

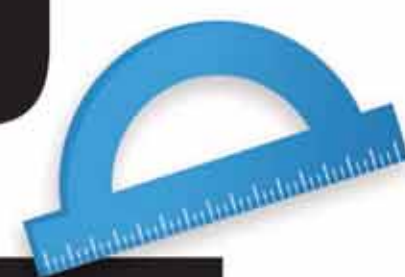


# sunday pioneer

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# झारखण्ड के उत्कृष्ट विद्यालय



## सभी बच्चों को समावेशी शिक्षा प्रदान करने का लक्ष्य

80 उत्कृष्ट विद्यालय, 325 प्रखंड स्तरीय लीडर स्कूल,  
4,091 ग्राम पंचायत स्तरीय आदर्श विद्यालय

सरकारी स्कूलों के 15 लाख से अधिक बच्चों को उत्कृष्ट शिक्षा के  
अवसर प्रदान करने का लक्ष्य

शिक्षा में समानता, गुणवत्ता और मानक तय करना

बदलते समय के अनुरूप विद्यार्थियों को अत्याधुनिक गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा

सीबीएसई से मान्यता तथा राष्ट्रीय एवं राज्य स्तरीय गाइडलाइन्स  
के अनुरूप आउटकम फ्रेमवर्क

मेरा मानना है कि समाज के  
प्रत्येक वर्ग को गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा  
प्राप्त करने का पूर्ण अधिकार है।

मेरा प्रयास रहा है कि सरकारी  
स्कूल शिक्षा और प्रशिक्षण के  
मानकों को पूरा करें, ताकि  
राज्य में समावेशी शिक्षा की  
समानता और गुणवत्ता को  
सक्षम बनाया जा सके।



अत्याधुनिक आधारभूत संरचना



अंग्रेजी माध्यम स्कूल



एकीकृत STEM लैब्स



डिजिटल स्मार्ट क्लास



सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी का मजबूत हांचा



राष्ट्रीय स्तर का खेल प्रशिक्षण



**CLEANLINESS  
FORTNIGHT BEING  
CELEBRATED IN BSL**  
PNS : BOKARO

The period from March 16-31 is being celebrated as Swachhta Pakhwada at Bokaro Steel Plant. In this episode, on March 16, a cleanliness campaign was conducted by the team of the Town Administration Department at Gandhi Chowk in the city. Executive Director (Personnel) Rajan Prasad, Chief General Manager (Town Administration) BS Popli and other officers and personnel participated in the cleanliness drive enthusiastically.



**TATA STEEL SIGNS MOUS WITH THE  
MINISTRY OF STEEL UNDER THE PLI SCHEME**

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

Tata Steel Limited, Tata Steel Long Products Limited, and The Tinplate Company of India Limited today have signed MoUs for eight product categories with the Ministry of Steel under the Production-linked incentive (PLI) Scheme for specialty steel. A total of 57 MoUs with 27 companies covering 20 sub-categories were signed with the Ministry. The Union Minister of Steel and Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, and senior officials from the Ministry of Steel and steel companies were present



on the occasion. Chanakya Chaudhary, Vice President, Corporate Services, Tata Steel said: "We are thankful to the Ministry of Steel for driving the PLI scheme, which would go a long way in realising the National Steel Policy 2017 both in terms of scale and quality of products needed for consumers." The Indian Steel Industry has been on a growth trajectory for the last few years and is currently the second-largest producer globally. Steel is also one of the sectors driving the much-needed private investment in the country. The MoU signing marks a significant milestone for Tata Steel,

enabling the Company to further enhance its capabilities and contribute to the Government's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The PLI scheme is aimed at encouraging domestic as well as foreign companies to manufacture specialty steels needed for high-end applications. Production-linked incentive (PLI) Scheme for specialty steel was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 22, 2021, with a five-year financial outlay of Rs 6322 crore to promote manufacturing within the country by attracting capital investment, generating employment, and promoting technology upgradation in the steel sector.

**Admin holds workshop  
cum training programme**

SHAILESH SHARMA: HAZARIBAG

Public food distribution cum consumer's affairs department of the State government organised a one day workshop cum training seminar here on Saturday. The workshop was inaugurated by Additional Collector Rakesh Roshan by lighting the lamp. The objective of the workshop was to increase the efficiency of shopkeepers, who are in the distribution system. Roshan said that at present there are 1382 persons having the responsibility to distribute the food among the public. He further said that the dealers must use the electronic machines to weigh and measure food. Roshan further said that the objective of the workshop is to increase the efficiency of

the persons who are engaged in the distribution of the food to villagers. He said that dealers must be honest in the weight of the food, so that maximum people are benefited with the facilities. He said that the food lifting and distribution chain management must be strong, so that the food must reach every dealer in time before the date of distribution. The Additional Collector further said that 15th, 16th, 25th and 26th day of the month should be celebrated as rice day of every month. If on the said date there is any holiday that comes on that date then the distribution must be on the next date. He further said that if the distribution will be done honestly then the no of complaints will be less.

**International seminar at Karim City College:  
Relevance of Radio remains strong in net age**

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

On the first day of the three-day seminar organized under the aegis of Mass Communication Department of Karim City College experts spoke about its relevance even in internet age.

This seminar is being organised on the occasion of completion of 100 years of radio broadcasting, the theme of which is: "Reviewing the world of radio". Snehasish Sur (Senior Broadcast Generalist & President, Press Club, West Bengal) was present as the keynote speaker and Chinmoy Mahto (President, Guide International Radio Listeners Club) as the guest speaker. The topic of Snehasish Sur was - "Early Days of Radio Broadcasting in India". Talking on his topic, he presented the initial status of radio in India and the attitude of people towards it at the social level. The topic of Mr. Chinmoy Mahato's speech was- "This is my obsession". He presented the importance



of radio in human life and its increasing popularity to the extent of craze in a very interesting way. On this occasion, Shahid Anwar (International Sports Commentator & Veteran Radio Broadcast, India) delivered a power presentation on the topic "Radio: The Journey of Awaaz". The people present in the meeting liked his presentation the most. Presenting the journey of sound through radio, he told that exactly 100 years ago, in June 1923 AD, for the first time, the Radio Club

started it in Mumbai. Radio broadcasting started from Kolkata after 5 months. He told that for the first time after attaining independence, Mahatma Gandhi spoke through radio on 11 November 1947. He also told that Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose gave the slogan "You give me blood, I will give you freedom" from Germany through radio. Today's program was started by lighting the lamp by all the guests. The principal of the college, Dr.

Mohammad Reyaz, gave the welcome address. Dr. Neha Tiwari (Professor Incharge Department of Mass Communication, Karim City College) spoke as the Convener and highlighted the purpose of the seminar. At the end of the first shift of satisfaction, Dr. Rashmi Kumari (Department of Mass Communication, Karim City College) proposed the vote of thanks. After this, the special session started in which Renu Chaturvedi, assistant director program of Vividh Bharti National Broadcasting, joined from Mumbai and shed light on the role of Vividh Bharti's programs in times of crisis. He told how Covid-19 became a medium of both entertainment and knowledge for various Indian people, after which the internationally renowned broadcaster Anupam Pathak joined Lucknow. He emphasized on the culture and pure use of language through Akashvani, because of the refinement of the language of radio, it can become a good

medium of language learning. Anupam Pathak explained this topic by giving an example. This was followed by Dr. Sergio Ricardo, a professor and communicator from Argentina, who highlighted the role and usefulness of AM in radio broadcasting still in Argentina. Morocco Dr. Martin Gangsinger, working as a professor at a university in Morocco, joined Fromm for this international symposium because he had attended a workshop there. Dr Martin stressed the need to include classical music in addition to popular music in the radio. All the four subject experts were appreciated. At least 13 research papers were read after the lunch break, in which scholars from Arka Jain University, Netaji Subhash Chandra University, Women's University, St. Xavier's College, Kolhan and Ranchi and other places read their research papers. Apart from these, many researchers joined from abroad and presented their research online.

**Official language Hindi workshop  
held in Safety Engineering Dept of BSL**

R SHARMA : BOKARO

The Rajbhasha Hindi workshop was organized under the Leadership of Amarendra Jha, Chief General Manager (Security and Fire Services) in the Security Engineering Department of BSL. DGM (Safety Engineering) J Jaiswal, AGM (Fire Services) Kumar Rajneesh, Senior Manager (Official Language) of BSL Shashank Shekhar along with other officers and personnel of Safety Engineering Department were present during the workshop. In his address, Amarendra Jha called upon



the participants to make maximum use of official language Hindi in their daily official work. Shashank Shekhar gave detailed information about rules and regulations related to official language and Unicode. A

competition related to the official language Hindi was organized in the programme and the winners were honored by the chief guest. The workshop was conducted by the Senior Manager (Safety Engineering) Manoj Kumar.

**Students, guardians resent non  
availability of centre of NTA in Palamu**

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

Taking admission in any of the faculties of UG (under graduate) courses in the Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj is now no 'walk in and take in' affair.

Now, students seeking admission in UG courses here in NPU will have to crack National Testing Agency sponsored examination having syllabus for general knowledge, current affairs, mental ability, numerical ability, reasoning, comprehension vocabulary literary aptitude etc. However resentment brews among the students and guardians with regard to the non availability of the centre of the National Testing Agency in the Palamu Commissionerate.

