nine Sindhu, a double Olympic medallist, lost 17-21, 11-21 in the 39-minute women's singles contest.

This is the third time that Sindhu has lost her first round match this year.

She had lost to Carolina Marin of Spain in Malaysia Open in January before exiting the Indian Open at the same stage in the same month.

She had recently parted ways with her coach Park Taesang of Korea, under whose guidance she won a bronze at the Tokyo Olympics.

Sindhu was rusty and subdued throughout the match with her world number 17 opponent showing more agility and attacking intent.

There was not much to differentiate initially between the two who had 1-1 head-to-head record before Wednesday's match.

Sindhu led 6-5 and then made it 16-13. But the Chinese shuttler won seven straight points to lead 20-16 before tak-



ing the first game in 21 minutes.

In the second game, the two players were tied 5-5 but Sindhu committed a few unforced errors and was soon down 5-10.

Sindhu recovered a bit to trail 7-11 but was soon down 9-16 before losing the second game and the match.

Earlier during the day, India's women's doubles pair of

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand Pillela stunned seventh seeded Thailand duo of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai 21-18, 21-14 in a 46-minute first round match.

The Indian duo will meet the Japanese pair of Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota in the pre-quarterfinals.

AP ■ LONDON

Mikel Arteta insists Arsenal will not down tools in the Europa League to help their bid to win a first Premier League title for 19 years.

Arteta's Premier League leaders sit five points clear of second placed Manchester City with 11 games left.

Bowing out of the Europa League could aid the Gunners' hopes of holding onto the lead in the title race as it would allow more recovery and preparation time.

But Arteta does not share that view because the Arsenal boss is trying to restore a winning culture to a club mired in mediocrity for much of the past two decades.

Arsenal host Sporting Lisbon in the second leg of their Europa League last 16 clash on Thursday with the tie delicately balanced after a 2-2 draw in Portugal last week.

"Our priority is the two competitions," Arteta said.

"The best way to prepare for any competition is to win the previous match and having the confidence and the proper emotion to approach the next game."

Arteta's philosophy has so far been proved right.

Arsenal have won six and drawn one of their seven Premier League games immedi-



ately following their Europa League matches this season.

Despite arriving back in London in the early hours of Friday morning, the visitors cruised to a 3-0 win at Fulham on Sunday with the game won by half-time.

It is master against the apprentice in the Premier League title fight as Arteta takes

on his former boss in City manager Pep Guardiola.

Arteta was Guardiola's assistant for three years between 2016 and 2019.

The influence of Guardiola is clear to see Arsenal's style of play under Arteta, but also in the mentality the Spaniard is trying to instill.

City lifted the League Cup

times, including in Arteta's first season in charge.

But Arsenal have only won one European trophy in their history - the 1993/94 Cup Winners' Cup.

Arteta is desperate to change that appalling record for a club of Arsenal's size and is not willing to compromise despite the risk his young squad could run out of gas in the final months of the season.

If Arsenal are to make it to the final in Budapest on May 31, they will have to progress past a stellar cast of big names in Europe's second tier competition. Manchester United have one foot in the quarter-finals after a comprehensive 4-1 win over Real Betis at Old Trafford.

Juventus still have work to do when they travel to Freiburg defending a slender 1-0 first leg lead.

Six-time winners Sevilla may be fighting a relegation battle in La Liga but are always a threat in the knockout stages of the Europa League and take a 2-0 lead to Istanbul against Fenerbahce.

Jose Mourinho led Roma to their first European trophy in 61 years by lifting the Europa Conference League last season.

The Italian giants are also well-placed to reach the last eight after beating Real Sociedad 2-0 at home last week.

PTI ■ KOLKATA

## Chhetri may be playing his last season: Stimac

Talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri "may be playing the last season" of his illustrious career, feels Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac, who is hoping that his star player would be saving his best for the last in the coming months.

