

OPINION 6
SIKHS HOLD TIRANGA
IN HIGH ESTEEM**WORLD 8**
CHINA, RUSSIA TO COUNTER US'
INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY**MONEY 10**
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AYER TO MISS
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11 SPORT

Plan for modern Delhi announced

- Govt gives infra-focussed ₹78,800-cr Budget
- Power subsidy, free bus rides to continue

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Finance Minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday presented Rs 78,800-crore Budget, giving a major push to transport and infrastructure with an allocation of Rs 21,817 crore ahead of the G20 Summit, and announced a comprehensive plan to make the Capital a "clean, beautiful and modern city".

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the Budget has something for everyone and free schemes like bus ride for women, power subsidy and pilgrimage for senior citizens will continue in the next financial year as well.

However, the education and health sectors, two highest priority areas of the AAP dispensation, have not seen a major hike.

The Government has proposed Rs 9,742 crore for the health sector, a marginal decline, while in the last Budget, it was Rs 9,769 crore.

The education department has been given Rs 16,575 crore. In the 2022-23 Budget, it had the highest allocation of Rs 16,278 crore. An outlay of Rs



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Delhi Finance Minister Kailash Gahlot arrive for the presentation of Delhi Budget for the financial year 2023-24, at Delhi Legislative Assembly, on Wednesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

9,337 crore in the transport sector has been proposed for the next financial year. Opposition BJP dismissed the Budget as "directionless" and alleged that it is a bundle of lies and has only paper announcements.

In his 150-minute speech in the Delhi Assembly, Gahlot said a comprehensive infrastructure rejuvenation project was being launched in a very significant year when Delhi will be hosting India's first

G20 summit. The comprehensive plan includes beautification of 1,400-km roads maintained by PWD, construction of 26 flyovers and three double-decker flyovers, induction of 1,600 electric buses and electrification of all bus depots.

Also, the Government has proposed to construct three world-class inter-State bus terminals, two multi-level bus depots, two modern bus terminals and nine new bus

Flares, bottles hurled at Indian Mission

High Commission in London responds to stir by pro-Khalistan protesters by putting up bigger Tricolour

PTI/PNS ■ LONDON/NEW DELHI

Around 2,000 protesters waving Khalistan flags descended upon the Indian High Commission here on Wednesday for a planned demonstration and hurled objects and chanted slogans amid a heightened security presence and barricades.

The Indian High Commission countered by unfurling an additional humongous Tricolour on the roof of its building, which seemed to rile the protesters further who then hurled coloured flares and water bottles towards the mission building and at police officers and media covering the protest.

Scotland Yard reacted by further blockading the area outside India House and several additional uniformed and mounted officers on horseback were deployed immediately to the area.

Unlike the violent disorder on Sunday when India House came under attack, the protesters were barricaded across the road with uniformed officers standing guard and patrolling the area throughout. The protesters, including turbaned men, and some women and children, had been bused in from different parts of the UK and chanted pro-Khalistan slogans. The organisers used mikes to make anti-India speeches and attack the Punjab Police for



Protesters gathered outside a heavily guarded Indian High Commission in London. PTI

alleged human rights violations. The speeches switched between English and Punjabi to make allegations of Indian media bias for calling them fringe elements and backed by Pakistan's spy agency ISI. Banners for the so-called "National Protest", organised by groups such as the Federation of Sikh Organisations (FSO) and Sikh Youth Jathebandia, have been circulating on social media since before a protest on Sunday, which ended in violent disorder at India House.

The Indian Government had registered a strong protest over the lack of security measures at its diplomatic mission, which ended in Khalistan flag-waving protesters smashing windows of the Indian High Commission and attempting to pull down the Tricolour. In an apparent tit-for-tat, India on Wednesday morning removed the barricade security cover of the UK High Commission or British Embassy and its envoy in New Delhi.

Hours after the Indian sharp action more policemen and barricades were installed outside the Indian High Commission in London on Wednesday ahead of the planned protest, in an apparent effort to avoid a repeat of the vandalism seen three days ago.

'Take early action on Judges' appointment'

Collegium worried over Centre holding back recommended names as it hurts their seniority

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium has voiced concern over the Centre withholding or overlooking the names recommended for appointment as judges, saying this disturbs the seniority of the candidates, and asked the Government to take "necessary action" for elevation of those recommended earlier. The Collegium, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, said a notification for the elevation of persons recommended earlier in point of time should be issued at the earliest.

The Collegium was expressing displeasure on the non-appointment of John Sathyan and Ramaswamy Neelakandan in Madras High Court and also reiterated Harpreet Singh Brar's appointment as Judge in Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The Collegium voiced its concern in a resolution dated March 21 in which it recommended the names of four district judges for appointment as judges of the Madras High Court. The Collegium, which comprises Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and KM Joseph, recommended the names of R Sakthivel, P Dhanabal, Chinnasamy Kumarappan, and K Rajasekar.

"By its resolution dated 17 January 2023, the Collegium of the Supreme Court recommended the appointment



of Ramaswamy Neelakandan, advocate practising before the Madras High Court, as a judge of the High Court. As on March 31, 2023, Ramaswamy Neelakandan was 48.07 years of age while K Rajasekar on that date was 47.09 years of age. Neelakandan, who is a member of the Bar, has been recommended earlier in point of time and must be appointed before Rajasekar is appointed. Otherwise, Rajasekar, who is a judicial officer and younger than Neelakandan, would rank senior to Neelakandan.

Such a deviation in seniority would be unfair and against the settled convention," the resolution said. The Collegium said that while recommending the name of Rajasekar for elevation, it is of the view that his appointment should be notified after the appointment of Neelakandan is notified.

"The Collegium is of the considered view that necessary action for the issuance of a notification for the elevation of persons who have been recommended earlier in point of time should be taken at the earliest including the name of R John Sathyan which has been reiterated by this Collegium on 17 January 2023.

CAPSULE

RAILWAYS RESTORE AC 3-TIER ECONOMY FARE

New Delhi: Railways on Wednesday issued an order to restore the fare for AC 3-tier economy class travel which had been withdrawn in November last year when it was merged with AC 3-tier. Despite the restoration in price, Railways will continue offering linen to passengers, the order indicated.

MUKESH AMBANI IS RICHEST INDIAN AGAIN

Mumbai: Gautam Adani's fortunes have suffered a severe setback on concerns over corporate governance and accounting fraud, leading to Reliance Industries' Mukesh Ambani replacing the Ahmedabad-based industrialist as the richest Indian. Adani lost Rs 3,000 crore of wealth every week over the last year and his overall networth is down 60 per cent from its peak, as per the M3M Hurun Global Rich List, which pegged Adani's overall fortune at \$53 billion as of mid-March.

ISRO: CHANDRAYAAN 3, ADITYA L1 SOON

Ahmedabad: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman S Somanath on Wednesday said the launch of Chandrayaan-3, India's third lunar mission, and the first solar mission Aditya L1 will possibly happen by the middle of 2023. ISRO is also discussing a possible mission to the Moon in alliance with the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency.

PM reviews Covid, influenza situation

Modi stresses on genome sequencing, observing strict Covid protocols



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A mid a spike in influenza and Covid-19 cases in some pockets in the country in the past two weeks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting and directed officials to enhance genome sequencing while also emphasising on Covid-appropriate behaviour.

India has recorded 1,134 new coronavirus cases, while the active cases increased to 7,026, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday. The death toll climbed to 5,30,813 with five deaths. One death each has been reported in Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat and Maharashtra while one fatality was reconciled by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am stated. The number of districts with 10 per cent or more Covid-positivity has gone up to 14 during March 12-18 against nine in the March 8-14 week.

Modi chaired the meeting to assess the Covid-19 and influenza situation in the country in terms of preparedness of health infrastructure and logistics, status of the vaccination campaign, emergence of new Covid-19 variants and influenza types and their public health implications for the country, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. During the meeting, a comprehensive presentation was made covering the global Covid situation, including the rising cases, by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan. The Prime Minister was briefed that a slight rise in new cases is being witnessed in some pockets in the country with average daily cases reported as 888 and weekly positivity reported as 0.98 per cent in the week ending March 22. However, 1.08 lakh daily average cases have been reported globally during the same week.

SC to set up Bench to hear plea against remission to Bilkis' rapists



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to constitute a special Bench to hear a plea against the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano gang-rape case. A Bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala assured Bano, represented through her lawyer Shobha Gupta, that the new Bench will be formed.

Gupta mentioned the matter for urgent hearing and said that a new Bench needs to be constituted. "I will have a Bench constituted. Will look at it this evening," the CJI said. Earlier, on January 24, the hearing on Bano's plea challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the gang-rape case by the Gujarat Government could not be held in the top court as the Judges concerned were hearing a matter related to passive euthanasia as part of a five-Judge Constitution Bench. All 11 convicts were granted remission and released on August 15, last year.

QR code on tomb keeps son's memories alive

Family of Kerala doc designed a Web page with his videos linked to the QR code

PTI ■ THRISSUR (KERALA)

A QR code placed on a tombstone at a church in Kerala's Thrissur helps one to relive and reminisce on the creative work rendered by a doctor, who died young at just 26. The parents of Dr Ivin Francis decided to place the QR code on the tomb of the youngest at St Joseph Church, Kuriyachira in the central Kerala district to give people a glimpse

into his world as they can watch videos of his performances by scanning the code. His family from Kuriyachira has designed a web page containing all the works of Ivin and linked it with the QR code.

Son of Francis, an officer with a private company in Oman, and Leena, principal of the Indian School in Oman, Ivin was well-versed in music and sports, and found time for it along with his medical course. He was popular among the community with his performances.

Ivin's unfortunate death came in 2021 when he collapsed and died while playing badminton. "We wanted his life to be a motivation for everyone and that is how we thought of placing a QR code on his tomb,"



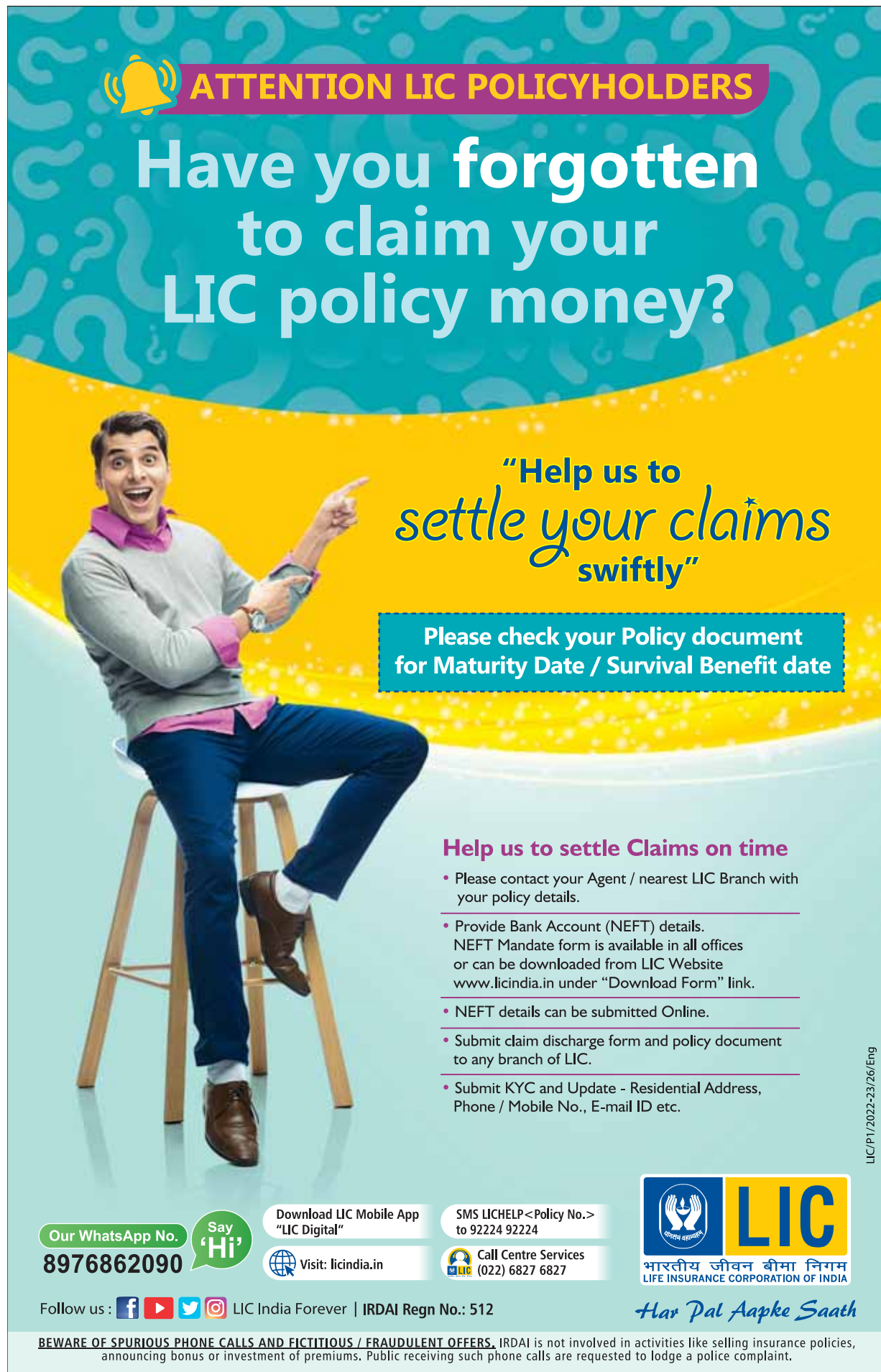
Francis said.

Ivin had created profiles of people using QR codes and his parents also decided to do the same for him. "He also used to send me a lot of QR codes for information," the father said. He said the idea of placing a QR code was of Ivin's sister Evelyn Francis.

"My daughter told me that just writing something about Ivin on the tomb will not be sufficient to portray what all he did. We thought he may not be satisfied with just that. So, she said we can have a QR code linked to his profile and place it on the tomb. So, people who scan the code will know what was he and what all he could do. She created the site and QR code in 10 days," Francis said.

The dotting father said his daughter had asked him not to inscribe anything on the tomb when he ordered it. "She created the site and QR code and asked me whether that could be printed on the marble tomb. So I asked the maker, and he said it can be printed," Francis said.

He said, "Now, people who visit the grave can just scan the QR code and can know what sort of a person Ivin was."



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Har Pal Aapke Saath

Jharkhand Medical Protection Bill sent to Select Committee

THE BILL HAS BEEN SENT TO SELECT COMMITTEE FOR THE THIRD TIME

PNS : RANCHI

The Medical Protection Bill of Jharkhand seeking to prevent doctors, healthcare staff and hospitals from attacks by patient parties was sent to the Select Committee after MLAs cutting across party lines opposed to some of its provisions. The Bill Jharkhand Medical Service, Medical Service Association (Prevention of Violence and Property Damage) was introduced in the House, but it was not passed for third time.

Soren, after going through the Bill urged the Speaker Rabintra Nath Mahto to send the bill to the select committee for proper study and give its opinion within 30 days after he noticed that as many as 30 proposals for amendment in the bill had come.

In the last Cabinet meeting, the Bill got the nod. Doctors of State have been demanding implementation of the Medical Protection Act in the state for a long time. The bill was introduced to ensure security to doctors and para-medical staff in Jharkhand.

Opposition members had been demanding amendments in the bill as they claim that it does not provide any security to patients. Aju legislator Lambodar Mahto criticized the bill demanding a Patient Protection Bill and explained how dangerous the bill could be in the state where people die in government hospitals due to negligence.

Some MLAs have opposed some of the provisions of the bill and demanded that provisions for the protection of the patients' rights should be there in the bill. The medical



Ministers attending Budget Session of State Assembly in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

protection bill was introduced in 2013 and 2017 too, but it could be implemented after it was sent to select committee. Some of the provisions of bill include jail term of up to two years and a monetary fine of up to Rs 50,000 against any person found guilty of assault on medical professionals and vandalising government and private hospital properties.

The Cabinet gave its nod to the bill as there were repeated demands of the medical fraternity in the state for such a law. The state has witnessed several cases of attack in hospitals involving

medical professionals and family members of patients. Two such attacks happened this year in Garhwa and Dhanbad districts, leading to strikes of medical professionals in respective districts.

BJP legislator Amar Kumar Bouri said there are several provisions to ensure security to all. In this situation a special bill to give protection to a particular section is not advisable. He said it often comes into the knowledge that doctors run around and beat relatives of a patient when they protest in case of death of a patient due to neg-

ligence.

Another BJP legislator supported Bouri saying one can easily imagine the behavior of a high handed doctor in the state where doctor like Dr O.P. Anand did not hesitate to misbehave with the health minister in his home constituency.

The not passing of bill is setback for medical fraternity in State as Jharkhand is 24th state to introduce Medical Protection Act in state. Many states including Bihar, Odisha and Bengal already have medical protection act in their state.

BJP demands implementation of NRC in State

BJP MLA Anant Oja says demography of Santhal Pargana is changing

PNS : RANCHI

Demand for implementation of NRC was once again raised in the House. BJP MLA Anant Oja raised the issue of Bangladeshi infiltration in the state. Oja demanded implementation of NRC in the state at Zero Hour. He said that the demography of Santhal Pargana is changing due to Bangladeshi infiltrators. He said that in Sahibganj, Pakur, Godda, Dumka and Jamtara, the number of tribals and Hindus population is decreasing, while the number of Muslims population is increasing. At the same time, he said that the state government should take initiative to implement NRC to stop Bangladeshi infiltrators. Oja said that the youth of neighboring Bangladeshi state are



Ranchi MLA CP Singh speaks during the ongoing Budget Session of State Assembly in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

getting involved in anti-national activities. The employment of the people here is being snatched away. The MLA said that Jharkhand's water, forests and land are being encroached upon.

He said that this has been

raised by me continuously in the assembly, at that time the ministers of the UPA coalition have been denying it. He said that even in the last session, when I said that Bangladeshi infiltrators are using the resources here, the government is doing appeasement

politics, then the Chief Minister said in the House that we have not come to provide resources to Bangladeshi infiltrators. He said that the Chief Minister says something in the House and something else happens.

During this, the MLA said that the widow and old age pension given under the Social Security Scheme is being made in a fake way in Sahibganj. He said that during the investigation, it has come to light that a fake death certificate was used for widow pension in Rajmahal block. At the same time, a Bangladeshi youth was arrested near Sahibganj Taljhari railway station in the past. At the same time, he said that cow smuggling is also happening openly in Santhal Pargana. He said that

as long as the person involved in anti-national activities is identified on the basis of religion, till then such illegal business will continue. Bangladeshi infiltrators are doing the work of usurping Jharkhand's resources. At the same time, he demanded to constitute a high level task force in this regard.

BJP legislator Biranchi Narayan today pointed out the plays which the state government took to deprive youths of jobs during the last three years.

Speaking in favour of a cut motion brought by BJP's Ranchi legislator C.P. Singh on the budgetary demands by several departments, including home and prison, Narayan said: "In the first year the state government said there is no money in the



Chief Minister Hemant Soren plays a shot during a friendly cricket match between Chief Minister's XI and Journalist's XI at Birsra Munda Athletics Stadium Hotwar in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

DC holds meeting to organise festivals peacefully



PNS : RANCHI

An important meeting was organized today, under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Ranchi Rahul Kumar Sinha for holding upcoming festivals in a cordial atmosphere. Senior Superintendent of Police, Ranchi Kishor Kaushal, Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order), Ranchi RN Alok, various Muharram Committee members of the city, Mahavir Mandal Committee members and peace-loving people were present in the meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner Auditorium, Collectorate Block A. During the meeting, discussions were held regarding the celebration of Sarhul festival, Ramzan and Ram Navami in a cordial atmosphere. Suggestions were given by the members of Moharram Committee and Mahaveer Mandal Committee in turn, sharing their past experiences for better law and order maintenance during Ram Navami.

Members of the Moharram Committee said that as usual, the tradition of welcoming the procession during Ramnavami will be carried out in Ranchi in a cordial atmosphere. The members of Muharram Committee said

that during Ramnavami procession in the holy month of Ramzan, after Iftar, all out efforts would be made to ensure that there is no unnecessary crowd at sensitive places so that the procession can depart in a timely and smooth manner.