The National Testing Agency has been urged to set up a centre in Palamu Commissionerate also for the benefit of the students of Palamu Commissionerate which is a drought hit Commissionerate.

National Testing Agency, an autonomous organisation of the ministry of higher education government of India has only 9 centres in Jharkhand for its pre admission test for the UG (under graduate) courses.

The 9 centres of the National Testing Agency in Jharkhand are at Bokaro,

Chaibasa, Dhanbad, Deoghar, Dumka, Ramgarh, Hazaribag, Jamshedpur and Ranchi barring any centre in Palamu Commissionerate which has 3 districts namely Latehar, Garhwa and Palamu.

Students of Palamu Commissionerate who are to take admission in the first year course of the UG studies in the constituent and affiliated colleges under the Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj will now have to qualify the National Testing Agency's entry test scheduled for 21 May till 31 May. There are more than one and a half dozen colleges here affiliated to this university including 4 constituent colleges.

But for want of the centre of the National Testing Agency here in the Palamu Commissionerate students seeking admission in any of the colleges under the Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj will have to go to Ranchi for the examination of the National Testing Agency slated for the last week of May as Ranchi centre will be the shortest distance centre in comparison to Dumka or Chaibasa for the students of this Commissionerate.

The distance between Daltonganj and Ranchi is 170 kms while it is more than 200 kms between Garhwa and

Ranchi. The distance between Latehar and Ranchi is 100 plus kms.

Students and guardians are pretty sore over this inconvenience being caused by the National Testing Agency to travel such a distance to sit for the examination of the National Testing Agency.

Dr Vibhesh Choubey nodal officer of the Nilamber Pitamber university Daltonganj said "Non availability of the National Testing Agency centre in any of the three districts of the Palamu Commissionerate will mean a lot of problems and harassments to students specially the girl students. Ranchi centre of the National Testing Agency is no stone throw away. It's a 4 hours journey from Daltonganj and 5 hours from Garhwa."

Choubey said the National Testing Agency has set March 31 for applying for the test while JAC's intermediate examination is underway and one knows results of the JAC's examination starts coming out in the month of June.

Dr Mohini Gupta professor in charge of YSN Mahila college Daltonganj said "We are too anxious as to how girls of this poor Palamu Commissionerate will be able to bear this expenditure of journey all for qualifying for the admission.

**T-shirt distribution pro-  
gram organized at HCDSH**

PNS : HAZARIBAG

T-shirt distribution program was organized by the Social Service Club of Hazaribagh College of Dental Sciences and Hospital. In which 28 Group D employees working in the college were presented T-shirts and other gifts by the club to increase their sense of belonging. Secretary Dr. Praveen Srinivas appreciated the event and encouraged the students to continue this good work. Dr. Praveen Srinivas said that such a program gives soul satisfaction. At the same time, there is a feeling of celebrating happiness with the needy people.

People of every section of the society have the right to live and celebrate happiness equally, only then a clean society can be established by eradicating discrimination from the society. Principal of the college, Dr. K. Srikrishna and Vice-Principal, Dr. Ankur Bhargava talked about the need to be sensitive to the underprivileged sections of the society among the students. The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for this and thanked the club members and faculty for this effort. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Devarshi Nandi, Head, Alumni Committee emphasized the need for extra-curricular activities among the students.



**Palamu MP holds  
electricity panel meet**

NITYANAND DUBEY : GARHWA

A meeting of the District Electricity Committee was organized under the chairmanship of Palamu MP, Vishnu Dayal Ram in the Collectorate conference hall, on Saturday.

Plans related to electricity were discussed in the meeting and complete information about the work to be done under RDSS was given by the Electricity Superintending Engineer and Executive Engineer.

Many necessary guidelines were given by the MP regarding electrification in the left out villages and hamlets on the basis of priority. The MP directed to speed up the ongoing schemes. In the meeting, taking information related to the work of separation of urban and rural feeders, 58 transformers of 63 KVA, 108 km 11KV line under RDSS scheme in Garhwa district, discussed and gave necessary guidelines.

Deputy Commissioner Garhwa Shekhar Jamuar, District Board President, Shanti Devi, Deputy Development Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Rai, Additional Collector Pankaj Kumar Singh, Electrical Superintending Engineer, MLA Representative, Executive Engineer, Executive Officer Municipal Council and other concerned were present in the meeting.



**3 Bank Sakhis were hon-  
ored by BOI Hazaribag**



AVINASH ANJAN : HAZARIBAG

On the occasion of International Women's Day at Birsamunda Auditorium of Bank of India, Hazaribag Zone, Zonal Manager VV Krishna Kishore honored three Sakhis of the bank. The bank Sakhis, Renu Devi (Simaria branch), Kanchan Devi (Phulwaria branch), Ruksana Praveen (Moganpur branch) are working as bank sakhi. They have made invaluable contributions in banking business especially in the field of agriculture. They were honored for his important contribution. All of them also shared their experience with all the staff members of the Zonal Office. With the help of these bank sakhis, 500 SHG linkages were done in about 600 accounts in Simariya, 250 SHG linkages in 400 accounts in the Phulwaria branch and 400 SHG linkages in 500 accounts in Moganpur. Along with this, senior manager Madhu Mishra gave information regarding the Star Sakhi scheme. Under this scheme, women belonging to SHGs are given loans ranging from Rs 50000 to Rs 10 lakh. With this money, definitely sakhis are becoming self-sufficient in the field of self-employment.

**State farmers, IIAB scientists  
virtually attend PM's address**

PNS : RANCHI

Commemorating the International Year of Millets, 2023, ICAR-Indian Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology (IIAB) organized a one-day programme on Saturday, to create renewed awareness among the farmers about the health benefits of millet-based foods. Ninety-two scientists, state officials, and farmers from Ranchi and Gumla districts attended the programme.

In his opening remarks, Dr Sujay Rakshit, Director of IIAB, highlighted the aims of the International Year of Millets, 2023, and stressed increasing household consumption of millets and converting some panchayats of Jharkhand into a high-quality millet production hub with technology support from



IIAB. Subsequent to the Director's opening remark and brief deliberation by the IIAB Scientists, the participants virtually joined the inaugural session of the International Millet (Shree Anna) Conference on

'Enhancing Productivity and Value Addition in Millets' held at National Agricultural Science Complex (NASC), ICAR-IARI, New Delhi, graced by auspicious presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In his inaugural address the PM acknowledged that the United Nations General Assembly had declared 2023 the International Year of Millets (IYM) on India's intervention. He emphasized that rechristening the millets as Shree Anna provides recognition to millet cultivators, their age-old practices in water conservation, and the importance of millets in sustainable agriculture and its benefits as a smart and superfood. The PM urged the business organizations to use the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for food processing to promote millets. He stressed that the millets might be introduced in the public distribution schemes and the Mid Day Meal Scheme of the school meal programme. He reiterated that India is

positioned as a 'global hub for millet' and sought engagement from stakeholders across the states, union territories, cultivators, start-ups, and traders. The PM expressed his gratitude and thankfulness to the members of the United Nations for their support in marking the International Year of Millets. He thanked the organizers of the Conference and expressed that events like the Global Millets Conference are necessary for 'Global Good' and a symbol of India's increasing responsibility for Global Good. Toward the end of the program, millet-based confectionery and food were served to the participants to revitalize the taste and role of millets as a key component of the food basket for a healthy world.

**3 MOWED DOWN  
BY SPEEDING  
RAJDHANI  
EXPRESS AT  
GOMOH JUNCTION**

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

Three persons were mowed down by speeding Sealdah-New Delhi Rajdhani express train (12301) at Gomoh junction while they were attempting to cross tracks after alighting from a passenger train on Friday night. All three were cut into several pieces and body parts were spread over around 500 meters along the tracks. Those killed have been identified as Vikash Saw, resident of Baresdaa, Shivcharan Saw and Babloo Saw, both residents of Gomoh. The Rajdhani was crossing Gomoh Junction at high speed while the three who had alighted from Asansol - Gomoh passenger train and in an attempt to cross tracks they were hit by the speeding train and died on spot.



**WORLD 5**

RUSSIAN ATTACKS CONTINUE AFTER  
ICC'S ARREST WARRANT

**MONEY 6**

FOREX KITTY DOWN BY  
\$2.39 BN TO \$560 BN

**SPORT 8**

INDIA TO FACE AUS IN  
2ND ODI TODAY

**RANCHI, SUNDAY** MARCH 19, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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## Some hurt by success of India's democracy: Modi

'That's why they are criticising'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the success of India's democracy and its institutions is hurting some people and that is why they are attacking it, in an apparent swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his criticism of the state of democracy in the country.

When the country is full of confidence and resolve, and intellectuals of the world are optimistic about India, talk of pessimism, showing the country in poor light and hurting the morale of the country also takes place, he said at the India Today Conclave.

"When something auspicious is happening, there is a tradition to apply 'kaala tika', so when so many auspicious things are happening, some people have taken the responsibility to apply this 'kaala tika'," Modi said, without naming anyone.