India's next big assignment is the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar from January 12 to February 10 next year. The 38-year-old Chhetri is set to play in his third continental showpiece, the most by an Indian, after playing a pivotal role in the qualification tournament here last year.

"At his age, this will probably be his farewell from football. Obviously, Sunil may be playing his last season, and definitely his last Asian Cup," Stimac said.

"I'm quite sure that the upcoming months will be the best for Sunil Chhetri," he was quoted as saying in the official All India Football Federation (AIFF) website.

The national team is currently having a five-day camp here ahead of the Tri-Nation Football Tournament in Imphal from March 22.

Chhetri, the third most prolific international goal scorer among active players with 84 strikes behind Cristiano Ronaldo (118) and Lionel

Messi (98), was part of the Indian teams that featured in the 2011 and 2019 Asian Cup.

The 38-year-old Chhetri, who made his international debut in 2005, played a key role in Bengaluru FC making to Indian Super League final to be played on Saturday.

"Sunil Chhetri was nowhere to be seen this season. He was on the bench, waiting, preparing himself, working to take his weight down a few kilos, which is very difficult to handle at this age," said Stimac who has been given the target of reaching Asian Cup quarterfinals if he wants to continue at the helm beyond that tournament.

"But when it was most needed, he was there for his club, helping them, and taking them to the finals. He scored the most decisive goals."

With 10 months to go for the Asian Cup, the 106-ranked Blue Tigers will play their first international match since September when they take on higher ranked Kyrgyz Republic (94) and Myanmar (159) in the international tournament in Imphal.

India drew 1-1 against Singapore



and capped a 0-3 loss to Vietnam in their last international matches.

Along with Chhetri, the Indian team has also ageing stars in central-defender Sandesh Jhingan and goal-

keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, and Stimac is well aware of the likely change in the core group of players in the near future.

"We need to understand that

some of them are of a certain age now. It's difficult to say, but goodbyes need to come sometime," the 1998 World Cup bronze medallist Croatian said.

"Along with him (Chhetri),

Sandesh (Jhingan) and Gurpreet (Singh Sandhu) are the core strength of our team. I've never hidden that. I was never running away from the truth.

"They are free guys, with great characters, strong mindsets and a good mentality, which is a basic platform for us to build the team around. But of course, we need to keep their age in mind. Gurpreet and Sandesh may be there for four, or five years," he added.

### 'SPOTS ARE AVAILABLE'

For someone who has always preferred to take his players from the top tier of the domestic structure, Stimac said he would look at all the players involved in Indian football be it Santosh Trophy or the I-League.

"The competition for places in the final squad for the Asian Cup will go all the way until the end. The spots are open for everyone with an Indian passport, and not only those involved in the Hero ISL."

"Our focus now is on all players involved in Indian Football — whether it is the Santosh Trophy or the I-League.

"Our scouting team will go everywhere in the next eight-nine months to watch everyone. We're going to give an opportunity to all those who we think might help us in the Asian Cup," the coach added.

AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey had recently said that all the competitions in the country, including Santosh Trophy, should be considered for national team selection.

On India's opponents in the Tri-Nation tournament, the coach said both Kyrgyz Republic and Myanmar would be challenging.

"Myanmar are the lower-ranked one but they have changed their approach to the game in the last few years. They try to play middle-press football, which could be challenging," Stimac said.

"Kyrgyz Republic are a very well-organised side and play very good quality football. They played wonderful football against such a strong and competitive side Russia. It's going to be very interesting."

"We are the hosts, and we're going to do absolutely everything to win the tournament."

The national team players in the ISL finalists sides ATK Mohun Bagan and Bengaluru FC will join the camp on March 19. The team will leave for Imphal on March 21.



# KUL-CHA WILL HAVE IMPORTANT SIX MONTHS AHEAD OF THEM

PTI ■ MUMBAI

They were the toast of the nation going into the 2019 World Cup in England but in last four years, Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal have seen more downs than ups.