In the meeting, the members of the committee also talked about elaborate arrangement of lights at prominent places along the route of the procession. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner Rahul Kumar Sinha directed the Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order), Ranchi to talk to the Ranchi Municipal Corporation and make it the nodal for the particular area and share its information with the concerned police stations and committees. The Deputy Commissioner asked all the committees to give a list of the places where repair of roads, arrangement of lights, etc. is to be done so that work can be done in this regard as soon as possible. The members of the Mahaveer Mandal Committee said that Ram Navami has been celebrated in Ranchi in a cordial atmosphere and this time also Ram Navami will be celebrated with the co-operation and cordial atmosphere of all sections of the society.

Governor encourages students, meets villagers in Dumka



Governor CP Radhakrishnan worships at Baba Bajinathdham on the occasion of the first day of 'Chaitra Navaratri' festival, in Deoghar on Wednesday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Governor CP Radhakrishnan today went to Mohli Tola of Ghasipur village under Dumka district. First of all, he reached to observe the Anganwadi center located there. On the said occasion, the Governor inquired about the number of children in the Anganwadi center and obtained information regarding the nutrition of the children. On this occasion, he also planted trees in the Anganwadi premises.

The Governor then went to the upgraded Primary School, Ghasipur and met the children studying there. He interacted with the children and got information about the facilities available in the school. He encouraged the children by asking their



Governor CP Radhakrishnan taking information about making material from bamboo during his visit to the Anganwadi center Mohali Tola of Ghasipur village under Dumka district in Dumka on Wednesday. PNS

names and asked about the subjects being taught through the smart class. He inquired from the Deputy Commissioner, Dumka about the mid-day meal scheme along with the number and attendance of students in the school. After getting information about their studies from the local youth present there, the Governor encouraged them to take up education.

After this, the Governor met the local women present and got information about their livelihood and appreciated their talent of making bamboo material and asked the Deputy Commissioner, Dumka to take initiative to increase their income. After this, in a program organized there, apart from distributing medical grants among the villagers, the Governor benefited the beneficiaries under

Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Irrigation Water Construction Scheme, MGNREGA Scheme, Saree-Lungi Scheme.

In front of the Governor, the head of the village distributed nutrition food insects among TB patients by becoming a non-decaying friend under the 'Pradhan Mantri TB-free India Scheme'. He told the villagers that it is expected that this area will become a developed area with mutual relations, harmony and understanding. He said that those who are not able to reach Raj Bhavan, they will have access to them. He also encouraged folk artists. Deputy Commissioner, Dumka, Superintendent of Police, Dumka and other officers of the district administration were present on the said occasion.

INTERNATIONAL FOREST DAY AND WORLD WATER DAY PROGRAMME CONCLUDES

PNS : RANCHI

The three-day program organised from March 20 to 22 on International Forest Day and World Water Day ended on Wednesday. The chief guest of the concluding program was Dr. Sanjay Srivastava, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief of Forest Force, Jharkhand. He gave detailed information regarding the importance of water, its usefulness and its conservation in the concluding programme. In the programme, on the occasion of "All India Spring Art Camp-Prakriti 2023" organised on the theme of protection of nature, forests and water, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh etc. The artists (painters) who came from the states were honoured by giving mementos, certificates and wearing shawls. Along with this, the exhibition of paintings done by him in these three days on the subject of management and conservation of nature, forest and water was organized in the premises of Palash Auditorium with the aim of bringing awareness among the people.

IN BRIEFS

Important to save religious places: Shahdeo

Former Deputy Mayor of Ranchi, Ajay Nath Shahdeo today inaugurated Sarna Sthal developed by local Pahan at Bada Ghaghra in Doranda. Pahan Chukam Kutchhap has personally beautified the Sarna Sthal from his own funds. Shahdeo said that this is a very proud moment for the local Sarna community. With the development of this place just before the Prakriti Parv Sarhul, the entire village will be greatly facilitated. It is very important to save our religious places. Apart from being a heritage, it is linked to our existence and identity. Mahato Gopal Kachhap, Sanjay Minj, Rajan Minj, Poornima Minj, Vimla Tirk, Birsra Kachhap, Sudarshan Kachhap, Vinod Minj, Munna Minj, Nitesh Lakda, Rohit Kachhap and Sarna Dharmavalambi of entire village were present in the programme.



ILCC conducts GK quiz competition



The International Library and Cultural Center conducted a General Knowledge Quiz on Wednesday. The competition was open to the young student members of ILCC. A total of 52 enthusiastic members registered for the quiz, which was conducted in two stages. A written screening test for all was held on Saturday, 18/03/2023. Applicants, who scored 24 points and above (out of 54) qualified for the final quiz. Four teams of 4 members were formed. The members were well prepared and answered smartly and knowledgeably. They were grilled on Current Affairs, Sports and GK. The Quiz was conducted in 8 rounds. The Quiz Master was Ravi Sharma. The program was organized and conducted by the ILCC Librarian Nivedita Sharma. Present on the occasion were Cultural Committee members Rekha Mishra and Anchala Singh. First prize was awarded to Team No. 3 (Ajay Gope, Mukesh Sahu, Rahul Kumar, Samyak Kumar), while the Second Prize was bagged by Team No. 4 (Rahul Kumar, Shambhu Kumar, Sourabh Kumar, Bikinder Sahu). The third prize went to Team No. 1 (Madhu Kumari Singh, Pallavi, Pragya Kumari, Swadha Raj)

DPS Ranchi students shine in Mental Maths



The young mathematicians of DPS Ranchi once again proved their mettle in the Mental Maths competition 2023 organised by Ignited Mind Lab. As per the declaration of the Grand Finale results of this competition, Viraj Pratap Singh (Class III), Vivaan Singh (Class III), Agastya (Class IV), Aadarsh Gupta (Class V) bagged All India Rank 01. Rudransh Ranjan (Class VII), Pranay Kumar Singh (Class VII) and Dhairya Barnwal (Class VI) secured All India Rank 03 while H. Angel Katrina (Class VI) bagged All India Rank 06. Around 438 students participated in this competition out of which 118 students were selected for the Grand Finale Stage of this coveted examination. Principal, DPS Ranchi, Dr Ram Singh, said, "The school has been nurturing brilliance amongst the students in all the streams. It is a matter of pride for all of us to have got this remarkable result. The hard work of students and teachers has always paid off the best results".

CM FELICITATES 4 WOMEN FOR EXCELLENT WORK IN WATER CONSERVATION, CLEANLINESS

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren felicitated Munni Devi, head of Pithoria Panchayat of Kanke block of Ranchi district, Parvati Devi, member of Markachho Panchayat Samiti of Koderma district, Markachho from Koderma district, Pooja Devi, ward member of Arkocho Panchayat located in the block and Parvati Devi of Lakshmipur Panchayat of Domchanch block of Koderma district for their special contribution in the field of Jal Jeevan Mission, water conservation and cleanliness.

The Chief Minister congratulated them for doing better work. He took information from all of them about the works and activities being done by them and

appreciated them. Drinking Water and Sanitation Minister Mithilesh Kumar Thakur was also present on the occasion.

The CM said that life cannot be imagined without water. In such a situation, water conservation is the urgent need of today. He said that you should run a campaign for water conservation and planting more and more trees and connect others with it, because, only with collective effort can we achieve success in this.

It may be mentioned that President of India Draupadi Murmu honoured the women in a programme organised at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on 4 March 2023. Munni Devi was the only head of Jharkhand in this programme, who was honoured with the Swachh Sujal Shakti



Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Minister Mithilesh Thakur present certificates to the Mukhiya Munni Devi, Panchayat Committee Member Parvati Devi, Ward Committee Members Pooja Devi and Parvati Devi for their work in the field of Jal Jeevan Mission, Water Conservation and Sanitation during a programme, in the Chief Minister's Room Jharkhand Legislative Assembly in Ranchi on Wednesday. PNS

Samman-2023. She received this honour for the successful operation and maintenance of the Multi Rural Water Supply Scheme. At the same time, Parvati Devi was hon-

oured by the Union Jal Shakti Minister for Jal Shakti Abhiyan, whereas Pooja Devi was honoured for doing better work in the field of ODF Plus (Sanitation).

On this occasion, Secretary of Drinking Water and Sanitation Department Manish Ranjan, Chief Engineer Sanjay Kumar Jha, Special Secretary Rajeev Ranjan, Joint Secretary PN Mishra, Executive Engineer Anil Gupta and other officers were present.

Meanwhile, in another development, members of Shri Mahavir Mandal, Ranchi Steering Committee and Shri Mahavir Mandal, Metropolitan Committee met Chief Minister Hemant Soren today and invited him to participate in the grand Ramnavami festival and Shobha Yatra to be held on March 30. They urged the

Chief Minister to shower flowers by helicopter on the devotees involved in the procession as per the tradition that has been going on for the past several years.

They presented an idol of Shri Hanuman ji to the Chief Minister as a symbol of Ram Navami. On this occasion MLA CP Singh, Deputy Commissioner Rahul Kumar Sinha and Senior Superintendent of Police Kishor Kaushal, Jai Singh Yadav, Rajeev Ranjan Mishra, Dr. Ajit Sahai, Deepak Ojha, Ramdhan Burman, Shankar Sahu, Roshan Lal Yadav, Raju Yadav, Lalit Ojha, Sagar Kumar, Kailash Kesari, Abhinav Anand and President of Mahavir Mandir Mahanagar Samiti, Kunal Ajmani, General Secretary Munchun Rai, Coordinator Dr. Dilip Soni and Ramesh Bali were present.

Baghel, Raman face-off in Assly over coal fare

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and his predecessor Raman Singh had a showdown on Wednesday in the Chhattisgarh Assembly over coal transportation rates given by a state-owned power company at Gare Pelma coal block in Raigarh district.

During Question Hour, Raman Singh alleged that more than double the fare was given to Raigarh Coal Transportation to ferry coal, leading to loss to the state exchequer.

Singh alleged a multi-crore scam and said a loss of Rs 210 per tonne was suffered by the government due



to this.

Replying, Baghel said coal transportation rates differ from mine to mine and the system adapted by the present government was the same as that of its predecessor.

If the BJP government in 2017 had okayed that the SECL-approved rates had to be implemented, then it would have been by his government. "The rules today followed are the same as enforced by the erstwhile BJP government."

The Chief Minister denied the demand of BJP members for a House Committee probe into the matter.

Dissatisfied, BJP members staged a walk out.

C'garh Police issues cyber alert on job fraud

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Police on Wednesday issued an alert regarding fraudsters who lure people to earn money but end up cheating them of their money.

Several complaints have been registered on the Cyber Crime Helpline number 1930, an official communication said.

The fraudsters obtain the mobile numbers of job seekers. The victim is offered a part-time online job through Telegram, Instagram or WhatsApp. The money is paid on completion of various types of tasks.

The victim is then lured to register through a link to a website where the amount deposited is displayed on the basis of the job profile. Eventually, the money is siphoned away.



The police have told people not give away personal information like mobile

number and to avoid trusting such misleading messages or calls.

Two-day nat'l workshop on eco-economic accounting from today

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

A two-day national workshop on Environmental and Economic Accounting in Chhattisgarh is being held in Raipur from March 23.

The Department of Economics and Statistics is organizing the workshop at the Grand Imperia Hotel on VIP Road.

Chhattisgarh-based environmentalists and statisticians and other states will participate, an official communication said.

Eco-Economic Account in the state is required to record the natural resources, stock levels, changes in stocks over time

Chhattisgarh has about 44 percent of the geographical area covered by forests. Three major river systems

irrigate the state.

The Eco-Economic Account in the state is required to record the natural resources, stock levels, changes in stocks over time, and economic activities that produce tangible and intangible products of the environment.

The data collected will be vital in decision and future policy making, conservation of resources and ensuring sustainable development. It will also help in mapping and measuring the state's resources accurately.

STAFF REPORTER ■
KABIRDHAM

With an aim to prevent soil erosion and ensure year-round flow of the Sakri river, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel virtually launched the Sakri rejuvenation programme in Kabirdham district.

Addressing the event, he said that tree plantation along riverbanks in forest and revenue land, tree plantation under the Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana on private



land, and water and soil conservation through the Narva scheme in forest areas will be carried out as part of this project.

This project will provide sufficient water for domestic

use and irrigation to farmers in the Kabirdham district.

A book on Sakri river's rejuvenation was released.

Forest Minister Mohammad Akbar said the origin of Sakri river is

Mudwahi village. It flows through 59 villages in Kawardha district, covering a distance of 45 km.

Due to silt accumulation over time, the river was unable to flow at full capacity throughout the year.

To ensure the year-round flow of the river, tree plantation of various species will be done on both banks under the Mukhyamantri Vriksh Sampada Yojana.

Additionally, various structures such as check dams and gabions will be built to prevent river ero-

sion.

The goal of this scheme is to plant additional trees on 400 acres every year. The plantation will be done to prevent the damage caused by the effects of climate change.

Useful trees such as white sandalwood, rudraksha, tissue teak, tissue culture bamboo, clonal eucalyptus, milia dubia neem as well as medicinal and commercial plants such as stevia, ashwagandha, sarpgandha and satavar have been included for plantation.

Govt approves criteria for unemployment allowance

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Department of Skill Development Technical Education and Employment, Chhattisgarh, has issued the criteria and conditions to get unemployment allowance.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had announced Rs 2,500 per month to educated and unemployed youth, an official communication said on Wednesday.

The department states that to get unemployment allowance, the applicant must be a native of Chhattisgarh, should be unemployed and educated between the ages of 18 and 35.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel had announced Rs 2,500 per month to educated and unemployed youth

He must have a minimum of Higher Secondary (12th) qualification from a recognized board and registered in the District Employment and Self Employment Guidance

Centre.

The applicant should not have any source of income. The applicant's family's annual income from all sources should not exceed Rs 2.50 lakh.

The benefits will be provided to beneficiaries for the first year. If one does not find meaningful employment within one year, the period of unemployment benefits can be extended for another year. In no case it will exceed two years.

Only one person from each family will be eligible for unemployment allowance.

If the applicant's family works in a government or local body (other than Class

IV or Group D), he shall be ineligible for the allowance.

If the applicant is offered self-employment or a position in the government or private sector but does not accept it, he or she will be disqualified from unemployment benefit.

Pensioners' family members with a monthly pension of Rs.10,000 or more will be disqualified.

Ditto for families whose members paid income tax in the preceding assessment year besides engineers, doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants and family members of architects who are members of professional groups.

Replenish water resources: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday asked people to work for conservation and replenishment of water resources.

In his message to people, he said the state has numerous ponds and rivers. With proper care and

awareness, these should be conserved, enhanced and replenished.

The state government is making efforts to improve the water sources under the 'Narva' programme. It can be successful if public participation is ensured, he said.

He urged all citizens to save heritage ponds, rivers and water sources.

Forest Department achieves 160 percent higher revenue

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Forest Department, Chhattisgarh, registered 160 percent revenue receipt against a target of Rs 500 crore in financial year 2022-23. The revenue receipt was Rs 800 crore.

The earning was

through sale of commercial timber, forest minor produce and transportation fee. The department collected Rs 253 crore.

An additional revenue of Rs 2.57 crore was received by cutting and conducting e-auction of pine species planted in the Bastar forest division.

C'garh Assembly passes Mediaperson Security Bill

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Assembly on Wednesday passed the Chhattisgarh Mediakarmi Suraksha Vidheyak 2023 by voice vote.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel termed the bill a fulfillment of promise made to journalists and said it will further strengthen the fourth pillar of democracy.

"It is our view that through this act, the journal-

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel termed the bill a fulfillment of promise made to journalists and said it will further strengthen the fourth pillar of democracy

ists will now work without any fear," Baghel said.

Solar power bringing positive changes in tribal life

STAFF REPORTER ■
KANKER

Farmers of the North Bastar's Kanker district are seeing positive changes in their lives by using modern techniques in agriculture.

Tribal farmers living in villages located in interior regions face difficulties while irrigating their fields due to the absence of regular electricity supply.

Solar pump installation in fields without electricity provides pollution-free and obstacle-free irrigation facility, that too for free.

With the help of the government schemes, farmers living in interior regions are being encouraged to embrace agriculture even in harsh geographical condi-



tions. A resident of Choriya village, Maheshwari Vatti

said she used to face difficulties in farming on account lack of resources for irriga-

tion. On learning about the Saur Sujala Yojana of the

government, she installed a solar pump with a capacity of 5HP in her fields. She now

Solar pump installation in fields without electricity provides pollution-free and obstacle-free irrigation facility, that too for free

cultivates crops like madiya, urad and kulthi along with vegetables.

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता,
लोक निर्माण विभाग दुर्ग संभाग, दुर्ग

// मेनुअल पद्धति निविदा सूचना //

ज्ञाप क्रमांक - 2921/ व.ले.लि. / लेखा खण्ड / 2022-23 दुर्ग, दिनांक 20/03/2023

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी (अ से द) में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु प्रमुख अभियंता, लो.नि.वि. रायपुर द्वारा जारी भवन / सड़क SOR दिनांक 01.01.2015 तथा निविदा तिथि तक जारी संशोधन के अंतर्गत मेनुअल निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

निविदा प्रपत्र क्रय करने हेतु आवेदन प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि - 31/03/2023 अपराह्न 5.30 बजे तक

निविदा प्रपत्र जारी करने की अंतिम तिथि - 03/04/2023 अपराह्न 5.30 बजे तक

ठेकेदारों द्वारा प्रस्तुत निविदाएं प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि - 10/04/2023 अपराह्न 5.30 बजे तक

निविदा खोलने की तिथि - 11/04/2023 पूर्वाह्न 11.30 बजे तक

एनआईटी क्र. निविदा क्र.	कार्य का नाम NoOfCalls	कार्य की अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)
1	2	3
34 T0205	Plantation work in Devider of Durg Utai Patan Road in Km. 28 to 34= 7-00 Km. (1st Call)	19.94
34 T0206	Plantation work in Devider of Durg Utai Patan Road in Km. 35, 36, 44 to 48 = 7-00 Km. (1st Call)	19.94

□ General Condition □ Plant Condition ■ Special Condition

नोट - निविदा संबंधी निम्न शर्तें आवश्यक होगी।

1. इंदिरा गांधी कृषि विश्व विद्यालय रायपुर द्वारा 5 वर्षों का पौधों का गुणवत्ता प्रमाण-पत्र / फल-फूल एवं उद्यानिकी पौधों का गुणवत्ता प्रमाण-पत्र।

2. पूर्व में किये गये दो कार्यों का ए-4 सार्जेंट में 10 फोटो कार्यपालन अभियंता और छत्तीसगढ़ उपसंचालक उद्यानिकी विभाग से गार्डन कार्य का प्रमाणित प्रति प्रस्तुत करना होगा।

3. छत्तीसगढ़ उद्यानिकी विभाग जिला कार्यालय से गार्डन कार्य का 15 वर्षों का अनुभव प्रमाण पत्र प्रस्तुत करना होगा।

4. नगर पालिक निगम दुर्ग द्वारा प्राप्त गोमारा लायसेंस की प्रति संलग्न किया जावे, नर्सरी कार्य दर्ज होना अनिवार्य एवं स्वयं की नर्सरी अनुविभागीय अधिकारी से सत्यापन प्रमाण पत्र आवेदन के साथ प्रस्तुत किया जावे।

5. अन्य निविदा संबंधी शर्तें विभागीय वेबसाइट www.cg.nic.in/pwdraipur में Live Tender के अंतर्गत निविदा प्रपत्र में उपलब्ध है। एवं अन्य निविदा संबंधी शर्तें संभाग कार्यालय में अवलोकन किया जा सकता है।

कार्यालय अभियंता
लोक निर्माण विभाग दुर्ग संभाग दुर्ग

G- 99512/3

‘Hike capital budget of Army’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Faced by two hostile neighbours namely China and Pakistan and the ongoing tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, a Parliament Standing Committee on Defence report has called for a hike in capital Budget of the Army. It will enable it to enhance deterrent capabilities to meet any challenge, the report noted.