His remarks come amid a political slugfest over Gandhi's



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a gift from an exhibitor while visiting an exhibition during the 'Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference' in Pusa, in New Delhi on Saturday (Report on Page 4)

PTI

remarks during his recent visit to the UK, with the BJP accusing him of maligning India on foreign soil and seeking foreign intervention. Modi said India has shown the world democ-

racy can deliver.

He said, "The success of India's democracy and its institutions is hurting some people and that is why they are attacking it."

Modi said he is confident that despite such attacks, the country will move forward to meet its objectives.

Targeting the Opposition, Modi said scams used to make the headlines earlier but now the "corrupt" joining hands over action against them is making news.

The world is stating that this is India's moment and this has been made possible because of the change of promise and performance in the country, Modi said.

The PM said all Governments worked according to their abilities and got results according, but his Government wanted new results and worked on a different speed and scale.

"Today India is the fastest growing economy in the world, it is the number one in smartphone data consumers, it is the second biggest mobile manufacturer and has the third biggest startup ecosystem," he said.

Leading economists, analysts and thinkers of the world are saying in one voice that it is India's moment, the prime minister said.

## Khalistani Amritpal gives cops slip after long chase

PNS/PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Government on Saturday launched a major crackdown against radical Sikh preacher and Khalistan sympathiser Amritpal Singh, with police arresting 78 members of an outfit headed by him, officials said.

The elusive preacher himself, however, gave the police a slip after an hour-long chase when his cavalcade was intercepted in Jalandhar district, even as authorities stepped up security at several places and suspended internet services in the state till Sunday noon.

The police said it has launched a "massive State-wide cordon and search operations (CASO)" in the State against elements of "Waris Punjab De" (WPD), headed by Singh, against whom several criminal cases had been registered.

During the operation, a total of 78 persons have been arrested so far, while, several others have been detained for questioning, it said.

Amritpal Singh and others are on the run and a massive manhunt has been launched to nab them, a police spokesperson said.



Some supporters of the Waris Punjab De chief shared some videos on social media claiming that policemen were chasing them. A video also showed Amritpal sitting in a vehicle and one of his aides could be heard saying policemen were after "Bhai saab" (Amritpal).

During the state-wide operation, nine weapons, including one .315 bore rifle, seven rifles of 12 bore, one

revolver and 373 live cartridges of different caliber have been recovered so far, the police said.

The police spokesperson informed that the WPD elements are involved in four criminal cases relating to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duties of public servants.

An FIR dated February 24

stands registered against WPD elements for the attack on Ajnala Police Station, he added. Last month, Amritpal and his supporters, some of them brandishing swords and guns, broke through barricades and barged into the Ajnala Police Station on the outskirts of the Amritsar city, and clashed with police for the release of one of Amritpal's aide. After the incident, in which six policemen, including a Superintendent of Police rank officer had suffered injuries, the AAP Government in the State had faced severe flak and was accused of kowtowing to extremists.

A heavy deployment of security forces had been made near village Jallapur Khara in Amritsar, the native place of Amritpal Singh, for the operation.

Dubai-returned Amritpal Singh was last year anointed the head of 'Waris Punjab De', which was founded by actor and activist Deep Sidhu who died in a road accident in February last year.

Officials said Amritpal Singh has been maintaining close links with Pakistani intelligence agency ISI and terrorist groups based in foreign countries.

Amitpal Singh, who had even issued a veiled threat to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has been trying to destabilise the situation in Punjab by indoctrinating and attracting Sikh youths into the fold of his outfit "Waris Punjab De", sources said.

## CAPSULE

### TRUMP EXPECTS TO BE ARRESTED ON TUESDAY

**New York:** Donald Trump said in a social media post that he expects to be arrested on Tuesday as a New York prosecutor is eyeing charges in a case examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with the former president.

### DON'T START SESSION BEFORE APRIL: CBSE

**New Delhi:** The CBSE has warned schools against starting the academic session before April 1, saying it poses the risk of causing anxiety and burnout among students. The warning by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) comes after several schools commenced their academic session, especially for Classes 10 and 12.

### HASINA HAILS INDIA FOR OIL PIPELINE

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Saturday that her country's first cross-border oil pipeline with India will play a vital role in ensuring fuel security in Bangladesh at a time when the world was facing a serious energy crisis due to the Ukraine war.

### 4 FROM BIHAR KILLED AS BUS OVERTURNS IN J&K

**Srinagar:** Four people hailing from Bihar were killed and 28 injured when their bus overturned in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on Saturday, officials said.

## No compromise on JPC demand, Rahul won't say sorry: Jairam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said he does not see a "middle path" to end the logjam in Parliament as the Opposition's demand for a JPC probe into the Adani issue was "non-negotiable" and the question of an apology over Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the UK does not arise.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said the Government is rattled by 16 Opposition parties coming together to demand a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani issue and is resorting to a "3D orchestrated campaign — distort, defame and divert".

The former Union Minister also hit out at BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's efforts to seek termination of Rahul's membership of the Lok Sabha over his remarks in the UK, saying all this was "intimidation" and part of efforts to distract from the real issues.

The remarks by the Congress general secretary in-charge communications comes amid the logjam in Parliament over Rahul's remarks during his recent trip to the UK, with both houses failing to transact any significant business on the first five days of the Budget Session's second half.

## LAC situation fragile, but a few drool over China: Jaishankar

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Sounding a note of caution regarding the tense border in Ladakh, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday termed the situation there "fragile" and "dangerous" as per military assessment.

He also took a dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and quipped when "panda lovers try to be China hawks, it does not fly." Both of them are engaged in a war of words regarding ties with China in the last few weeks.

Incidentally, Jaishankar on Saturday tweeted a picture with Rahul Gandhi and some other Opposition MPs. They were briefed in the Parliament consultative committee meeting by the Minister on India's G -20 presidency.

Some other MPs including Shatrughan Sinha (TMC), Shashi Tharoor (Congress) and Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena) attended the meeting here.

On the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Jaishankar said in the India Today conclave, though India and China have made substantial progress in disengaging from friction points, situ-



ation remains "fragile" and "dangerous" as per military assessment.

He categorically stated that India's relationship with China cannot return to normal unless all outstanding issues at the LAC are resolved.

Bilateral ties had entered a "challenging and abnormal phase" due to the heightened tensions at the Himalayan border and along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, the external affairs minister said.

Recalling his recent meetings with his Chinese counterparts, Jaishankar said, "When I met Wang Yi, we came to an understanding on how to resolve the border crisis. Now I've met with the new foreign minister Qin Gang. I have made it clear that we cannot have a breach of peace then continue the rest of the relationship like nothing happened."

## India's daily Covid tally crosses 800 after 4 mnths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's single-day tally of Covid-19 cases crossed 800 after 126 days on Saturday, while the number of active cases climbed to 5,389, according to Union Health Ministry data. With 843 fresh infections, the country's caseload increased to 4.46 crore (4,46,94,349). The death toll rose to 5,30,799 with four fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated. Experts have attributed the recent rise in Covid cases to XBB.1.16 variant.

A total of 76 samples of XBB.1.16 variant have been found, according to INSACOG data.

The variant has been found across Karnataka (30), Maharashtra (29), Puducherry (7) Delhi (5), Telangana (2), Gujarat (1), Himachal Pradesh (1) and Odisha (1), the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) data showed.

The XBB 1.16 variant was first found in January when two samples tested positive for the variant while in February a total of 59 samples were found.

In March, till now 15 samples of the XBB 1.16 variant have been found, the INSACOG said.



Police detain supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan during a search operation in the Khan's resident, in Lahore on Saturday

AP

## Police storm Imran house

### Court cancels arrest warrant

PTI ■ LAHORE

Over 10,000 armed Punjab police personnel stormed Imran Khan's residence here on Saturday and arrested dozens of his party workers after the former Pakistan prime minister left for Islamabad to attend a court hearing in a corruption case against him.

Meanwhile a Pakistani judge on Saturday cancelled Imran's arrest warrants in the Toshakhana corruption case and allowed him to go home without indicting him. "The situation as it is, the hearing

and appearance cannot proceed that is why all those who have gathered here should disperse after marking attendance. There is no need for shelling or pelting, the hearing cannot be held today," the judge was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

The police personnel, using a power shovel, removed the barricades and tents at the entrance of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief's Zaman Park residence and evicted hundreds of his supporters camping there to prevent Khan's arrest in the Toshakhana case.

They conducted a search at the house after demolishing its main gate and walls.

## Collegium best system for selection of judges: CJI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Not every system is perfect but this is the best system available, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said on Saturday while defending the Collegium system of judges appointing judges, a major bone of contention between the Government and judiciary.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave, 2023, the CJI said judiciary has to be protected from outside influences if it has to be independent.

"Not every system is perfect but this is the best system we have developed. But the object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value. We have to insulate the judiciary from outside influences if the judiciary has to be independent," Chandrachud said.

## Unseasonal rain casts shadow over harvesting season

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As unseasonal rain and hail are expected in the next few days due to western disturbances, India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday advised farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh to postpone harvesting of wheat and other rabi crops.

Also, rain and hailstorm lashed parts of Delhi on Saturday, bringing some respite from the warm weather.

Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 18.2 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal.

The relative humidity at 8:30 am was 89 per cent. Strong winds and hail might damage plantations, horticulture and standing crops.