Kuldeep had a career-threatening knee surgery in 2021 while Chahal, has been repeatedly ignored for important T20 games and global meets. They would want to change their wheels of fortune.

However with India's ODI World Cup preparations starting with the three-match series against Australia, starting Friday, the famed 'Kul-Cha' would love to serve a platter of googlies, leg-breaks and flippers which their fans would like to savour.

Several members of the Indian cricket team including the stand-in captain Hardik Pandya on Wednesday began training here at the Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday but all eyes were on the two wrist spinners as they need to battle it out with Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar, two multi-



skilled cricketers, who are also part of this squad.

Both Kuldeep and Chahal, aren't the most accomplished of batters, although the UP left-arm wrist spinner has had some degree of success at the Test level.

However both Washington and Jadeja come as a package but purely on tweaker's skills, the two wrist spinners are ahead compared to finger spinners.

India's regular captain Rohit Sharma will miss the first ODI in Mumbai due to family commitments and the stand-in captain for the match, Pandya, was among those who trained for more than two hours with the white ball.

Among the other players who were in attendance were fast bowlers Mohammed Siraj, Jaydev Unadkat, Umran Malik, Shardul Thakur and among batters, Suryakumar Yadav and wicketkeeper-batsman Ishan Kishan.

While India head coach Rahul Dravid did not attend the session, the other members of the coaching staff, batting coach Vikram Rathour, fielding coach

T Dilip and bowling coach Paras Mhambrey were present along with throw-down specialists Raghavendra and Nuwan Senewiratne.

India's preferred choice for No. 5 spot and wicketkeeping duties, KL Rahul, who was dropped from the team after the first two Tests at Nagpur and New Delhi, was also among the absentees.

Pandya, who is also the designated vice-captain for the series, did light bowling practice and also tried leg-breaks in one of the adjacent nets to Kishan.

While Suryakumar, Kishan and Pandya had long stints with the bat, Siraj, who featured till the third Test in Indore, also spent a lot of time batting against spinners and fast bowlers.

Suryakumar mostly had a conventional approach in the nets with an odd aggressive shot, but captain Pandya did chance his arms whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The Australian players also had a training session here late in the afternoon.

# India's direct-hit conversion ratio has improved: Fielding coach



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian fielders have improved in leaps and bounds in terms of successful ratio of direct hits even though some of those didn't turn into run-outs, said fielding coach T Dilip.

Citing KL Rahul's direct hit to dismiss an on-song Litton Das during the T20 World Cup in Australia which helped India halt Bangladesh's charge and clinch a narrow win, Dilip said the team seems to have improved in that area.

"There are certain areas where we have certainly improved over a period of time. If you look at the number of direct-hit

percentage in the World Cup and that one direct hit from KL Rahul changed the course of the match," Dilip told the media after India's optional training session here at the Wankhede Stadium.

"That's something we are looking at as a group and if you look at it's overall ratio, even though there are no run outs, the number of times we have hit the stumps has improved a bit. That's one area we will keep improving," he added.

Dilip backed Rahul, who did not attend the optional training session, to continue doing well at No 5 as a wicketkeeper-batsman.

"We all know that KL Rahul

is a wonderful player. He has a proven record. Even in ODIs, in the middle-order, he has proven enough as a batter. As a wicket-keeper, he gets a lot of balance into the team because he gives advantage.

"Since he is not someone who has picked the gloves just now — he has been doing that since a younger age — he adds a lot of things. Not that difficult to work on his wicket-keeping, apart from refining a few aspects," Dilip said.

Dilip said that the team is looking to have specific fielding drills and training for specific players so that they are best prepared to field at certain positions. Hardik Pandya will be India's stand-in captain for the first ODI here on Friday, and Dilip backed the all-rounder to come good.

"He is the captain now officially. But he has been in our leadership group for all these matches and he's proven in T20s what he can bring on table as a captain. Even if Rohit is the captain, he is part of our leadership group, he adds a lot of value to the team, not only you, we all are looking forward to him. He is well-equipped to do it," Dilip said.