The committee appreciated the efforts made by the Defence Ministry towards the indigenisation of military platforms and hoped that the country would see "100 per cent contract value" going to Indian



vendors in the years ahead. The report was tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

Referring to the challenges before the Army, the parliamentary standing committee cited proxy wars, in an apparent reference to Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

The committee was of the view that funds slated for modernisation of the armed forces should always be incremental. "The committee also desired that there should be a separate allocation for committed liabilities and new schemes, under the modernisation/capital budget," it said.

"Our expenditure should be in proportion to the increase in defence spending of our neighbours. Therefore, the committee recommended that the capital budget of the Army should be increased to have a deterrent capacity to ward off at least two hostile neighbours," it said, in an indirect reference to Pakistan and China.

The committee noted that the capital outlay for the Navy for 2023-24 was projected at Rs 52,804.75 crore. "Against this projection, the committee found that this year's allocation is pragmatic and supportive for the Navy as the ministry actually allocated the same amount as projected, although, this projection is Rs 14,818.21 crore

less than the projection it made in the year 2022-23," it said.

"This also indicates that the requirements of the Navy for the new scheme have decreased, and gone down which may affect its modernisation drive. The committee recommended to be apprised of the reasons for the lower projection in comparison to last year," the panel said.

The committee recommended that from next year onwards a separate statement of the net budget be provided after taking into account the inflation, noting that it is a recurring and unavoidable phenomenon in all aspects of economic theory which applies to the Navy also.

‘Sensationalist lies’: India’s High Commissioner to UK on Punjab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/LONDON

Terming the reports on the situation in Punjab as "sensationalist lies," Indian High Commissioner to London Vikram Doraiswami said on Wednesday the situation is normal in the State and visitors including from the UK are safe.

He made these observations in the backdrop of ongoing operation in India to nab Amritpal Singh and Waris Punjab De.

While summarizing the situation in Punjab, the envoy



said in London "there is no truth to sensationalist lies being circulated on social media. The Indian High Commissioner was talking about the law enforcement action against Waris Punjab De.

"The situation for travel is normal and visitors including

from the UK are safe.

"Let me assure all our friends here in the UK, especially brothers and sisters with relatives in Punjab that there is no truth to sensationalist lies being circulated on social media," Doraiswami said in a video address released by the Indian High Commission in London.

It was reported on Saturday that mobile Internet services have been suspended in several districts of Punjab, state police said after launching an operation to arrest the chief of suspected pro-Khalistan outfit 'Waris Punjab De', Amritpal Singh and his aides.

India likely to be severely hit by water scarcity by 2050: UN report

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Come 2050 and India is expected to be the most severely water-hit nation due to scarcity of the precious item with a flagship UN report warning that overall the global urban population facing water scarcity is projected to increase from 933 million in 2016 to 1.7-2.4 billion people within the next 27 years.

The flagship UN report 'United Nations World Water Development Report 2023: partnerships and cooperation for water', released Tuesday ahead of the UN 2023 Water Conference, said that around 80% of people living under water stress lived in Asia; in particular, northeast China, as well as India and Pakistan.

"The global urban population facing water scarcity is projected to increase from 933 million (one third of global urban population) in 2016 to 1.7-2.4 billion people (one third to nearly half of global urban population) in 2050, with India projected to be the most severely affected," the report said, citing data.

No doubt, the observations of the report hold importance for India which is home to 18 percent of the world's population, but has only 4 percent of its water resources. The UN report comes a month after the government's policy think tank, the NITI Aayog had pointed out that India's depen-



dence on an increasingly erratic monsoon for its water requirements is a challenge. Climate change is likely to exacerbate this pressure on water resources, even as the frequency and intensity of floods and droughts in the country increases.

Yet another report by the United Nations Institute for Water, Environment and Health in January 2023 had estimated that India's 3,700 large dams will have lost on average 26 per cent of their initial total storage by 2050.

Against such a bleak scenario, experts have called for setting up strong mechanisms to prevent the global water crisis from spiralling out of control.

"There is an urgent need to establish strong international mechanisms to prevent the global water crisis from spiralling out of control," said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay. "Water is our common future, and it is essential to act together to share it equitably and manage it sustainably."

Globally, two billion peo-

ple do not have safe drinking water and 3.6 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation, the report found with Richard Connor, the report's editor-in-chief pointing out that "uncertainties are increasing".

"If we don't address it, there definitely will be a global crisis," he said, pointing to rising scarcity that reflects reduced availability and increased demand, from urban and industrial growth to agriculture, which alone consumes 70 per cent of the world's supply.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in the report that "Water is the lifeblood of humanity.

It is vital for survival itself and supports the health, resilience, development and prosperity of people and planet alike."

Guterres voiced concern that humanity is blindly travelling a dangerous path. "Vampiric overconsumption and overdevelopment, unsustainable water use, pollution and unchecked global warming are draining humanity's lifeblood, drop by drop."

Won't go back on JPC demand: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday claimed that the Government wants the party to take back its demand for a JPC on the Adani issue and in return it would drop the call for an apology over Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the UK, asserting there was no question of any such compromise.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said efforts are being made since the last few days that a "formula" or middle path is found with both the



Opposition and the Government relenting.

"This is unacceptable to us, these two things are completely unconnected. One is a reality. The questions we are asking are fundamental questions, this has happened. The BJP's demand of apology is just baseless, it is on false allegations. So

Railways restores fare of AC 3-tier economy class travel in trains

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Railways on Wednesday issued an order to restore the fare for AC 3-tier economy class travel which had been withdrawn in November last year when it was merged with AC 3-tier.

Despite the restoration in price, Railways will continue offering linen to passengers, the order indicated.

The present order has withdrawn an earlier circular in which the fare for AC 3-tier economy class ticket had been made equal to the fare of an AC 3-tier ticket. The reason for the merger was stated to be the cost of linen which was initially not provided in the economy air conditioned class. According to the order, passengers who have



booked tickets online and over the counter will be given a refund of the extra amount for the pre-booked tickets.

The railways, while introducing the 3E as a class in September 2021, had announced that fares in these newly-introduced coaches will be 6-8 per cent less than normal AC 3 coaches, pitching the class of travel as the "best and cheapest AC travel service" in the world.

Before the November 2022 order, passengers could book AC 3 economy tickets under a separate category of "3E" in specific trains where railways offered such seats.

Officials said, currently there are 463 AC 3 Economy coaches compared to 11,277 normal AC 3 coaches.

AC 3 economy coaches have better facilities for passengers than normal AC 3 coaches, officials said.

CAG extending its outreach to include political executives to highlight audit concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India Girish Chandra Murmu on Wednesday said the audit watchdog outreach is now being extended to include political executives to highlight audit concerns.

"The intention is to build a shared understanding of the most pressing concerns in governance and find possible solutions," Murmu said during an orientation programmes with the Officer Trainees of the Indian Information Service (IIS) belonging to three batches of 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Noticing that most of the

officers are from engineering background, she said technical skills should be used to handle the challenges of future media, especially with emerging self-help AI tools such as ChatGPT. He said that the trainee IIS officers should gear up to meet the challenges posed by Big Data and Artificial Intelligence.

Murmu said the media is a very powerful tool that adds value to society. "In the Indian context, it has helped to disseminate the government's plans and initiatives. As a probationer, you have to understand the perspective and vision of your department, and it should improve country's image," he said.

Army introduces millets in soldiers' ration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With a view to promote consumption of millets in light of the United Nations (UN) declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets, the Indian Army has introduced millets flour in the rations of soldiers. Special emphasis is on providing healthy millet based food and snacks to troops guarding the China front or the Northern Border.

This landmark decision will ensure troops are supplied with native and traditional grains after over half a century, when these were discontinued in favour of wheat atta, officials said here on Wednesday.

Traditional millet foods with proven health benefits and suited to our geographical and climatic conditions would be a vital step in mitigating life style diseases and enhancing satisfaction and morale of the troops. Millets would now form an integral part of the daily meal for all ranks, they said.

Government sanction has been sought to procure millets flour not exceeding 25 percent of the authorised entitlement of Cereals (Rice and Wheat Atta), in rations for troops com-



mencing from the year 2023-24 onwards. Procurement and issue will be based on option exercised and quantity demanded.

Three popular varieties of millets flour including Bajra, Jowar and Ragi will be issued to troops duly considering preference. Millets have the benefit of being a good source of proteins, micro-nutrients and phyto-chemicals thus boosting the nutritional profile of soldier's diet.

In addition, advisories have been issued for Millets to be extensively used in organised functions, Barakhanas, canteens and in home cooking. Centralised training of chefs is being undertaken to prepare wholesome, tasty and nutritious millet dishes. Special emphasis for introducing value added millet items and snacks to troops deployed along Northern borders have been given.

Def Min justifies barring married individuals from applying for JAG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry on Wednesday justified in Delhi High Court on the policy barring married individuals from applying for Judge Advocate General (JAG), the legal officer in the army, and said considering the "effects of marriage", the bar is a "reasonable restriction placed in public interest and the interest of national security". In an additional affidavit filed in response to a petition chal-



lenging the embargo, Defence Ministry said the condition of being unmarried for grant of commission to cadets aged 21-27 years is "restricted only for the period of recruitment and pre-commissioned training" which involves a high amount of stress and rigours of military

training and the restriction on marriage before successful commission is in the interest of the candidates as well as organisation.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sachin Datta granted time to petitioner Kush Kalra to file his response to the Centre's stand. Last year, the high court had asked the Centre to explain the reason behind the policy on an affidavit while remarking that the policy barring married individuals from applying for the

post "does not make any sense".

The Centre, in its earlier affidavit filed in March 2019, said that right to marry cannot be a right to life under the Constitution and there was no discrimination on the basis of marital status of the candidates. The authorities have sought dismissal of the PIL saying the Constitution does not stipulate right to marry as a fundamental right.

In the latest affidavit, the Centre submitted that in the Indian Army, both males and females are treated equally and

all army personnel have similar qualification requirements for basic military training and in all types of entries, "unmarried clause" is common. It explained that once the unmarried cadets complete their training and are granted commission, there is no bar on marriage or its "natural consequences" like pregnancy and several service benefits are also given, but during conduct of basic military training that lasts for minimum one year, such provisions are not possible.

SC cautions lower courts for not applying mind in bail matters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has cautioned the lower courts for not applying mind and remanding the accused persons into the custody of the probe agency the moment they appear before them in response to the summons. The apex court noted that the appellants fear arrest not at the behest of the CBI but at the behest of the trial court. It ordered that the appellants be released on bail in the event of their arrest subject to terms and conditions as may be imposed by the special court, including the condition for the surrender of the passport, if any.

The top court said this while hearing the appeals of four accused challenging Allahabad High Court orders that rejected their pleas for pre-arrest bail in a case probed by the CBI. "Suffice for the present to note that it is not the CBI which is seeking their custody, but the appellants apprehend that they may be remand-



ed to custody by the trial court and this is why they seek protection. We must keep this in mind while deciding the fate of these appeals," it said.

"This is for the reason that in some parts of the country, there seems to be a practice followed by courts to remand the accused to custody, the moment they appear in response to the summoning order. The correctness of such a practice has to be tested in an appropriate case," a bench of Justices V Ramasubramanian and Pankaj Mithal said in its verdict delivered on March 20. The case was related to a bank loan default case.

NPG under PMGatiShakti examines, recommends 6 infra projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Network Planning Group (NPG) under PM GatiShakti at its 45th session examined and recommended six Infrastructure projects including that from Railways and Road Transport Highways Ministry.

These projects will be developed in tandem with the PM GatiShakti Principles using the integrated and holistic approach. These projects will also provide multimodal connectivity, seamless movement of goods and passengers as well as increase logistics efficiency across the country.

A project by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy was also examined by the NPG. A one of its kind project for the Inter-State Transmission System for Renewable Energy Projects in Ladakh is a big step towards achieving the Government of India's target of 500 GW capacity from non-fossil fuels by the year 2030.

The Ministry of Railways proposed a project for city logistics. The project was for



Kanpur Anwarganj - Mandhana elevated railway track. It is a City specific project as it will increase line capacity utilization for railways and improve city logistics in the region. The project is located in the heart of Kanpur city wherein 16 Level Crossing (LC) are located in 16 Km stretch with GT road running parallel to this track.

On both sides of the railway track there are important components such as universities, medical college, cardiology centre, cancer centre, good shed, consumption centres, warehouses, agricultural components, among others.

Eventually, it leads to traffic jams and an increase in waiting time of trains, and vehicles. After the construction of this track rail logistics will improve by 4.2 MTPA. Further,

a project by the Ministry of Railways for construction of Rail Bridge across river Ganga in connection with the new railway line connecting Vikramshila - Kataraah railway station on East central railway in Bihar State was examined by the NPG. The project is about 40 KM from Bhagalpur alongside a stream on river Ganges.

The NPG examined two projects by the Ministry of Roads, Transport and Highways pertaining to construction of 4 Lane to Bijni to Mandi section including construction of twin tube tunnels of Pathankot - Mandi.

The second project proposed by MoRTH was the construction of a 4 Lane of Belgum - Hungsund - Raichur, as a part of Panaji - Hyderabad Economic Corridor.



President Droupadi Murmu confers Padma Shri on social worker Hiraibaiben Ibrahimibhai Lobi from Gujarat during Padma Awards 2023 ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday (PTI Photo)

Modi to visit Varanasi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Varanasi on March 24 and inaugurate and lay a number of projects in his home constituency and address the 'One World TB Summit at Rudrakash Convention Centre.

Prime Minister will dedicate and lay the foundation stone of various projects worth more than Rs. 1780 crores at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University ground, according to the Prime Minister's office.

On the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day, the Prime Minister will address the One World TB Summit.

The summit is being organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Stop TB Partnership. Founded in 2001, the Stop TB Partnership is a United Nations hosted organisation that amplifies the voice



es of the people, communities, and countries affected by TB.

He will launch various initiatives including the TB-Mukt Panchayat initiative; official pan-India rollout of a shorter TB Preventive Treatment , Family-centric care model for TB and release of India's Annual TB Report 2023. Prime Minister will also award select States and UTs and Districts for their progress towards ending Tuberculosis.

NIA arrests Khurram in NGO terror funding case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested the Programme Coordinator of Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS) in connection with the NGO Terror Funding Case.

Following the first arrest made in this case, the NIA arrested Khurram Parvez, the Programme Coordinator of JKCCS and Chairperson of Philippines-based NGO Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the NIA said in a statement.

"Investigations revealed that Khurram Parvez has been collecting funds under the garb of fighting for Human Rights, from various international entities/ persons based abroad and channelizing those funds for funding terror activities in the Kashmir valley," the agency said.

He, along with his associates, were also propagating a secessionist agenda through his various NGOs. Khurram Parvez has already been chargesheeted in another NIA case. He was formally arrested upon production in this case on Wednesday, it said. The case relates to the terror funding of



proscribed terrorist organisations, such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, by certain NGOs, Trusts and societies based in the Valley. Investigations have revealed that Khurram Parvez and his associates raised funds to support individuals who were involved in pelting stones at security forces personnel and also motivated others to extend similar support, it said.

These trusts and societies, which have been under investigation, have utilised the funds raised by them to publish anti-national and incriminating materials to cause hatred and disaffection towards Government of India, it added.

NIA court sentences Bodo militant to life imprisonment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has secured conviction for life and rigorous imprisonment against a Bodo militant in the 2014 Assam indiscriminate firing case.

The NIA Special Court, Guwahati, on Tuesday sentenced Bodo militant Rabi Basumatary alias Rongjabaja alias Rabi to life imprisonment, along with rigorous imprisonment for 10 years, in various cases of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a 2014 case of indiscriminate firing on villagers in Assam, the NIA said in a statement here on Wednesday.

Rabi, who was convicted by the court on March 13, 2023, has been sentenced to life imprisonment in two cases and rigorous imprisonment in two others.

He has been convicted under IPC sections relating to murder, attempt to murder and common intention besides relevant provisions of the UAPA.

He has also been fined in all the cases, and will have to undergo additional simple imprisonment in case of failure to pay the same. All the substantive sentences will run concurrently, the agency said.



Seven villagers were killed and two grievously injured in the case, in which Rabi was arrested in September 2016 and chargesheeted by NIA in March 2017 through the first supplementary chargesheet.

Investigation in the case had revealed that Rabi Basumatary alias B Rongjabaja was a member of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), an armed separatist outfit fighting to obtain a sovereign Boroland for the Bodo people.

On May 1, 2014, Rabi, along with six other NDFB cadres, had entered Balapra village under Gossaigaon police station area of Kokrajhar district of Assam, where they opened indiscriminate fire on the villagers on instructions from top NDFB leadership headed by G Bidai and Songbijit. The Special NIA Court had subsequently registered the case as Special Case 05/2015.

BJP seeks CBI probe into Kerala ‘waste mgmt scam’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of a major fire in the waste dump in Cochi in Kerala on March 2 , the BJP on Wednesday claimed a major 'waste management scam by the son-in-laws of the UDF-LDF Government' in the state and demanded an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the alleged corruption. The BJP accused the Kerala Government of "not following rules" spelt-out by the 'Swachata abhiyan' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference here , the BJP-in-charge of Kerala and former environment minister Prakash Javadekar said While the solid management rules were notified by the Centre in 2016, the Kerala Government never followed them, leading to a complete "mismanagement" of waste all over the state, he said.

He said the firm chosen for the waste management in Kochi received a Rs 54 crore-contract and it in turn subcontracted the

task to other firms for over Rs 22 crore. "Rs 32 crore went straight into its pocket," the BJP leader claimed.

"Goa and Indore have been among the best examples of managing waste and turning it into wealth. But the Kerala government never tried to do anything in this regard," he said. Javadekar said since Kerala government is not allow permission for the CBI probe, the High court may order such a probe into the alleged scam.

The BJP leader said that corruption involving kin of the Left and Congress functionaries in Kerala led to the absence of a waste-management plan and a consequent fire at a land-fill in Kochi which among damages caused innumerable health problems to the Cochin inhabitants, he said.

The former union minister alleged involvement of son-in-law of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan besides sons-in-law of a former Left Democratic Front (LDF) and a Congress leader in the "monumental" corruption

which caused the man-made disaster recently. While the Left is in power in Kerala, the Congress is the main opposition party. Both are now together in looting the state, Javadekar alleged.

"There are three sons-in-law, two companies and a big scam. The LDF and the UDF have come together in looting Kerala," he said, claiming that the companies assigned to deal with waste management in the city are linked to the kin of politicians.

Kerala BJP leaders, including Union minister V Muraliedharan and former Union minister K J Alphons, were present at the press conference. "I am directly saying that the chief minister has taken interest," Javadekar said.

BJP has been electorally focusing on Kerala and has recently received support from one of the Bishops in the state. The Prime Minister has recently hoped that the BJP may come to power in Kerala in coalition with others. .

Will challenge hegemony of BJP in 2024 LS polls: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday that his party would challenge the hegemony of the ruling BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. He also said that the SP would contest all the 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Yadav also hit out at the BJP-led state government and alleged that it was against farmers. He said other political parties should decide their respective roles ahead of the general elections next year. He alleged that the BJP government was selectively targeting the leaders of the Samajwadi Party and its associates.

"Azam Khan is being victimised by the Yogi Adityanath government as he is a senior leader of the Samajwadi Party," Yadav said while addressing mediapersons here on Wednesday.

"The SP will lead UP's opposition alliance in the Lok Sabha elections," said Yadav, who returned to Lucknow after attending the two-day national executive meeting of the party in Kolkata.

He said that the SP would play a major role in the opposition alliance in UP. "In the upcoming assembly elections in various states, the SP will field candidates where it has a



presence. The party will contest the assembly elections with alliance partners in those states. The SP chief had recently visited Telangana to participate in the Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi (BRS) rally organised by K Chandrashekhkar Rao. He also visited Tamil Nadu to participate in MK Stalin's birthday programme.

Alleging that the BJP-led government in UP was against farmers, he said the arrears of farmers have not been cleared so far. Yadav also said that the state government should give compensation to farmers who have faced losses due to damage to their crops in the recent unseasonal rains and hailstorm.

