

WORLD 5

4 KILLED WHILE COLLECTING
FREE FLOUR IN PAK

MONEY 6

PARL PANEL TO GOVT: FRAME
POLICY ON E-VEHICLES

SPORT 8

I HAVE PLANNED SPL
DELIVERY FOR IPL: SHIVAM

RAIPUR, SUNDAY MARCH 26, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Even if jailed, will fight on: Rahul

‘I am not scared of threats, disqualifications, allegations, prison sentences’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Addressing his first Press conference after his disqualification from the Lok Sabha, a combative Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said he would continue to defend democracy in the country even if he is disqualified from Parliament for life or jailed and claimed that a “panic-stricken” Government has handed the Opposition a “big weapon” by disqualifying him.

Rahul claimed that the action against him was taken because Prime Minister Narendra Modi was “scared” of his next speech in Parliament on the Adani issue and alleged that the “whole game” is to distract people from the issue and the panic the Government is feeling over the matter.

Rahul was disqualified from the Lok Sabha on Friday, a day after a court in Gujarat’s Surat convicted him in a 2019 defamation case.

The disqualification will bar Rahul (52), a four-time MP, from contesting polls for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction.

He said he would continue to ask questions on the Adani issue, adding the moot questions remain that who invested ₹20,000 crore in Adani shell firms and what is the businessman’s relationship with the prime minister. He vowed he will keep raising these questions.

Asserting that “democracy has finished in this country”, the former Congress chief claimed that he never sought foreign intervention in his remarks made in the UK and accused Union Ministers of “lying” against him in Parliament to which he said he wanted to respond but was not allowed.

He also said the BJP is trying to divert the issue by alleging that he had insulted OBCs and he would continue to ask what is Modi’s relationship with businessman Gautam Adani.

“I am here defending the democratic voice of the Indian people, I will continue to do that. I am not scared of these



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a press conference at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

threats, of these disqualifications, allegations, prison sentences. I am not scared of them. These people don’t understand me yet, I am not scared of them,” he said, attacking the BJP.

“Disqualify me for life, put me inside jail, I will keep going. I will not stop,” he said, noting that it makes no difference to him. “I have been disqualified because the Prime Minister is scared of my next speech. I have seen it in his eyes. So he is terrified of the next speech that is going to come and does not want that speech to be in Parliament,” the former Congress chief alleged at the 30-minute Press conference, flanked by Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and party general secretaries Jai Ram Ramesh and K C Venugopal.

He claimed that his attack on Adani was the reason for distraction through allegations and now disqualification. Rahul, when asked if he was worried, quipped, “Do I look worried. I am excited, I am happy that they have given me the best gift that they could give me.”

Legal recourse or paint
Rahul as martyr? Cong
mulls cash-in-on planDEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

Several theories within the Congress are doing the rounds on how to “encash” the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi as Lok Sabha member in elections. While a section of the party think tank is of the opinion that let “Rahul be allowed to become a ‘political martyr’ and lead the 2024 Lok Sabha” another group has been contemplating to field Priyanka Gandhi from Wayanad which Rahul represented till Friday morning.

“Another theory working is to fight back legally and retain the Lok Sabha berth as it is, and simultaneously dig out similar statements or speech by BJP leaders and get cases registered at least in the Congress and its alliance State Governments,”

said senior party leader and a member of the Rajya Sabha.

Congress legal luminaries led by team like Abhishek Manu Singhvi, P Chidambaram, Vivek Tankha, Pramod Tiwari, have done a few round of deliberations in the last 48 hours over the prospect to deal with the conviction ruling in Surat court in Gujarat. Sources said the Congress is also working to rope in their former party colleague and a legal eagle Kapil Sibal now in the Rajya Sabha backed by the Samajwadi Party.

Sibal took a swipe at two BJP Ministers for accusing Rahul of insulting OBCs with his “Modi surname” remark in 2019, saying they were “insulting” people’s intelligence by making such an “absurd allegation”.

Rahul lies,
defames
PM: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP spokesperson Ravishankar Prasad on Saturday alleged that the Congress did not press into service its battery of lawyers to immediately obtain a stay on Rahul Gandhi’s conviction by a court in Surat with a view to portray the Congress leader as “martyr” and “encashing” the issue in the upcoming Assembly polls in Karnataka.

Talking to reporters here soon after Rahul’s Press conference alleging that he has been targeted by the BJP to divert attention from the “Modi-Adani” row, Prasad accused the former Congress president of “lying” and “defaming” Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The BJP leader gave a list of projects which the business tycoon Gautam Adani had signed in many countries, including in Australia and Indonesia, “when the Congress under Manohan Singh was in power at the Centre”.

Reminding Rahul that he and his mother are on bail in the National Herald case, Prasad alleged that Rahul is trying to tarnish the fair name of the Prime Minister.

“Doesn’t he feels ashamed?”, the BJP said.

Prasad said Rahul has been accusing businessman Adani “without any proof”. He was, though, also quick to add “we are not defending Adani”.

He said Adani “has bagged Rs 65,000 crore projects in the Congress-ruled Rajasthan and that of Rs 15,000 crore in West Bengal”.

Prasad said Rahul has become “frustrated” as “people are not voting for his party”. “He is not respecting peoples mandate,” said Prasad.

Fight against Maoist
insurgency in decisive
stage: Amit ShahSTAFF REPORTER ■
JAGDALPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the battle against Maoists had reached a decisive stage.

Attending the 85th Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Foundation Day in Bastar, he said the CRPF has uprooted leftwing extremism which

had caused obstruction to the development of tribal areas.

Shah said that it was a proud moment that the CRPF was organizing its Raising Day Parade for the first time in Bastar, the hub of Naxalites.

Lauding CRPF, he said be it Jammu and Kashmir or the Northeast, the force had displayed unparalleled valour and bravery.

Incidents of Naxalite related violence have come down by 76 per cent from the peak of 2010, he said. Casualties have also fallen by about 78 per cent.

Shah thanked Prasad Bharti for starting a news bulletin in Bastar in local Halbi dialect.

Apart from it, 400 local youths have been recruited in the Chhattisgarh Bastaria Battalion, he said.

FM reviews PSBs’
financial health amid
US banking failureAsks bankers
to be vigilant
of rate risks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday reviewed the performance of public sector banks (PSBs) on various financial health parameters and their resilience in the wake of the current global financial scenario emanating from the failure of some international banks in the US and Europe.

She urged the banks to remain vigilant about the interest rate risks and regularly undertake stress tests.

During the two hours meeting with MDs and CEOs of PSBs, an open discussion was held on the global scenario amid the failure of the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank (SB), along with the issues leading



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reviews the performance of public sector banks (PSBs) on various financial health parameters and their resilience in the wake of the current global financial scenario emanating from the failure of some international banks in the US and Europe.

to the crisis in Credit Suisse. The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi and other senior officials, an official statement said. She also discussed the developing and immediate external global financial stress from both short and long-term perspectives.

During the PSB review meeting, she emphasised that the banks should undertake due diligence and adhere to the regulatory framework by focusing on risk management and diversification of deposits and assets base.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes metro ride in Bengaluru on Saturday

PTI

Cong sees K’taka as ATM to
fill its leaders’ coffers: ModiPTI ■ CHIKKABALLAPURA/
DAVANGERE/BENGALURU

In poll-bound Karnataka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday made a strong pitch for the return of the ruling BJP, and lashed out at politics of manipulation and addressed a public rally at Davanagere after getting yet another rousing reception in his seventh visit to the State.

The PM wrapped up a busy day of public engagements that also included a tribute to the legendary Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya and a Metro rail ride on a new route that Modi inaugurated.

In yet another stinging attack on the Congress, he said it looks at Karnataka as an

“ATM” to fill the coffers of its leaders.

Seeking a resounding mandate for a successive stint for the BJP in Karnataka, Modi said a stable government led by the saffron party was the need of the hour for the State’s fast paced development.

Stressing that Karnataka should be brought out of the “politics of manipulation”, he said BJP wants to make the State a driving force of developed India, while the Congress looks at it as “an ATM that fills the treasury of its leaders”.

This visit of the Prime Minister — his seventh to Karnataka this year — gains significance as the Election Commission is expected to announce the poll schedule

for Assembly elections, due by May, in the next few days.

On Saturday, the PM also inaugurated Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Chikkaballapura district, and Whitefield (Kadugodi) to Krishnarajapura Metro Line of Bangalore Metro in Bengaluru. He took a Metro ride after buying a ticket.

“Karnataka has seen a long period of opportunistic and selfish coalition governments, Karnataka has faced losses due to such governments. So, for the fast paced development of Karnataka, BJP’s full majority, stable government is needed,” Modi tol a mega rally in Davangere headquarters.

Land-for-jobs: CBI quizzes
Tejashwi, ED grills Misa

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investigation agencies on Saturday questioned Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav and his MP sister Misa Bharti in connection with the railways land-for-jobs case here, officials said.

While Tejashwi was quizzed by the CBI for more than eight hours, the ED questioned Bharti for over six hours, they said.

Slamming the BJP over the questioning of the two RJD leaders, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged the ruling party wants to finish off the

Opposition and expressed solidarity saying, “We are all united against the attack on democracy.”



RJD leader Misa Bharti arrives at the ED office for questioning in connection with the land-for-jobs case, in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

Indian-Americans march
against Khalistani vandalsPIONEER NEWS SERVICE /
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI /
SAN FRANCISCO

Putting up a show of solidarity against Khalistan extremists, several Indian Americans carried a support march and waved the tricolour. The march late on Friday was undertaken to condemn the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco. The alleged Khalistani supporters had vandalised the consulate last Sunday.

Regretting the violence, many Indian-American community members attended the support march outside its consulate in San Francisco for



India’s unity against Khalistan movement.

A huge crowd of Indian Americans turned up for the peace rally. Criticising the destructive elements of Sikh separatism, the Indian-American community chanted “Vande Mataram” and other slogans while dancing and holding the US flag along with tricolour. Local police ensured there were no incidents of violence as few Khalistani supporters were

also in the crowd chanting separatist slogans.

On Sunday last, Khalistani sympathisers vandalised the consulate building and installed flags in support of the separatist movement, which were later removed by the consulate staff. The incident evoked sharp reactions from the NRIs who called for strict action against the guilty.

The Indian diaspora in London, too, had registered a strong protest against the pulling down of tri colour by the Khalistan supporters at the Indian High Commission in UK by gathering outside the office demanding strict action on Tuesday.

Usha, Mithali, Rawat’s
daughter to witness
Agniveers’ passout

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Queen of Indian track and field PT Usha, former Indian women team captain Mithali Raj and daughters of late General Bipin Rawat, the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) will be present on the historic day on March 28 when the first ever batch of Agniveers pass out from Navy’s training institute INS Chilka.

As first reported in *The Pioneer* on Friday, the Passing Out Parade (POP) of the first batch of Agniveers is scheduled at INS Chilka on March 28.

The POP marks the successful completion of training of close to 2,600 Agniveers

including 273 women. In another first, the parade will take place post sunset unlike in the morning as done earlier.

Navy chief Admiral Hari Kumar will be the chief guest and the Reviewing Officer of the Passing out Parade, navy officials said here on Saturday. The successful trainees would be deployed on frontline warships for their sea training.

The Agnipath recruitment scheme to transform the armed forces to fight modern day war was launched on June 14 last year. The Navy selected 2,600 Agniveers and their training commenced in November last year.

ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE OF IAPSM AT MANIPAL COLLEGE

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The first annual state conference of IAPSM at Manipal Tata Medical College Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, was successfully hosted today by the department of community medicine of Manipal Tata Medical College Jamshedpur and the Indian Academy of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM). The department head, Dr. Jarina Begum, organised the event with the help of the dean, Dr. Sunita Tripathy, and the director of academic administration, Dr. Rajiva Dwivedi.

The chief visitors included Dr. Purushottam Giri, secre-

tary general of IASPM, Dr. Harivansh Chopra, national president of IAPSM, and Dr. Birendra Kumar Singh, deputy director of health services for Jharkhand.

The Special Word of the Blessing was spoken by Lt. Gen (Dr.) M.D. Venkatesh, Vice Chancellor of Manipal Academy of Higher Education.

The scientific session was centred on the theme "One Health," addressing preventive, promotive, and curative aspects of diseases prevalent in communities like childhood malnutrition, vaccine-preventable diseases, measles-rubella, HIV, etc. The scientific session featured eminent

speakers from across the country as well as experts from WHO, UNICEF, JSACS, JHPIGO, and ALLIANCE INDIA. An overview of the competency-based medical education curriculum and a panel discussion on the family adoption program's implementation in medical colleges were also included in the activities.