The fielding coach added that senior players like Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja inspire the younger players to work on their fielding.

"They have proven over a period of time, they have been role models in terms of what they can contribute in fielding. Players do look up to them. What special I see when they come to practice is the intensity. Even after proving themselves, they carry that intensity, which rubs on to the youngsters," he said.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

## Shreyas Iyer ruled out of ODI series

KKR. Iyer leads KKR in IPL.

He is currently back in NCA for extensive rehabilitation but it couldn't be confirmed whether he would also require surgery like Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna.

"Injuries are a part and parcel of the game. We have the best medical facilities and they are well-equipped... We are in co-ordination (with NCA). Shreyas ruled out of this series. (We will be able to provide) fur-



ther update as and when we know," told India's fielding coach T Dilip told media in his debut press conference.

The right-handed Iyer, who had made a comeback into the Indian side recently during the four-Test series against Australia after recovering from a back injury, complained of experiencing similar troubles during the fourth and final Test in Ahmedabad.

As a result, Iyer was taken

for scans by BCCI's medical team with the message being relayed that the batsman was being monitored. Iyer did not bat in India's only innings at Ahmedabad.

The injury is expected to keep Iyer out of action for at least the first half of the 2023 edition of the Indian Premier League, which begins on March 31. Iyer is the designated captain of two-time title winners Kolkata Knight Riders and it seems they will be in search of a new leader.



## Ashwin regains No 1 spot in Test bowlers rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Senior India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's superlative show in the fourth Test against Australia has helped him regain the top spot among bowlers in the latest ICC Rankings issued on Wednesday.

Ashwin, who grabbed a haul of six for 91 in the drawn fourth Test and was the leading wicket-taker in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with 25 scalps, is 10 rating points ahead of England seamer James Anderson.

Fellow Indian left-arm spinner Axar Patel climbed six places to 28 among bowlers. He also rose to the fourth spot in the all-rounder's list led by Ashwin and Jadeja.

While pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who is recovering from a recurring back injury, dropped to number seven among bowlers.

Talismanic Indian batter Virat Kohli moved seven places to 13th position after his Player of the Match performance against Australia in the fourth Test.

The high-scoring match at Ahmedabad also saw opener Shubman Gill, who smashed a

fine century, jump 17 places to 46th.

The injured Rishabh Pant (9th) and skipper Rohit Sharma (10th) are the Indian batters in the top 10.

Australia opener Usman Khawaja and New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell have also made notable gains in the list.

Khawaja's score of 180 in the drawn fourth Test against India in Ahmedabad has lifted him two spots to seventh position and to a career-best 815 rating points while Mitchell's knocks of 102 and 81 in the epic victory over Sri Lanka in Christchurch has helped him reach a career-best eighth position as he touches the 800-point mark for the first time.

In the latest weekly update that also considers performances in the second Test between South Africa and the West Indies in Johannesburg, Temba Bavuma's match-winning 172 for the home side has lifted him 14 slots to a career best 15th position.

Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews is another one to move up the batting rankings, his scores of 47 and 115 taking him from 19th to 17th position.

## Women's Boxing World C'ships: India eye strong show at home

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nikhata Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain will be at the forefront as India eye a show befitting their growing stature in women's boxing when the World Championship, whose build-up was marred by controversies, begins here from Thursday.

In the absence of the iconic six-time champion MC Mary Kom, who is recovering from an ACL tear in her left knee, world champion Nikhata and Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina will spearhead the 12-member Indian team. Both boxers will look to find their footing in new weight categories with the Paris Olympics approaching.

World No. 4 Nikhata cut down her weight from 52kg — the weight category in which she found glory last year in Turkey — to 50kg. Lovlina, on the other hand, has bulked up from the 69kg welterweight class to the 75kg middleweight division after both their preferred weight categories were scrapped for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

This will be Nikhata's second international tournament after dropping down to 50kg. She won the Commonwealth Games gold in the light fly weight division but the field wasn't that strong in Birmingham.