SP supremo takes jibe at Tourism Min

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday took a jibe at UP Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh, saying the latter played a key role in the victory of Dimple Yadav in the bypoll to Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat in November last year.

"Jaiveer Singh is the tourism minister. He is unpredictable and as a tourist, he can stray in any direction," Yadav said. Jaiveer Singh was elected to the UP assembly from Mainpuri Sadar, a segment of the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat.

Mainpuri is the stronghold of the Samajwadi Party and its founder Mulayam Singh Yadav held this seat.

Retaliating to the jibe, Jaiveer Singh said: "People of Uttar Pradesh have rejected the Samajwadi Party many times since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. In fact, people of UP have sent Akhilesh Yadav on permanent tourism to political oblivion."

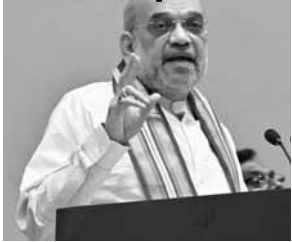
Shah opens Maa Sharda temple virtually

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The precincts of a newly constructed Maa Sharda Devi Temple, located close to the line of control in Tithwal village of North Kashmir district of Kupwara, came alive on Wednesday as large number of devotees assembled here for the first time to worship the idol, made from panch dhatu(five metals).

The 3.5 feet-tall idol of Goddess Sri Sharadamba, was donated by the Sringeri Sharada mutt for installation at the newly-constructed Sharda Temple.

The temple, constructed on a piece of land provided by the local villagers in the area, was formally inaugurated by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah through video conferencing. Several dignitaries including Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, were present on the occasion and became witness to the historic occasion. Several



guests including Ravindra Pandita , Founder Save Sharda Committee Kashmir, Kashmiri pandit scholars were given warm reception by the local villagers on their arrival in Tithwal.

Amit Shah began his address by wishing countrymen for the New Year. He said that today on occasion of New Year, the newly constructed temple of Maa Sharda has been opened for the devotees and this is an auspicious sign for devotees from all over India. He said inauguration of Maa Sharda's temple is beginning of a new era. He said that today's beginning will help in bringing back lost glory of this place and

with the blessing of Maa Sharda this place will remain the centre of worship and continue to awaken the consciousness of India for ages. "Sharda Peeth has been a historical centre of India's cultural, religious and educational heritage, like Kartarpur Corridor, Government under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will move forward to open Sharda Peeth for devotees."

The Union Home Minister said that the architecture and construction of this temple has been done according to mythological scriptures under the aegis of Sharda Peeth.

Shah said the idol of Sharda Maa, donated by Sringeri Math, and its installation here, the time period from 24 January till today was like a journey.

The reconstruction of Maa Sharda's temple in Kupwara is a necessary and important step in direction of discovery of Sharda-civilization and promotion of Sharda-script.

India home to spiritual ancestors of Koreans: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as the diplomatic relations between India and South Korea complete half-century, the spiritual ties between the two go back to centuries because India is not 'foreign' but 'home' to spiritual ancestors of the Koreans, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said at the felicitation ceremony of Jogye Sangh.

The function was held on the completion of the 43-day 'padyatra' of Buddhist pilgrimages by Jogye Sangh of South Korea on the completion of 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and South Korea.

About 108 Buddhist pilgrims from the Republic of Korea walked over 1,100 kms in over 43 days as part of the walking pilgrimage organised by Sangwol Society of South Korea.

Speaking on the occasion, Yogi said: "Lord Gautam Buddha had started his Dhamma Yatra from Sarnath by giving his first sermons. I congratulate you on completing your 43-day pilgrimage. The 'padyatra' is being organised to strengthen the relations between the two countries on the completion of half-century of the diplomatic relations between India and South Korea. When saints make efforts to deepen the relations,



its meaning becomes divine."

Lord Buddha's meditation tradition entered Korea through his disciple Huineng in China. "Shravasti, the origin of your meditation tradition Seon, is where your journey came to an end. In this sense, you have not come abroad but to the home of your spiritual ancestors," Yogi said.

The group of monks travelled on foot along the entire Buddhist circuit, including Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, to Kushinagar, the place of Mahaparinirvana.

Yogi said: "Both India and South Korea celebrate independence on August 15. India got the opportunity to chair the G20 summit in its 'Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal'. This year, the theme of G20 is 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'; it connects us with the spirit of India's "Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam."

"Buddha's preaching inspires the entire mankind to

embrace friendship, oneness, compassion, and humility. India is the centre of reverence and faith for the Buddhist society of the world," the CM added. He went on to say that many places associated with the life of Mahatma Buddha are in Uttar Pradesh.

"Lord Buddha had delivered his first sermon in Sarnath while in Shravasti, he spent most of his 'varshavaas', and Kushinagar is his place of 'Mahaparinirvana'," Yogi noted.

"Lucknow is surrounded by the aura of Lord Buddha from all sides. Shanti Upvan Buddha Vihar is in UP and so is the International Buddhist Research Institute. As the international airport has become operational in Kushinagar, the development of an airport in Shravasti is also underway on a war footing.

The state government is going to set up an agriculture and technology university named after Mahatma Buddha in Kushinagar itself. The relations between India and South Korea are scaling new heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The chief minister added that the mutual trade between India and South Korea is \$28 billion, in which India exports goods worth \$9 billion and imports worth \$19 billion from South Korea.

Mamata offers prayers at Shree Jagannath Temple

PTI ■ PURI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday offered prayers at the Shree Jagannath Temple here and offered a huge flag, which was tied atop the 12th-century shrine, seeking the welfare of all people. Banerjee, accompanied by senior government officials from her state and Odisha, entered the temple at 4 pm and had a dar-

shan of the sibling deities-Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath. "She offered prayers to the deities standing alone near the 'Bhitar Katha' (inner cordon). She is a devotee of Lord Jagannath," said Ramakrushna Dasmohapatra, her priest.

She witnessed 'arti' while standing near Bhitar Katha. She also went to 'Mukti Mandap' (seat of religious pundits) and sought the blessings of the

pundits there. Later. She also visited the temple of Maa Laxmi and Maa Bimala in the temple premises while making a round of it.

The West Bengal Chief Minister stood at the 'Pata Agana' (a corridor near the main temple) to witness the 'Bana Bandha' (tying of flag) ritual during which the flag atop the 65 m high temple is changed every day. "She offered a 14-haath flag to the Lord

praying for the wellbeing of all," the priest said. One haath is 1.5 feet. Local police in plain-clothes provided security to her and no one was allowed to go close to her.

The devotees were, however, allowed to enter temple and have 'darshan' of the deities when Banerjee was inside temple. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration presented a wooden idol of Lord Jagannath to her.



People buy dates near the Jama Masjid ahead of the start of the holy month of Ramzan in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI Photo

Ahead of polls, NCP chief calls meeting of Opposition leaders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid talks of opposition unity in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar has invited leaders of various opposition parties here on Thursday 23 to discuss issues of common interest and efficacy of EVMs.

Sources said the meeting will take place at 6 pm.

Pawar has held that in the interest of free and fair elections, electronic voting machines (EVMs) need to be accurate and any doubts over their efficacy must be addressed by the Chief Election Commissioner. Experts have said that any machine with a chip inside can be hacked and we cannot allow democracy to

be hijacked by unscrupulous elements. Therefore, in the interest of free and fair elections, we must sit together and listen to the views expressed by eminent IT professionals and cryptographers. Pawar said in his letter to the opposition leaders.

Leaders of several opposition parties are likely to attend the meeting keeping in view Pawar's stature. The meeting comes in the wake of several efforts being made to bring unity in opposition ranks to help take on the BJP together.

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and Telangana Chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao have made some efforts in this direction in the recent past.

Already engaged

A prominent US conservative academic says BJP is the most important foreign political party in the world

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh rarely figure in public discourse of Western countries. And when it does, it is generally for criticism. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nine years in office, and his Government's persistent emphasis on its Hindu core, seem to have changed that. Evidently, those who matter in government and decision- and opinion-making are shedding their blinkers to have a closer look at the Sangh Parivar. The blinkers, needless to say, were often manufactured at the facilities (academia, the mainstream media, *et al*) run by the Left-liberal establishment. But it looks like the important people in the West want to have a 360-degree view of the saffron family, especially the BJP. This is the reason that a prominent conservative academic, in an opinion piece in the prominent conservative newspaper *Wall Street Journal*, chose to state that the BJP "is, from the standpoint of American national interests, the most important foreign political party in the world. It may also be the least understood." The author Walter Russell Mead is "convinced that Americans and Westerners generally need to engage much more deeply with a complex and powerful movement [Hindutva]." It may be mentioned here that Mead is a well-known critic of China. Three years ago, he wrote an article with the self-explanatory headline, 'China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia,' in *WSJ*. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese Government was incensed; it even expelled three *WSJ* journalists.



Mead, who teaches at New York's Bard College, is quite bullish not just about India but also the BJP, which "is headed for a repeat victory in 2024." India is emerging both as a leading economic power and, along with Japan, as the linchpin of American strategy in the Indo-Pacific, he wrote. Therefore, for the foreseeable future the BJP will be calling the shots in a country without whose help American efforts to balance rising Chinese power are likely to fall short. Mead is not exactly a cheerleader of the BJP. He talked about the anti-Government journalists who "can face harassment and worse." He also talks about "anti-conversion laws as well as occasional outbursts of mob violence." Yet, he doesn't find the BJP beyond the pale, for the party may reject many ideas and priorities of Western liberalism, "*it embraces key features of modernity*" (emphasis added). Further, he is appreciative of the saffron party which "combines a basically pro-market economic stance with populist rhetoric and traditionalist values." This is also a trait that American conservatives generally admire. The *WSJ* article should not be seen as just an academic's exuberance; the West's deeper engagement with Modi's India was written all over Air India's 70-billion deal to buy 470 aircraft. This could not have been possible without the consent of the big boys and girls of global finance — and of politics. Indo-Western engagement has already begun.



Legal remedies for crimes against women

Underreporting of crimes against women makes it difficult to assess the correct prevalence of such crimes and provide relief

Domestic violence and crimes against women have been a persistent problem in many countries, including India. Despite various initiatives and measures taken by governments and civil society organizations, these issues continue to affect women in our society. The victims of such crimes often find themselves in a vulnerable position, not aware of their legal rights and remedies.

Domestic violence is defined as any behaviour that is designed to control or dominate an intimate partner, including physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, and economic abuse. It is a serious violation of human rights and can have devastating consequences for the victim's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

One of the primary reasons for the persistence of these issues is the patriarchal nature of Indian society. Women are often viewed as inferior to men and are expected to conform to societal norms and expectations. This mindset has led to the normalization of violence against women and the belief



that women are responsible for their own safety.

One of the most effective legal remedies for victims of domestic violence is obtaining a restraining order or protection order. A restraining order is a court order that prohibits the abuser from contacting or coming near the victim or their children. The order can be obtained by filing a petition in court and providing evidence of abuse. Once the order is issued, the abuser can be arrested and charged with a criminal offence if they violate the order.

Another significant legal remedy for victims of domestic violence is obtaining a divorce or separation. In many cases, the victim may need to obtain a restraining order before filing for divorce or separation to protect them-

selves and their children from further harm. Divorce or separation can provide victims with the legal right to seek financial support and custody of their children. The divorce may also provide for the division of property and assets acquired during the marriage.

One big reason for the persistence of these issues is the under-reporting of crimes against women. Many women are hesitant to report such crimes due to fear of retaliation, social stigma, and lack of trust in the justice system. This under-reporting not only makes it difficult for victims to seek legal remedies but also makes it challenging for authorities to tackle these issues effectively. Crimes against women such as rape, sexual harassment, and trafficking constitute serious offences that can have long-lasting consequences for the victim. Victims of these crimes can seek legal remedies to hold the perpetrator accountable and obtain compensation for the harm they have suffered. It is not that we do not have laws though their implementation leaves much to be desired. The

number of crimes identified under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for instance, Rape (sec.376 IPC), Kidnapping & abduction (sec.363 – 373 IPC), Dowry Deaths (sec.302/304-B of IPC), torture, both mental and physical (sec.498-A of IPC), Molestation (sec.354 of IPC), Sexual harassment (sec.509 of IPC) (referred to in the past as Eve-teasing), Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and last but not the least, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Unfortunately, the actual number of such crime is never known as women shy away from reporting it.

Victims can also seek legal remedies through civil lawsuits, which can provide compensation for the harm they have suffered, including medical expenses, lost income, and emotional distress. It is imperative for women to be aware of their constitutional rights and seek help from law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations.

(The writer is an advocate in the Delhi High court)



HITESH BAISLA

By one of the most decorated regiments of the Indian Army due to its fiery traditions. 1st Battalion of the Sikh Regiment, later the 4th Mechanised Regiment, is considered the Commonwealth's most decorated battalion with 245 pre-independence and 82 post-independence gallantry awards. Martial Sikhs need no certificate of patriotism. Those who seek to besmirch its fine history written in blood and sacrifice, don't behave or represent the community's unflinching standards and ethos for eons!

Sikhs may be about 1.7% of the national population but they are almost 20% of the recipients of the highest gallantry award i.e., Param Vir Chakra (with the National Emblem of India in the centre, surrounded by four copies of the Vajra). These men willingly put themselves in the line of fire to defend the Tiranga. They are Lance Naik Karam Singh, Subedar Joginder Singh, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon and Hony Capt Major Bana Singh.

Beyond soldering, farming is the mainstay of the Sikh community and they have had many socio-economic concerns with various dispensations since independence (like any region or ethnicity). Reckless politics by earlier

Sikhs hold Tiranga in high esteem

Reckless politics by earlier governments created conditions that bred an insurgency movement but Sikhs have always saluted the Tiranga

Healthy politics is all about disagreements (irrespective of the fact that every ruling dispensation would suggest otherwise), and so it should always be. Dissent and disagreement with a government and its perceived policies is not the same as rebelling against the nation. History is instructive that often dissent against the government can be the highest form of patriotism e.g., dissent against Emergency in 1975. However, something is sacrosanct and beyond the realm of either political usurpation or conversely destruction. These are the foundational 'Ideas of India' as enshrined in the holy book of the land i.e., the Constitution and the defined symbols within, the most sacred of them being the national flag, Tiranga or Tricolour.

Recent images of a Khalistani supporter attempting to pull down the Tiranga at the Indian High Commission in London, were simply deplorable beyond words. The shameful act militated against the inert sense of patriotism that ought to beset all Indians, irrespective of their partisan loyalties, personal identities, and disaffections. That it came from a member of a community that has given more blood and lives to protect the integrity, sovereignty, and dignity of India since time immemorial, made it even more hurtful and unbelievable.

Contrast this recent image with that of the valourous Sikh warriors (8 Sikh Regiment - the irrepressible 'Chardhikala' battalion) who battled their way to the top of Tiger Hill in the Kargil War. These fierce Khalsa warriors with unmatched josh and daredevilry reached atop the Tiger Hill and flew the Tiranga – the price to pay for flying that Tiranga was one officer, four junior commissioned officers and 30 jawans of 8 Sikh who went down fighting and charging with a war cry that sent shivers down the spine of the enemies, 'Bole So Nihal Sat Sri Akal'! To defend their commitment to the flag, their forefathers had refused to surrender and came down fighting to the last man in earlier battles like Saragarhi. There is no surprise the latter day Sikh Regiment (along with Sikh Light Infantry) has continued to



be one of the most decorated regiments of the Indian Army due to its fiery traditions. 1st Battalion of the Sikh Regiment, later the 4th Mechanised Regiment, is considered the Commonwealth's most decorated battalion with 245 pre-independence and 82 post-independence gallantry awards. Martial Sikhs need no certificate of patriotism. Those who seek to besmirch its fine history written in blood and sacrifice, don't behave or represent the community's unflinching standards and ethos for eons!

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RECENT IMAGES OF A KHALISTANI SUPPORTER ATTEMPTING TO PULL DOWN THE TIRANGA AT THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON WERE SIMPLY DEPLORABLE BEYOND WORDS

governments created conditions that bred an insurgency movement, but that didn't imply that every Sikh who had a genuine grievance against the government wanted to secede or become a Khalistani (as is instinctively and thoughtlessly attributed today). At the height of militancy in 1987, then Naib Subedar Bana Singh of 8th JAKLI had led an impossible assault and wrested control of an almost impregnable peak in Siachen Glacier. Such is the cloth from which the Sikh community is cut – societal and political differences aside, a nation first and foremost, always!

Like many proud Veterans who had guarded the nation with their lives and were later participating in the Farmers Protest a few years back, little did they know that they would be abused as Khalistanis, 'anti-nationals' by people who would never come remotely close to making the sacrifices that these men and women had made, and even by some among them, who were misguided and truly condemnable. Larger citizenry did not differentiate (unlike in the 80's) and the dispensation encouraged the wrongful narrative that a Khalistani flag had replaced the Tiranga at Red Fort – it hadn't

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Parliament logjam continues



Kingdom.

This resulted in a controversy that stalled the House of Representatives. Legislators from the ruling regime want to make Mr Gandhi come to the House and apologize. Contrarily, the Opposition leaders are adamant on their demand for a probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). Ironically, these gratuitous adjournments are commonplace in all regimes and have adverse bearing on the precious time of the Members of the Houses as well as on the taxpayers' hard-earned money. Reverse columnist's observation that in a matured over-year democracy like India, what matters most is the smooth functioning of the Parliament. For that to happen, some pragmatic and corrective measures are needed.

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

threatening our food chain. The frequency, timing and quality of precipitation has shifted. The rains are heavy and short-lived. In the past, sudden temperature rises prior to time were considered harmful to wheat crops. Last year, despite a full harvest, wheat grain remained low because of an early increase in temperature. Therefore, productivity declined, and the farmer suffered.

Rain is expected to fall for a few more days because of western disturbances. In such a situation, where immediate relief is required for farmers, the central and state governments must promote advancing research and research for crops. This will assist farmers in preventing the damage caused by the effects of global warming.

This crisis will turn off the next generation of farmers. A country with a population of 140 million may face a food crisis in the coming decades. For that, far-reaching policies must be implemented right away.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

EXCESSIVE SALT IS DANGEROUS

Sir — It is very imperative for all of us to

consume salt in food according to taste and need. Without salt, food is tasteless and bland. Nevertheless, excessive salt consumption causes death all over the world. Recently a report from the World Health Organization has explained why salt is proving fatal. According to this WHO report, every year around 20 lakh people around the world die because of eating too much salt. At present the average use of salt per person in the world is 10.8 grams. While the WHO has set a maximum limit of 5 grams per person's consumption of salt.

That means we are consuming double the amount of salt. These figures are proof that it is healthy to take salt in limited quantities, not according to taste. If we all reduce the amount of salt, the number of deaths due to heart diseases worldwide every year can be brought down. WHO estimates that consuming less salt can save the lives of 22 lakh people by 2025 and about 70 lakh lives can be saved by 2030.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

ROBOTIC AUTOMATION IS THE FUTURE

It will be the main driver of growth in the e-commerce



SANGEET KUMAR

The face of robotics is quickly changing due to new technologies like edge computing, cloud computing, AI and machine learning. Every industry is experiencing a change as a result of the use of robots. For example, robots are used in restaurants to prepare food, in manufacturing to perform tasks like picking and placing, pelletizing, and material movement. They are also used in supply chains and warehouses to perform every conceivable task from sorting to inventory management until the product is ready for delivery.

Industries all over the world have been integrating robotics and automation into their operations because of the introduction of the latest cutting-edge technologies to increase corporate productivity, efficiency, and marketability. The e-commerce sector has grown exponentially during the last two to three years. According to Statista, global retail e-commerce sales were over 5.2 trillion dollars in 2021 and are projected to increase to 8.1 trillion dollars by 2026.

The disruption of the supply chain caused by the rise in e-commerce sales has driven businesses to find more innovative ways to meet customer demand for speedy delivery.

Increased demand for e-commerce sales in turn drives up the need for faster delivery, packing, shipping, inventory management, and supply chain management. Advanced and automated warehouses can help meet this demand. The need for automated warehouses has increased significantly in the last couple of years. The global market for warehouse automation systems, which was estimated to be worth \$21.7 billion in 2021, is expected to grow to \$93 billion by 2031, according to Allied Market Research.