Hail may injure people and cattle in open places, strong



A man rides his bike on a road near Akshardham amid rainfall, in New Delhi, on Saturday

PTI

asked to withhold irrigation to wheat crop to avoid lodging.

In the last 24 hours, IMD said light/moderate rainfall and thundershowers were observed over most parts of the country.

Even hailstorm was observed over Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, West Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh and North Interior Karnataka in the last 24 hours.

In its latest forecast, the IMD said isolated thunderstorm, lighting, squall and hailstorm is expected over Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on March 19; over West Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and East Rajasthan on March 20; and over Uttarakhand on March 21. The likely strong wind/hail

may damage standing crops, injure people and cattle at open places, and partial damage to vulnerable structures due to strong winds, it said.

In this likely scenario, the IMD advised farmers to "postpone harvesting of crops in Punjab, Haryana and West Madhya Pradesh; if already harvested, store at safe places to avoid losses."

Farmers have also been asked to withhold irrigation to wheat crop to avoid lodging. Rajasthan farmers have been advised to carry out harvesting of matured mustard and chickpea at the earliest store them in safe place.

Similarly, east Madhya Pradesh farmers have been asked to harvest mustard, chickpea and wheat immediately and store them in a safe place. In Maharashtra, farmers

have been asked to harvest wheat, pulses and grapes immediately.

"Postpone harvesting of crops in Marathwada. Use the skirting bags or aluminium-coated paper for grape bunches to protect from rains. Use hail nets to protect orchards," the IMD added.

Speaking to PTI, Rajbir Yadav, wheat breeder at Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), said the current unseasonal rains, hailstorms and gusty wind are not good for the standing wheat crop and could impact its yields.

Wheat is a main rabi (winter) crop and harvesting has already started in some parts of the country.

The Government has projected a record wheat output at 112.2 million tonne for the 2022-23 crop year (July-June).

## Some retd judges want judiciary to play Opp role: Rijiju

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday claimed that a few retired judges and some activists who are "part of the anti-India gang" are trying to make the Indian judiciary play the role of the Opposition party. He again criticised the Collegium system to appoint judges, saying it is a result of the "misadventure" of the Congress party.

The Minister was speaking at the India Today Conclave, where Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud later defended the Collegium system, saying "not every system is perfect but this is the

best system we have developed" and the "object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value."

Rijiju also hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks in London on democracy in India, saying the person who speaks the most says he is not allowed to speak.

"Anti-India forces in India and outside India, they use the same language — democracy is in danger, human rights are non-existent in India. What this anti-India gang says, the same language is used by Rahul," the Law Minister alleged.



# Continuous efforts on accelerating pace of development in State: CM



Chief Minister Hemant Soren speaks during Jharkhand Samvad programme in Ranchi on Saturday. PNS

## SOREN PARTICIPATES IN ‘SAMVAD JHARKHAND’ PROGRAMME

PNS: RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren attended the "Samvad Jharkhand" programme here on Saturday. On this occasion, the CM said that it was only a few days after the formation of the present government and the global pandemic Covid-19 engulfed the country and the world. "Our government was not even established properly and we had to struggle to survive as well as to save lives, yet our government did many things for the benefit of the people of the state with a lot of patience and sensitivity. The working class who had gone from Jharkhand to different states of the country for self-employment, the state government made them return home

safely," he said.

Jharkhand was the first state in the country which took a historic initiative for the safe return of its working class. Work was done to bring the labourers back to Jharkhand from every corner of the country by various means including bus, train and air. The CM said that during the global pandemic, our government has also worked to open many doors of livelihood for the poor, farmers, labourers and needy people here. Many self-employment schemes were implemented.

Soren said that the previous governments made work plans only on paper, but our government has shown the work of putting the plans on the ground along with paper. The CM said that under the 'Sarkar Aapke

Dwar' and 'Aapki Yojana-Aapki Sarkar-Aapke Dwar' programmes, our government has done the work of connecting people with various schemes by visiting panchayats and panchayats in every village. The CM said that the state government is working fast in the development works of water, electricity, roads and other infrastructure. Now even in the night there is light in remote areas through electricity.

The problems related to electricity have been resolved in the state. Ever since the formation of the government, we have intensified the exercise to strengthen the basic route. The pace at which our government is increasing the dimension of development, if development works continue at this pace, then the day is not far

when every Jharkhand resident will feel proud. The Chief Minister said that our government has also done many remarkable works in Naxalite affected areas. Earlier the people of Budha Pahar could not see the city and the people of the city could not show the courage to go to Budha Pahar. Our government has done the work of changing that situation.

Soren said that after getting rid of the global pandemic, our government made constant efforts to speed up the pace of development in the State. Jharkhand is a State surrounded by rural areas. There are many challenges along with poverty, unemployment, on which special work needs to be done. Our government has done the work of giving Sarvajan Pension Scheme

and Old Pension Scheme to government employees in the state. The elderly people in the state, who are at the last stage of their age, today feel safe in themselves. Our government also worried about the future of government employees and linked them to the old pension scheme.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister spoke frankly on many important issues and apprised the people present there about the future plans of the state government.

Minister Mithilesh Thakur, Minister Satyanand Bhokta, Rajya Sabha MP Mahua Maji, MLA Sarfaraz Ahmed, Deepika Pandey Singh, Vinod Singh, Anoop Singh, Dinesh William Marandi, Shilpi Neha Tirkey and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

# Illegal mining issue rocks State Assembly

## BJP LEGISLATORS DEMAND NIA INVESTIGATION IN THE CASE

PNS : RANCHI

The issue of illegal mining resonated in the Jharkhand Assembly on Saturday as Opposition BJP members demanded an inquiry into the illegal mining cases in the State by a committee of the Vidhan Sabha. BJP MLA Biranchi Narayan raised the issue and said that thousands of cases of illegal stone mining and illegal transportation have come to the fore in the last three years.

The BJP MLA said, "There is a mining scam of about Rs 20000 crores across the state. During this, a case of misuse of explosives has also come to the fore. This is an NIA matter. That's why it should be investigated by NIA."

Responding to the Opposition barbs, Agriculture Minister Badal

said that in the coalition government, three times more revenue was collected from mining than that in the previous government. In the Raghubar Das led government, Rs 15,784 crore revenue was received in three years, while in Hemant Soren led government, Rs 30,949 crore revenue has been received. "As far as the misuse of explosives is concerned, it is the responsibility of the Central Government. The Explosives Act is under the Government of India," he said.

Addressing the House BJP MLA Bhanu Pratap Shahi said that how much revenue was received is not the issue of discussion. The subject is of illegal mining. He demanded to form a committee to investigate. Independent MLA Saryu Roy said that illegal mining is causing damage to the environment. On the



BJP Legislators stage a protest against the state government during the ongoing Budget Session of State Assembly in Ranchi on Saturday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

suit has been filed in NGT regarding this, the NGT court has said that the State government has failed to stop the anarchy there. On this the BJP MLAs raised slogans of shame shame.

On this, Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan said that

the government will never conduct a CBI inquiry to hide its deeds. That's why the speaker should get it investigated by the committee of the Assembly, otherwise history will never forgive him. Angered by the government's reply, the BJP MLAs came to

the well and created ruckus. Later, the speaker adjourned the proceedings of the House from 11.49 am to 12.30 pm.

Meanwhile, the BJP MLAs staged a protest in the Assembly, accusing the government of corruption. During this, the BJP legislators lashed out at the present government. The legislators protested outside the House with placards in their hands before the proceedings of the House began. They demanded the dismissal of senior IAS officer Rajeev Arun Ekka. Along with this, the MLAs demonstrated demanding the reinstatement of doctors in the Community Health Center of Chhatrapur and service adjustment of Poshan Sakhis. In the protest, many MLAs including Biranchi Narayan, Anant Ojha, Neera Yadav, Shashibhushan Mehta, Pushpa Devi were involved.

# DC, SSP inspect Sarna Sthals ahead of nature festival

PNS : RANCHI

In view of the Sarhul festival, Deputy Commissioner, Ranchi Rahul Kumar Sinha and Senior Superintendent of Police, Ranchi Kishor Kaushal inspected various Sarna sites of the city on Saturday. During this, Superintendent of Police (City) S Jain, Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order), Ranchi RN Alok, Deputy Collector District Nazarat, Ranchi and other concerned police/administrative officers were present.

The DC and SSP inspected Siram Toli, Sarna Toli and Sarna sites located in Hatna. Here, talks were also held by the top officials with the Sarna committees for better arrangements.



Sinha said that the committees gave opinion regarding better arrangement of lights, road levelling, water supply, mobile toilets etc at Sarna sites. He said that in this light, a blueprint has been prepared by the concerned officials for complete facilities at the Sarna sites, arrangements have to be

made at all the Sarna sites. The DC said that by establishing coordination with the officers and Sarna committees, directions have been given to the officers for necessary arrangements at the Sarna site.

The DC said that the district administration will try to ensure that the people coming to the Sarna Sthal during the Sarhul festival can leave for their respective homes in a smooth manner after offering prayers, such arrangements will be made. Care will be taken that the devotees do not face any kind of problem in coming and going. Vehicles are being arranged for the people by the Municipal Corporation. It will be the endeavour of the district administration

that with mutual coordination all the preparations for Sarhul Puja should be completed on time.