However, that will not be the case here. Being an Olympic weight category, Nikhata will have to face some of the top boxers on her way to the podium.

Although Lovlina won the Asian Championships in the 75kg division, she is still adapting to her new weight class.

The two-time Worlds bronze medallist has been working extensively on increasing her strength and adding power to her punches, a



must for succeeding in the higher weight classes.

"The focus has been on improving the power in my punches as my opponents will be much stronger than what I encountered in the 69kg category," Lovlina told PTI.

The spotlight will also be on CWG champion Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) and last edition's bronze medallist Manisha Maun (57kg).

The likes of Sakshi Chaudhary (52kg), Preeti (54kg), Shashi Chopra (63kg), Sanamcha Chanu (70kg) are expected to create a flutter.

It is the third time India is hosting the prestigious event. But a series of boycotts, the conflict between the International Boxing Association (IBA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and a court case have taken the sheen off the tournament.

Over 100 countries, including the likes of USA, Britain and Ireland pulled out of the event after the IBA, headed by Russian Umar Kremlev, allowed boxers from Russia and Belarus to compete under their own flag against the IOC's recommenda-

tion. Additionally, the ongoing tussle between the two world bodies has created a lot of confusion as the IOC said it would be in charge of the 2024 Paris Olympics qualifiers and not the IBA, which has been under suspension since 2019.

But the IBA went on and announced that they would conduct the qualification events, and the men's and women's World Championships this year would be the main qualifiers.

Kremlev on Tuesday clarified that the IOC will remain in

charge of the qualifying events adding that the two bodies need to cooperate and coordinate. He, however, asserted that all the qualification tournaments shall be managed by IBA.

Another dispute arose within the national camp as reigning national champions Manju Rani (48kg), Shiksha Narwal (54kg) and Poonam Poonia (60kg) moved court after they couldn't make the cut for the World Championships under Boxing Federation of India's new selection policy.

Under the new policy the boxers underwent an evaluation process for three weeks where they were judged on various parameters with Nitu, Preeti and Jaismine Lamboria being selected for the tournament.

The Delhi High Court eventually refused to interfere in the issue. The 13th edition of the championship will feature over 300 boxers from 65 countries and the gold-winners will walk away with a prize money of USD 100,000.

The silver medallists are to be given USD 50,000, and both bronze-medallists will be awarded USD 25,000 each.

India returned with a haul of three medals including a gold in the last edition.

The Indian team would hope to match its 2006 performance at home, when the boxers won eight medals, including four golds.

**Squad:** Nitu Ghanghas (48kg), Nikhata Zareen (50kg), Sakshi Chaudhary (52kg), Preeti (54kg), Manisha Moun (57kg), Jaismine Lamboria (60kg), Shashi Chopra (63kg), Manju Bambaria (66kg), Sanamcha Chanu (70kg), Lovlina Borgohain (75kg), Saweety Boora (81kg) and Nupur Sheoran (81+kg).

## Kuhnemann returns home with 'some awesome tips' from Jadeja

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rookie Australian left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann, who made an impressive debut in the Test series against India, said he has received "some awesome tips" about his craft from star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja.

Kuhnemann said Jadeja stuck to his "promise and spent about 15 minutes talking about everything" after India clinched the series 2-1 following the drawn fourth and final Test in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

"It was probably about 15 minutes, he (Jadeja) was just giving me some awesome tips; we talked about everything," Kuhnemann was quoted as saying by Fox Cricket.

"He gave me some good tips for the next time we're in the subcontinent and some tips to go back home with as well."

The 26-year-old Queensland was flown in as a replacement for leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson who left home for the birth of his first child ahead of the second Test in Delhi.