In warehouses, robots have a crucial job to do. The employment of robots in warehouses helps with time-consuming and arduous chores like picking stuff up off the floor or sorting products by size, shape, or colour. Most often used in warehouses are piece-picking robots, automated guided vehicles (AGVs), collaborative robots, sorting and shuttle robots.

Inventory management plays an extremely important role in warehouse management. Automated storage and retrieval systems (AS/RS) are most frequently used for inventory control and on-demand product storage and retrieval. They are used to expedite material handling and order fulfilment procedures.

Automated robotics systems with AI capabilities aid companies in boosting the effectiveness and speed of supply chain operations. These AI-enabled systems have grown considerably as a result of technological breakthroughs; they now learn from both existing systems and the surrounding system. Robotic systems are becoming quicker, better, and more adaptable thanks to AI and machine learning, which is beneficial for e-commerce fulfilment operations.

Increased demand for online shopping and shifting customer expectations for quicker deliveries are the main causes of the rise in demand for warehouse automation. Emerging technologies like 5G, AI, ML, edge computing, and sophisticated robots will help the e-commerce sector develop at a phenomenal rate in the years to come..

{The writer is cofounder and CEO of Addverb Technologies}

Moral compass is critical for democracy



JS RAJPUT

Elected representatives must ensure proper and well-informed debates and discussions in Parliament and Assemblies



The manner the Indian Parliament conducted itself in the second half of the Budget session in March 2023 inflicts considerable disquiet amongst all those who revere it as a pious institution that could transform the lives of every Indian and give dignity and better life to those who deserve support and handholding because of exclusion and sufferings inflicted for generations due to historical, social and cultural constraints.

Could such an assembly of responsible people afford to waste their time for weeks together? They all are—officially—honourable individuals who are guardians of the Constitution; they are policymakers and lawmakers of the nation. The global image of India is changing fast; it is being viewed with considerable interest; there are high hopes in the international community. The last decade has convinced the powers that be that India is emerging as a self-confident nation; it is no more cowed down by its belligerent neighbours. India is no more willing to suffer ‘thousand cuts’ and terrorist attacks. The new-found sense of national pride could be seen in practically every home and hearth in India, in its farms and fields, across the high-end research labs bringing out innovations in areas, extending from artificial intelligence to space research.

India has enhanced its pace of change with full confidence and self-assurance. It has to make course corrections as well and must recall the Mahatma. ‘The Lonely Pilgrim (Gandhiji’s Noakhali pilgrimage)’, a compilation by Manubahan, contains the essence of how Gandhi realised that the national service has nowadays come to mean striving for a big name, according to many now, through which one can get a notice in the papers or is photographed—which is better—or secure ministership as a reward for going to jail.

So everyone wants to grab power in order to rise to a ministership in the end. But how can even good ministers do any notable work without the people’s support? The country does require ministers, but a minister can adorn his post only if he deserves it, Gandhi said. He observed, in this very context, the presence of ‘selfish stinginess’ and reiterated that “we must, therefore, train ourselves to keep national interest always before us.” And this was not the first time he was referred to ministers.

On September 18, 1938, when provincial governments had spent just ten months in ‘power’, things were not much different! The Mahatma received a letter from a citizen, indicating that the main purpose of the “Congress ministry appears to us to be to worship your idol in public and break it in secret; to worship the symbols of Imperialism in secret and denounce them in public, to play the malefactor towards their opponents when they cannot conquer by truthful and legitimate methods...”

Gandhi had condensed this after “toning down the bitterest part.” The letter writer had also included a sentence which after 85 years appears prophetic: “The government of a people cannot be run by the common argument of promised boons and by corrupting the electorate with hope.”

The lesson to be drawn is clear: the mere scent of power coming to ministers made them leave no stone unturned to shake the moral foundation of good government. In this particular instance, the letter-writer found it strange why Gandhi’s “soul should not revolt against such a predatory Ministry for creation of which the moral responsibility is entirely yours”.

After over seven decades of Independence, India has more ex-ministers than serving ministers. The taste of having savoured power—exceptions apart—has been highly intoxicating. We have ‘Lok-Sewaks’ who swear by the name of Mahatma Gandhi but have amassed wealth by means that could be beyond the comprehension of the finest of economists.

People have seen the growth and display of affluence that follows politicians becoming elected representatives, ministers and chief ministers. In fact, most panchas and sarpanchas of village panchayats have proved to be good learners from politicians.

The issue before the nation is: why are the elected representatives losing credibility among those who elect them and put them in the saddle of power?

The manner democracy is being conducted was most crudely exposed in the recent election of the mayor of Delhi, which presented a shocking spectacle for everyone who feels a sense of pride in Indian democracy. The entire country witnessed it, as did the world. I found it shameful. Sadly enough, one could cite numerous such instances that have led to the disaffection between the representative and those represented.

On May 12, 1920, Gandhi said: “If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics today encircle us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter how one tries. I wish to wrestle with the snake...” He did, and created a model of giving people a voice, a non-violent approach that helped not only India but so many other nations to throw away the yoke of imperialism, the caste system and apartheid.

In one word, he made people trust the moral force. On September 7, 1920, it was so articulated by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore: “We need all the moral force which Mahatma Gandhi represents, and which he alone in the world can represent.” It was this moral force that every Indian was supposed to comprehend, internalise and put to practice.

Obviously, the representatives of people at every stage were—and are—supposed to be the prime torchbearers of the legacy of Gandhi. Each one of them needs self-introspection; they must analyse the extent to which their conduct is contributing to the national cause, strengthening democracy, and helping the amelioration of the miseries from the life of the ‘last man in the line’.

The 75+ generation of Indians has seen and observed the decline of moral and humanistic values in the political sphere, and the consequent deterioration of the credibility of leaders, elected representatives, and those in office. It adversely impacts the very vitals of democracy, its institutions and, above all, the people and their concerns.

Ministers are put behind bars, but continue to receive all the perks and privileges of the post and position. It is an unheard-of situation in a democracy. How could India ignore resignations on moral grounds credibility—like those of TT Krishnamachari, KD Malaviya and Lal Bahadur Shastri?

This generation of elderly citizens often recalls Gandhi and his in-depth comprehension of a free person and a free nation. He acknowledged that the superficial study of the British Parliament had made him think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. It was not so, he himself realised: “The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people.”

One earnestly hopes that the elected representatives realise the source of their power—the people—and ensure proper and well-informed debates and discussions in Parliament and Assemblies. Following the moral compass could strengthen their role performance and bestow the satisfaction of serving the needy.

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THE 75+ GENERATION OF INDIANS HAS SEEN AND OBSERVED THE DECLINE OF MORAL AND HUMANISTIC VALUES IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE, AND THE CONSEQUENT DETERIORATION OF THE CREDIBILITY OF LEADERS, ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, AND THOSE IN OFFICE

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(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity)

Stress among women is rampant but it can be managed

Women can reduce the risk of burnout in their daily lives by following a few simple changes to their lifestyles



DR JYOTI KAPOOR

Stress is a common problem that many women experience in their daily lives. Whether it's due to work, family obligations, or other responsibilities, stress can take a toll on both mental and physical health. According to a Deloitte report in 2022, 56 per cent of Indian women's stress level is higher than it was a year ago. Globally, 53 per cent of women admitted to feeling more stressed than last year.


Due to a shift in hormonal levels (including sex hormones, like estrogen, which can also impact stress hormones, cortisol, and response), females are at a higher risk of developing mood disorders. Since a woman passes through puberty, menstruation, preg-

nancy, postpartum, and post-menopause, they face a host of different stressors and reactions to stress. However, the good news is that there are many effective ways for women to cut down on stress and improve their overall well-being. In this article, we will explore some of the most effective strategies for reducing stress in a woman's life.

Exercise regularly

Exercise is one of the most effective ways to reduce stress for women. Physical activity releases endorphins, which are chemicals in the brain that promote feelings of happiness and well-being. Additionally, regular exercise can help women sleep better, improve their mood, and increase their energy levels.

been shown to be effective in reducing stress and anxiety in women. By practicing mindfulness meditation regularly, women can learn to manage their emotions and respond to stressful situations in a more positive and productive way.



Practice mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a technique that involves focusing on the present moment and paying attention to your thoughts and emotions without judgment. It has

Get enough sleep

Sleep is essential for overall health and wellbeing, and it's also crucial for managing stress. When women don't get enough sleep, they may feel irritable, anxious, and stressed. By making sleep a priority and getting enough rest each night, women can reduce their stress levels and improve their mental and physical health.

Connect with others

Connecting with others is a vital way for women to reduce stress in their lives. Spending time with friends and family members, participating in social activities, and engaging in hobbies and interests can all help women feel more supported and less stressed.

Eat a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet is essential for overall health and wellbeing, and it can also assist women manage stress. Foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants can help reduce inflammation and promote feelings of wellbeing. Also, avoiding foods that are high in sugar and caffeine can help prevent spikes in blood sugar and promote better sleep.

Take breaks throughout the day

Taking breaks throughout the day is essential for managing stress. By taking short breaks to stretch, walk, or simply relax, women can give their minds and bodies a chance to recharge and refocus. This can help them feel more productive and less stressed throughout the day.

Seek professional help

If stress is becoming overwhelming or interfering with daily life, it may be helpful to seek professional help. A mental health professional can help women develop coping strategies and manage stress in a healthy way.

In conclusion, stress is a common problem for many women, but there are many effective strategies for reducing stress and improving overall wellbeing. By exercising regularly, practicing mindfulness meditation, getting enough sleep, connecting with others, eating a healthy diet, taking breaks throughout the day, and seeking professional help when needed, women can successfully manage stress and enjoy a happier, healthier life.

China, Russia to counter US’ Indo-Pacific strategy

PTI ■ BEIJING/MOSCOW

Chinese President Xi Jinping concluded his state visit to Moscow on Wednesday and vowed to build “an equal, open and inclusive security system” with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to counter the Indo-Pacific strategy pursued by the US.

Xi held an intense round of discussions with Putin after which the leaders signed two joint statements to deepen their “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era” and “Pre-2030 Development Plan on Priorities in China-Russia Economic Cooperation”.

Xi embarked upon the 3-day Moscow trip ostensibly to broker a peace deal and end the raging conflict in Ukraine, as he sought to push a peace talks plan that elicited a frigid response from the US, Kyiv’s key ally. The trip, described by Xi as “one of friendship, cooperation and peace,” marked his ninth visit to Russia since he first became the Chinese President in March 2013. The joint statement issued in Chinese and Russian languages said the two sides expressed serious concern over NATO’s continued strengthening of military security ties with the Asia-Pacific countries, which undermined regional peace and stability. It said the two sides



‘Xi sees Russia as counterweight to US influence’

Washington (PTI): In President Vladimir Putin and Russia, Chinese President Xi Jinping sees a “counterweight” to American and NATO influence on the continent and elsewhere around the world, the White House has said. The statement by John Kirby, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the White House, came as Putin accorded a red carpet welcome to his Chinese counterpart Xi in Moscow and held marathon talks spread over two days on a range of issues, including the raging war in Ukraine.

opposed cobbling together a closed and exclusive bloc structure in the Asia-Pacific region, creating camp confrontation, in an apparent reference to the Quad alliance comprising the US, India, Australia, Japan and AUKUS, consisting of Australia, the UK and the US. Both sides said the US adheres to the Cold War mentality and pursues the Indo-Pacific strategy, which has a negative impact on peace and stability in the region, it said. China and Russia are committed to building an “equal, open and inclusive security system” in the Asia-Pacific region that does not target third countries, in order to maintain regional peace, stability and prosperity, it said. Both countries expressed serious concerns over the consequences and risks of the tri-lateral security partnership — AUKUS and related nuclear-powered submarine cooperation programmes on regional strategic stability, it said.

Civilians killed by Russian missiles, drones

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine’s president posted video on Wednesday showing what he said was a Russian missile slamming into an apartment building in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, killing at least one person, after Moscow’s forces launched exploding drones before dawn that killed another seven at a student dormitory near Kyiv.

The video posted by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Telegram appeared to be from CCTV cameras that captured the moment a missile hit the nine-story residential block by a

busy road. Ukrainian media showed charred apartments on several stories of the affected buildings, with flames billowing from some of them. Two children were among the wounded, said Zaporizhzhia City Council Secretary Anatolii Kurtiev, adding that 25 needed hospital treatment, with three in critical condition.

“Russia is shelling the city with bestial savagery,” Zelenskyy wrote to accompany the video. “Residential areas where ordinary people and children live are being fired at.” He appealed for countries to increase pressure on the Kremlin to give up its invasion of Ukraine. The city is about

100 kilometres (60 miles) from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe’s largest which has previously come under threat during the war.

Russia has denied targeting residential areas even though artillery and rocket strikes hit apartment buildings and civilian infrastructure on a daily basis. Earlier Wednesday, an overnight drone attack partially destroyed a high school and two dormitories in the city of Rzhyshevsk, south of the Ukrainian capital, officials said. It wasn’t clear how many people were in the dormitories at the time. The body of a 40-year-old man was pulled from

the rubble on a dormitory’s fifth floor, according to regional police chief Andrii Nebytov, adding that more than 20 people were hospitalised. Just hours earlier, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida left Kyiv after meeting Zelenskyy in a show of support for Ukraine. Earlier Wednesday, Chinese leader Xi Jinping left Moscow after meeting with President Vladimir Putin and discussing his peace proposal, which has been rejected by the West as a non-starter. The drone barrage and other Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure drew a scathing response from Zelenskyy. “Over 20 Iranian murderous

drones, plus missiles, numerous shelling occasions, and that’s just in one last night of Russian terror,” he wrote in English on Twitter. “Every time someone tries to hear the word ‘peace’ in Moscow, another order is given there for such criminal strikes.”

Zaporizhzhia’s regional administration said two missiles struck the apartment block, saying Russia’s goal is “to scare the civilian population of the city of thousands.”

“It’s hell in Zaporizhzhia,” Ukrainian lawmaker Oleksiy Goncharenko wrote on Telegram, adding: “There aren’t any military facilities nearby.”

Pak court rejects FIA’s plea to cancel Imran Khan’s bail

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Wednesday rejected the country’s top investigating agency’s plea to cancel former prime minister Imran Khan’s bail in the prohibited funding case, a media report said. Khan, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was granted bail by an Islamabad-based banking court in a prohibited funding case. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in October last year filed a case in the banking court against Khan, 70, and other members of his



party for allegedly receiving prohibited funding. The prohibited funding case was filed by PTI’s estranged founding member Akbar S. Babar in the Election Commission of Pakistan in 2014. A two-mem-

ber bench comprising Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri conducted the hearing on the plea in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday, according to the Express Tribune newspaper. The court also rejected the request to cancel the bail of co-accused Tariq Shafi, the report said. The FIA filed an application in the IHC on February 28 against the banking court’s decision to grant bail to the PTI chief and appealed to the court to annul the decision as it was “against the law”.


‘Israel attacked Aleppo airport, no casualties’

Damascus (AP): An Israeli airstrike early on Wednesday targeted the international airport in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, causing material damage and putting it out of service, Syria’s state news agency reported. It was the second attack on the facility this month.


SANA quoted an unnamed military official as saying Israeli warplanes fired the missiles toward Aleppo, Syria’s largest city and once commercial centre, while flying over the Mediterranean Sea. It did not mention any casualties. Bassem Mansour, head of Syria’s civil aviation, told the pro-government Sham FM radio station

the strike damaged the airport’s runway and put the facility out of service. Repair work has started, he said, adding that “the airport will resume work within a short period”. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said that in addition the airport, the airstrike also destroyed a nearby arms depot of Iran-backed militia-men.

The airport has been a key channel for the flow of aid into the country after the February 6 earthquake hit Turkey and Syria, killing over 50,000 people, including more than 6,000 in Syria.



NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE



Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

1. N.I.T. No.	44A-22-23-W-2 Dated 21.03.2023
1. Name of work with its location	A) Augmentation in capacity of LHS by one time cleaning of 76 nos. LHS under ADEN/SMOL
2. Approx Cost of work NIT-44A-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
3. Earnest Money NIT-44A-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
4. Completion period of work NIT-44A-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
5. Cost of tender on cash/bid post NIT-44A-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
6. Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender	30.03.2023 to 14.04.2023 upto 15:00 hrs Opening of tender 14.04.2023 at 15:00 hrs.
7. Similar nature of work NIT-44A-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
8. Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be ascertained etc.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in

NIT - 44A-22-23-W-2 Dated : 21.03.2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

872/23



NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE



Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

1. Name of work with its Location	*Part-A Design, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of 25 KV OHE modification work in connection with Provision of Machine siding & over run at Safdarjung station Part-B Provision of 25 KV/230V, 25KVA Auxiliary Transformer in connection with Electronic Interlocking work at DSJ station
2. Approx. Cost of Work	Rs. 6600101.05/-
3. Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 132000.00/-
4. E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	03.04.2023
5. E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	17.04.2023 (15:00 Hrs.)
6. Fund Allocation	deposit work
7. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

E-Tender No.: 37-TRD-NDLS-2022-23 Date : 21.03.2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

878/23

HINDUSTAN AUTO FINANCE LIMITED
CIN: L65910DL1980PLC010617
Regd. Office: Cabin No. DA-8, 02nd Floor, Vikas Marg, Shakarpur, New Delhi-110092
Email: hindaf1980@gmail.com, Website: www.hindaf.in

NOTICE OF 40TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, REMOTE E-VOTING AND INTIMATION OF BOOK CLOSURE

NOTICE is hereby given that the 40th Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) of members of **Hindustan Auto Finance Limited** will be held on Friday, 14th April, 2023 at 02:00 p.m. at the registered office of the Company to transact the businesses as set out in the Notice convening the AGM.

The Annual Report for the financial year 2019-20 including the Notice convening AGM along with Attendance Slip and Proxy Form has been sent to members whose emails are registered with their depository participants as at close of business hours on Friday, March 17, 2023. Physical copy of the Annual Report along with AGM Notice has been sent by permitted mode to members who have not registered their e-mail address. The emailing and dispatch of Annual Report along with Notice of AGM has been completed on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. The Annual Report along with the Notice convening the AGM is available on the website of the Company at www.hindaf.in, website of Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited, and on the website of Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) at www.evotingindia.com.

The shareholders whose email IDs are not registered with Company/RTA or with respective DPs may temporarily get their email ID registered with the Company by sending e-mail at hindaf1980@gmail.com and follow the temporary registration process as guided thereafter to receive the Annual Report for FY 2019-20 along with the Notice of AGM which inter-alia contains the instructions for attending the AGM. However, for permanent registration of email ID, members are requested to approach their respective DPs and follow the process advised by DPs.

Pursuant to provisions of Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 (“Act”) and the applicable rules framed thereunder and Reg. 42 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, (“Listing Regulations”), the register of members and share transfer books of the Company will remain closed from Saturday, April 08, 2023 and will end on Friday, April 14, 2023 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of 40th AGM of the Company.

Pursuant to Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended and Regulation 44 of Listing Regulations, the Members are provided with the facility to cast their votes on the resolutions set forth in the Notice of AGM using electronic voting system from a place other than venue of the AGM (‘remote e-voting’), provided by Central Depository Services India Limited (CDSL) and the business may be transacted through such voting. The voting rights of members shall be in proportion to the equity shares held by them in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on the cut-off date, i.e. Friday, April 07, 2023. Any person who is a member of the Company as on the cut-off date is eligible to cast vote on all resolutions set forth in the Notice of AGM using remote e-voting or voting through ballot paper at the AGM.

The remote e-voting period commences on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 09:00 a.m. IST and ends on Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 05:00 p.m. IST. During this period, Members may cast their vote electronically. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL thereafter and remote e-voting shall not be allowed beyond the said date and time. Once vote on a resolution is cast by the member, he/she not be allowed to change it subsequently or cast the vote again. The detailed procedure for voting has been mentioned in the AGM Notice. The facility for voting through ballot paper shall also be made available at the AGM and members who have not cast their vote by remote e-voting shall be able to exercise their right at the AGM through ballot paper. The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend the AGM, but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again.