During the meeting, SSP Kishor Kaushal said that a meeting has been held with all the Sarna committees in view of the Sarhul festival. From the point of view of security, an adequate number of police forces will be deployed, CCTV cameras are being installed as per requirement, as well as drone cameras will also be used so that anti-social elements do not take advantage of any kind. He said that the traffic will be diverted keeping in mind that the route should not be obstructed in any way and in this context information will be given in the media in advance.

# Empower women, enable them with decision-making capacity, and entrust them with resources to bring change in the society: VC, SKMU

PNS : RANCHI

Our aim is to bring change in the community, empower women with decision-making capacity and giving them access to resources. This can be achieved if we enrich our curriculum, revisit our policies, and look out for the gaps where true actions can be initiated. Our nation celebrates diversity, and unity in diversity should be our motive," said Prof Sonajharia Minz, Vice Chancellor, Sido Kanhu Murmu University during the Valedictory Lecture on the concluding day of the conference organised on "Economic Empowerment of Women in East India and the Role of Women's Collectives."

She also discussed the state's rich cultural diversity and the contribution of Jaipal Singh Munda in the context of women's representation in the Constituent Assembly. Collectively, we need to redefine women's empowerment by reimagining, realigning, and revising our agendas, she concluded.

Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi, the Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3 Sakshama), and the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) concluded the two-day conference on "Economic Empowerment of Women in East India and the Role of Women's Collectives" on Saturday in the XISS Campus. This conference was sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Earlier, the second day of the conference began with a panel discussion on the theme 'Women's Access to Livelihood and Markets: The



Role of Women's Collectives, Microcredit, and the Government' chaired by Prof Ishita Mukhopadhyay, President, Indian Association of Women's Studies and Professor of Economics, Calcutta University, Kolkata.

Director, XISS Dr Joseph Marianus Kujur, highlighted that setting a tone for such important dialogue of empowering women in all sectors is the need of the hour. He emphasised, "XISS's aim with this conference is to initiate a dialogue amongst the policy makers. XISS has taken this initiative to take the case of women empowerment as not just a knowledge disclosure but as a campaign." In his concluding lines, he said that 'real women's empowerment is turning crises into possibilities and dreams into reality.'

Further in the conference, Sonmani Choudhary, Senior Programme Manager, PCI, Patna, presented her research on Women's Participation in MGNREGA: Creation of Sustainable Individual Productive Assets for Women Under MGNREGA. She emphasized creating assets for rural women rather than considering MGNREGA

as employment. It was followed up by a research paper presentation on the evaluation of a Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) in Bihar: A Case Study of Women Entrepreneurs in Dhanur Block in Patna District by Dr Shweta Chandra, Assistant Professor, Amity University, Patna. Mr Rahul Bhushan, PhD Scholar, Aryabhata Knowledge University addressed the Brick Kill Industry of Eastern India: An Economic Space of Systematic Gender Discrimination in his research.

Dr Madhu Smita Sahoo, Assistant Director - Research, Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Research Institute, Bhubaneswar focused on the research on Tribal Women SHG Members on Value Addition and Food Processing of Mahua: A Path Towards Women Empowerment. She discussed on how production and selling of mahua can generate scope of employment for women. A simultaneous panel was also held where discussions on Women's Collectives and Urban Women's Economic Capacity was done Mr Om Prakash, Programme Manager, PCI, Patna.

# IWCS organises e-waste management programme

PNS : RANCHI

Under the aegis of Innerwheel Club of Swarnarekha Ranchi District - 325, a program of e-waste management was organized for the protection of the environment in collaboration with Women's College, Ranchi. In the programme, the manager of "Hulladeck Recycling Pvt Ltd" Debapriha gave detailed information to the college students about the need and methods of proper disposal of unusable electronic equipment and non-biodegradable plastic waste. Unusable electronic equipment were collected on this occasion. Supriya, the Principal of the college made



an important contribution in making this program a success. Club President Namrata Kumar Vice President Mala Srivastava IPP Neeta Narayan Supreet Lal, Soma Bhaduri, Neeta Shekhar, Archana Trivedi, Deepa Chauhan, Devjani Sanyal, Meena Sahay, Sangeeta Sinha, Sushma Pandey, Ambuja Sharan, Nupur Sheshank, Shalini Sinha, Sonal among others participated in the programme.

# FINALLY, TIGER DIRECT SIGHTED IN PTR

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

Chief conservator of forest and field director of the tiger reserve Palamu Kumar Ashutosh has confirmed the direct sighting of a male tiger in the tiger reserve Palamu.

According to Ashutosh the tiger was directly sighted on Friday and Saturday today. It was eating its kill. He said the location of its direct eye sighting has occurred in one of our 8 ranges but for its safety the name of the range and the site has been withheld. It was in 2021 that there was a similar direct sighting of a tiger in Bareysan range of the tiger reserve Palamu.

# RU, IGNC A ink MoU

PNS : RANCHI

A Memorandum of Understanding between Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and Ranchi University, Ranchi was signed on 19th March 2023 at Conference Hall, Ranchi University, Shaheed Chawh, Ranchi.

Dr. Ajit Kumar Sinha, Vice-Chancellor, Ranchi University, Ranchi graced the occasion.

The MoU was signed by Dr. M.C. Mehta, Registrar, RU on behalf of Ranchi University and Dr. Sapam Ranabir Singh, Regional Director, IGNC A, Regional Centre Ranchi signed on behalf of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Dr. Sudesh Sahu, DSW, RU; Dr. Smriti Singh,



OSD to VC & Deputy Director Vocational, RU; Dr. P.K. Jha, CDC, Ranchi University; Dr. V.K. Deogharia, Coordinator (Finance), RU and Dr. R.K. Sharma were present from Ranchi University. Prof. (Dr.) Binod Kumar, Academic Council Member, IGNC A, Ranchi; Sumedha Sengupta, Program Assistant, IGNC A, RC Ranchi and Bolu Kumari Oraon, Project Assistant, IGNC A, RC Ranchi were present.

# HC organises programme on Gender Sensitization

PNS : RANCHI

A Programme on Gender Sensitization with Focus on Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace was organized on Friday (March 17) at the White Hall of Jharkhand High Court. The function was organised by the High Court of Jharkhand Gender Sensitization and Internal Complaints Committee under the Aegis of the High Court of Jharkhand, Ranchi.

The Program Chief Guest was Justice Sanjaya Kumar Mishra, Chief Justice of High Court of Jharkhand, while the guest of Honour was Justice Anubha Rawat Choudhary, Judge, High Court of Jharkhand & Chairperson, High Court of Jharkhand Gender Sensitization & Internal Complaints Committee, in the presence of all the Judges of



High Court of Jharkhand. The Program had two other speakers, namely, Mrs. Darshana Poddar Mishra, Additional Advocate General - I and Member of the Committee as well as Priti Srivastava, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF and Member of the said Committee. The Program was attended by over 120 distinguished guests and partici-

pants including Anil Kumar, Additional Solicitor General of India, Prashant Pallav, Deputy Solicitor General of India and Additional Advocate Generals of Jharkhand, Dr. Ram Singh, social worker, Principal of D.P.S. School, Ranchi and Member of the said Committee, Senior Advocates, Executive Members of the Advocated Association and

distinguished Members of the Bar, High Court Registry Members, Participants including officers and staff from all cadres of the High Court.

The Welcome Address was delivered by Mohammad Shakir, the Registrar General, High Court of Jharkhand. In the KeyNote Address, Justice Sanjaya Kumar Mishra, shared life altering personal experiences of Court and explained the role of Judge in practical life and Court. Further, His Lordship walked the audience through the journey of how the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 came into being, right from the time India ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Government of India on 25th June 1993 and enlightened on various aspects of the holy

Constitution of India. Justice Anubha Rawat Choudhary, in Special Address explained step by step Procedure under the High Court of Jharkhand (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Regulations, 2021, framed by Jharkhand High Court is available on the website of High Court. The slogan "Career has no Gender" shared by Mrs. Poddar resonated with the audience. Thereafter, the Vote of Thanks was proposed by Tanvee, Member Secretary, the High Court of Jharkhand Gender Sensitization and Internal Complaints Committee - cum-Dy. Registrar, Judicial, High Court.

Overall, the Program was a huge success and the High Court of Jharkhand resolved that it shall make this Court gender friendly workplace with cooperation of all, determined to protect the rights and dignity of individuals.



# Russian attacks continue after ICC’s warrant against Putin

**AP ■ KYIV**

Widespread Russian attacks continued in Ukraine following the International Criminal Court’s decision to issue an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia’s commissioner for children’s rights.

Meanwhile, Putin has travelled to Crimea to mark the ninth anniversary of the Black Sea peninsula’s annexation from Ukraine.

Putin visited an art school and a children’s centre on Saturday.

Ukraine was attacked by 16 Russian drones on Friday night, the Ukrainian Air Force said in the early hours of Saturday.

Writing on Telegram, the air force command said that 11 out of 16 drones were shot down “in the central, western and eastern regions.” Among areas targeted were the capital, Kyiv, and the western Lviv province.