The purpose of the conference was to spread knowledge about and advocate for the idea of "One Health," which highlights the interdependence of human, animal, and environmental health.

A holistic approach to healthcare that acknowledges the interdependence of



all living things, and their shared environment was discussed at the conference, which brought together healthcare experts, veterinarians, environmentalists, lawmakers, and other stakeholders.

Renowned healthcare experts and academics who spoke as the keynote speakers provided their perspectives on the prospects and difficulties of implementing the "One Health" strategy in the healthcare system.

The meeting made clear the importance of working together to confront new threats to global health such as zoonotic diseases, antibiotic resistance, and environmen-

tal deterioration. To effectively address these issues, the participants stressed the significance of taking a multidisciplinary approach that includes healthcare experts, veterinary professionals, environmentalists, lawmakers, and other stakeholders.

Dr. Harivansh Chopra, National President of IAPSM, remarked, "We are thrilled with the enormous response to the conference. The "One Health" approach is gaining popularity, and we are dedicated to spreading this idea and assisting in cooperative initiatives to improve health outcomes for all living things.

The conference included a range of academic session

styles, including twelve oral presentations of original research, twelve poster presentations, and nine scientific sessions. The awards for the top oral and poster presentations were presented at the conference's closing session. Almost 200 persons attended this event in addition to Dr. Sunita Tripathy, Dr. Rajiva Dwivedi, Dr. H.C. Bandhu, Dr. Vijay Kautilya, Dr. Sudhir Rai, Air Vice Marshal (Retd.), Dr. Jarina Begum, Sidharam Halikhed, Kshitij Mohan, and many others. As the conference ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Abhishek Kumar, organising secretary. Priyanka Singhal, PR, led the whole event.

Jayant Sinha honoured with 'Saansad Ratan' award

THE HONOUR GIVEN TO HIM FOR EXCELLENT WORK AS CHAIRMAN OF PERMANENT FINANCE COMMITTEE OF LOK SABHA

SHAILESH SHARMA : HAZARIBAG

Member of Lok Sabha from Hazaribag, former union minister and chairman of Lok Sabha Finance Committee has been honored as "Saansad Ratan " award by the Prime Time Foundation and e-patrika. The foundation has given the award of one person each from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (Upper House).

The jury of the foundation has finalized his name among the other members of Parliament and Member of Rajya Sabha. Sinha has been selected by the jury for his excellent performance in 17th Lok Sabha to the year 2022.

He has proved himself as best chairman of the Lok Sabha permanent



Finance Committee. He has tried his best to solve each and every matter which comes to committee for the solution.

After receiving the award Sinha said that this award is fully dedicated to all people of the constituency. He further said that he always tried to give the best performance as the chairman and as well as the representative of the public of Hazaribag.

The representative of Jayant Sinha, Suresndra Sinha, Tunnu Gope, press representative of MP Anil Kumar Sinha, Bipin Sinha, Mithilesh Pathak, Bipul Kumar, Ravi Kumar Sinha, Deepak Nath Sahay, Himansu Kumar Ashish Singh, Priyavanda and other BJP leaders congratulated Jayant Sinha for this achievement.

DLSA Garhwa organises seminar on POCSO and NDPS Act

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

As per the orders of Jhalsa Ranchi and Principal District and Sessions Judge Co-Chairman DLSA, Garhwa Rajesh Sharan Singh. A seminar on POCSO and NDPS Act was organized in the seminar hall of Civil Court Garhwa, on Saturday. The seminar was inaugurated jointly by Principal District and Sessions Judge AD J5 Garhwa SP and DLSA Secretary Kumar Vipul by lighting the lamp.

Addressing the seminar, District and Sessions Judge Rajesh Sharan Singh said that if the case is properly executed by investigation officers properly, crime will automatically reduce and peace will be established in



the society. There will also be fear in the minds of criminals. The work of the judiciary, police, and media is the same as how to strengthen the judicial system in the society and no criminal should be deprived of punishment. How to make concerted efforts for this should be ensured.

Garhwa Superintendent of Police Anjani Kumar Jha said that DLSA Garhwa has organized this seminar to speed up the work of all police officers in the district.

During the first session, detailed information on the POCSO Act was given to the police officers by the District and

Sessions Judge Vth Special POCSO Judge.

In the second session, detailed information about the NDPS Act was given by Amit Bhagat, NCB Ranchi. DLSA Secretary Kumar Vipul, JJB Chairman Nishant Kumar Das and others were present in the programme.

MALFEASANCE IN EDUCATION OF THE 21ST CENTURY



RADHIKA S TIBREWAL

The world stands at a very crucial crossroad. Time is short, action is required. The extent of corruption, deceit and manipulation does not escape the eye of the common man. From charging wrong rates from a person who lacks customer awareness to the mere vegetable purchase that we rely on blinding us by the very false claim of it being truly organic, not one field is left untouched by the malice and self-centric approach, which goes down to any extents at any cost.

Education being one of the most important fields, which is being used as a tool

of mere extraction and exploitation of the general public, who do not have any alternative to the say. The will of the Indian parents to impart good and quality education to their children has given the stakeholders of these organizations an incentive to infiltrate the education system by strongly emphasizing on money making and consumerism.

Corruption, which used to be limited within the government, the police have now deepened their roots in the primary aspect of everyone's life and continues to grow posing a serious and a heart-breaking effect on the common man who wish to see their children educated and well read. The importance of education in a country like India cannot be overstated and its significance lies beyond the borders and the extending peripheries, however, the irony lies in the fact how bright a future can be when the education itself is rigged, when the education itself fails to give incentive to the already struggling Indian population.

In the working, this has taken a firm grip by bribing the officials for admission or even misallocation of funds, which were directed to the

infrastructural enhancement and is now being used to meet the personal affairs of the officials. Many of the private colleges have started to offer courses in a multidisciplinary aspect without the presence of the existing infrastructure or the trained professors leading to the sale of these degrees as mere goods. By fixing the seat quota many of the institutions use it as a means to exploit the donations offered to these institutions adding to the already existing unbearable expenditure borne by the common men.

Hiring individual career counsellors is extremely on trend these days. This motive is guided by the aim to have a better sight of one's future and their multifaceted growth. However, these ambitions are being shadowed by the enormous rates charged by the officials. It is high time that we call for a stop in the concept of favouritism and public fraud.

We should not let go of the very essence of education, which has built it and moulded it to something very crucial and an attempt to waver the already existing stereotypical mindset of most of the Indians, as a means to grow as a human

and deliberate upon economic development and growth. But, that comes easy only when the right to education is equally accessible to anyone and everyone with the decent charges being imposed on them. India's occupancy in the high rates of global corruption directs us toward the longstanding growing issue, which needs to be addressed and strengthening the legal foundation being one of them. It is big time that we let the humanity of humans prevail and pledge not to be so self-centred and so self-driven that the ultimate cost borne by everyone would be too high and it would be too late to regret.

A NATIVE OF RANCHI, RADHIKA S TIBREWAL IS PRESENTLY STUDYING IN CLASS 12 (SCIENCE) AT MAYO COLLEGE GIRLS' SCHOOL, AJMER. HER INTERESTS LIE WIDELY IN FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT AND ARE AN AVID AND A PASSIONATE PUBLIC SPEAKER WHO IS PART OF THE MODEL UNITED NATIONS CLUB AND THE DEBATING SOCIETY OF HER SCHOOL. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE PERSONAL.

CM TO FELICITATE 4 STUDENTS OF GARHWA



NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

Chief Minister Hemant Soren will award 4 students of Garhwa district on March 27. All these students have brought laurels to the entire Garhwa district by securing first, second and third positions in state in various subjects in the first phase of the Jharkhand State Olympiad 2022 organized by JCERT Ranchi. These students will be given laptops as an award by the Chief Minister on March 27 at Project Building, Ranchi. The awardees include Khushbu Kumari, Vivekanand Gupta from Upgraded Middle School, Daleli, Harsh Kumar, and Shubham Kumar from Shanti Niwas High School, Garhwa. District Education Officer Anita Puri, District Education Superintendent Mithilesh Kerketta, District Program Manager Gayatri Sahu have congratulated all the students on their great achievement and wished for a bright future.

CMPDI CMD meets National athlete, cyclist



PNS : RANCHI

CMD, CMPDI, Manoj Kumar, met Aasha Malviya, National Athletics Player and famous Mountaineer at CMPDI, Hqs, Ranchi on Saturday. Kumar felicitated and congratulated

Malviya for her endeavour and dedication to spread awareness on Women's Safety and Empowerment. On this occasion, Sanjay Kumar Dubey, General Manager (TS/PR) & Rajiva Kumar Singh, Chief Manager (Geology) were present.

Aasha Malviya to spread awareness on "Women Safety and Women Empowerment" is doing All India Solo Cycling, aims to cover 25,000 kms across 28 states of India. Malviya who hails from Nataram Village, (Dist.) Rajghar, Madhya Pradesh started her All India Solo Cycling journey on 1st November 2022 from Bhopal, M.P and intends to end her journey on 15th August 2023 at New Delhi. Till date Malviya has covered 11 states covering

5 members of sleeper cell of TSPC jailed in Palamu

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

Five members of the sleeper cell of the TSPC were remanded in judicial custody today in Daltonganj.

Giving this information the SP Palamu Chandan Kumar Sinha said the 5 had no weapon with them like other Sleeper Cell fellow but all 5 had devilish mind set to commit crime which they did when they torched 3 tractor engines of the brick kiln of Satyanand Mehta at the Kanda Ghattee on March 20 night.

The 5 identified as Sudhir, Chhotu, Birender, Sanjay and Basant have been booked under 17 CLA Act besides sections of the IPC. Sanjay and Birender hail from Bihar.

Police did take help from the CRPF, said the SP as two companies scoured the jungles where police nabbed 1



leading to 4 coming into its net one by one. However all the 5 were caught by the police.

SP said "Such inputs in regard to sleeper cell or naxals are to be acted upon fast and swift, but with the CRPF there is a procedural time and sometimes precious minutes get lost in putting the CRPF into the vehicle and by then the members of the sleeper cell or of the hard core naxals vanish from the scene."

SP didn't mean any lag-gardness of the CRPF but just reminded the CRPF moves

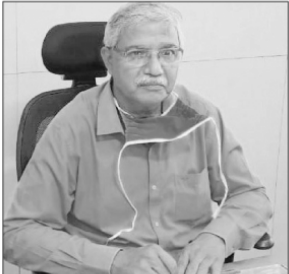
when order from above comes to it and here the clock goes against the police.

SP lauded his officers Rishabha Garg assistant superintendent of police and SDPO and Surjit Kumar SDPO who led the teams of police officials that busted the sleeper cell. He said these officers had very short sleep on subsequent nights since the night of arsoning March 20 and kept themselves awake and alert at night so as not to miss the faceless people of the sleeper cell of the TSPC remaining uncaught.

Poster making competition organized on 'World TB Day'

PNS : HAZARIBAG

An awareness program on 'World TB Day' was organized at Shrinivas Institute of Paramedical Sciences on Saturday. Students actively participated in the awareness programme. A Poster making competition was organized on this occasion. On the other hand, patients and girl students were given necessary information related to the symptoms and prevention of TB disease by the doctors. Palak Pandey and Praveen Singh got first position in the poster making competition. On the other hand, Tasneem and Roopa Kumari got the second position. Secretary Dr. Praveen Srinivas said that TB is not an incurable disease. By hiding the disease, the infection spreads to other people as well, so its investigation and treatment is completely free, don't panic, get the treatment done.



BANSHIDHAR RUKHAIYAR

The vandalisation of the Indian High Commission in London on nineteenth March by a handful of supporters of the so called Khalistan and the total absence of British security apparatus is a matter of grave concern for India. They tried to pull down the Indian tricolour which was thwarted by some staff of the mission. The reaction of the Indian government was quick and sharp. The Deputy Secretary of the British embassy in Delhi was called and conveyed the strong displeasure of the Indian government.

The Government of India withdrew the elaborate security apparatus deployed at British embassy in Delhi. It was not an angry reaction but a simple step based on the cardinal principle of reciprocity in the field of diplomatic relationship and an exhibition of India's assertive foreign policy. It brought desired result in no time. The British government immediately provided security to the Indian embassy.

The political class of Britain has gone into a damage control exercise as it has seriously dented its image. No sovereign country can leave a foreign embassy unprotected and to fend for itself. The much acclaimed British Police cut a sorry figure in the whole incident. It was in this backdrop that Bob Blackman, an MP of Conservative Party tore into what he called Khalistan Project hand said that it was a very very small section of the Sikhs living in London who supported it. A vast

majority of the Sikhs living over there completely rejected this idea. It is a serious blow to the so called Khalistan Project.