A person who acquires shares and become a member of the Company after the dispatch of notice of the AGM and holding shares as of cut-off date, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com. However, if he/she is already registered with CDSL for remote e-voting, then he/she can use his/her existing User ID and password for casting the votes.

The Board of Director has appointed CS Anju Bansal, proprietor of M/s Anju Bansal & Associates, Company Secretary in Practice (COP No. 17594) as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the ‘remote e-voting’ process and voting at the AGM, in a fair and transparent manner. The results of AGM will be announced by the Chairman or any other person authorised by him and will be submitted along with report of scrutinizer within two days from the conclusion of AGM to Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited and also be posted on the Company’s website www.hindaf.in.

In case of any queries or grievances regarding e-voting, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQs”) and e-voting manual which is available at www.evotingindia.com under help section. Or contact at 022-23058542/43. In case of grievances relating to e-voting, please contact Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Sr. Manager at 25th Floor, A Wing, Marathon Futorex, Mafatal Mills Compound, NM Joshi Marg, Lower Pareil (E), Mumbai-400013; Email: helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or aforesaid number.

For Hindustan Auto Finance Limited
Sd/-
Rishabh Aggarwal
(Company Secretary & Compliance Officer)

Place: New Delhi
Date: March 22, 2023

HINDUSTAN AUTO FINANCE LIMITED
CIN: L65910DL1980PLC010617
Regd. Office: Cabin No. DA-8, 02nd Floor, Vikas Marg, Shakarpur, New Delhi-110092
Email: hindaf1980@gmail.com, Website: www.hindaf.in

NOTICE OF 39TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, REMOTE E-VOTING AND INTIMATION OF BOOK CLOSURE

NOTICE is hereby given that the 39th Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) of members of **Hindustan Auto Finance Limited** will be held on Friday, 14th April, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. IST at the registered office of the Company to transact the businesses as set out in the Notice convening the AGM.

The Annual Report for the financial year 2018-19 including the Notice convening AGM along with Attendance Slip and Proxy Form has been sent to members whose emails are registered with their depository participants as at close of business hours on Friday, March 17, 2023. Physical copy of the Annual Report along with AGM Notice has been sent by permitted mode to members who have not registered their e-mail address. The emailing and dispatch of Annual Report along with Notice of AGM has been completed on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. The Annual Report along with the Notice convening the AGM is available on the website of the Company at www.hindaf.in, website of Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited, and on the website of Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL) at www.evotingindia.com.

The shareholders whose email IDs are not registered with Company/RTA or with respective DPs may temporarily get their email ID registered with the Company by sending e-mail at hindaf1980@gmail.com and follow the temporary registration process as guided thereafter to receive the Annual Report for FY 2018-19 along with the Notice of AGM which inter-alia contains the instructions for attending the AGM. However, for permanent registration of email ID, members are requested to approach their respective DPs and follow the process advised by DPs.

Pursuant to provisions of Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 (“Act”) and the applicable rules framed thereunder and Reg. 42 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, (“Listing Regulations”), the register of members and share transfer books of the Company will remain closed from Saturday, April 08, 2023 and will end on Friday, April 14, 2023 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of 39th AGM of the Company.

Pursuant to Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended and Regulation 44 of Listing Regulations, the Members are provided with the facility to cast their votes on the resolutions set forth in the Notice of AGM using electronic voting system from a place other than venue of the AGM (‘remote e-voting’), provided by Central Depository Services India Limited (CDSL) and the business may be transacted through such voting. The voting rights of members shall be in proportion to the equity shares held by them in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on the cut-off date, i.e. Friday, April 07, 2023. Any person who is a member of the Company as on the cut-off date is eligible to cast vote on all resolutions set forth in the Notice of AGM using remote e-voting or voting through ballot paper at the AGM.

The remote e-voting period commences on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 09:00 a.m. IST and ends on Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 05:00 p.m. IST. During this period, Members may cast their vote electronically. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by CDSL thereafter and remote e-voting shall not be allowed beyond the said date and time. Once vote on a resolution is cast by the member, he/she not be allowed to change it subsequently or cast the vote again. The detailed procedure for voting has been mentioned in the AGM Notice. The facility for voting through ballot paper shall also be made available at the AGM and members who have not cast their vote by remote e-voting shall be able to exercise their right at the AGM through ballot paper. The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend the AGM, but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again.

A person who acquires shares and become a member of the Company after the dispatch of notice of the AGM and holding shares as of cut-off date, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com. However, if he/she is already registered with CDSL for remote e-voting, then he/she can use his/her existing User ID and password for casting the votes.

The Board of Director has appointed CS Anju Bansal, proprietor of M/s Anju Bansal & Associates, Company Secretary in Practice (COP No. 17594) as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the ‘remote e-voting’ process and voting at the AGM, in a fair and transparent manner. The results of AGM will be announced by the Chairman or any other person authorised by him and will be submitted along with report of scrutinizer within two days from the conclusion of AGM to Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited and also be posted on the Company’s website www.hindaf.in.

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For Hindustan Auto Finance Limited
Sd/-
Rishabh Aggarwal
(Company Secretary & Compliance Officer)

Place: New Delhi
Date: March 22, 2023

Donald Trump’s potential indictment caps decades of legal scrutiny

AP ■ NEW YORK

For 40 years, former President Donald Trump has navigated countless legal investigations without ever facing criminal charges. That record may soon come to an end. Trump could be indicted by a Manhattan grand jury as soon as this week, potentially charged with falsifying business records connected to hush money payments during his 2016 campaign to women who accused him of sexual encounters. It’s one of several investigations that have intensified as Trump mounts his third presidential run. He has denied any allegations of wrongdoing and accuses prosecutors of engaging in a politically motivated “witch hunt” to damage his campaign. An indictment in New York would mark an extraordinary turn in American history, making Trump the first former president to face a criminal charge. And it would carry tremendous weight for Trump himself, threatening his long-established ability to avoid consequences despite entanglement in a dizzying number of cases.

Indictment, says biographer Michael D’Antonio, would



Police officers place a barricade in front of Trump Tower, on Tuesday in NY. AP/PTI

be a “shocking event, both because of the fact that a former president is being indicted for the first time, but also because one of the slipperiest people at the highest level of business, whose devotion to abusing the system is so well established, is being caught.” “Throughout his life, he has done things for which he could have been investigated and potentially prosecuted and learned from those experiences that he could act with impunity,” he said.

Trump first faced legal scrutiny in the 1970s when the Department of Justice brought a racial discrimination case against his family’s real estate business. Trump and his father fiercely fought the suit, which accused them of refusing to

rent apartments to Black tenants in predominantly white buildings. Testimony showed that applications filed by prospective Black tenants were marked with a “C” for “coloured”. Trump counter-sued for USD 100 million, accusing the government of defamation.

The case ended with a settlement that opened the way for some Black tenants but did not force the Trumps to explicitly acknowledge they had “failed and neglected” to comply with the Fair Housing Act. Since then, Trump and his businesses have been the subject of thousands of civil lawsuits and numerous investigations. There have been probes into his casino and real estate dealings, allegations of bribery and impro-

per lobbying, fraud allegations against the now-defunct Trump University and charitable Trump Foundation and a probe by the Manhattan district attorney into sales at the Trump SoHo hotel-condominium in Lower Manhattan. Indeed, according to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, a government watchdog group abbreviated CREW, as of November 2022, Trump had been accused of committing at least 56 criminal offenses since he launched his campaign in 2015, not including allegations of fraudulent business dealings. But he has never been formally indicted.

Trump is a master of delay tactics, “finding ways to endlessly delay in the hopes that the investigation and litigation will go away. And he’s had remarkable success,” says CREW president Noah Bookbinder, a former federal corruption prosecutor. “It makes accountability absolutely essential because we can’t have people in a functioning democracy operating in positions of power with total impunity where they can commit crimes and never have to face any consequences,” he said.

Indian-American receives National Humanities medal from Joe Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden has presented the prestigious 2021 National Humanities Medals to Indian-American actress and producer Mindy Kaling, with several others, in recognition of her giving voice to a new generation of storytellers, at a White House ceremony. The National Medal of Arts is the highest award, given to artists, arts patrons, and groups by the US government. It honours exemplary individuals and organisations that have advanced the arts in America and inspired others through their distinguished achievement, support, or patronage. Presenting the award to the actress on Tuesday, at the ceremony attended by First Lady Dr Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and the Second Gentlemen, Biden said that Kaling is the first woman of colour to create, write, and star in a primetime sitcom. He added that the 43-year-old actress empowers a new generation to tell their stories with irreverence and sincerity. “The daughter of Indian immigrants — we know about that, right? Our Vice President is a daughter of Indian immigrants — a mother who was a great scientist,” the US President said. “Above all, she is hardworking and an adoring mom, just like



her own mom was. And, Mindy, we know your mom is always with you in your spirit. We know that,” Biden added. “Imbued with humour and heart, Mindy Kaling’s work across television, film, and books inspires and delights, capturing and uplifting the experiences of women and girls across our nation,” the citation of Kaling’s award, read by a military aide later, said.

The award honours individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation’s understanding of the humanities and broadened citizens’ engagement with history, literature, languages, philosophy,

and other humanities subjects. The 11 other distinguished medal recipients were Judith Franciscas Baca, Fred Eychaner, Jose Feliciano, Gladys Knight, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Antonio Martorell-Cardona, Joan Shigekawa, Bruce Springsteen, Vera Wang, The Billie Holiday Theatre, and the International Association of Blacks in Dance. Richard Blanco, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Walter Isaacson, Earl Lewis, Henrietta Mann, Ann Patchett, Bryan Stevenson, Amy Tan, Tara Westover, Colson Whitehead and Native America Calling were the recipients of the National Humanities Medal.

California faces more flooding after strong storm

Santa Cruz (US): A strong late-season Pacific storm that brought damaging winds and more rain and snow to saturated California was blamed for two deaths and forecasters said additional flooding was possible Wednesday in parts of the state. Tuesday’s storm focused most of its energy on central and southern parts of the state, bringing threats of heavy runoff and mountain snowfall. In the north, intense hail was reported in Sacramento, the state capital.

Locally heavy rain and snowmelt may cause flooding on Wednesday in southern California and central Arizona, the National Weather Service warned. Trees and power lines were reported downed in the San Francisco Bay Area. An Amtrak commuter train carrying 55 passengers struck a downed tree and derailed near the East Bay village of Portola Costa. The train remained upright and nobody was injured, Amtrak and fire officials said. In the Bay Area community of Portola Valley, a man driving a sewer truck was killed when a tree fell onto the vehicle, the California Highway Patrol said. And in the community of Rossmore, a driver was injured and a passenger died after a large tree fell onto a car, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District said.

AP ■ LONDON

Protesters take part in a torchlight demonstration against the raising of the retirement age in Nantes on Tuesday. AP

Unions have called for new nationwide protests and

PTI ■ BEIJING

Rescue workers and people gather at a hospital, where earthquake victims are brought, in Saidu Sharif, a town Pakistan's Swat valley on Tuesday. AP/PT

PTI ■ COLOMBO

PTI ■ LONDON

AP ■ LONDON

Date: 20.03.2023
Place: SONEPAT

s/d
AUTHORISED OFFICER
INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LTD.

DoT seeks ₹33,111 cr for BSNL AGR dues

Expects PSU to become profitable by FY 2027

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom has sought Rs 33,111 crore for payment of adjusted gross revenue dues of state-run BSNL which is likely to be made in the upcoming April-June quarter, according to a Parliamentary panel report.

In a submission to the Standing Committee of Communications and Information Technology, the Department of Telecom shared that against the proposal of Rs 39,725.07 crore for 2023-24, Rs 66,691.82 crore has been allocated to it in the budget.

The increased amount is towards the payment of AGR Dues to BSNL, which is a part of its revival package. The Department had proposed an amount of Rs 33,111.00 crore for the AGR Dues. The payment



will be made once BSNL claims the amount and is most likely to happen in the first quarter of FY 2023-24," the DoT informed in a written reply to the panel.

The Finance Ministry has allocated a total of Rs 1,08,153.25 crore under Budget Estimates for 2023-24 to the DoT comprising Rs 41,461.43 crore under revenue section and Rs 66,691.82 crore for capital section accounts.

The government had allocated Rs 44,720 crore for capital infusion in the state-run BSNL and MTNL for the current fiscal which was revised to Rs 33,269.01 crore and out of the total allocated fund Rs 23,873.44

crore have been spent till December 2022.

The DoT has informed the panel that the techno-commercial bids of TCS and ITI were opened by BSNL on November 23 and financial bids of January 13 for procurement of 4G equipment and as per the cabinet approval Group of Ministers will approve the process of procurement.

"Due to indigenous development of 4G stack for the first time in the country and issues in supply chain of chipsets, the deployment will gradually start and completion of projects of all 1 lakhs sites is likely to take 2 years," the DoT submitted.

Stocks rise on Wall Street, even the most beaten-down banks

AP ■ NEW YORK

Stocks are rising on a calming Wall Street Tuesday, even the banks most beaten down by the industry's crisis, amid hopes for more help from the U.S. Government.

The S&P 500 was 0.6% higher in midday trading after halving a bigger gain from the morning. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 131 points, or 0.4%, at 32,376, as of noon Eastern time, while the Nasdaq composite was 0.6% higher.

Markets around the world have pinballed sharply this month on worries the banking system may be cracking under the pressure of the fastest set of hikes to interest rates in decades.

If the S&P 500 squeezes out a gain, it would mark its first back-to-back rise in two weeks.

In the U.S., shares of smaller and mid-sized banks rose after Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told a bankers' group more government assistance "could be warranted" if risks arise that could bring down the system.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Government said it would make



depositors at Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank whole, even those with more than the \$250,000 limit insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

They were the second- and third-largest U.S. Bank failures in history.

They had struggled as depositors rushed to pull their money out en masse.

Such runs can topple a bank, and investors have since been hunting for the next one that could fall. Much focus has been on First Republic Bank, which shares some similar traits with Silicon Valley Bank, and its stock had lost 90% for the month through Monday.

It jumped 39.6% Tuesday. Other smaller and mid-sized banks also rallied, including a 7.2% climb for Comerica and a 7.7% gain for Zions Bancorp.

Hopes for the banking industry began to turn over the weekend after regulators pushed together two huge Swiss banks. Shares of both banks in that deal rose Tuesday in Switzerland, including a 9.8% jump for acquirer UBS.

Credit Suisse, meanwhile, rose 5.3% after tumbling a day earlier.

Credit Suisse had long-standing problems that were relatively unique, but all banks on

both sides of the Atlantic have the shared challenge of navigating a world with much higher interest rates than a year earlier.

Central banks have jacked up rates at a blistering pace in hopes of getting high inflation under control.

But such moves act like huge hammers with little nuance. They try to bring down inflation by slowing the entire economy.

That raises the risk of a recession later on. Higher rates also hurt prices for stocks and other investments.

That's one of the factors that hurt Silicon Valley Bank, which saw the value of its bond investments drop with the rise in rates.

The Federal Reserve is beginning its latest meeting on interest rates Tuesday, with an announcement slated for Wednesday.

Earlier this month, much of Wall Street was bracing for the Fed to reaccelerate its hikes and raise by 0.50 percentage points. A string of reports on the economy came in hotter than expected, including data on the job market, retail sales and inflation itself.

BRIEF

PFC SIGNS MOU WITH IISC FOR NEW ENERGY RESEARCH BUILDING

Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), a Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in the power sector, has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to support establishing a state-of-the-art building that will house the Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Research (ICER). The state-of-the-art building for ICER will foster cutting-edge fundamental and applied research on various energy-related areas, with special focus on green hydrogen generation.

IIFL AIMS WORLD RECORD WITH IIFL JITO AHIMSA RUN

IIFL Group, which is one of India's largest financial services conglomerates, aims to create Guinness Book of World record with IIFL Jito Ahimsa Run to be held on April 2, 2023 across 23 countries and 65 cities in India. This is the largest such run for the cause of peace and non-violence. The run is being organized by the ladies wing of Jito (Jain International Trade Organization) and IIFL besides Jito volunteers and supporters across the world.

NTPC COMMEMORATES WORLD WATER DAY

NTPC Limited, India's largest power producer, today commemorated World Water Day through a conference on 'Sustainable Supply Chain with Focus on Water Sustainability', along with prominent supply chain partners and vendors to observe World Water Day 2023. Ramesh Babu V, Director (Operations) and officials from multiple organizations participated in the discussions. The event witnessed the release of the NTPC Water Compendum 2023.

PFC INKS PLA FOR JPY 2.65 BN WITH JAPAN BANK

PFC recently signed a Project Loan Agreement (PLA) for JPY 2.65 Billion with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) at a ceremony held at JBIC headquarters, Tokyo, Japan. This PLA was executed under General Agreement signed between PFC & JBIC for JPY 30 Billion.

Modi launches ITU Area office, innovation Centre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the new International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Area Office and Innovation Centre here.

Modi also unveiled the Bharat 6G Vision Document and launched the 6G R&D Test Bed.

ITU is the United Nations' specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs). Headquartered in Geneva, it has a network of field offices, regional offices and area offices.

India signed a Host Country Agreement in March 2022 with ITU for establishment of an area office. The area office in India also envisaged to have an Innovation Centre embedded in

it, making it unique among other area offices of ITU.

The area office, fully funded by India, is located on the second floor of the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) building at Mehrauli in New Delhi.

It will serve India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan and Iran, enhancing coordination among nations and fostering mutually beneficial economic cooperation in the region, a statement said.

Bharat 6G Vision Document is prepared by Technology Innovation Group on 6G (TIG-6G) that was constituted in November 2021 with members from various ministries/departments, research and development institutions, academia, standardization bodies, telecom service providers.

Tomar launches blended learning platform for higher edu in agri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Tuesday launched a blended learning platform for higher education in agriculture, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) as part of a World Bank-funded project.

ICAR has developed the blended learning ecosystem as part of the five-year National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP) concluding this year. India and the World Bank have contributed USD 82.5 million (about Rs 600 crore) each for this project that aimed at strengthening the national agriculture education system in the country.

"The blended learning is an extension of Krishi Megh. I believe it will strengthen the foundation of Krishi Megh and will help in meeting the requirement of digital learning," Tomar said at the launch of this platform at the three-day international conference here.

Krishi Megh, which is a data recovery centre of ICAR, enables the farmers, researchers, students and policymakers to be updated with latest information regarding agriculture and research. For India to become a developed nation by 2047, the minister said the blended learning ecosystem will play a key role in this journey.

Blended learning is a combination of offline and online learning in a way that one complements the other. ICAR Director General Himanshu Pathak said, "I believe the World Bank will further promote research and education. ...To address the challenges of climate change and low productivity,



ity, education will play a crucial role. Our young students as well as scientists need to be equipped to combat all problems and experiment to learn new things which can be done through a blended learning ecosystem."

ICAR Deputy Director General (Agricultural Education) R C Agrawal said it has been the ICAR's endeavour to enhance agricultural higher education in alignment with guidance from the National Education Policy 2020 and the UN-SDGs.

Now, all agricultural universities have access to e-learning and e-governance applications. They all have smart classrooms, video conferencing facilities and virtual reality experience labs, he said.

About 86 per cent of agricultural universities have academic management systems; 90 per cent have wi-fi on campus and 92 per cent have high-speed internet connectivity. The e-content, using virtual and augmented reality, is highly immersive. Assessments, including short and long answer type questions

Par panel calls for ease of doing business to attract investment in mining sector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel has suggested that factors like ease of doing business and increase in competitiveness should be looked into in a bid to boost a favourable investment environment for the mining sector.

The committee also acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of Mines to accommodate the private sector to help the mining sector reach new heights.

"The Committee has been given to understand that the amendment to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 in 2015 and in 2021 has been aimed at increasing the production of minerals and time-bound operationalisation of mines, maintaining continuity in mining operations even after a change of lessee and increasing the pace of exploration and auctioning of mineral resources," the Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel said in its latest report. These amendments have resulted in the enhancement of mineral production across the spectrum and will be a major boost to many industries which

are primarily dependent upon key raw materials provided by the mining sector.

The measures are intended to enhance self-reliance in the mineral sector.