The head of the Kyiv city administration, Serhii Popko, said Ukrainian air defences shot down all drones heading for the Ukrainian capital, while Lviv regional Gov Maksym Kozyskyi said on Saturday that three of six drones were shot down, with the other three hitting a district bordering Poland. According to the Ukrainian Air Force, the

attacks were carried out from the eastern coast of the Sea of Azov and Russia’s Bryansk province, which borders Ukraine.

The Ukrainian military additionally said in its regular update on Saturday morning that Russian forces over the previous 24 hours launched 34 airstrikes, one missile strike and 57 rounds of anti-aircraft fire.

The Facebook update said that falling debris hit the southern Kherson province, damaging seven houses and a kindergarten.

According to the Ukrainian statement, Russia is



People inspect a damaged restaurant after Russian shelling hit in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Saturday

No casualties were reported, but houses were damaged and a catering establishment destroyed, Anatoliy Kurtev of the Zaporizhzhia City Council said. It is the first time the global court has issued a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The move was immediately dismissed by Moscow — and welcomed by Ukraine as a major breakthrough.

Its practical implications, however, could be limited as the chances of Putin facing trial at the ICC are highly unlikely because Moscow does not recognise the court’s jurisdiction or extradite its nationals.

UK military officials said Saturday that Russia is likely to widen conscription. In its latest intelligence update, the UK defense ministry said that deputies in the Russian Duma, the lower house of Russia’s parliament, introduced a bill on Monday to change the conscription age for men to 21-30, from the current 18-27.

The ministry said that, at the moment, many men aged 18-21 claim exemption from military service because they are in higher education. The change would mean that they would eventually still have to serve. It said the law will likely be passed and come into force in January 2024.

# Vatican closes embassy in Nicaragua

**AP ■ VATICAN CITY**

The Vatican said on Saturday it had closed its embassy in Nicaragua after the country’s government proposed suspending diplomatic relations, the latest episode in a yearslong crackdown on the Catholic Church by the administration of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

The Vatican’s representative to Managua, Monsignor Marcel Diouf, also left the country on Friday, bound for Costa Rica, a Vatican official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Vatican action came a week after the Nicaraguan government proposed suspending relations with the Holy See, and a year after Nicaragua forced the papal ambassador at the time to leave. It’s not clear what more the proposed suspension would entail in diplomatic terms.

Relations between the church and Ortega’s government have been deteriorating since 2018, when Nicaraguan authorities violently repressed anti-government protests.

Some Catholic leaders gave protesters shelter in their churches, and the church later tried to act as a mediator between the government and the political opposition.

# Trump anticipates arrest

**AP ■ NEW YORK**

Donald Trump said in a social media post that he expects to be arrested on Tuesday as a New York prosecutor is eyeing charges in a case examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with the former president.

Trump said in a post on his Truth Social network early on Saturday that “illegal leaks” from the Manhattan district attorney’s office indicate that “The far & away leading republican candidate & former president of the United States of America, will be arrested on Tuesday of next week.”

Messages left on Saturday with the district attorney’s office were not immediately returned. Representatives for Trump did not immediately respond to calls for comment.

Trump did not provide any details on social media about how he knew about the expected arrest. In his postings, he repeated his lies that the 2020 presidential election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden was stolen and he urged his followers to “Protest, take our nation back!” That language evoked the message from the then-president that preceded the riot at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Law enforcement officials in New York have been making security preparations for the possibility that Trump could be indicted.

There has been no public announcement of any time frame for the grand jury’s secret work in the case, including any potential vote on whether to indict the ex-president.

Trump’s posting echoes one made last summer when he broke the news on Truth Social that the FBI was searching his home as part of an investigation into the possible mishandling of classified documents.

The grand jury in Manhattan has been hearing from witnesses, including former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen, who says he orchestrated payments in 2016 to two women to silence them about sexual encounters they said they had with Trump a decade earlier.

Trump denies the encounters occurred, says he did nothing wrong and has cast the investigation as a “witch hunt” by a Democratic prosecutor bent on sabotaging the Republican’s 2024 presidential campaign.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg’s office has apparently been examining whether any state laws were broken in connection with the payments or the way Trump’s company compensated Cohen for his work to keep the women’s allegations quiet.

Daniels and at least two former Trump aides — one-time political adviser Kellyanne Conway and former spokesperson Hope Hicks — are among witnesses who have met with prosecutors in recent weeks.

Cohen has said that at Trump’s direction, he arranged payments totaling USD 280,000 to porn actor Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal. According to Cohen, the payouts were to buy their silence about Trump, who was then in the thick of his first presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, law enforcement officials in New York are making security preparations for the possibility that former President Donald Trump could be indicted in the coming weeks and appear in a Manhattan courtroom in an investigation examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with him, four law enforcement officials said Friday.



# FIIDS: Time running out for laid off H-1B workers

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON**

Time is running out for laid off H-1B professionals as under the existing laws they need to leave the country within 60 days of losing their employment status, giving sleepless nights to the thousands of Indian tech workers and their family members.

“This has a humanitarian impact on them as their families, including their US-born children are uprooted abruptly, and those who were laid off in the earlier months are now running out of time,” the Foundation For India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS), which took up their cases with lawmakers and federal administration said in a statement on Friday.

While the US Citizenship and Immigration Services is considering their request to extend the existing time window to 180 days, the process is likely to take up some time, leaving no other option for these professionals other than to leave the country.

“FIIDS appeals to the USCIS, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consider a request to expedite the extension of grace period. FIIDS also appeals to the elected officials, tech executives, and community leaders to emphasise the need and urgency to increase the grace period,” the foundation said in a media statement.

Since last year, more than 2,50,000 such professionals have been laid off in the United States. This number continues to grow with companies like Meta announcing another set of tens of thousands of layoffs, FIIDS said.

# Ex-Air Force officer sentenced for Capitol attack

**Washington (AP):** A retired Air Force officer who stormed the US Capitol dressed in combat gear and carried zip-tie handcuffs into the Senate gallery was sentenced on Friday to two years in prison.

Larry Brock, 55, of Grapevine, Texas, joined other rioters on the Senate floor nine minutes after then-Vice President Mike Pence, senators and their staff evacuated the chamber to escape the mob attacking the building on January 6, 2021.

US District Judge John Bates also sentenced Brock to two years of supervised release after his prison term and ordered him to perform 100 hours of community service. Brock, who declined to speak in court before the judge imposed his sentence, remains free until he must report to prison at a date to be determined.

Prosecutors had recommended a sentence of five years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Bates convicted Brock in November after a trial without a jury. Brock waived his right to a jury trial. The judge said Brock expressed “very troubling” and violent rhetoric before the January 6 riot. The judge read aloud several of Brock’s social media postings calling it “really pretty astounding” that a former high-ranking military officer expressed those words. “That’s chilling stuff, and it does reflect a purpose to stop the certification of the election,” Bates said.

Brock believed baseless conspiracy theories that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from Republican incumbent Donald Trump, prosecutors said.

# GLOBE TROTTER

**1 KILLED BY ISRAELI ARMY IN WEST BANK**

**JERUSALEM:** The Israeli military said troops shot a Palestinian who approached soldiers on Friday and pulled a knife near the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian authorities said the man died of his wounds a short while later. The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the man as Yazan Khaseeb, 23. The military said the man refused to identify himself and drew a knife, prompting the soldiers to open fire. It published a photo of the alleged knife on the ground.

**THREE DEAD IN STABBINGS IN CANADA**

**MONTREAL:** Three people were found stabbed to death Friday inside an apartment in the eastern Canadian city of Montreal, and police have a suspect in custody. Police found the three bodies with wounds from a sharp object after responding to an emergency call Friday morning, Montreal police Const. Julien Lévesque said. He said it was too early to release details about the link between the victims and the suspect. The suspect was arrested outside the apartment building and will be questioned by investigators, police said. Authorities barricaded the street, in a neighbourhood consisting of low-rise apartment buildings.

**TURKIYE’S DIPLOMAT IN CAIRO TO MEND TIES**

**CAIRO:** Turkey’s chief diplomat was in Cairo on Saturday for talks with Egyptian officials as the regional powers seek to mend their frayed ties after years of tensions. Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkiye’s foreign minister, landed in the Egyptian capital early Saturday. He was the highest ranking Turkish official to visit the Arab World’s most populous nation in over a decade.

**NEW MEXICO PASSES BILL TO SAFEGUARD ABORTION PROVIDERS**

**SANTA FE:** New Mexico legislators raced against the clock on Friday to advance hard-fought proposals aimed at safeguarding abortion access, delivering tax relief and reducing gun violence in the final hours of a 60-day legislative session. Republicans in the legislative minority raised a series of objections during a House floor debate to a bill that aims to protect abortion providers and patients from out-of-state interference, prosecution or extradition attempts.

# Violence in France over retirement age push

**AP ■ PARIS**

Angry protesters took to the streets in Paris and other cities for a second day on Friday, trying to pressure lawmakers to bring down French President Emmanuel Macron’s government and doom the unpopular retirement age increase he’s trying to impose without a vote in the National Assembly.

A day after Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne invoked a special constitutional power to skirt a vote in the chaotic lower chamber, lawmakers on the right and left filed no-confidence motions to be voted on Monday.