On the nineteenth March itself, the Indian Consulate in California was vandalised by a handful of Khalistani supporters. The American officials condemned the incident and said the guilty would be brought to book. President Joe Biden called it a totally unacceptable and punishable incident. India expects that this would be translated into action shortly and effectively. It is really a matter of profound concern that no such condemnation has come from Rishi Sunak, though the local police in London has beefed up the security of the Indian High Commission. The Indian Government has strongly reacted to such an incident and asked the American government to take necessary action to stop such vandalisation. The way India has reacted against Britain will have a positive impact else-

where and countries like America, Australia and Canada will act properly while dealing with these Khalistani activists.

India had not retaliated strongly in the past while dealing with such incidents that allowed laxity on the part of foreign nations while dealing with the security of Indian embassies abroad. Now such elements will not have a friendly or rather an encouraging environment to carry out their nefarious designs against India in foreign lands. This stern attitude of India has not come a day too early as attempts to vandalise the Indian embassy in America and UK are continuing. The Government of India has started identifying the people involved in such incidents abroad and FIRs have been lodged against them in India and their passports might be cancelled to force them to return to India so that they could be prosecuted here as per the law of the land. Besides, the govern-

ment should pressurise the concerned foreign governments to repatriate such Indian nationals and they must not be given political refuge over there. The supporters of the idea of Khalistan in India should be suppressed with an iron hand. Soft peddling in this matter would be counterproductive and intensify the demand as it fetches money for the trouble makers from those quarters in India and abroad who are inimical to our peaceful and rapid growth. Their supply line of funds should be cut as soon and as effectively as possible. There is no real support to the cause of Khalistan in the country and abroad and this is the silver line in the whole case. However, it demands a strong and deft handling of the entire situation.

THE WRITER IS A NOTED ACADEMICIAN AND POLITICAL COMMENTATOR. VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE PERSONAL.

Special Camp organized by NSS Unit 1 of St. Columba College

AVINASH ANJAN : HAZARIBAG

A special camp was organized in Sakhia Panchayat by St. Columba College, National Service Scheme Unit 1. The camp is being organized from March 20 to March 26. The day in the camp was started with Prabhat Pheri, after which the work of survey of unemployed people was done by the volunteers as per the format given by the Government of India. Academic session was organized on the sixth day of the camp, in which special guests were welcomed through traditional Jharkhandi folk dance and songs on their arrival. After tilak and aarti in the camp, the guests were entered in the auditorium. The guests started the program by offering flowers and lighting the lamp on the picture of Swami Vivekananda. Also, the program started with NSS Lakshya Geet. The theme of the academic session was the role of youth in nation building.

Dr. Sarita Singh, Former Program Officer, National Service Scheme, St. Columba College and Present Head, Department of English, Vinoba Bhawe University explained the duty of the volunteers of National Service Scheme and motivated them. She also explained the requirements of tree plantation and blood donation and showed the right direction to the volunteers. The chief guest of the academic session, Umesh Pratap, Bureau Chief Sanmarg and Press Club President described NSS as the basis of social harmony and development of the society. He said that Swami Vivekananda appealed to the NSS volunteers to follow the ideas of character building and personality development that the knowledgeable, sylvan, cultured youth imbued with national spirit in front of India and the world.



Not Rahul, entire BJP is anti-OBC: Baghel

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday hit back at BJP chief J.P. Nadda over his allegation that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had insulted Other Backward Class (OBC) by calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'thief'.

Instead, it was the BJP that was against the OBC as at influenced the Chhattisgarh Governor to withhold the amendment bills which sought to hike the quota for backward classed in admissions to educational institutions and jobs, Baghel said.

Baghel asked BJP leaders



to stop shedding crocodile tears over OBC issue and to reply to the queries of Rahul Gandhi on business tycoon Adani.

"They must answer the queries of Rahulji as how many times Adani had made foreign tours with Modi and about his invest-

ment in shell companies," he said.

The entire BJP was against backward classes, he added.

"Baghel asked BJP leaders to stop shedding crocodile tears over OBC issue and to reply to the queries of Rahul Gandhi on business tycoon Adani"

'Counselling must post promotion of teachers'

"To bring transparency, the designation should be allocated based on the needs of the schools"

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh School Education Minister Dr Prem Sai Singh Tekam on Saturday underlined the need for counselling after the promotion of teacher cadre in the state.

He asked the Principal Secretary in the School



Education department to ensure its implementation with immediate effect, an official communication said.

To bring transparency, the designation should be allocated based on the needs

of the schools and where requirement for teachers exists. The secretariat and Public Instructions Directorate should monitor the promotion process, the Minister stated.

Congress to hold 'Satyagraha' today



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Congress will hold a one-day sit-in district and block level 'Satyagraha' on March 26 against the "dictatorial

attitude" of the BJP government at the Centre, it was announced on Saturday.

It said that Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn 'Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye, Jo Peed Parai Jaane Re' will be sung during the protest.

C'garh gets award for ground water conservation

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Department of Forest and Climate Change in Chhattisgarh received the 'Gold Award for Environment' category of 'Skotch Award' for excellent performance in the state.

The award was for the successful implementation of the government scheme 'Narva Vikas Yojana' by utilizing the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds, an official communication said.

Under the scheme, more



than 1.5 crore structures in built in forest areas across 6,395 streams have been the state creating 23 lakh

hectares of water catchment areas.

The award was for the successful implementation of the government scheme 'Narva Vikas Yojana'

The structures include BrushWood Check Dam, Loose Boulder Check Dam,

Gabion Structure, Earthen Check Dam, Contour Trench, Water Absorption Trench and Staggered Contour Trench.

Apart from these, stop dams, percolation tanks and ponds, small ponds and waterholes are also being constructed.

At present, the construction work of ground water conservation structures are in progress in 32 forest divisions, two national parks, three tiger reserves and one elephant reserve.

The existing structures have helped to increase the ground water level.

Health Minister for stern action on pre-natal test



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Health and Family Welfare Minister T S Singh Deo on Saturday asked officials to take action on violation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act.

He called for regular inspection of sonography centres. He was holding the State Board of Supervisors of PCPNDT Act held at Swasthya Bhawan, Nava Raipur.

He underlined the need for creating awareness among the people about the Act.

Dr. Prashant Srivastava,

Joint Director, said 56 sonography centres in 14 districts of the state have been inspected.

Notices have been issued to 14 centers based on violations of the Act.

Similarly, at the district level, 853 centers were inspected and action has been taken against 23 centres.

Boy becomes child constable



STAFF REPORTER ■
AMBIKAPUR

Police in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district have appointed a five-year-old boy as a child constable, a senior official said on Saturday.

Surguja Superintendent

of Police Bhavana Gupta said he was given the appointment on compassionate grounds after the accidental death of his father Rajkumar Rajwade, a constable in the district.

The boy will be posted as a constable after completion of 18 years, she added.

Traffic Inspector suspended

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

A police officer was suspended on Saturday in Raipur city after a video went viral purportedly showing him abusing and beating a tribal woman inside a women's hostel here.

Raipur Traffic Inspector Rakesh Choubey suspended with immediate effect based on prima facie evidence, Raipur Senior Superintendent of Police Prashant Agrawal told The Pioneer.

Choubey has been attached with the Police Lines during the suspension period. The SSP said the video of March 24



showed him abusing and beating the woman in Devendra Nagar.

A departmental proceeding has been initiated against him, Agrawal said.

Man arrested for killing police officer in C'garh



STAFF REPORTER ■
KORBA

Chhattisgarh Police on Saturday arrested a 25-year-old man for killing a police officer in Korba district earlier this month.

Korba Additional Superintendent of Police Abhishek Verma told The Pioneer that Karan Giri has been taken into custody for

murdering Assistant Sub-Inspector Narendra Singh Parihar.

Parihar was posted at the Bango police station. His body was found in the police station on March 10.

The police learnt that Parihar had arrested Giri in December last year under the excise Act and the latter was jailed.

Also, Parihar seized a DJ sound system on March 8 when the accused and others were dancing during Holi celebration.

Giri confessed to killing Parihar. He said he decided to kill Parihar when he spotted him celebrating Holi with colleagues and dancing to the same DJ sound system.

Baghel launches App for Socio-Eco Survey

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday launched a mobile App for the Chhattisgarh Socio-Economic Survey.

The application has been prepared by the Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society (CHIPS), which was launched at the 'Bharose Sammelan' held at Sargaon in Mungeli district.

Baghel said modern techniques were being used appropriately for development.

A socio-economic survey of all sections of the state would be done through the



App. After the data is available, schemes would be made for the benefit of the citizens.

He said CHIPS will train 200 master trainers from March 25 to 29 at Thakur Pyarelal State Training Institute, Nimora (Raipur).

Baghel also launched a website of the Mahatma

Gandhi Rural Industrial Park (RIPA) scheme. Complete information of all the beneficiaries of the RIPA scheme will be available in the portal.

He said the RIPA scheme will provide equal opportunity to the rural entrepreneurs to compete at the global level.

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
MAHANADI GODAVARI BASIN RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> (1st Call)

System Tender No. : 128348/NIT No. : 15/SAC/22-23, Rajnandgaon, Dated : 23.03.2023
Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to **17-04-2023** at 17:30 Hour (IST):-
Name of Work : CONSTRUCTION OF GATAPARA (KHURD) ANICUT ON LOCAL NALLA BLOCK DONGARGARH DISTRICT RAJNANDGAON
Probable Amount of Contract :- **Rs.253.19 Lakhs**
(As per S.O.R. Dated 01.08.2010 (As Amendments 22.08.2022))

The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) **from Date 31-03-2023 at 17:31 Hours.(IST) onwards.**

NOTE :-All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

Executive Engineer
Water resources Division, Rajnandgaon (C.G.)
For , Chief Engineer, Mahanadi Godavari Basin Raipur (C.G.)

G- 99605/6

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
WATER RESOURCES CIRCLE , RAIGARH (C.G.)

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> (First Call)

System Tender No. : 128059/NIT No. : 09/SAC/22-23, Dated : 20.03.2023
Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to **10-04-2023** at 17:30 Hour (IST):-
Name of Work : CONSTRUCTION & RENOVATION WORK OF LADUKHAI TANK, CANAL.
Probable Amount of Contract :- **Rs. 135.79 Lakhs**

The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) **from Date 27-03-2023 at 17:31 Hours.(IST) onwards.**

NOTE: 1. All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

2. Probable Amount of Contract (P.A.C.) is as per S.O.R. 01.08.2010.(As Amendments 22.08.2022)

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION, RAIGARH (C.G.)
For , Superintending Engineer water Resources Circle, Raigarh(C.G.)

G- 99598/3

Covid surge: Centre raises concern at low testing by States, UTs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the Covid cases are climbing up gradually in some parts of the country, States and UTs seem to have lowered their guard with the Centre on Saturday raising concern at low level and insufficient testing by States and UTs compared to the standards prescribed by WHO ie 140 tests per million. It also asked them to keep a close watch on the evolving etiologies (causes of diseases) of Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) cases.

In an advisory issued jointly by DG, Indian Council of Medical Research, Dr Rajiv Bahl and Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, the Centre pointed out that India usually sees a seasonal rise in influenza cases from January to March & again from August to October. Presently, the most



prominent subtypes of influenza in circulation in the country seem to be influenza A (H1N1) and influenza A (H3N2). “The States must keep a watch on these causes of diseases.”

“A gradual but sustained increase in the trajectory of Covid-19 cases in the country has been witnessed since mid-February 2023. As on date, most of the active cases in the country are largely being reported by a few states like Kerala (26.4 per cent), Maharashtra (21.7 per cent),

Gujarat (13.9 per cent), Karnataka (8.6 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (6.3 per cent).

“While the rates of hospitalisation and death due to the disease remains low, largely because of the significant coverage achieved in terms of Covid-19 vaccination rates by all states/UTs, this gradual rise in cases needs reinvigorated public health actions to contain the surge,” said the advisory. The states have been told that Covid and influenza share a number of similarities in terms of mode of transmis-

sion, high risk population, clinical signs and symptoms. While this may present a clinical dilemma for the attending doctors in terms of diagnosis, this also renders both these diseases easily preventable by following simple public health measures like avoiding overcrowded and poorly ventilated settings, wearing a mask in crowded & closed settings, advisory reads.

The States have also been advised to take a stock of hospital preparedness including drugs, beds including ICU beds; medical equipment, medical oxygen, capacity building of human resource on existing guidelines as well as vaccination coverage.