It envisages involving the private sector as a co-partner in the country's development and enhancing business opportunities in the economy, it said.

"The Committee has been informed that the scope and potential for the private sector in the mining sector is widely available in the existing legislation. Further, the National Mineral Policy (NMP), 2019 envisages that the private sector would be encouraged to take up exploration activities," it said.

Besides, NMP 2019, the recent reforms undertaken by the government also encourage investment by the private sector in the mineral sector.

The Committee find that the private sector plays a dominant role in mineral production and accounted for about 58.54 per cent or Rs 77,713 crore in the total value production in 2021-22 (Provisional).

As on April 1, 2022, there are 94 mines with CPSUs, 144 mines with state PSU.

20 women-led startups in pipeline to become unicorn, say study

Total valuation of unicorn built by women founders stands at \$30 bn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 18 per cent of India's unicorn startups are founded or co-founded by women and 20 other firms are in pipeline to become unicorn, a joint study said on Tuesday.

The study conducted by TiE Delhi NCR, research firm Zinnov, Google, NetApp and venture capital firm Indian Angel Network found that despite comparable metrics, success, and high entrepreneurial intent, socio-cultural barriers hinder women founders' growth.

"Approximately 18 per cent of India's total unicorns are founded by women, with 20 Potential Unicorns in the pipeline," the study said.

The startups that are in the pipeline to become unicorns include WinZO, Doubnut, Infinity Learn, Locus, Pratipati, Portea, SirionLabs, etc.

Women founded or co-founded start-ups that have already become unicorns include acko, BYJU's Pristyn Care, MyGlam, MobiKwik, Open etc.

The total valuation of unicorn built by women founders stands at over USD 30 billion and total equity investments raised by them is over USD 12 billion.

The study, however, found a huge gender disparity in the Indian start-up ecosystem.

"Disparity in ticket size caused women founders to face an investment loss of about USD 3.7 billion over the past 3 years," the study said.

According to the study, from an investor's perspective, women founders come across as more cautious compared to their male counterparts, which lowers deal size offers to them.

"Women founders face more scrutiny on their commitment compared to their male counterparts which makes negotiations more challenging from their point of view," the study said.

Average salary may rise 10.2% in 2023 led by e-commerce, IT, professional services: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Average salary in India is expected to increase by 10.2 per cent in 2023, mainly driven by e-commerce, professional services and information technology, a report said on Tuesday.

The average salaries in India will increase by 10.2 per cent in 2023, lower in comparison to 10.4 per cent (actuals) in 2022, but still in double digits, according to a 'Future of Pay' 2023 report by professional services organisation EY.

The projected salary increases for 2023 are slightly lower than the actual increases for 2022 across all job levels, except for blue-collar workers, who are projected to have a slightly larger decrease in compensation in 2023, it stated.

The top three sectors with the biggest projected salary increases are tied to technology, said the report.

E-commerce has the highest projected salary growth at 12.5 per cent, followed by professional services at 11.9 per cent and IT at 10.8 per cent, it added.

The data presented in 'EY Future of Pay' report is based on a survey with over 150 leaders.

India may require 31,000 pilots in next 20 years: Boeing

PTI ■ MUMBAI

US aircraft maker Boeing has said India may require 31,000 pilots and some 26,000 mechanics over the next 20 years amid the growing order book of the aircraft original equipment manufacturers.

Speaking on the sidelines of a CII event here, Boeing India President Salil Gupte also said the South Asian region is expected to remain the fastest-growing market globally over the next several years.

Courage of the government to go forward and privatize Air India and Tata Group to take up the airlines will transform the Indian aerospace industry, he said. "India is going to need over 31,000 pilots and 26,000 mechanics over the next 20 years to take care of the aircraft coming in. This is as important a part of the Indian growth story as the aircraft (orders)," Gupte told reporters.



He said considering India's air traffic growth, a lot of focus has to be on making infrastructure robust, both hard infrastructure which includes airports as well as critical infrastructure, which includes pilots, among others. Tata Group-owned Air India last month announced placing orders for a total of 470 planes with both Boeing and European aviation major Airbus.

Air India's mega aircraft deal with Boeing, Gupte said, is a massive deal for

India as a nation, and added that India is getting a representation on the global stage.

Last September, Boeing had projected India's air traffic growth at around 7 per cent through 2040. He also said that after coming out of the pandemic, the recovery in air travel demand has stunned the world and Boeing does not see any impact of the financial crisis on air travel growth.

It is "too early to know what the consequences of the bank situation of the US and Europe and others are going to be. At this stage, we really see no slowdown in the demand for aviation," Gupte added.

There is a huge market for narrow-body aircraft for Boeing in India, he said and added that, "as much as 90 per cent of the market over the next 20 years is going to be a narrow body market and we expect we will be successful in competing for those every single campaign (aircraft order)."

Google suspends Chinese shopping app amid security concerns



AP ■ HONG KONG

Google has suspended the Chinese shopping app Pinduoduo on its app store after malware was discovered in versions of the app from other sources.

Google said in a statement Tuesday that it suspended the Pinduoduo app on the Google Play app store out of 'security concerns' and that it was investigating the matter.

The suspension of the Pinduoduo app — mainly used in China — comes amid heightened U.S.-China tensions over Chinese-owned apps such as TikTok, which some U.S. lawmakers say could be a national security threat.

They allege that such apps could be used to spy on American users.

Pinduoduo is a popular e-commerce app in China which often offers discounts if users team up to buy multiples of an item.

Google warned users Tuesday to uninstall any Pinduoduo app not downloaded from its own Play store.

Downloads of Android and even iOS apps can often be found on websites that allow people to download apps without going through official app stores.

"Google Play Protect enforcement has been set to block installation attempts of these identified malicious apps," Google said in its statement.

"Users that have malicious versions of the app downloaded to their devices are warned and prompted to uninstall the app."

It was unclear if there are similar security concerns around the Pinduoduo app for Apple users, and Pinduoduo was still available to download from Apple's iOS store Tuesday.

In a statement, Pinduoduo said that Google had not shared more details with the company beyond informing it that the current version of its app was "not compliant with Google's policy."

India will not slow down: RBI article

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Unlike the global economy which is risk of recession, India would not slow down and maintain the pace of expansion achieved in 2022-23, said the RBI bulletin on Tuesday.

Even as global growth is set to slow down or even enter a recession in 2023 as global financial markets wager, India has emerged from the pandemic years stronger than initially thought, with a steady gathering of momentum since the second quarter of the current financial year, said an article in the March bulletin of the Reserve Bank.

Year-on-year growth rates do not reflect this pick-up of pace because by construction they are saddled with statistical base effects, and instead suggest a sequential slowing down through successive quarters of 2022-23 to an unsuspecting reader, it said.

"...Unlike the global economy, India would not slow down - it would maintain the pace of expansion achieved in 2022-23. We remain optimistic about India, whatever the odds," said the article authored by a team led by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra.

They said the NSO's end-February data release indicates



that the Indian economy is intrinsically better positioned than many parts of the world to head into a challenging year ahead, mainly because of its demonstrated resilience and its reliance on domestic drivers.

Currently available forecasts of India's real GDP growth for 2023-24, including those of the RBI, settle between 6.0 and 6.5 per cent.

The article observes that hawkish minutes of the Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) meeting, a sharp rise in US treasury yields, and fresh geopolitical risks after Russia suspended its participation from the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) dented positive sentiment in the Indian equity market during the second half of February 2023.

Consequently, the BSE Sensex reversed its earlier gains and registered a cumulative decline of 1 per cent during February 2023.

Oz beat India in 3rd ODI, seal series

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Indian batting unit once again choked under relentless pressure from the Australian spinners as the visitors clinched the three-match ODI series 2-1 with a comfortable 21-run victory, here on Wednesday.

Chasing a stiff target of 270 on a tricky pitch, India were all out for 248 in 49.1 overs as Australia came back in the series after losing the first ODI by five wickets.

The series defeat is an indicator that the Indian team is far from prepared for the World Cup and there are too many loose ends that needs to be tied.

The match turned out to be an anti-climax in the final 15 overs as Australian spinners Adam Zampa (4/45) and Ashton Agar (2/41 in 10 overs) snared as many six Indian wickets, giving away only 86 runs in the 20 overs between them.

The Chepauk track got slower and slower and post 35th over in the Indian innings, it became very difficult to hit the big strokes.

Once Zampa bowled a couple of googlies to force Hardik Pandya (40 off 40 balls) and Ravindra Jadeja (1 off 33 balls) hit against the turn, the writing was on the wall.

It was Zampa's best figures against India and he certainly was the hero for the Aussies.

Incidentally, Australia were the last international team to beat India in a bilateral ODI series back in 2019. The score-line back then was 3-2. Since that series defeat four years back, India have won seven back-to-back bilateral ODI rubber at home.

It was three games in a row that the Indian top-order flat-



tered to deceive and that too in home conditions. They could have been blanked 3-0 in the series had Australia scored at least 235 in the opening ODI.

The highest run-getter for India in the series was KL Rahul with 116 runs and that tells the story.

Between overs 35 to 43, India managed only 31 runs and that was where the game turned on its head.

Skipper Rohit Sharma (30

off 17 balls) started well but played one pull shot too many to be holed out at deep square leg fence while an alert Alex Carey's decision to convince Steve Smith into taking a DRS saw the back of Shubman Gill (37 off 49 balls). Rahul (32 off 50 balls) joined Virat Kohli (54 off 72 balls) and the duo added 69 runs in 15.3 overs but were never able to dominate as such on a track that got slower with passage of time.

Kohli's first boundary came in his 21st delivery, a pull shot off Agar and two balls later of Tamil Nadu he hit a regal six off Agar over extra cover.

Rahul's first boundary came in his 45th ball when he hit Zampa over his head for a four. Next over, Starc fired from wide off crease but the length ball was hit for a straight six. However a ball fired by Zampa into the blockhole was dug-out by Rahul but Abbot timed his jump well

to hold onto it at the boundary.

Then it was the turn of Agar to quickly send back Kohli and the out-of-form Suryakumar Yadav (0) for his third first-ball duck in as many games.

From 146 for 2, India had slumped to 185 for 6 when Pandya and Jadeja joined forces with the Australian close-in fielders making it infinitely difficult.

But Pandya, however, main-

tained a 100-plus strike-rate

despite tight bowling by the opposition. Earlier, a fine opening spell by Pandya and a probing effort by Kuldeep Yadav put a tight leash around the Australian batters before its tail wagged considerably to take the visitors to a fighting 269 all out in 49 overs after opting to bat first.

The five wickets added 131 to keep Australia in the game.

While Pandya (3/44 in 8 overs) shaved off the top half, Kuldeep's (3/56 in 10 overs) rhythm and guile on a helpful Chennai track was the biggest takeaway as the latter's delivery to remove Carey was the ball of the series. It was a classical left-arm wrist spinner's leg-break that beat the southpaw all ends up and Kuldeep's ecstasy was there to be seen.

India were in control after pegging Australia back at 138 for 5 but a 58-run stand between Carey and Marcus Stoinis for the sixth wicket and 42 for the eighth wicket between Sean Abbott (26) and Ashton Agar (17) took them close to 250 while Mitchell Starc and Adam Zampa added 22 precious runs for the final wicket.

What looked like a good toss to win for Australia after Mitchell Marsh (47 off 47 balls) and Travis Head (33 off 31 balls) put on 68 for the opening stand didn't seem so as Pandya bowled three different deliveries in his first three overs to completely seize the momentum in favour of the hosts.

David Warner (23 off 31 balls) and Marnus Labuschagne (28 off 45 balls) paid dearly for their indiscreet shot selection off Kuldeep's bowling before Carey (38 off 46 balls) played his first innings of substance on the final day of a long near two-month tour.



Short break for India's white ball players before joining IPL teams

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian players, who are part of the ODI series against Australia, will get a short break for three to four days before joining their respective IPL camps with the tournament starting from March 31.

Defending champions Gujarat Titans and Chennai Super Kings will play in the opening match of the season in Ahmedabad.

It is understood that all the players, who are in the World Cup scheme of things, will have their workload management monitored and hence the rest is going to be paramount.

"Some players might join their IPL camps directly but they will have an option of taking a three-four day break and relax at home before touching base with their respective IPL teams," a BCCI

source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Even if the players directly join the training camp, it is unlikely that they would be training for at least next 72 hours.

IYER TO MISS ENTIRE IPL, DOUBTFUL FOR WC

Shreyas Iyer is all set to undergo lower back surgery and will not take any part in the IPL, according to sources in the board. The decision is being taken keeping the player's best interest in mind as a surgery right now will give him an outside chance of at least making a comeback before the World Cup in October, although chances of making it for the marquee event also looks dim at the moment.

Jasprit Bumrah and Prasidh Krishna are the two players who have already undergone back surgery.

Fleming to be Texas Super Kings coach in MLC

PTI ■ DALLAS

Former New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming will be the coach of Dallas-based Major League Cricket (MLC) club Texas Super Kings (TSK), which announced its partnership with IPL side Chennai Super Kings (CSK).

Four-time IPL champions, CSK had recently said that they would make a "major announcement" with regard to their association with the new T20 tournament in the US.

TSK said in a statement that CSK will bring "operational expertise" and help "Texas compete on the field".

"The (Texas Super kings) team will be led by coach Stephen Fleming. Fleming is a former captain of the New Zealand national cricket team and head coach of Indian Premier League team Chennai Super Kings. He played in the first-ever T20 to be staged as captain of the New Zealand team in 2005," said a TSK statement.

Fleming is a long-serving CSK head coach and has guided the Chennai franchise to four IPL titles.

CSK join Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians as the third IPL side to get associated with the six-team MLC, scheduled to begin on July 13.

The six MLC teams are San Francisco Unicorns, Lost Angeles, MI New York, Seattle Orcas, Texas Super Kings and Washington DC.

Delhi Capitals, co-owned by GMR Group, are partnering with Seattle Orcas to "help build and operate a world-class cricket team", while Mumbai Indians have joined the US cricket revolution by acquiring the New York franchise.

Meanwhile, all six MLC teams completed the domestic player draft at the Space Center in Houston, where they selected nine players each from more than 100 cricketers eligible to represent the "US cricket community".

The remainder of each team's player roster will be filled with top T20 cricketers from across the world.



New IPL Rule: Captains allowed to name playing XI after toss

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The captains of IPL teams can name their playing eleven after the toss instead of handing over team sheets before the spin of coin, stated the new playing conditions issued by the BCCI.

According to playing conditions clause 1.2.1: "Each captain shall nominate 11 players plus a maximum of 5 substitute fielders in writing to the IPL Match Referee after the toss."

"Other than set out in Clause 1.2.9 no player (member of the playing eleven) may be changed after the nomination and prior to the start of play without the consent of the opposing captain."

This effectively means that after the toss, if a skipper feels that he needs to change his eleven as per demands of the situation, he is free to do that till the match starts.

The other significant change in playing conditions is penalising unfair movement by the wicketkeeper in case there is shift in position before the batter meets the ball.

In the event of unfair movement by the wicket-keeper, either umpire shall call and signal dead ball and inform the other umpire the reason for doing so. The bowler's end umpire shall then: "award the one-run penalty for Wide or No ball, if applicable or award 5 Penalty runs to the batting side. Inform the captain of the fielding side of the reason for this action. Inform the batters and, as soon as practicable, the captain of the batting side of what has occurred."

The "Impact Substitution" where a new player can be introduced during the match from the five designated substitutions had already been announced by the tournament committee.

Siraj slips from top spot to third in ODI rankings



PTI ■ DUBAI

Pacer Mohammed Siraj was on Wednesday dethroned from the top spot by Australia's Josh Hazlewood in the latest ICC rankings for ODI bowlers, as the Indian slipped to third place.

Another Australian pacer, Mitchell Starc, who impressed during the first two ODIs of the three-match series in India, also moved up to join Siraj at joint third.

Siraj, who returned with impressive figures of 3/29 to help India win the first ODI against Australia, was expensive in the second ODI giving away 37 runs in three overs and consequently lost his position as the top-ranked bowler.

The right-arm pacer had copped the brunt of the attack

by Mitchell Marsh and Travis Head during the second ODI in Visakhapatnam. Siraj, who has had a successful run across formats in recent past, was crowned as the world No. 1 bowler in ODIs in January this year.

Starc claimed three wickets in Mumbai to stage Australia's fightback while his 5/53 in the second ODI in Visakhapatnam powered the visitors to a 10-wicket win.

Hazlewood, who missed the entire tour of India consisting four Tests and three ODIs, became world No. 1 bowler in ODIs for the first time ever.

"Hazlewood, whose career-best second position was attained for the first time in June 2017 and which he had kept since August 2022, is No. 1 in ODIs for the first time," the ICC said.

Mohammad Shami, who produced a match-winning spell in Mumbai, also moved five spots up to reach to 28th in the list.

KL Rahul's unbeaten 75, which helped India recover from a poor start and win the first ODI by five wickets, helped him move up three places to get to the 39th spot.

In the ODI ranking among batters, India's Shubman Gill -- who made 'marginal progress' -- and Virat Kohli remained fifth and seventh respectively, while captain Rohit Sharma moved up one place to ninth.

New Zealand's Kane Williamson moved up to the second spot among batters in Test cricket following his dominant show with the bat against Sri Lanka, with the former skipper notching up scores of 1, 121 not out and 215 in the two-match series which the Kiwis won 2-0.

With his sixth double ton in Tests, Williamson is now just one behind Kohli (seven) as players with most scores over 200. Australia's Marnus Labuschagne remains the top ranked batter in Test cricket.

New Zealand's left-handed batter Henry Nicholls, who made 200 not out in the Wellington Test and was involved in a massive 363-run stand with Williamson in what was Test cricket's 2,500th match, jumped up 20 spots to reach to 27th.

Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne occupies the 10th spot.



2023 WC in India likely to start on Oct 5, final in Ahmedabad: report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 2023 ODI World Cup in India is likely to start on October 5 with the final to be held at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on November 19, according to a report.

The BCCI has shortlisted at least a dozen venues for the 10-team marquee event, which will see 48 matches, including three knockouts across the 46-day period, an ESPNcricinfo report said.

The 11 other shortlisted venues, according to the report, are Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Dharamsala, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Indore, Rajkot and Mumbai.

Except for the final match, which is set to be played at the world's largest stadium in Ahmedabad, the BCCI has not specified the venues for any games as yet.

The list of 12 cities, however, does not include Mohali and Nagpur, which had hosted a Test match against visiting Australia recently.

India had won the title when it last hosted the 50-over World Cup in 2011.

WORLD NO 1 ALCARAZ RETURNS TO MIAMI AFTER RAPID RISE

AP ■ MIAMI

World number one Carlos Alcaraz heads into this week's Miami Open looking to defend both his title and top ranking and admitting even he has been surprised by his dizzying rise to the top of the sport.

A year ago, the 19-year-old came to Miami on the back of wins on clay in Croatia and Brazil and hoping to make his mark on the hard courts. His victory in South Florida launched a remarkable year.

The highlight was his US Open triumph which made him the youngest player to become world number one and he returns to Miami after last week's win in Indian Wells, achieved without dropping a set in the tournament.

"It's all been very fast, when I got to Miami last year I was around number 20 and a year later I am coming in with the number one ranking. That is something very

special. I fulfilled my dreams quicker than I expected," he told reporters on Tuesday. Because of his victory in Miami last year, Alcaraz must win at the Florida event again if he is to hold on to his number one spot, but he says he feels no pressure in that regard or to meet newly raised expectations.

"I don't feel the pressure too much. I know the things I have to do. I need to play relaxed and not mind if I lose or if I play well or not," he said.

"My goal is always the same. To feel comfortable on court. To enjoy playing tennis and try to have great thoughts when playing. That is why I am playing at a good level. I am enjoying every single second and playing relaxed. That is what I am thinking about on court," he added.

As at Indian Wells, world number two Novak Djokovic is missing after being refused entry to the United States due to his lack of a COVID vaccine and Alcaraz says he misses the Serb's presence,



along with the injured Rafael Nadal.

"I'm a professional tennis player, but also I'm a huge fan of tennis and I always want to watch the best players in the world, like Rafa, like Djokovic," he said.