At the elegant Place de Concorde, a festive protest by several thousand, with chants, dancing and a huge bonfire, degenerated into a scene echoing the night before. Riot police charged and threw tear gas to empty the huge square across from the National Assembly after troublemakers climbed scaffolding on a renovation site, arming themselves with wood.

They lobbed fireworks and paving stones at police in a standoff.

On Thursday night, security forces charged and used water cannons to evacuate the area, and small groups then set street fires in chic neighbourhoods nearby. French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin told radio station RTL that 310 people were arrested overnight, most of them in Paris.

Mostly small, scattered protests were held in cities around France, from a march in Bordeaux to a rally in Toulouse. Port officers in Calais temporarily stopped ferries from crossing the English Channel to Dover. Some university campuses in Paris were blocked and protesters occupied a high-traffic ring road around the French capital.

Paris garbage collectors extended their strike for a 12th day, with piles of foul-smelling rubbish growing daily in the French capital. Striking sanitation workers continued to block Europe’s largest incineration site and two other sites that treat Paris garbage.



Demonstrator ran through the tear gas during a protest in Paris on Friday

# Indians organise Young Minds Conference in London

**London (PTI):** Youth 20 (Y20), the official consultation forum for youth from across the G20 member countries to be able to dialogue with each other during India’s presidency, found resonance here with a special Y20 India Young Minds Conference.

Attended by Y20 India representative Falit Sijeria, the two-day conference was organised at University College London on Friday by the student group Young India Dialogue in association with Y20 India.

“Many kinds of programmes are being organised in India regarding Y20 and this is the first program to be held outside India,” Sijeria said.

“It is our endeavour to get ideas from as many youths as possible so that there can be a good discussion about solutions on the international platform of Y20. It is a matter of pride for me that in the presidency of India, I have been able to participate in a consultation programme organised abroad,” he added.

India assumed the Presidency of the G20 for one year from December 1, 2022, to 30 November 2023.

Y20 UK representatives, James Frater and Ritvik Singh joined in the day’s deliberations and were supported by the Indian National Students Association (INSA) UK.

# Braverman in Rwanda to assess illegal migration

**PTI ■ LONDON**

Britain’s Indian-origin Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, arrived in Rwanda on Saturday on a tour of facilities being built as part of a bilateral migration pact that will see hundreds of illegal migrants deported from the UK to the central African nation.

The UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership, which was signed by Braverman’s predecessor Priti Patel in April last year, is designed to house migrants in Rwanda while their asylum claims are assessed.

The controversial plan remains caught up in legal wrangles, but Braverman said her visit is an effort to reinforce the government’s commitment to the partnership.

“Our partnership is a ground-breaking approach that will act as a powerful deterrent against dangerous and illegal journeys, such as small boat crossings,” said Braverman in a statement on the eve of her visit to Rwanda.

“While in Rwanda we will discuss all the aspects of the partnership and I will be visiting some of the initiatives that we have supported,” she said.

According to the UK Home Office, the minister is scheduled to meet refugees who have rebuilt their lives in Kigali, people leading on accommodation projects and a range of entrepreneurs who have helped build employment opportunities for people in Rwanda.

She will also meet with Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Vincent Biruta during the two-day official visit this weekend.

# British Muslim guilty of terror

**PTI ■ LONDON**

A British Muslim financial analyst influenced by extremist Islamist ideology has been found guilty of multiple terrorism related offences by a UK court after his laptop led police to dangerous bomb-making plans.

Asad Bhatti, from Redhill in Surrey, south-east England, was arrested and charged in January 2021, following which a search was carried out at an address in the area which revealed a makeshift bomb-making facility.

Surrey Police said the 49-year-old, of South Asian origin, was found guilty of two counts of possessing an article for the purpose of terrorism, contrary to Section 57 of the UK’s Terrorism Act 2000.

He was also found guilty of three counts of making or possessing an explosive substance under suspicious circumstances contrary to Section 4 of the UK’s Explosive Substance Act at the Old Bailey court in London on Friday.

Bhatti remains in custody and will be sentenced for the crimes at the same court on April 25.

“The case against Bhatti was strong. I am glad the jury found him guilty today,” said Detective Chief Superintendent Olly Wright, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) in Surrey.

“There was clear evidence of his extreme Islamist ideology and the danger he posed. He clearly hated those whom he considers do not follow his version of Islam, and he made a range of derogatory comments towards those he considers to be ‘unbelievers,’” he said.

# Japan, German leaders agree to strengthen ties

**AP ■ TOKYO**

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Saturday held the first round of government consultations in Tokyo and agreed to strengthen economic and defense ties to better cope with China’s growing influence and global security concerns.

Kishida told a joint news conference after the talks that the sides agreed to strengthen supply chains in minerals, semiconductors, batteries and other strategic areas, in order to “counter economic coercion, state-led attempts to illegally acquire technology and non-market practices,” apparently referring to China.

“Japan and Germany, both industrial nations that share fundamental values, need to take global leadership to strengthen resilience of our societies,” Kishida said.

Scholz brought six of the 17 Cabinet members for talks with Japanese counterparts, including economy, finance, foreign, interior, transport and defense ministers.

They discussed deepening economic and national security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as China’s assertiveness in pressing its maritime territorial claims and its closer ties with Russia.

Germany has similar “government consultations” framework with several countries.

In Tokyo, the two leaders again condemned Russia’s war on Ukraine and agreed to continue tough sanctions against Moscow and strong support for Ukraine, Kishida said.

Russia’s nuclear threat has made atomic weapons disarmament even more difficult and divided the international community, Kishida said, adding that it’s crucial to get China, Russia and other nuclear states to resume discussing nuclear disarmament.

Scholtz said the government consultations will “further advance our strategic cooperation, and they’re a very important part of giving a new drive to this close cooperation we want to achieve together,” German news agency dpa reported.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, second left, and Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, centre, pose for a family pictures at prime minister’s official residence in Tokyo on Saturday

# Be transparent in sharing Covid data for origin study, WHO tells China

**AP ■ UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA**

The WHO has criticised China for withholding data related to samples taken at a market in Wuhan in 2020 that could have provided vital information about the Covid-19 pandemic’s origins, calling on Beijing to be transparent and to share results of investigations it conducts.

The Huanan market in central China’s Wuhan city was the epicentre of the pandemic. From its origin there, the SARS-CoV-2 virus rapidly spread to other locations in Wuhan in late 2019 and then to the rest of the world.

“Every piece of data relating to studying the origins of COVID-19 needs to be shared with the international community immediately. These data could have – and should have – been shared three years ago,” World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in Geneva on Friday.

“We continue to call on China to be transparent in sharing data and to conduct the necessary investigations and share the results. Understanding how the pandemic began remains both a moral and scientific imperative,” he said.

Ghebreyesus said that last Sunday, the global health agency was made aware of data published on the GISAID database in late January, and taken down again recently.

“The data, from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, relates to samples taken at the Huanan market in Wuhan, in 2020,” he said.

Ghebreyesus said while the data was online, scientists from a number of countries downloaded the data and analysed it.

“As soon as we became aware of this data, we contacted the Chinese CDC and urged them to share it with WHO and the international scientific community so it can be analysed,” he said, adding that WHO also convened the Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens, or SAGO, which met on Tuesday.

“We asked researchers from the Chinese CDC and the international group of scientists to present their analyses of the data to SAGO. These data do not provide a definitive answer to the question of how the pandemic began, but every piece of data is important in moving us closer to that answer,” he said.

In a report Thursday, the New York Times said that an international team of virus experts said they had “found genetic data from a market in Wuhan, China, linking the coronavirus with raccoon dogs for sale there.”

The NYT report said that the genetic data was drawn from swabs taken from in and around the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market starting in January 2020, “shortly after the Chinese authorities had shut down the market because of suspicions that it was linked to the outbreak of a new virus.”

While the animals had been cleared out from the market, researchers took swabs from the walls, floors, metal cages and carts used for transporting animal cages.



# Forex kitty down by \$2.39 bn to \$560 bn

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The country's forex reserves fell by \$2.39 billion to a three-month low of \$560.003 billion for the week to March 10, the Reserve Bank said in its latest weekly data release. In the week to March 3, the reserves rose by \$1.46 billion and stood at \$562.40 billion.

On an annualised basis, the RBI said, the reserves are down by \$47.31 billion during the week under review while on a fiscal year basis, the same plunged by \$62.23 billion.

With this erosion, the forex kitty is at the lowest since early-December, according to the weekly statistical supplement released by the RBI on Friday.

The loss in the reserves is due to the revaluation of the foreign currency assets, which are the largest component of the forex kitty, to the tune of



\$2.2 billion to \$494.86 billion for the week to March 10. On a year-on-year basis, the value of foreign currency assets fell by \$45.86 billion and from a fiscal year perspective, they lost \$59.49 billion.

Expressed in dollar terms, foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of the non-US units like the euro, the pound and the yen held in the foreign

exchange reserves. The reserve losses are primarily due to the RBI selling dollars to stem the rupee volatility in the spot and forwards market to prevent runaway moves in the exchange rate.