“Testing at the level of districts & blocks also varies, with some states heavily relying on the less sensitive rapid antigen tests. Hence it is critical to maintain optimum testing for Covid-19, equitably distributed across the states,” said the advisory.

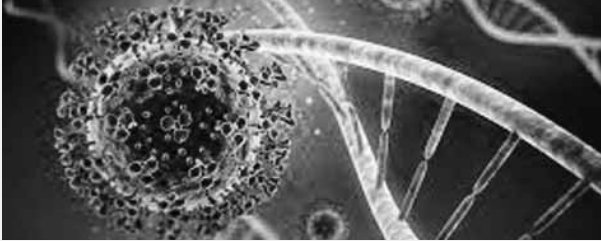
‘Virus may alter DNA in infected patients’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The virus that causes Covid-19, may alter DNA in the patients it infects. This not only explains immunological symptoms after infection, but also potentially links to long Covid, researchers have said.

In a study published in the Nature Microbiology, they said that the genetic materials in the cells of the human body are stored in a structure called chromatin. Some viruses of other categories have been reported to hijack or change our chromatin so that they can successfully reproduce in our cells.

But SARS-CoV-2’s effect on chromatin was not known. “This particular finding is quite unique and has not been seen



in other coronaviruses before. “What we found here is a unique mechanism of SARS-CoV-2 that is associated with its severe impacts on human health.” said Wenbo Li, Associate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of the McGovern Medical School at University of Texas-Houston.

In this study, researchers used leading-edge methods and comprehensively characterised the chromatin archi-

ture in human cells after a Covid-19 infection. They found that many well-formed chromatin architectures of a normal cell become de-organised after infection.

For example, there is one type of chromatin architecture termed A/B compartments that can be analogous to the yin and yang portions of our chromatin. “After SARS-CoV-2 infection, we found that the yin and yang portions of the chromatin lose their nor-

mal shapes and start to mix together. Such mixing may be a reason for some key genes to change in infected cells, including a crucial inflammation gene, interleukin-6, that can cause cytokine storm in severe Covid-19 patients,” Li said.

In addition, the study published in the journal found that chemical modifications on chromatin were also altered by SARS-CoV-2. “The changes of chemical modifications of chromatin were known to exert long-term effects on gene expression and phenotypes. Therefore, our finding may provide an unrealised new perspective to understand the viral impacts on host chromatin that can be associated with long Covid,” added Xiaoyi Yuan, from the McGovern Medical School.

Army Chief presents ‘President’s Standards’ to 4 Armoured Regiments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Saturday presented the prestigious ‘President’s Standards’ or ‘Nishan’ to four Armoured Regiments of the Indian Army, namely 49 Armoured Regiment, 51 Armoured Regiment, 53 Armoured Regiment and 54 Armoured Regiment during an impressive Standards Presentation Parade held at Suratgarh Military Station in Rajasthan.

The Armoured Corps is one of the premier combat arms of the Indian Army. Since Independence, the valour, courage and fortitude shown by the Armoured Regiments during the wars have been exceptional, officials said here.

Pande reviewed the Standard presentation parade and appreciated the rich leg-



cy of valour, sacrifice and traditions displayed by the Armoured Corps in war and in peace.

The Army Chief in his address commended the Regiments who received the prestigious President’s Standards, for their exemplary

service and conveyed his best wishes to the ranks and families. He also brought out that the modern and professional Indian Mechanised Forces are always ready to meet the future challenges and stand committed to guard the nation against all threats.

India, US will boosting ties, says Indian envoy to US

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

India and US will work towards further strengthening their bilateral ties, Indian Ambassador to Washington Taranjit Singh Sandhu said soon after meeting the new US ambassador to New Delhi Eric Garcetti. He was sworn in as the next envoy to India late Friday.

The meeting between the two envoys took place hours after Garcetti’s oath taking ceremony in Washington. Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

“Congratulated @eric-garcetti on his swearing-in as



the Ambassador of America to India,” Sandhu tweeted after the meeting.

“As he prepares to depart for India, we discussed some immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral partnership, in line with our Leaders’ vision,” Sandhu said. He said he looked forward to working with Garcetti.

The US Embassy in India has been without an ambassador since January 2021, the longest stretch in the history of US-India relations that the

post has sat vacant, since Kenneth Juster, the last US envoy in New Delhi, stepped down after the change of government in America.

The US Senate confirmed Garcetti’s nomination earlier this month, ending a protracted hiatus of over two years to fill the key diplomatic position. Garcetti’s nomination was pending before the US Congress since July 2021 when he was nominated by President Joe Biden.

Garcetti’s daughter Maya held the Hebrew Bible during the swearing-in ceremony. The ceremony was attended by his close family members, including wife Amy Wakeland, father Gil Garcetti, mother Sukey Garcetti and mother-in-law Dee Wakeland.

“I cannot wait to serve,” Garcetti said, when asked about his new diplomatic assignment.

USBRL project will be completed by Jan-Feb 2024: Vaishnav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Union Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav Saturday announced the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Line (USBRL) project will be completed by Jan-Feb 2024.

The Union Minister also said after connecting with the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla train service, a specially built Vande Bharat train will be introduced in the rail section.

Addressing media persons



at Srinagar Railway Station the Union Minister said that the budget allocation for USBRL was about Rs 800 crore per year before 2014, which has been increased to Rs 6,000 crore in the year 2022-23.

The Minister also visited Budgam Railway Station and inquired about various procedures related to the maintenance of trains at Carriage & Wagon Depot, Budgam.

Ashwini Vaishnav also undertook a journey from Budgam Railway Station to Baramulla Railway Station by special inspection car. He also made a detailed overview of the safety and security of

the railway section and took stock of the passenger amenities at Baramulla Railway Station. The Minister discussed with the concerned railway officers the development works to be done at Baramulla Railway Station. He also interacted with Railway employees and inspected the dry fruit stall of “One Station One Product”. He appreciated the local dry fruits of Baramulla and purchased them using the digital mode of payment.

The Parcel Office was also inaugurated at Srinagar Railway Station in the presence of the Union Minister.

India pushing for TB vaccines to eliminate infection by 2025

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Faced with the target to achieve Tuberculosis (TB) elimination by 2025, India is pushing for expediting, manufacturing and introduction of potential TB vaccines at the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) slated September this year.

“TB vaccine is needed urgently”, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said while highlighting the crucial importance of TB vaccine in the global fight against the disease. Speaking at the 36th Board Meeting of STOP TB Partnership on Saturday, he urged its officials to take up the matter of need for TB vaccines at the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September this year.

“We have seen the unwavering commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to end TB in India. We are ready to lead from the front and be the voice of the Global South in the collaborative fight against TB,” said Mandaviya.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Mandaviya stated that “India has identified 3 impor-

tant health priorities under the G20 Presidency. All of these are focused on universal health coverage and relevant to our response for TB elimination”.

Dr Mandaviya emphasized that effort is on not only to rebound from Covid but also bring innovative strategies like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan which has become a one-of-a-kind movement in the world.

Executive Director of the Stop TB Partnership Dr Lucia Ditiu emphasized that “India has a pivotal role in eliminating TB because India’s progress will drive the world.”

She also praised India for “doing very sophisticated modelling with their Ni-kshay data.”

“Their innovations, ideas and strategies for bringing healthcare closer to people is something that the whole world can emulate”, she stated.

The Stop TB Partnership Board also appreciated India’s estimation of TB burden developed with in-country evidence.

An “Accountability Report of TB-affected Communities & Civil Society: Priorities to Close the Deadly Divide” was also launched at the event.

Septuagenarian’s odyssey in law knows no bound

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

While the youth of the country study for earning a livelihood, S D Parameswaran, the septuagenarian from Ernakulam is engaged in studies for the sake of studying. Seventy two year old Parameswaran did his college, Government Law College, Thrissur, proud by passing out in the three-year LLB course with all As and enrolling as a lawyer in Kerala High Court early this week. The fact that all his classmates were young enough to be his grandchildren did not deter him from waking up at 3 in the morning, complete his studies and homework for the day and travel 80 km to Thrissur by train to attend daily classes.

For Parameswaran, who had retired from the Department of Atomic Energy as General Manager of Indian Rare Earths Ltd, life itself was a challenge. Though he passed out of the matriculation class with top honors, his poor parents could not afford to send him for higher education.

“Those were the days when typists and stenographers were very much in demand. I managed to excel in stenography and with the meagre income from that job, joined in the higher secondary class and then in Regional Engineering College, Kozhikode.

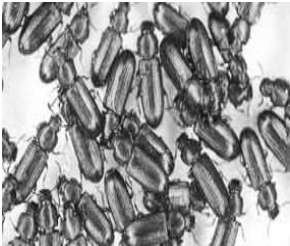
Secrets of beetles’ survival revealed

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ever wondered how beetles, commonly found pests like grain weevil and red flour beetles which eat their way through thousands of tons of food globally, manage to survive even in extremely dry environments? Scientists have now found that secrets lie in their rear ends as they have the ability to open their rectums and take up water from food and moist air and convert it into fluid.

“Besides being able to suck water out of the air, beetles are also extremely effective at extracting liquid from food. Even dry grain, which may consist of 1-2 percent water, can contribute to a beetle’s fluid balance,” said the researchers after investigating the molecular and physiological processes underlying the ability of beetles to survive their entire lives without drinking any liquid water whatsoever.

The new collaborative study by researchers from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Edinburgh explains just how. Beyond helping to explain how beetles thrive in environments where few other animals can survive, the knowledge could eventually be used for more target-



ed and delicate control of global pests such as the grain weevil and red flour beetle.

Insect pests eat their way through thousands of tons of food around the world every year. Food security in developing nations is particularly affected by animal species like the grain weevil and red flour beetle which have specialized in surviving in extremely dry environments, granaries included, for thousands of years.

“We have shed new light on the molecular mechanisms that allow beetles to absorb water rectally. Insects are particularly sensitive to changes in their water balance. As such, this knowledge can be used to develop more targeted methods to combat beetle species which destroy our food production, without killing other animals or harming humans and nature,” says Associate Professor Kenneth Veland Halberg of the Department of Biology, who led the research.

Differences between Govt, judiciary doesn’t mean confrontation: Rijiju

PTI ■ MADURAI

Denying any clash between the government and judiciary as speculated in the media, Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday contended that differences were inevitable in a democracy but they should not be construed as confrontation.

The Minister inaugurated the Chief Judicial Magistrate court, Mayiladuthurai, in the presence of Chief Justice of India Justice D Y Chandrachud, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and Acting Chief Justice of Madras High Court Justice T Raja here.

“We have differences, but it doesn’t mean there is confrontation. It sends a wrong message across the world.

“I want to make it clear that there is no problem between different organs of the State. There are signs of robust democratic actions, which are not a crisis,” he emphasised.

Pointing to some media reports of alleged differences between the government and the Supreme Court or the legislature and judiciary, the Union Minister said, “we must understand that we are in a democracy. There are bound to be certain differences in terms of some outlook but you can’t have conflicting posi-



tions. This doesn’t mean confrontation. We are the largest democracy in the world.”

The Centre would support the Indian judiciary to be independent, he said, and called upon the bench and the bar — being two sides of the same coin — to work together to ensure that the court complex is not divided. “One can’t exist without the other. Court must have proper decorum and conducive atmosphere.”

He further said, “everybody can’t think alike.”

“We are not ruled by a dictatorial king, so the difference of opinion can’t be termed as a crisis in Indian democracy. We can criticise each other but when it comes to national interest we must be one,” he stressed.

His Ministry was involved in developing a common core vocabulary where Indian languages will have certain common usages, purely technical in nature, soon, to ensure that common people receive orders

in their respective languages. Lauding the courts in Tamil Nadu for their excellent performance during the pandemic in delivering justice to the people, he said judicial infrastructure in Tamil Nadu was comparatively better than in many States in India.

Recently, he visited Puducherry and found that the kind of work being done to improve the judicial infrastructure was possible only when the judiciary and government worked together in understanding the issues and tried to solve them.

Talking about fund allocations, he said last year the government had allotted Rs 9,000 crore for district and other courts in the State, and his department was pushing hard for utilisation of funds so that more could be sought.

“In some States, I realised that requirement of court and understanding of government has some shortcomings,” Rijiju said.

Pro-Khalistan groups protest at London’s Parliament Square

PTI ■ LONDON

A small group of protesters carrying pro-Khalistan flags and banners in support of Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh gathered at Parliament Square here on Saturday, as part of similar protests in Canada and the US.

Banners for the so-called “Protest against the discriminatory actions by Indian police forces against Bhai Amritpal Singh and other innocent Sikhs” had been circulating on social media, along with similar protests called in the cities of Toronto, Vancouver, Indianapolis and Fresno.