"I played a couple of times against Rafa and I wish to play against him more and with

Djokovic as well. I wish to play against him more times, you know, but obviously in every tournament I want them to be playing and I hope we get them back soon," he said.

Far from feeling the weight of following in the footsteps of the 'Big Three' of Djokovic, Nadal and the

now retired Roger Federer, Alcaraz says he is trying to draw lessons from their successes.

"You have to improve, you have to get better every day. That's why the big players, the Big Three, for example, did all through their careers - to improve every day a little bit," he said.

Alcaraz can expect plenty of support from the crowd in Miami, which includes many Spanish-speaking fans.

"It's so special to come back here and feel the same energy that I felt, for example, last year," he said.

"I have great supporters here, a lot of people supporting me. I remember last year it was unbelievable you know, with the crowd. I feel like I am at home, you know," he added.

The top seed will begin his title defence against Argentine Facundo Bagnis or a qualifier and could face two-time Miami champion and former world number one Andy Murray in the third round.

I'VE NEVER FELT THAT MUCH HATE: SABALENKA

AP ■ MIAMI GARDENS

Belarus' world number two Aryna Sabalenka says she has faced "hate" in the women's tour locker-room but hopes tensions with Ukrainian players will eventually ease. Australian Open champion Sabalenka lost to Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina in Sunday's Indian Wells final and at the media day for this week's ATP-WTA Miami Open was asked about her recent comments on "tensions" in the locker-room between Ukrainian and Russian and Belarus players.

"It was really, really tough for me because I've never faced that much hate in the locker room," said Sabalenka. "Of course, there are a lot of haters on Instagram when you're losing the matches, but like in the locker room, I've never faced that," she added.

"It was really tough for me to

understand that there's so many people who really hate me for no reason, like no reason. I mean, like I did nothing," she said. Sabalenka said sometimes the tension had gone beyond awkward silences and abrupt conversations.

"I had some, not like fights, but I had some weird conversations with, not the girls, but with members of their team. It was really, it was tough. It was tough period. But, now it's getting better," she said. In comments at Indian Wells Sabalenka had said she had been in a dispute with Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko's coach Nikita Plesov. Tsurenko was due to play Sabalenka at Indian Wells but withdrew before their match.

The Ukrainian said she had a "panic attack" and had also been upset with a conversation about the war and the position of Russian and Belarusian players with WTA CEO Steve Simon.

NITU, NIKHAT & SAWEETY CONFIRM MEDALS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on impressive performances, star Indian pugilists Nitu Ghanghas, Nikhat Zareen and Saweety Boora registered thumping victories to confirm at least three medals for India at the Mahindra IBA Women's World Boxing Championships by advancing to the semi-finals at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex here on Wednesday.

Squaring off against the two-time Worlds bronze medalist Madoka Wada of Japan, the 2022 Commonwealth Games champion Nitu (48kg) secured a scintillating win with the Referee Stops Contesting (RSC) verdict in the second round of the bout. With an attacking approach from the word go, the 22 year old hardly had to break a sweat against the veteran Japanese and was in complete control of the bout.

"I have been able to apply 100% apply of my practice in the ring so far and going into the next match I feel good I have won all my three bouts by RSC. She (Maduko) is a southpaw just like me and as this was my first time in the tournament facing a southpaw, I had to pay complete attention and attack. I was on the counter from the first round but I feel like I should have played a bit more attacking and I will try to do that in my next bout. (After the defeat in last edition's quarters) I felt that since is the tournament happening in India this year with the home support constantly backing us, I won't let the medal slip away this time," said Nitu after the bout.

The Indian will now take on the reigning Asian champion and last year's World Championships silver medalist Alua Balkibekova of Kazakhstan in what will be a rematch of last year's World Championships quarter finals.



Following Nitu's victory, Nikhat (50kg) successfully continued her title defence by recording a hard-fought 5-2 win on points after the bout was reviewed against the two-time World Championships bronze medalist Chuthamat Raksat of Thailand. Both pugilists were at the top of their game and gave it their all to emerge victorious in this bout that went right down the wire. However it was the 26 year old Indian who utilized her superior technical ability to edge out her Thai opponent and come out on top with the win.

"Yes, today's bout was stressful but

I won by a split decision so I am really happy that I secured a medal for my country, and going forward I'll win the gold medal too. My strategy today was to win in the first 2 rounds and then play around in the last. I won the 2 rounds but from 3:2 in each so in the last round, I aimed to play from a long range but there was a lot of clinching so my body got a little tired. All the bouts I have had till now were powerful but for me, it's been a good experience to keep moving forward and defeating them so hopefully I will keep moving forward like this and fight for my country," said Nikhat after the bout.

Nikhat will face Rio Olympics bronze medalist Ingrid Valencia of Colombia in the semi-finals.

Contrary to Nikhat, the three-time Asian medalist Saweety (81kg) recorded a dominating 5-0 win against the 2018 World Championships bronze medalist Viktoria Kebikava of Belarus. In what was her first match of the tournament, the experienced pugilist from Haryana was extremely confident throughout the bout and landed strong, accurate punches to seal the win. She will be going up against Emma-Sue Greentree of Australia in her next bout.

"The boxer from Belarus (Viktoria

is a very good fighter with a world medal to her name and with both of our strengths including uppercuts being similar, I knew that I will have to fight till the very end. I was a bit tired towards the last round but I kept going for my coach who was constantly motivating from the ringside and my family in the audience, all of whom had high hopes from me. My next bout will definitely be better than this one as I always get better with the number of matches that I play," commented Saweety after her bout.

Meanwhile, the two-time World Youth champion Sakshi Chaudhary (52kg) and the 2022 World Championships bronze medalist Manisha Moun (57kg) went down fighting in the quarter finals despite their best efforts. While Sakshi lost 0:5 against Wu Lu of China, Manisha lost 1:4 against Amina Zidani of France and bowed out of the competition.

The 2020 Olympics bronze medalist Irma Testa (57kg) of Italy also secured her place in the semi-finals after beating Jucielen Romeu of Brazil with a 5-0 scoreline. The Italian who won silver at last year's World Championships looked determined to better that this time round and proved it with her stellar performance.

Later on Wednesday, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg), the 2022 Commonwealth Games bronze medalist Jaismine Lamboria (60kg) and Nupur Sheoran (+81kg) will all take to the ring for their respective quarter-finals bouts.

The on-going prestigious event is witnessing the participation of 324 boxers, including several Olympic medalists, from 65 countries fighting for the titles in the 12 weight categories. The tournament has a massive prize pool of INR 20 crore.

Sarabjot clinches men's air pistol gold

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Sarabjot Singh shot down a gold in men's air pistol while Varun Tomar clinched a bronze in the same event as India opened their ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup campaign with two medals here on Wednesday.

The Indian women air pistol shooters though couldn't make it to the medal bracket, with Manu Bhaker, Divya Subbaraju and Rhythm Sangwan failing to come good on the inaugural day of competitions here.

Sarabjot, the 2021 junior world champion in the team and mixed team categories, defeated Azerbaijan's Ruslan Lunev 16-0 in the gold-medal match in the first final of the World Cup.

The 21-year-old Sarabjot was in awesome form all through as he emerged leader at the end of the qualification round with 585 points.

Sarabjot was hitting the bulls eye every time he took aim, with his scores of 98, 97, 99, 97, 97, 97 in the six qualification series suggesting he would be hard to beat.

China's Liu Jinyao was a close second at 584.

Six other shooters — Jason Solari (Switzerland, 583 points), Vladimir Svecinko (Uzbekistan, 582), Frederik Larsen (Denmark, 580), Zhang Jie (China, 580), Ruslan Lunev (Azerbaijan, 579) and Varun Tomar (India, 579) — completed the list of eight marksmen who made it to the ranking round.

In the ranking round, Sarabjot continued to excel, while 19-year-old Varun also began superbly after qualifying eighth and last for the ranking round.

At the end of the ranking round, Sarabjot (253.2 points) and Ruslan (251.9) were placed first and second respectively and both of them entered the gold-medal round high on confidence, while Varun, who scored 250.3, settled for bronze.

In the battle for the top podium place, the Azerbaijan shooter was no match for Sarabjot, with the Indian firing single-shot scores of 10.4, 10.4, 10.3, 10.2, 10.2, 10.9 in comparison to Ruslan's 10.1, 10.1, 9.6, 9.5, 8.9 and 10.4.

As per the ISSF's new format, the winner of a single shot in the final gets awarded two points and the first to race to 16 points is the winner of the competition.

With Sarabjot shooting better scores in all six shots, he raced to the title, giving India its first gold medal in the competition.

In the women's air pistol event, 27-year-old Divya Subbaraju did much better than Olympian Manu Bhaker, entering the ranking round after coming third in qualification with a score of 579.

However, the Indian ended up ranked fifth with China's Li Xue winning gold after defeating Germany's Doreen Vennekamp in the title round. Another Chinese shooter, Wei Qian bagged the bronze medal.



Portugal back with Martínez as coach, Ronaldo in squad

AP ■ LISBON

It's a new era for Portugal as it begins European Championship qualifying under a new coach and with Cristiano Ronaldo far away from football's biggest stadiums.

Portugal starts its Euro 2024 qualifying campaign at home against Liechtenstein in Group J on Thursday, with Roberto Martínez debuting as coach and Ronaldo still in the squad.

It will be Ronaldo's first appearance with Portugal since leaving Europe for Saudi club Al Nassr after a mostly disappointing stint with Manchester United. He is set to break the all-time record of appearances with a national team after tying Bader Al-Mutawa's mark of 196 outings for Kuwait during last year's World Cup.

Martínez is taking over Fernando Santos, who quit in December after Portugal's elimination by Morocco in the quarter-finals of the World Cup. Santos left amid the controversy of benching Ronaldo in the knockout stage of the tournament in Qatar.

Santos was in charge of Portugal for eight years, leading the national team to the Euro 2016 title — the country's first major trophy — and the 2019 Nations League title. He reached an agreement with the federation to leave two years before his contract was to end.

Martínez ended his six-year stint with Belgium after the team's disappointing group-stage elimination at the World Cup. He arrived pledging to respect Ronaldo's history with the national team.

In addition to Ronaldo, Martínez will inherit a squad filled with talented players such as Bernardo Silva, Bruno Fernandes, Diogo Jota, Gonçalo Ramos and João Félix. The coach made few changes to the squad, with 40-year-old defender Pepe also returning to play alongside the 38-year-old Ronaldo.

"We were briefly introduced to him on the training field," Félix said about Martínez.

"He explained to us some of his ideas, mainly for these two

games, which are going to be very similar. He talked about the attacking dynamic, the connections between wingers and strikers."

Félix downplayed Portugal's chances in the matches against Liechtenstein and Luxembourg on Sunday.

"We always have to be prepared and not take any game lightly," he said.

"We have the recent example of the World Cup, when everyone thought we were going to get past Morocco and we didn't. It's always complicated, it's always the best from each country, and everyone plays each game like it is a final. All games will be difficult, both at home and away. We have to be cautious."

Portugal is unbeaten against Liechtenstein, with six wins and a draw in seven matches.

Portugal's Euro 2024 qualifying group also includes Iceland, Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The top two nations from each of the 10 groups qualify for the final tournament in Germany.

Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne said on Tuesday he was "honoured" to be named Belgium captain following Eden Hazard's retirement from international football. The Red Devils coach Domenico Tedesco chose playmaker De Bruyne for the position after Real Madrid's Hazard, who turned 32 in January, ended his Belgium career following last year's World Cup. Tedesco, who took over from Roberto Martinez after the tournament, has called up 19-year-olds Zeno Debast and Romeo Lavia to what was an ageing squad. "It's an honour for me to be named and represent the country in this way," De Bruyne told RTL-TV television.

"I'm almost 32. I've never considered international retirement. I think I can still bring something to the table and help the youngsters," he added. Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and Chelsea attacker Romelu Lukaku will be De Bruyne's vice-captains. De Bruyne was one of the players criticised after The Red Devils were knocked out in the group stage in Qatar. De Bruyne has played 97 games for Belgium scoring 25 goals and will make his debut as skipper in Sweden on Friday in a Euro 2024 qualifier. They will also face Austria, Azerbaijan and Estonia in the campaign for the tournament held in Germany next summer.

De Bruyne 'honoured' to be named Belgium skipper



AP ■ BRUSSELS

Treesa and Gayatri exit from Swiss Open in 1st round

PTI ■ BASEL

All England Championships semifinals, Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand made an early exit from the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here as they lost their first-round match.

The Treesa-Gayatri duo lost to second-seeded Indonesian pair of Apriyani Rahayu and Siti Fadia Silva 14-21, 14-21 in 41 minutes in the opening round on Tuesday night.

Treesa and Gayatri had made a sensational run in the All England Championships women's doubles last week before losing in the semifinals.

Meanwhile, Malvika Bansod qualified for the main draw of the women's singles after beating USA's Lauren Lam 21-17, 21-7 in the qualifying round.



The women's doubles pair of Sikki Reddy and Arathi Sara Sunil also made it to the main draw after beating Paula Lynn Cao Hok and Lauren Lam 21-15, 15-21, 21-18.

The mixed doubles pair of Rohan Kapoor and Sikki Reddy notched up a 21-17, 15-21, 21-18 win over Germany's Patrick Scheiel and Franziska Volkman to book a berth in main draw.

However, Meiraba Luwang Maisnam and Priyanshu Rajawat couldn't qualify for the main draw. Rohan Kapoor and B Sumeeth Reddy also lost in the first round of men's doubles qualification. On Wednesday, PV Sindhu, seeded fourth in the tournament, will look to snap her three first-round exits on the trot this season when she faces local player Jenjira Stadelmann in women's singles. Kidadambi Srikanth, H S Prannoy and Lakshya Sen will also begin their campaign in men's singles.

EUROPEAN CHALLENGE TOUR RETURNS TO INDIA AFTER 10 YEARS

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian golfers will have a two-week bonanza as they get to play back-to-back European Challenge Tour events at the KGA Golf course here.

The first of the two \$300,000 events, the Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge, gets underway on Thursday at the KGA with a majority of the Indian stars in action.

The European Challenge Tour returns to India after a 10-year absence.

The leading Indian players in the field include former PGTI Order of Merit champions Udayan Mane, also an Olympian, Khalin Joshi, current PGTI Order of Merit leader Sachin Baisoya, Yuvraj Singh Sandhu and Aman Raj, and the talented rookie Aryan Roopa Anand, who is playing in his hometown.

With the DP World Tour and TATA Steel Professional Golf Tour of India announcing a new partnership, this week's co-sanctioned event between the Challenge Tour and the PGTI is aimed at creating a pathway for the top players of the country



to reach the highest levels of the men's professional game.

Earlier this year, Manu Gandas earned his card into the DP World Tour by topping the PGTI Order of Merit.

In addition, the next three players will get a chance to make it to the DP World Tour via the final stage of the Qualifying School.

With 20 top players from the Challenge also getting into the DP World Tour, the two Challenge Tour events assume a lot of

importance for Indian golf.

The Challenge Tour is where the next generation of golfing stars find their feet and players including Irishman John Murphy, Frenchman Ugo Coussaud and Italian Matteo Manassero, the youngest winner in DP World Tour history, will tee it up in India this week.

Aryan is looking to thrive on local support in this week's Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge. The 21-year-old, who was crowned India's number one amateur in 2022, leads a strong home contingent.

"My expectations are high coming into the week but I am just going to focus on the little things and prepare the best I can," he said.

"Golf in India is growing in popularity in recent years and Karnataka Golf Association is such a busy golf course throughout the year," he said.

The Indian joins a star-studded field in Bangalore this week, including seven-time DP World Tour winner Alvaro Queros and Matteo Manassero, the youngest winner in DP World Tour history.

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Regd. Office: 19-A, Dhuleshwar Garden, Ajmer Road, Jaipur - 302001 (CIN:L36911RJ1996PLC011381)				
APPENDIX IV [SEE RULE 8(I)] POSSESSION NOTICE				
Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the AU Small Finance Bank Limited (A Scheduled Commercial Bank) under the "Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act, 2002 (54 of 2002)) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice on the date as mentioned below calling upon the borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice as per the details given in below table:-				
Name of Borrower/Co-Borrower/Mortgagor/Guarantor/Loan A/c No.	13(2) Notice Date & Amount	Description of Mortgaged Property	Date of Possession Taken	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060120460188, Smt.Manjula William (Borrower), Samson William (Co-Borrower) Wany William (Co-Borrower)	15-Dec-22 ₹ 14,72,663/- Rs. Fourteen Lac Seventy- Two Thousand Six Hundred Sixty-Three Only as on 13-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At P.H.No. 21, Khevt .No. 500, Kh.No. Part. Of 1029 , Bhukand.No.56/1, Mauja- Mangla, Tehsil-Dist-Bilaspur, C.G Admeasuring 222.2 Sqyds East: House Of Khulslani West: Road North: House Of Sahu South: House Of Shrivastawa	17-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060113317446, Narendra Kumar Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Ganga Bai Sahu (Co-Borrower)	15-Dec-22 ₹ 2,73,852/- Rs. Two Lac Seventy-Three Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty-Two Only as on 13-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Gram Panchayat 8, 596, Karma, Dist- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 2180 Sqft	17-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060817634936, Narendra Kumar Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Ganga Bai Sahu (Co-Borrower)	15-Dec-22 ₹ 2,29,392/- Rs. Two Lac Twenty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Ninety-Two Only as on 13-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Phn. 2 , Kh. No. 596 , New Phn. 10 , Rnm Beltara, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 242.2 Sqyds East: Govt. Land West: Land Of Vishal North: Land Of Vishal South: Land Of Man Singh	17-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001061124650730, Manjula William (Borrower), Samson William (Co-Borrower) Wany William (Co-Borrower)	15-Dec-22 ₹ 4,74,834/- Rs. Four Lac Seventy-Four Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty-Four Only as on 13-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Bilha Mangla Bilaspur Home No 504, Ganga Nag Sektar 2, Mangala ,Dist-Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, 495001 Admeasuring 222.2 Sqyds	17-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060118817955 & L9001060824690893, Naveen Jalpan (Borrower), Vimal Kumar Sahu (Co-Borrower) Bindu Sahu (Co-Borrower)	06-Aug-22 ₹ 4,99,490/- Rs. Four Lac Ninety-Nine Thousand Four Hundred Ninety Only and ₹ 4,88,275/- Rs. Four Lac Eighty-Eight Thousand Two Hundred Seventy-Five Only as on 05-Aug-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Khasra .No. 841 , Ph No. 13, Village- Jeora, Rnm - Durg, Dist- Durg, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 200 Sqyds East: House of Sumritra Bai, West: House Of Anupram Sagu, North: House Of Bhagwat Sinha, South: Road	20-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060125673459, Arjun Tandan (Borrower), Smt.Ritu Tandan (Co-Borrower)	15-Dec-22 ₹ 12,59,441/- Rs. Twelve Lac Fifty-Nine Thousand Four Hundred Forty-One Only as on 13-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Gramtal Property Registered Railway Crossing Ke Age Kanchana Road Housing Board, Dist- Raipur, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 1900 Sqyds	18-Mar-23	
(Loan A/C No.) L9001060716909277, Rudra Sharan Sahu (Borrower), Smt.Shanti Devi Sahu (Co-Borrower)	20-Dec-22 ₹ 17,53,651/- Rs. Seventeen Lac Fifty- Three Thousand Six Hundred Fifty-One Only as on 20-Dec-22	All That Part And Parcel Of Residential/Commercial Property Land / Building / Structure And Fixtures Property Situated At Freehold - Within Municipal Limit P.H.No. -3 K.No. Part Of 24/2 Jagdalla Janjgir- Champa, Chhattisgarh Admeasuring 405.06 Sqyds	20-Mar-23	

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, therefore notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein above mentioned table in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said [Act 2002] read with Rule 8 of the said rule on the date mentioned in the above table.

"The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets."

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 the AU Small Finance Bank Limited (A Scheduled Commercial Bank) for the amount and interest thereon mentioned in the above table.

Date : 22/03/2023
Place : Chattisgarh

sd/-
Authorised Officer AU Small Finance Bank Limited