The inexperienced spinner has often struggled to get into Queensland side when Swepson was available and has 35 wickets at 34.80 in 13 matches.

But he had impressed in the ODI debut against Sri Lanka to be called for the India series and Kuhnemann did not disappoint, finishing with nine wickets in three Tests.

He claimed six wickets, including a maiden five-for, to play a key role in Australia winning the third Test at Indore. It was Australia's veteran spinner Nathan Lyon who arranged the interaction between Kuhnemann and Jadeja after the Ahmedabad Test.

"Nathan Lyon helped organise it as well. He (Jadeja) was really impressed with Todd, 'Gaz' and myself so that was really cool to hear that from him."

"He was really nice and just said any time to reach out, and even sent me a message on Instagram, so that was pretty cool," he added.

The last time the two teams met on Indian soil, in 2017, Steve Smith's "brain fade" episode had made headlines. But this time, it was the bonhomie between the two bitter rivals that stood out in the four-Test series.

## Alcaraz, Swiatek roll into Indian Wells quarters

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Top seeds Carlos Alcaraz and Iga Swiatek eased into the Indian Wells quarter-finals on cue on Tuesday as in-form Daniil Medvedev defied injury in a wild three-set win over Alexander Zverev.

Alcaraz, the world number two who can regain the top ranking with a win this week, had a short night's work on Stadium Court as Britain's Jack Draper retired with an abdominal injury with the Spaniard up 6-2, 2-0. World number one Swiatek, meanwhile, had the last word in most of the long rallies as she powered past 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu 6-3, 6-1.

was a stark contrast to the drama earlier in the day, when Medvedev shook off a second-set fall and badly twisted ankle to beat Zverev 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 to push his ATP win streak to 17 matches.

The world number six, coming off ATP wins in Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai, rolled his right ankle and lay on the court for several minutes before limping to his chair.

Zverev, who suffered three torn ankle ligaments at last year's French Open, looked on in concern, but after the injury was examined and taped by medical staff Medvedev continued — and turned the match around.

"In the beginning it was quite painful, so I was more concerned and focused on my ankle



than the game," Medvedev said. "Then that actually helped me a little bit to play better. For the rest of the match, adrenaline was probably kicking in. So it was not easy to walk, that's why I was limping, but to move was easier."

Ankle allowing, Medvedev was scheduled to face 28th-ranked Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina — a 6-3, 6-4 winner over Chilean qualifier Cristian Garin — on Wednesday. Alcaraz will have a day off before facing Felix Auger-Aliassime, who saved six match points — three in the third-set tiebreaker — in his 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) victory over Tommy Paul.

Swiatek's match followed a familiar pattern, with last year's French and US Open winner feeling out her opponent over a

few close games before pulling away for a convincing win.

She next faces Romania's Sorana Cirstea, who battled to a 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 victory over fifth-ranked Caroline Garcia of France.

**KVITOVA ESCAPE**

Men's defending champion Taylor Fritz defeated Hungarian Marton Fucsovics 6-2, 6-3 in a tense match that belied the straightforward scoreline.

Fritz will face Italian Jannik Sinner, who beat three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka 6-1, 6-4. Britain's 2021 champion Cameron Norrie beat seventh-ranked Andrey Rublev 6-2, 6-4 to line up a clash with American Frances Tiafoe, a 6-4, 6-4 winner over Chilean

qualifier Alejandro Tabilo.

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka reached the quarter-finals for the first time with a 6-3, 2-6, 6-4 victory over Barbora Krejickova.

Sabalenka next faces 19-year-old American Coco Gauff, who squeezed past Swedish qualifier Rebecca Peterson 6-3, 1-6, 6-4. Gauff, the fourth seed, has won three of their prior four meetings. Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, a former world number two now ranked 15th, saved four match points in a 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (13/11) victory over third-ranked Jessica Pegula.

The Czech next faces last year's runner-up Maria Sakkari, the seventh seed who beat Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 5-7, 6-3.