The protest in London comes days after a planned demonstration outside the Indian High Commission in London on Wednesday when protesters hurled coloured flares and water bottles towards the mission.

They have since taken to social media to allege that the objects were hurled by the Indian mission instead, allegations which have been countered by India House. It comes in the wake of violent disorder at the Indian mission last Sunday, when pro-Khalistan extremists smashed windows and also attempted to pull down the Tricolour from its flagpole at the mission. India has registered a strong protest with the UK government and the issue was also raised in the House of Commons earlier this week.

“We strongly condemn the vandalism and violent acts that took place outside the Indian High Commission in London. It was a completely unacceptable action against the High Commission and its staff,” Leader of the Commons Penny Mordaunt told MPs.

“There is ongoing work with the Metropolitan Police to review the protection measures around the High

‘Canada closely following developments in Punjab’

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canada is “very closely” following the developments in Punjab and will continue to address the concerns of the community, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly has said amid Punjab Police’s crackdown on radical preacher Amritpal Singh.

Joly was answering a question from Indo-Canadian MP Iqinder S Gaheer in the House of Commons on Thursday.

“We are aware of the evolving situation in Punjab, and we are following it very closely. We look forward to a return to a more stable situation,” she said.

“Canadians can always count on the Government of Canada to make sure that we will continue to address the concerns of many members of the community,” she added. Gaheer said he had heard about the ongoing mass suspension of Internet services in Punjab and asked Joly to update the House about the situation in India.

Responding to questions about foreign leaders and parliamentarians commenting on the action against Amritpal Singh, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi urged people residing abroad not to believe “inaccurate and motivated narratives” that are being circulated by some elements on

Commission, and any changes will be made to ensure the safety and security of its staff so that they can go about their business, serving both this country and India,” she said.

social media.

“Authorities in Punjab are undertaking operations to nab a fugitive. Information regarding that operation is being shared by authorities concerned on a regular basis,” the spokesman said in New Delhi. Authorities in Punjab last week suspended internet and SMS services in the state following the police crackdown against elements of ‘Waris Punjab De,’ headed by the radical preacher. Police in Punjab are still searching for Amritpal Singh.

Earlier on Wednesday Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in the House of Commons: “We are looking forward to a swift return to a more stable situation.” Canada has also seen a rise in anti-India activities recently by Khalistan supporters who have vandalised some Hindu temples. A Ram Mandir in Mississauga was defaced by ‘Khalistani extremists’ with anti-India graffiti on February 13, drawing a strong reaction from the Indian Consulate in Toronto.

“We strongly condemn the defacing of Ram Mandir in Mississauga with anti-India graffiti. We have requested Canadian authorities to investigate the incident and take prompt action on perpetrators,” India’s Consulate in Toronto had tweeted.

It followed UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly’s statement to condemn the unacceptable acts of violence and an assurance to conduct a security review at the Indian mission in London.

Four killed while collecting free flour in Pak

PTI ■ LAHORE

At least four elderly people have died in the last few days while trying to collect free flour from the government distribution points in Pakistan’s Punjab province, officials said on Saturday.

The deaths were reported after several people flocked to the government distribution points after the cash-strapped Pakistani government introduced a free flour scheme for the poor especially in Punjab province to beat the sky-rocketing inflation.

Four elderly people died and several fainted in a bid to

collect free wheat flour in Multan, Muzaffargarh and Faisalabad cities during the last few days,” a Punjab government senior officer told PTI.

He said the incidents occurred due to the huge rush of people and lack of facilities at the distribution points set up by the government to distribute free flour among the citizens.

“Two of them died due to stampede and the other two died after getting exhausted while standing in queue for long hours,” he said.

Police on the other hand also baton-charged the people

seeking free flour to force them to stand in the queue.

The people have criticised the lack of proper arrangements by the district administration at these distribution points and the short supply of flour.

Most of them arrive at the flour points early in the morning and have to wait for a long time in queues.

Former prime minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has condemned the deaths and criticised the policy.

“This is today’s Pakistan where the people are losing their lives to get free flour.

Eric Garcetti sworn in as US Ambassador to India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Eric Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

Garcetti’s daughter Maya held the Hebrew Bible during the swearing-in ceremony on Friday, which was presided by Vice President Harris.

Garcetti raised his right hand while Harris performed the ceremony, and family members cheered when the two longtime friends shook hands.

The ceremony was attended by his close family members, including wife Amy Wakeland, father Gil Garcetti, mother Sukey Garcetti and mother-in-law Dee Wakeland.

“It feels great. Can’t wait to serve,” Garcetti, 52, said when asked about his new diplomatic assignment.

“I’m so honoured the vice

Indian envoy talks partnership

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India’s envoy here Taranjit Singh Sandhu met the newly-appointed US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, and discussed with him immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral strategic partnership. The meeting took place soon after Garcetti was sworn on Friday in as the next US envoy to India.

Garcetti, President Joe Biden’s close aide, was officially sworn in as the US Ambassador to India by Vice President Kamala Harris, ending over two years of delay to fill one of Washington’s most critical diplomatic positions.

president did this,” he said.

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff also attended the event.

Former Mayor of Los Angeles Garcetti’s nomination was pending before the US



“Congratulated @eric-garcetti on his swearing-in as the Ambassador of America to India,” Indian Ambassador to Washington Sandhu tweeted after the meeting on Friday.

“As he prepares to depart for India, we discussed some immediate priorities in deepening the bilateral partnership, in line with our Leaders’ vision,” Sandhu said.

He said he looked forward to working with Garcetti.

The US Embassy in India has been without an ambassador since January 2021, the longest stretch in the history of US-India relations that the post has sat vacant, since Kenneth Juster, the last US envoy in New Delhi, stepped down after the change of government in America.

Tornadoes kill 23 in Mississippi

AP ■ ROLLING FORK

Emergency officials in Mississippi said 23 people have been killed by tornadoes that tore through the state on Friday night, destroying buildings and knocking out power as severe weather that produced hail the size of golf balls moved through several southern states.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency confirmed there had been 23 deaths as of 6:20 am on Saturday with dozens of injuries and four people missing throughout the state.

The agency said in a Twitter post that search and rescue teams from numerous local and state agencies were deployed along with personnel to assist those impacted by the tornadoes. The National Weather Service confirmed a tornado caused damage about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northwest of Jackson, Mississippi.

The rural towns of Silver City and Rolling Fork reported destruction as the tornado swept northeast at 70 mph (113 kph) without weakening, racing towards Alabama through towns including Winona and Amory into the night.

Pennsylvania chocolate plant blast kills five, six missing



Smoke rises from an explosion at the RM Palmer Co. plant in West Reading

WEST READING: An explosion at a chocolate factory in Pennsylvania on Friday killed five people and left six people missing, authorities said.

Several other people were injured by the explosion at the RM Palmer Co. plant, said West Reading Borough Police Department Chief of Police Wayne Holben, who did not confirm the exact number of injured.

The explosion just before 5 pm sent a plume of black smoke into the air, destroying one building and damaging a neighbouring building that included apartments.

“It’s pretty levelled,” West Reading Borough Mayor Samantha Kaag said of the explosion site. “The building in the front, with the church and

the apartments, the explosion was so big that it moved that building four feet forward.”

The cause of the blast in the community about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia was under investigation, Holden told reporters.

Eight people were taken to Reading Hospital Friday evening, Tower Health spokeswoman Jessica Bezler said.

Two people were admitted in fair condition and five were being treated and would be released, she said in an email. One patient was transferred to another facility, but Bezler provided no further details.

Kaag said people were asked to move back about a block in each direction from the site of the explosion but no evacuations were ordered. (AP)

GLOBE TROTTER

GAEKWAD REAPPOINTED FLORIDA UNIV TRUSTEE

WASHINGTON: A prominent Indian American businessman and community leader was on Friday reappointed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to the board of trustees of the prestigious University of Florida.

“Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the reappointment of Digvijay ‘Danny’ Gaekwad to the University of Central Florida Board of Trustees,” the Governor’s office said in a statement.

MAN ATTACKS THREE WITH GRENADE, KNIFE IN BERLIN

BERLIN: German police said on Saturday that they have arrested a 61-year-old man after three people were wounded in a hand grenade and knife attack in Berlin. Police said the attacker detonated the grenade in the entrance of an apartment building in the Reinickendorf neighborhood of the German capital on Friday night, wounding two women, aged 42 and 48, and a 61-year-old man.

KING CHARLES HONOURS QUEEN’S PALLBEARERS

LONDON: Britain’s King Charles III on Saturday recognised in a special Demise honours list the eight pallbearers who carried the late Queen Elizabeth II’s coffin at her funeral last year. The British soldiers, who were selected to be pallbearers from the King’s Company of 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards – known as the Queen’s Company previously – have been awarded the silver Royal Victorian Medal.

INTEL CO-FOUNDER MOORE DIES AT 94

SAN FRANCISCO: Gordon Moore, the Intel Corp. co-founder who set the breakneck pace of progress in the digital age with a simple 1965 prediction of how quickly engineers would boost the capacity of computer chips, has died. He was 94. Moore died on Friday at his home in Hawaii, according to Intel and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Biden: Will protect our personnel in Syria

AP ■ OTTAWA

President Joe Biden said Friday that the US would respond “forcefully” to protect its personnel after U.S. forces retaliated with airstrikes on sites in Syria used by groups affiliated with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard following a suspected Iranian-linked attack Thursday that killed a US contractor and wounded seven other Americans in northeast Syria.

“The United States does not, does not seek conflict with Iran,” Biden said in Ottawa, Canada, where he is on a state visit. But he said Iran and its proxies should be prepared for the US “to act forcefully to protect our people. That’s exactly what happened last night.” Activists said the US bombing killed at least four people.

While it’s not the first time

the US and Iran have traded strikes in Syria, the attacks and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to deescalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

The Pentagon said a drone attack on a US base Thursday killed a contractor and injured five US troops and another contractor. That was followed by two simultaneous attacks on US forces in Syria on Friday, according to US officials.

The officials said that based on preliminary information, there was a rocket attack Friday at a Conoco plant, and one US service member was injured but is in stable condition. At about the same time, several drones were launched at Green Village, where US troops are also based. One official said all but one of the

drones were shot down, and there were no US injuries there. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

Two Syrian opposition activist groups reported a new wave of airstrikes on eastern Syria that hit positions of Iran-backed militias after rockets were fired at a Conoco gas plant that has a base housing American troops. Several US officials, however, said the US did not launch any attacks late Friday, and it wasn’t clear if the activists were referring to the attack on US forces at Green Village. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the American intelligence community had determined the drone in Thursday’s attack on was of Iranian origin.

US officials said that conclusion was based on recovered debris and intelligence threat streams.

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, केन्द्रीय भण्डार, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, जल भवन, 'बी' ब्लॉक, नेहरू कालोनी, देहरादून पत्रांक-1197 / ई-निविदा / 2022-23 दिनांक- 24.03.2023									
ई-निविदा सूचना									
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वाणिज्यिक दूर अनुबंध पर, Tamper proof water meters (inferential type) as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 with ISI or EEC/MID certification mark shall be with protection class of IP68 with 2 years warranty anywhere in Uttarakhand की आपूर्ति।									
26/ 22-23		26,000,000.00	28.03.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	06.04.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 upto 11:00 a.m.	120 days	03.04.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	
अर्हता:- 1. ISI or EEC/MID certification mark license for water meters and factory as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 certificate holder or dealers authorized by the manufacturer are allowed to participate in this tender. The Joint Venture are also allowed in this tender. 2. Authorised dealer should have MOU with manufacturer with assured minimum quantity. 3. The preference will be given to the water meter manufacturers. Manufacturer must have supplied minimum 50,000 water meters to government/semi govt/PSU in last seven years ie 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. 4. Production unit of the manufacturer should be established in India.									
27/ 22-23		5,000,000.00	28.03.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	06.04.2023 from 11:00 a.m. to 10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	10.04.2023 upto 5:00 p.m.	11.04.2023 upto 11:00 a.m.	120 days	03.04.2023 at 11:00 a.m.	
अर्हता:- 1. ISI or EEC/MID certification mark license for water meters and factory as per standard conforming to IS-779:1994/IS-2373-1981/ISO: 4064 certificate holder or dealers authorized by the manufacturer are allowed to participate in this tender. The Joint Venture are also allowed in this tender. 2. Authorised dealer should have MOU with manufacturer with assured minimum quantity. 3. The preference will be given to the water meter manufacturers. Manufacturer must have supplied minimum 50,000 water meters to government/semi govt/PSU in last seven years ie 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. 4. Production unit of the manufacturer should be established in India.									
ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारीयों व शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in एवं विभागीय वेबसाइट http://ujs.uk.gov.in पर ऑन लाइन देखी / प्राप्त की जा सकती है। अधिशासी अभियन्ता									

AP ■ BEIJING

New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta has expressed concern to China over any provision of lethal aid to support Russia in its war against Ukraine during a meeting with her Chinese counterpart.

Her press office on Saturday detailed Mahuta’s cautionary remarks in Beijing, days after Chinese President Xi Jinping concluded his trip to Moscow, a

warm affair in which Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin praised each other and spoke of a profound friendship.

Mahuta’s four-day trip, which began Wednesday, was the first made by a New Zealand foreign minister to Beijing since 2018 but it came at an awkward time as Xi visited Moscow the same week to give Putin a diplomatic boost after the International Criminal Court said it wants to put him on trial for alleged war crimes.

On the Ukraine war, Mahuta reiterated her government’s condemnation of Moscow’s “illegal invasion” to her counterpart Qin Gang.

She also told Qin’s predecessor Wang Yi, now the Chinese Communist Party’s most senior foreign policy official, that peace and prosperity are the expectations of all parties, according to China’s official news agency Xinhua. New Zealand supports political settlement of disputes through dialogue, she was quot-

ed saying in the report.

Wang said the pressing task is to achieve a ceasefire and resume peace talks, and that China would continue to play a constructive role to promote a political settlement, the agency added. During the meeting with Qin, Mahuta also raised concerns over the human rights situation in Xinjiang, the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong, disputes in the South China Sea and increasing tensions in the Taiwan Strait, her press office said.

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APPENDIX IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6) r/w proviso to Rule 9(1)] E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Public Notice for E-auction sale of immovable property under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to rule 8(6) r/w proviso to Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and Borrower & guarantor in particular that the immovable property described herein below ("**Secured Asset**"), mortgaged to Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited acting in its capacity as Trustee of EARC Trust SC- 30, ("**EARC**"), the physical possession of which has been taken by Authorised Officer of EARC on October 31, 2022, will be sold by way of E-Auction on **April 13, 2023 at 12:00 Noon** with unlimited extension of 5 Minutes each through e-Auction Agency M/s e-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger) on the website/portal <https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net> on "As is where is", "As is what is", "Whatever there is" and "No Recourse" basis for recovery of aggregate dues of **Rs. 505,29,95,872.25/- (Rupees Five Hundred Five Crores Twenty Nine Lac Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy Two and Twenty Five Paise Only)** being due as on August 23,2022, together with interest at contractual rates and other costs and expenses thereon to EARC from **KLG SYSTEL LIMITED (in Liquidation) ("Borrower")** and Mr. **Kumud Goel** and Mrs. **Pushpa Lata Goel ("Guarantors")**. The Description of Secured Asset, Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit for the Secured Assets shall be as follows:

Description of Secured Asset	
All that piece and parcel of Industrial plot of land being Plot No. 24, admeasuring 1000 sq. mtr. in Sector 18, Electronics City, Gurgaon, Haryana along with all the building/structures being thereon (total built-up structure - 15,750 Sq. Ft.) and bounded as follows (North: Access Road, South: Plot No.22, East: Access Road West: Plot No. 23	
Reserve Price	Rs.11,47,50,000/-
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.1,14,75,000/-
OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS	
Site Inspection	29/03/2023 to 10/04/2023, between 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
Document Verification	On working days between 03/04/2023 to 10/04/2023.
Bid Document Purchase	On working days between 10/04/2023 and 11/04/2023.
EMD amount payment	By 2pm on 12/04/2023
Last Date of submission of bid document	By 5pm on 12/04/2023
Commencement of e-auction sale	12 Noon on 13/04/2023
Bank details	Ac No. 0004103000054719, IFSC No. IBKL00000004, IDBI Bank, Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Mumbai.
Officer contact details	7506642534 Meghraj.deshmukh@edelweissarc.in

For detailed terms and conditions of the auction sale, please refer to the link provided in the Secured Creditor's website i.e. www.edelweissarc.in/Propertiesale

Date: 26.03.2023 **Sd/-**
Place: Mumbai **Authorized Officer**

Frame policy on e-vehicles, Parliament panel tells Govt

■ NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel has urged the government to frame a comprehensive national policy on electric vehicles (EV) by incorporating the elements of successful state models and international best practices.

These best practices should be based on charging infrastructure, battery swapping, battery waste management and recycling, public awareness in addition to the demand and supply side incentives such as lower GST, waiving road tax, registration fee, hire-purchase scheme at discounted interest rates by financial institutions for buying EVs, it said.

This would serve as a guiding policy to all states and ensure a comprehensive and uniform growth of the EV sector. It has also recommended that a roadmap for setting up of solar charging stations should be prepared in a time-bound manner to reduce the dependence on electricity generated by using coal, to remain true to the green mobility objective. The Committee on Estimates, in its report on "Evaluation of Electric Vehicles Policy", which was tabled in Parliament on Friday, further noted that the "Removal of



government support would result in price escalation of EVs significantly.

"The committee finds that a large number of start-ups are also involved in this field, which may have to shut down once the FAME II (second part of the scheme on promotion of electric vehicles called Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) is closed.

It is therefore recommended that the government should extend the FAME-II scheme beyond its current March 31, 2024 timeline by an

additional two years to allow more time to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and to make necessary adjustments/modifications to promote the electric vehicles (EVs)."

The high level panel further suggested to the Heavy Industries Ministry (the nodal department for electric vehicles' promotion) that along with EVs and hybrid vehicles, it should also promote other technologies like flex fuel vehicles, hydrogen ICE, and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles among others with greater emphasis for mobility transition. The

committee has also recommended that the ministry should coordinate with other ministries and charging infrastructure operators, to frame a comprehensive plan for rollout of a nationwide public charging network.

It also urged upon the ministry to consider offering purchase subsidies and cash-incentive schemes for scrapping or exchanging petrol and diesel vehicles for electric vehicles, as it would not only lead to faster adoption of EVs but also have a major impact on controlling CO2 emissions.

Jio installs 1 lakh towers to roll out India's fastest, deepest penetration of 5G network

■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio has installed close to 1 lakh telecom towers, nearly 5 times of its nearest competition, to roll out India's fastest and deepest penetration 5G telecom network to provide ultra-high speed internet, according to latest DoT data.

The latest daily status report from Department of Telecommunications' (DoT) National EMF Portal shows Jio has installed 99,897 BTS (base transceiver station) across 2 frequencies it owns (700 MHz and 3,500 MHz). In comparison, Bharti Airtel has 22,219 BTS.

Additionally, for every base station, Jio has 3 cell sites while Airtel has 2, the March 23 report said.

The more tower and cell sites means faster speed. According to the February 28 report of Ookla, the global leader in network intelligence and connectivity insights, Jio's top median speed is 506 Mbps (megabytes per second) as compared to 268 Mbps of Airtel. "5G has been in place in India for over four months and already it's having a tremendous impact on the state of mobile in the country," Ookla said in the report.

"Speedtest Intelligence data shows that median download speeds across India increased



by 115 per cent since before the 5G launch, from a 13.87 Mbps median download speed in September 2022 to 29.85 Mbps in January 2023."

5G performance has increased across early 5G adopters in most of the telecom circles, Kolkata achieved the fastest median 5G download speeds in January 2023 at above 500 Mbps.

"Jio experienced a top median 5G download speed of 506.25 Mbps in Kolkata, while Airtel of 268.89 Mbps in Delhi," it said. Airtel and Jio have ambitious targets in terms of 5G network rollout. "From 5G

networks' inception, 5G availability across 5G-capable devices has steadily increased, reaching 8.0 per cent for Airtel and 5.1 per cent for Jio," it said.

India has over half a billion internet users, making it the second-largest online market worldwide, just behind China. 5G telecom services were launched in October 2022. "Jio's USD 25 billion investment seems to be paying off.

In January 2023 Jio achieved median 5G download speeds above 400 Mbps across ten telecom circles. Jio's True 5G network is based on a 5G Standalone (5G SA), which

doesn't rely on a 4G LTE network.

"While Jio's initial 5G speeds fluctuated massively - from low single-digit to speeds well above 800 Mbps, which pointed to the operator recalibrating its networks, Jio's 5G performance has stabilized over the past four months.

In January 2023, Jio's 5G early adopters experienced speeds ranging from 246.49 Mbps median download speed in Himachal Pradesh to 506.25 Mbps in Kolkata," Ookla said.

In comparison, "Airtel's 5G early adopters experienced speeds ranging from a 78.13 Mbps median download speed in Kolkata to 268.89 Mbps in Delhi," it added.

Last month, Akash Ambani, chairman of Reliance Jio, had at a post budget webinar of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology stated that India's largest telecom company will undertake the fastest 5G rollout in the world.

Reliance Jio is a step-down subsidiary of Reliance Industries which is helmed by his father, Mukesh Ambani. Bharti Airtel had on Friday stated that its ultra-fast 5G service is available to customers in 500 cities in the country. "Airtel added 235 cities to its network, making it one of the largest rollouts to date."

Climate change threatening tea sector globally: ITA

■ KOLKATA

Leading planters body Indian Tea Association (ITA) said climate change is threatening the industry globally which is resulting in lower yields and rise in production costs.

A spokesman of ITA said climate change is also threatening the long-term viability of tea industry, which is also causing increasing pest infestations making pesticide residue management surfacing as a major challenge.

To mitigate this, ITA said that the industry needs to adopt a multi-faceted to address the climate change issue by way of sustainable farming practices and reduc-

tion in carbon footprint. In this context, the association maintained the industry involving all the stakeholders to invest in research to come out with mitigating solutions. There has also been a decline in rainfall and increase in temperature in the tea cultivating regions for the last several years, ITA said.

According to the association, future projections indicate a substantial reduction in suitability in tea cultivation in areas where the crop is grown.

The other major area where work is needed to be done by the industry is that optimisation in the use of chemical fertilisers and greater use of renewable energy. In the latest data compiled by Tea



Board, production in January 2023 in the country was 13.43

million kilogramme as against 16.22 million kilogramme in

the same month of last calendar year.

Cabinet approves MSP for raw jute for FY 2023-24

■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for raw jute for 2023-24 season, based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

The MSP of raw jute (TD-3 equivalent to earlier TD-5 grade) has been fixed at Rs 5,050 per quintal for 2023-24 season. This would ensure a return of 63.20 per cent over the all India weighted average cost of production. The announced MSP of raw jute for



production as announced by the government in the Budget 2018-19. It assures a minimum of 50 per cent as margin of profit. It is one of the important and progressive steps towards ensuring better remunerative returns to the jute growers and to incentivise quality jute fibre, said officials.

The Jute Corporation of India (JCI) will continue as Central government nodal agency to undertake price support operations and the losses incurred, if any, in such operations, will be fully reimbursed by the Central government.

Speed up PDS staff selection for quality food grains: Parl Panel

■ NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel has desired the Food and Public Distribution Department to expedite the process of revival of posts and new recruitments to raise the number of inspection and sample analysis to ensure delivery of good quality foodgrains to the ultimate beneficiaries.

"The Committee, while reiterating their original recommendation, desire the Department to expedite the process of revival of posts and new recruitments to raise the number of inspection and sample analysis thereby ensuring delivery of good quality foodgrains to ultimate beneficiaries and preventing storage losses of foodgrains," said a Action Taken report by the Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

Earlier, in their original report, it had observed that the



number of inspection and sample analysis should be increased to ensure good quality of foodgrains to beneficiaries and to prevent storage losses. "The Department in their Action Taken Reply has stated that increasing the frequency of inspections visits and sample analysis is subjected to availability of adequate staff. To achieve this, the Division is in the process of revival of posts, promotion and new recruitment on priority basis.

The Department has also informed that they have already formulated a SOP for storage loss/gain for stored goods. The Committee feel that raising

the number of inspections and sample analysis will have a significant effect on the quality of food grains," said the report. As per the report, the Ministry in its action taken reply has said: "The Storage & Research Division, D/o Food and Public Distribution has a mandate to ensure good quality foodgrains provided to the beneficiaries through various social security programmes.

"In pursuance to this, officer/official of QCC of S&R Division conducts inspection of various Food Storage Depots (FSDs) of FCI/state agencies, Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), State Warehousing Corporations (SWC), Rice Mills (RMs) Fair Price Shops (FPS), Rail Heads & Truck Heads, etc. Prior to 2018, the inspections of FPS were conducted only after receipt of any references/complaints. Presently, FPS inspections were included under targeted activities during 2020."

23K techies laid off in 82 desi startups

■ NEW DELHI

As layoffs continue to deepen amid recession fears, more than 23,000 employees have been laid off by at least 82 startups in India, and the list is only growing, the media reported.

According to a report in Inc42, 19 edtech startups, including four unicorns, have alone sacked more than 8,460 employees to date. The startups that lead the layoff tally include BYJU'S, Ola, OYO, Meesho, MPL, LivSpace, Innovaccer, Udaan, Unacademy and Vedantu, among others.

Home interiors and renovation platform Livspace this week laid off at least 100 employees as part of cost-cutting measures. Last week, SaaS platform for online stores Dukaan laid off nearly 30 per cent of its workforce, or around 60 employees — its second lay-off in about six months.

BPCL opens 19 EV fast-charging corridors in Karnataka, Kerala, TN

■ KOCHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) has announced that it has launched 19 EV fast-charging corridors along 15 highways in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

At approximately every 100 km on the corridors, one can find an EV fast-charging station, a top BPCL official said at an event here on Friday. "The fast-charging stations have been installed between 110 fuel stations which have been divided into various electric corridors."

BPCL Executive Director Incharge (Retail) P S Ravi said the company had launched three corridors with 19 fuel stations in Kerala, six corridors with 33 fuel stations in Karnataka and 10 corridors with 58 fuel stations in Tamil Nadu. "It takes just 30 minutes to charge an EV, giving a driving range of up to 125 km at our fuel stations. Therefore we have maintained a distance of

100 km between two charging stations," Pushp Kumar Nayar, Head of Retail in the South, said at the launch.

Ravi said the fast chargers were easy to use and could be self-operated without any manual assistance, even though support staff would be available if needed.

"BPCL has digitised the entire EV charger locator, charger operations and transaction process through the HelloBPCL app for an online hassle-free and transparent user experience," Ravi added.

The company has launched EV corridors connecting important religious and tourist destinations with cities, such as Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and Bandipur National Park in Karnataka, Guruvayoor and Kadampuzha temples in Kerala, Vallarpadam National shrine of Basilica at Kochi, Koratty and Markaz Knowledge City in Thrissur, Kanyakumari and Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai among others.

ChatGPT has power to change healthcare: Report

■ NEW DELHI

OpenAI's ChatGPT, which can write original prose and chat with human fluency, holds the potential to completely change healthcare, according to a report on Thursday.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, said that the revolutionary technology is coming faster than most people in the industry currently recognise.

It estimates the total Artificial Intelligence (AI) market will be worth \$383.3 billion in 2030, with a robust 21 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2022 to 2030. "ChatGPT can be used to assist doctors with bureaucrati-



ic tasks such as writing patient letters so doctors can spend more time on patient interaction. More importantly, chatbots have the potential to increase the effectiveness and accuracy of the processes for preventive care, symptom iden-

tification, and post-recovery care," said Tina Deng, Principal Medical Devices Analyst at GlobalData, in a statement. AI integration into chatbots and virtual assistants can motivate and interact with patients. It can review a patient's symp-

toms and then recommend diagnostic advice and different options like virtual check-ins or face-to-face visits with a healthcare professional.

This can reduce the workload for hospital staff, increase the efficiency of patient flow, and save healthcare costs. During the Covid-19 pandemic, chatbots have been developed for contactless screening of Covid-19 symptoms in healthcare institutions and to help answer questions from the public.

Chatbots can answer patient queries about medical products and share brand news with customers. Pharmaceutical and medical device companies can benefit from using AI-enabled virtual

agents to automate customer service processes and give patients round-the-clock attention.

Additionally, chatbots can be used for social purposes, increasing patient engagement. Chatbots offer advice on how to maintain health after treatment. They send automated reminders to take medications and re-visit information.

Meanwhile, a recent study in the Journal of The National Cancer Institute Cancer Spectrum, showed that when it comes to answering people's questions about cancer, especially regarding myths and misconceptions, ChatGPT was found 97 per cent accurate in providing the correct information. The AI was so accurate

that the test subjects were unaware whether the answers came from ChatGPT or the National Cancer Institute. However, the usage of chatbots in patient care and medical research raises several ethical concerns.

As massive patient data is fed into machine learning to improve the accuracy of chatbots, patient information is vulnerable. The information provided by chatbots might be more inaccurate and misleading, depending on the sources fed into the chatbots. "Regardless of the risks, AI-powered chatbots will be used widely in the healthcare industry. More regulations are expected to govern the health uses of chatbots," Deng said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

AIIMS TO GET WAITING HALL, BHOOMI POOJAN HELD

New Delhi: In a major relief to lakhs of patients and their attendees, a Waiting Hall will soon come up in the premises of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. The hall will be built by Dhanuka Group as a part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives. The Bhoomi Poojan of the hall was performed today in the



august presence of Dr. M. Sreenivas, Director, AIIMS; Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, Chairman, National Green Tribunal (NGT) and RG. Agarwal, Chairman, Dhanuka Group. The 80x80 meter size facility is being built near Community Centre in the AIIMS premises and expected to bring major relief to waiting patients and accompanying relatives and well-wishers. It is likely to be completed in four months and will have an attached washroom, drinking water facility and a canteen facility for refreshment. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sreenivas said, "It's a model example of a corporate helping a public institution in bringing facilities for our people. AIIMS is known worldwide for its excellent medical treatment and healthcare. This facility (waiting room) will bring major respite for waiting patients and accompanying relatives/well-wishers."

Murgappa, Premji to acquire Lotus Surgicals for ₹348 cr

Chennai: Murugappa Group's engineering firm Tube Investments of India and (TII) Azim Premji's private equity fund Premji Invest announced on Saturday that together they would be acquiring Lotus Surgicals, a maker of wound closure products, for a sum of Rs 348 crore. Tube Investments will invest Rs 233 crore for 67 per cent stake, while Premji Invest will pick up the remaining 33 per cent at Rs 115 crore from the existing shareholders of Lotus Surgicals.

"Tube Investments and Premji Invest on Saturday signed a share purchase agreement to acquire 100 per cent equity capital of Lotus Surgicals Pvt Ltd from India Medical Consumables Holdings Ltd, a Samara Capital entity, and other shareholders," a statement released here said. The two companies are partnering for the acquisition with the objective of setting up a medical



technology platform, which aspires to become a global platform to design, manufacture and distribute innovative world-class medical products at affordable price points, the statement added. Plans for scaling up the platform include organic and inorganic acquisitions.

"The acquisition of Lotus Surgicals Pvt Ltd marks our entry into the med-tech business. We believe that the Indian medical industry is expected to be one of the fastest growing sectors driven by both demand and supply side factors," TII executive chairman M A M Arunachalam said. **PTT**

Shooter Manu wins India's 7th medal

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Olympian shooter Manu Bhaker clinched the 25m pistol bronze medal at the ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup to take India's medal tally to seven, including a gold, here on Saturday.

Bhaker, the multiple World Cup medal winner, had shot 290 in the precision round on Friday and entered the second day of the competition well placed for the rapid round.

In the rapid round on Saturday, she again shot three superb series of 98, 99 and 97 to aggregate 294 and advance to the ranking round placed third.

Another Indian, Esha Singh, who had shot 292 in precision, scored 289 in rapid to aggregate 581 and advance to the ranking round placed eighth. In the ranking match 1, Bhaker qualified for the medal round as the third qualifier with an aggregate of 14 points, along with Germany's Doreen Vennekamp (14 points), while Esha was eliminated.

Two shooters from ranking match — China's Ziyue Du and Yaxuan Xiong — qualified for the medal round with 12



points each, to make up the quartet vying for the top position.

In a tough medal match, Bhaker was no match for Doreen (30 points) and Ziyue Du (29 points) who won the

gold and silver, while the Indian could aggregate only 20 points to finish her campaign with a bronze.

This is the first medal in the ongoing World Cup for Bhaker, who had failed to impress in her

favourite event, air pistol, on the opening day of the competition, finishing 16th with 568 points.

China continued their domination in the tournament, winning a sixth gold medal out of the eight decided so far. The

final competition day comes up on Sunday with two more finals left to be played -- the women's 3P and the men's 25m rapid fire pistol.

Aishwary finishes fourth

Om's rear-guard action propels him into tied second

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Om Prakash Chouhan fired a 66 to zoom 11 spots to tied second with a card of 13-under 203 while emerging as the highest-placed Indian at the USD 300,000 Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge here on Saturday. Italy's Lorenzo Scalise shot the third day's best score of seven-under 65 to take a two-shot lead at 15-under 201 at the Karnataka Golf Association (KGA) course.

Chouhan was in a four-way tie for the second spot along with Spain's Victor Pastor (67), England's Ashley Chesters (68) and Sweden's Rikard Karlberg (69). Aman Raj (71) was the second Indian in the top-10. He was placed tied ninth at 10-under 206.

Lorenzo Scalise (68-68-65), on his first trip to India, has posted only one bogey in his last 54 holes. The 27-year-old from Monza, who currently sits in 10th position on the Road to Mallorca Rankings, was pleased with every part of his game as he went error-free.

Scalise said, "I hit it great off the tee and put myself into some great positions. My putting was very good, and I only left myself short sided once.

"I've started the season well and my aim is to be in contention every week because you



have to play consistently throughout the year if you want to finish in the top 20 and get your DP World Tour card."

Chouhan (70-67-66), a seven-time winner on the PGTI, had a quiet start with just one birdie on the front-nine. The Mhow-based Chouhan then began to gather steam with birdie-eagle on the 10th and 11th making a 16-feet conversion on the latter.

Chouhan then stumbled with a double-bogey on the 12th where he found the hazard. He then came up with a fantastic rear-guard action by sinking long-distance birdie putts on the 14th, 16th, 17th and 18th to rise into contention.

The 36-year-old Chouhan said, "After a good start, the double-bogey on the 12th was quite disappointing but fortunately I didn't let that affect my game. I was pleased with the very strong finish. "I've been working on the mental aspect of my game as errors on the course used to affect me a lot in the past."

Satwik-Chirag duo enters semi-final of Swiss Open

PTI ■ BASEL

Dynamic Indian doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has entered the semi-finals of the Swiss Open Super Series 300 badminton event defeating the Danish pair of Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede in three hard-fought games.

On Friday night, the Indian pair fought off the challenge in 54 minutes, winning 15-21, 21-11, 21-14.

The victory came after a hard-fought 84-minute quarter-final battle and now they will face the Malaysian pair of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi late on Saturday night.

Satwik-Chirag are the only Indian contenders left in a tournament where the likes of PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen suffered early defeats.

The Indian pair didn't have a great start as they lost the first game easily at 15-21. The duo did pull things up in the middle of the game, reducing the deficit to just one point as they trailed 15-16.



However, the Danish pair won six consecutive points to wrap up the first game with ease.

The Indian pair picked up the tempo in the second game as they quickly got a seven-point cushion of 11-4 at the halfway break. They extended the lead to 10 points by the time parity was restored.

The third game started on an even keel but the Indians were fantastic at the net as they first got an 11-7 lead and then maintained a seven-point advantage till the end of the match to enter the last-four in style.

A tournament win will be a good comeback for the pair after a disappointing early round exit at the All England Championships.

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Former India star Renedy Singh is hoping that his football-crazy home state of Manipur gets to host more national team matches in the near future.

Manipur, which has been providing footballers to the national team for the longest time, is hosting its first international competition in the form of the ongoing tri-nation tournament involving India, Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan.

The seven Manipuris in the current Indian team are lucky to experience something that one of the state's greatest players, Renedy couldn't while representing the Blue Tigers.

"I was part of the national team for 12 years, but I never got to play even one match over here," said Renedy, the former midfielder who donned the India jersey 66 times between 1998 and 2011. Renedy was the star performer in many of India's memorable triumphs, including the LG Cup in Vietnam, the AFC Challenge Cup and twice in the Nehru Cup, but never had the opportunity to play for the national team in front of his home crowd in Manipur.

"I feel 25-30 thousand people turning up for India's first

I hope Manipur gets more national team matches in future: Renedy



match in Manipur is a big thing. I'm really happy for the current Manipuri players, and I hope we get more matches in the future," Renedy said. "In this state, football has always been number one. It's not cricket here in the northeast," he said.

"As we all know, we're one of the states which produces the most number of footballers, and we are still working hard to produce more. In every locality and community, you will see kids playing football. If the academies in Manipur keep

working, I'm sure we'll continue to provide good players in the future."

Speaking of academies, Renedy himself is a coach at the Classic Football Academy, one of Manipur's best, and one which is increasingly making its

mark at the national level.

CFA started as Renedy Football School in 2018 before being renamed three years ago.

"We just became the Hero U-17 Youth Cup champions. Our U-21 squad qualified for the Manipur state league and won the Shaheed Manoranjan Singh Memorial Tournament, beating former champions Sagolband United 7-0," Renedy said proudly. Rigorous competition at the youth level is a big reason why Manipur stands out in terms of churning out national team players. "There are many academies in Manipur with former players as coaches who are also working hard. Our rivalry and competition will only help Indian football," he claimed.

As a coach, Renedy spends a lot of time analysing his team's matches. So in attendance at the India-Myanmar game, it was natural for him to make some assessments. "Our players are fit, fast and well-built, but the only thing I want to see is them being more comfortable with the ball," he said.



Jeev, Chikka, Ahlawat tied 11th in rain-hit match

PTI ■ HONG KONG

Jeev Milkha Singh showed that he remains a force to reckon with and was the leading Indian alongside two youngsters — Veer Ahlawat and S Chikkarangappa — on the third day of World City Championship which has now been reduced to 54 holes.

Lightning and rain stopped the third round at 11.48 local time at the Hong Kong Golf Club and play was unable to restart again as the inclement weather persisted.

Jeev, who now plays on the Senior Tours in Japan and Europe, followed his second round 4-under 66 with another strong display as he was 2-under through eight holes in the third round.

With four Open slots available at the event, Jeev may well fancy his chances. At 5-under he is tied 11th with Ahlawat and Chikka.

Bidding to become the first player from Hong Kong to win an Asian Tour event and qualify for The Open, Taichi Kho was 1-under through two holes and was 13-under and last week's winner in DGC Open Miguel Tabuena (1-over through two) was 9-under.

Four other players are at 7-under and another four at 6-under, while the three top Indians with six others are at 5-under.

Other Indians are Gaganjeet Bhullar (66) who is among the few who have completed their third round. He is 4-under and tied 20th. He is alongside SSP Chawrasia at 1-under through eight holes. Chawrasia has a total of 4-under.

Shiv Kapur has a total of 3-under with six holes to play, while Karandeep Kochhar has a 1-under total with two holes to play. Honey Baisoya is 3-over with four holes to play.

Manika, Sreeja move up with other seeds

PTI ■ JAMMU

Top-seeded Manika Batra and second-seeded Sreeja Akula, also the defending champion, made short work of their respective opponents in women's singles to enter the Round of 32 in the 84th Senior National Table Tennis Championships here on Saturday.

Other seeded players, including Reeth Rishya, Diya Chitale, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Anusha Kutumbale, Swastika Ghosh and Prapti Sen scored easy wins to join the leaders in the race for the crown and the top prize purse.

But what aroused interest were the matches that went down to the wire, including the one between former national champion Ankita Das from PSPB and Pelf from Chandigarh and between Shamini Kumareshan, also a former national champion, and Deshna Vanshika from Karnataka.

Though Ankita advanced, Shamini could not.

Ankita did not begin well and conceded two of the first three games to the Chandigarh qualifier. But the inexperienced Pelf, too, suffered in the next and allowed the Olympian to restore parity.

Yet, Pelf made another desperate attempt to go ahead of her known rival before succumbing to the pressure and yielded.

AP ■ MUNICH

New Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel acknowledged on Saturday that he faces a challenging start to his new job after his surprise hiring on Friday to replace Julian Nagelsmann.

Tuchel goes straight into crucial games, starting with German title rival - and Tuchel's former club - Borussia Dortmund on April 1.

"The challenge can't be any greater," Tuchel said.

Ten days later, Bayern plays Manchester City in the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

There will be little time to rest or practice new tactics, with many Bayern players currently away with their national teams and then seven games in the first 22 days of April.

"I was relatively naive in the first conversation (with Bayern). In the first 30 seconds I didn't know what we were discussing or what it was about," Tuchel said.

Once it became clear

Tuchel ready for tough start at Bayern after surprise move



Bayern wanted him to take charge immediately, "it occurred to me that it actually begins right away with Dortmund with an international break beforehand."

Bayern against Dortmund is "the" game in German soccer, he added. Tuchel said the

move came as a surprise and that as recently as on Tuesday he had no contact with Bayern. He imagined his next job would be outside of Germany, he added, but that he had been following Bayern's season with interest.

Tuchel hasn't worked in

Germany since 2017. When he left, the only major trophy he'd won was the German Cup with Dortmund. He returns having won two French titles at Paris Saint-Germain and the Champions League and Club World Cup with Chelsea.

Bayern can still win three titles this season - the Bundesliga, the German Cup and the Champions League.

Consistency is a concern after Bayern chief executive Oliver Kahn highlighted that as a reason for getting rid of Nagelsmann.

Bayern is likely to be looking for Tuchel to get the best out of players like Leroy Sané and Serge Gnabry, whose form has dropped off this season, and Sadio Mané, who has rarely been at his best in an injury-disrupted season since joining from Liverpool.



three wins from three and on course to qualify for the continental championship next year in Ivory Coast.



Mexico hopes to host Summer Olympics in 2036 or 2040

AP ■ LAUSANNE

Mexico has declared its desire to host the Summer Olympics in 2036 or 2040 and says it already has most of the sports infrastructure required. Interest in hosting the 2036 Olympics had earlier been expressed by officials in countries including Egypt, England, India, Indonesia, Qatar and South Korea.

Mexico City hosted the Summer Games in 1968.

Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and

Mexican Olympic Committee president Maria José Alcalá met Friday with IOC president Thomas Bach. Ebrard delivered a letter of intent to Bach.

A city or region wasn't specified but Ebrard and Alcalá said a committee would be formed to support the initiative. Last October, International Olympic Committee director general Christophe De Kepper said they were talking to "10 interested NOCs and regions across four continents" regarding potential candidacies for future Summer Games.

Diallo eventually delivered one.

Salah took his goal with a first-time shot from a cross in the 20th minute to give Egypt the lead against Malawi in Cairo. Omar Marmoush was credited with the second but his low shot took a wicked deflection off a Malawi defender and looped over goalkeeper Charles Thom.

Egypt had 21 shots to Malawi's five and 75% possession, and the win revived the record seven-time African champion's qualifying campaign after it lost to Ethiopia in the last round to slip to the bottom of Group D on goal difference.

Authorised Officer AU Small Finance Bank Limited



ROBOTS & RITUALS

Robots are performing rituals — some devotees fear they’ll replace worshippers, writes HOLLY WALTERS.

It isn’t just artists and teachers who are losing sleep over advances in automation and artificial intelligence. Robots are being brought into Hinduism’s holiest rituals – and not all worshippers are happy about it. In 2017, a technology firm in India introduced a robotic arm to perform “aarti,” a ritual in which a devotee offers an oil lamp to the deity to symbolise the removal of darkness. This particular robot was unveiled at the Ganpati festival, a yearly gathering of millions of people in which an icon of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, is taken out in a procession and immersed in the Mula-Mutha river in Pune in central India. Ever since, that robotic aarti arm has inspired several prototypes, a few of which continue to regularly perform the ritual across India today, along with a variety of other religious robots throughout East Asia and South Asia. Robotic rituals even now include an animatronic temple elephant in Kerala on India’s southern coast. Yet this kind of religious robotic usage has led to increasing debates about the use of AI and robotic technology in devotion and worship. Some devotees and priests feel that this represents a new horizon in human innovation that will lead to the betterment of society, while others worry that using robots to replace practitioners is a bad omen for the future. As an anthropologist who specialises in religion, however, I focus less on the theology of robotics and more on what people actually say and do when it comes to their spiritual practices. My current work on religious robots primarily centers on the notion of “divine object-persons,” where otherwise inanimate things are viewed as having a living, conscious essence.

My work also looks at the uneasiness Hindus and Buddhists express about ritual-performing automatons replacing people and whether those automatons actually might make better devotees. **RIE** **UTIONAL** **UTOMATION IS NOT NEW** Ritual automation, or at least the idea of robotic spiritual practice, isn’t new in South Asian religions. Historically, this has included anything from special pots that drip water continuously for bathing rituals that Hindus routinely perform for their deity icons, called abhisheka, to wind-powered Buddhist prayer wheels — the kinds often seen in yoga studios and supply stores. While the contemporary version of automated ritual might look like downloading a phone app that chants mantras without the need for any prayer object at all, such as a mala or rosary, these new versions of ritual-performing robots have prompted complicated conversations. Thaneswar Sarmah, a Sanskrit scholar and literary critic, argues that the first Hindu robot appeared in the stories of King Manu, the first king of the human race in Hindu belief. Manu’s mother, Saranyu – herself the daughter of a great architect – built an animate statue to perfectly perform all of her household chores and ritual obligations. Folklorist Adrienne Mayor remarks similarly that religious stories about mechanized icons from Hindu epics, such as the mechanical war chariots of the Hindu engineer god Visvakarman, are often viewed as the progenitors of religious robots today. Furthermore, these stories are sometimes interpreted by modern-day nationalists as evidence that ancient India has previously invented everything from spacecraft to missiles.

“DEBATES OVER USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND ROBOTIC TECHNOLOGY IN DEVOTION AND WORSHIP ARE INCREASING. SOME DEVOTEES AND PRIESTS FEEL THAT THIS REPRESENTS A NEW HORIZON IN HUMAN INNOVATION THAT WILL LEAD TO BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY, WHILE OTHERS WORRY THAT USING ROBOTS TO REPLACE PRACTITIONERS IS A BAD OMEN FOR THE FUTURE.”



MODERN TRADITIONS OR TRADITIONALLY MODERN? However, the recent use of AI and robotics in religious practice is leading to concerns among Hindus and Buddhists about the kind of future to which automation could lead. In some instances, the debate among Hindus is about whether automated religion promises the arrival of humanity into a bright, new, technological future or if it is simply evidence of the coming apocalypse. In other cases, there are concerns that the proliferation of robots might lead to greater numbers of people leaving religious practice as temples begin to rely more on automation than on practitioners to care for their deities. Some of these concerns stem from the fact that many religions, both in South Asia and globally, have seen significant decreases in the number of young people willing to dedicate their lives to spiritual education and practice over the past few decades. Furthermore, with many families living in a diaspora scattered across the world, priests or “pandits” are often serving smaller and smaller communities. But if the answer to the problem of fewer ritual specialists is more robots, people still question whether ritual automation will benefit them. They also question the concurrent use of robotic deities to embody and personify the divine, since these icons are programmed by people and therefore reflect the religious views of their engineers. **DOING RIGHT BY RELIGION** Scholars often note that these concerns all tend to reflect one pervasive theme — an underlying anxiety that, somehow, the robots are better at worshipping gods than humans are. They can also raise inner conflicts about the meaning of life and one’s place in the universe. For Hindus and Buddhists, the rise of ritual automation is especially concerning because their traditions emphasise what religion scholars refer to as orthopraxy, where greater importance is placed on correct ethical and liturgical behaviour than on specific beliefs in religious doctrines. In other words, perfecting what you do in terms of your religious practice is viewed as more necessary to spiritual advancement than whatever it is you personally believe. This also means that automated rituals appear on a spectrum that progresses from human ritual fallibility to robotic ritual perfection. In short, the robot can do your religion better than you can because robots, unlike people, are spiritually incorruptible. This not only makes robots attractive replacements for dwindling priesthoods but also explains their increasing use in everyday contexts: People use them because no one worries about the robot getting it wrong, and they are often better than nothing when the options for ritual performance are limited. **SAVED BY A ROBOT** In the end, turning to a robot for religious restoration in modern Hinduism or Buddhism might seem futuristic, but it belongs very much to the present moment. It tells us that Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions in South Asia are increasingly being imagined as post- or transhuman: deploying technological ingenuity to transcend human weaknesses because robots don’t get tired, forget what they’re supposed to say, fall asleep or leave. More specifically, this means that robotic automation is being used to perfect ritual practices in East Asia and South Asia – especially in India and Japan – beyond what would be possible for a human devotee, by linking impossibly consistent and flawless ritual accomplishment with an idea of better religion. Modern robotics might then feel like a particular kind of cultural paradox, where the best kind of religion is the one that eventually involves no humans at all. But in this circularity of humans creating robots, robots becoming gods, and gods becoming human, we’ve only managed to, once again, re-imagine ourselves. (AP/The Conversation)

For wider adaptability of PD treatment, it favored PPP mode for PD treatment delivery with private service providers providing consumables and public sector providing care among others.

More than 10 million cases are recorded every year. The disease has worsened as it has become increasingly resistant to available medicines.

(The writer has covered Russia and other former Soviet nations for The AP since 1992)