Last week, the rupee stood ground and lost just 10 basis points against the dollar and the currency traded in the 81.61-82.29 range. The rupee ended at 82.55 on Friday. The

country's gold reserves and SDR holdings too saw a reduction in the week under review with both reserves falling \$110 million and \$53 million, respectively. The gold reserves and SDR holdings stand at \$41.92 billion and \$18.12 billion, respectively.

The country's reserve position in the IMF also fell by \$11 million, taking it to \$5.1 billion.

The reserves have been falling from the peak as the rupee has been under pressure and the monetary authority has been taking measures to defend the rupee from extreme volatility. In 2022, the cost of defending a falling rupee was over USD 115 billion of the reserves.

The worst drop was in the week to February 10 when reserves plunged by a steep \$8.32 billion to USD 566.95 billion. In October 2021, the forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion.

# 'Packaging industry growing at 15-17%'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The packaging industry is growing at 15-17 per cent and the sector has the potential to create employment opportunities in the country, industry experts said.

The experts also called for the promotion of domestic players and setting up the packaging industry in every district on the lines of the 'one district one product' initiative to create jobs at the local level.

"Presently, the demand for packaging of all things has increased a lot and there is a lot of scope for employment in this sector," Prof Tanveer Alam, Director of the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) Delhi, said at the Asian Packaging Congress here on Saturday.

The event was organised by the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, a release said. The packaging business in the world is worth USD 79 billion



The packaging industry is growing at 15-17 per cent and the sector has the potential to create employment opportunities in the country, industry experts said in New Delhi PTI photo

and has a growth rate of 15-17 per cent, Alam said. Industry experts opined that to boost the industry, packaging units should be set up in every district on the lines of one district one product scheme so that employment can be generated, a statement said. Different types of packaging like glass, metal, paper and others are being adopted for each type of

product, the expert said. Recently, an MoU has also been signed with the Government of Uttar Pradesh and this product has already been launched in 15 districts of UP, IIP said. Experts said that the packaging industry can also help bring agricultural products to market which will increase farmers' income and cut farm production losses.

# Gig economy in limbo after food deliveries slow down

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

With a spurt in online food and grocery delivery, especially in the pandemic years, India saw a meteoric rise in the gig economy, giving millions of people job opportunities.

However, delivering hot and piping food at customers' doorsteps has become a nightmare for many of them as the food delivery business turns out to be a losing game while more and more delivery partners report unfair work conditions, pay disparity, and harassment.

India is likely to see its gig workforce add 9-11 million jobs by 2025, which has been one of the most pivotal economic shifts in a long time.

In terms of job roles, door delivery is the most prevalent gig role employers are hiring for currently — 22 per cent for food and 26 per cent for other deliveries, according to a recent study by leading job portal Indeed. According to reports, a typical delivery boy's salary is



Rs 15,000 per month. Delivery Boy salaries at Zomato and Swiggy can range from Rs 4,804-Rs 30,555 per month depending on which area they are working in.

Gig workers are freelancers or contractors who work independently, typically on a short-term basis for multiple clients. Their work may be project-based, hourly, or part-time.

However, when it comes to fair work for gig workers among the digital platform economy in India, Zomato, Swiggy, and quick-grocery delivery providers Dunzo and Zepto are among the worst per-

formers across parameters related to the working conditions of gig workers, according to the latest 'Fairwork India Ratings 2022 Report'.

According to professor Balaji Parthasarathy, one of the principal investigators of the team, these findings are alarming for all stakeholders - government, consumers and platform owners -- and they should come together to help gig workers get the best working conditions.

"We would like the government and other stakeholders like consumers and digital labour platform owners to take

note of these findings and ensure a better work environment for millions of gig workers in 2023," Parthasarathy said.

The Fairwork India team was spearheaded by the Centre for IT and Public Policy (CITAPP), International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B), in association with Oxford University in the UK.

Even with workers and worker groups repeatedly emphasising the importance of a stable income for platform workers, platforms have been reluctant to publicly commit to and operationalise, a minimum wage policy.

"Secondly, while workers have engaged in various forms of collective action to voice their concerns in the platform economy, platforms have been uncompromisingly unwilling to recognise or negotiate with any collective body representing workers," the findings showed. According to the report, the promise of flexibility of the digital platform econ-

omy raises as many questions about livelihoods as it offers opportunities.

"We hope the report provides the basis for an interpretation of flexibility that allows for not merely the adaptability that platforms seek, but also the income and social security that workers lack," said Parthasarathy and Janaki Srinivasan, the Principal Investigators of the team.

The biggest barriers for gig workers are lack of access to job information (62 per cent), not knowing English (32 per cent), and not knowing the local language (10 per cent) for workers who have shifted outside of their home town for work.

Challenges in language also result in other difficulties with 14 per cent of the gig workforce respondents reporting a lack of awareness of their jobs' skills and abilities, according to Indeed study. Nearly three out of five gig workers (59 per cent) find their jobs uncomfortable (46 per cent), if not hard and risky (13 per cent).

# Five million food dispatches daily in Mumbai, yet delivery guys struggling

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

One of the greatest blessings Of the Smartphone Internet era is the ease of ordering snacks, food and desserts from anywhere in the city/town or the district, for self, family, parties, social or corporate events.

Through one or more of the hundreds of Apps, one can place the most outrageous orders, ranging from the humble 'Vada-Pav' to 'Shawarmas' — and every possible dish in between.

Once the App accepts the order, a series of precision processes are triggered right from inside the kitchens to the delivery boys/girls who pick it up, and finally ring your doorbell - all within 30-60 minutes - for that joyous, drooling smile...! Simple as it may sound, the delivery business is actually bizarre and complex, involving a lot of human elements,



the critical being the delivery boys-girls who serve as the 'last-mile' link between the food outlets and the hungry customer.

One such delivery boy-cum Area Manager attached to an app-based company, G. V. Kishore, 35, of Borivali, shares some insights into the low-profile business that quietly 'delivers' with clockwork precision and an efficiency that could merit a top Sigma rating. There are an estimated 500,000 car-

# Online gaming can make India \$1 tn economy: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The online gaming sector is a rapidly growing industry that has potential of contributing significantly to the country's goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion digital economy, generating substantial employment, and fostering innovation, a report said.

Regulation of online gaming will not only open up economic opportunities but also address various social issues, a report titled 'Online Gaming in India: The Taxation Quandary' by Primus Partners said. Announcements in Union Budget 2023-24 are positive for the sector as it has addressed the persistent ask to incorporate the offset of losses in the calculation of gains from online games for income tax, it said.

A pertinent issue relating to the implementation mechanism proposed in the Union Budget for TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) on online games has been highlighted in the report.

# India needs to promote e-payment items globally: Das

PTI ■ KOCHI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday underlined the need for using the G20 presidency to present India's e-payment story to the global audience and seize the opportunity to internationalise payment products like UPI and RuPay.

India's home-grown payment products like UPI and RuPay network are increasing their global footprint and will make cross-border payments easier, Das said while inaugurating the Payment System Operators (PSO) Conference here.

"Under Reserve Bank's Payments Vision 2025, we stand committed to the core theme of 'E-Payments for Everyone, Everywhere, Everytime' (4Es). We must seize every opportunity to internationalise our payment products. This will open up a new world of opportunities for our country. This is the year of the Indian Presidency of the G20. Let us present the India story to the global audience," he said.

The governor further said with the Indian economy getting increasingly integrated with the global system, cross-border payments have assumed greater significance.

"Our home-grown payment products, UPI and RuPay network, are enhancing their global footprint," he said and added launch of UPI linkage with Singapore's PayNow is a major step forward.

In future, Das added such linkages with other countries will make crossborder payments simple, affordable and real-time. QR code-based merchant payments through UPI apps are already enabled in



Bhutan, Singapore and the UAE. All these would also help project India's soft power at the global level. "I would like to say that a lot has been achieved but a lot more can and should be done in the days ahead," he said.

Das emphasised that payments and settlements are serious businesses with potential downsides, should anything go wrong. Effort should be to mitigate such downsides and capitalise on the upsides.

"This is something all market participants must recognise and constantly remind themselves. Every failed transaction, every fraud attempted or actually carried out, every complaint that is not satisfactorily addressed should be a cause of concern and must invite a detailed root cause analysis.

"It would do well to remember that like the batsman on the cricket field, you are only as good as the last ball faced.

"We must together make sure that no one in the country is left behind in the digital payments journey," he said.

The launch of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in 2016 has revolutionised the payments ecosystem with about 803 crore transactions worth Rs 13 lakh crore processed in January 2023 alone.

# Cabinet okays exemption to NTPC to invest in NTPC Green Energy

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Friday granted exemption to NTPC Ltd for making investment in NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL), it's wholly-owned subsidiary.

The CCEA also exempted NGEL's investment in NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd (NREL) and its other joint ventures and subsidiaries, subject to a ceiling of 15 per cent of its net worth beyond the monetary ceiling of Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 7,500 crore, towards achieving a target of 60 GW renewable energy (RE) capacity by NTPC Ltd, official sources said.

The exemption given to NTPC will help in improving India's global image as a green economy. It will also decrease India's dependency on conventional sources of energy by diversifying India's energy generation and will also decrease the country's coal import bills.

Number of air-passengers benefitting from the government's Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) has come down in 2022-23.

A Parliamentary standing Committee took note of the dwindling numbers and has sought an explanation from the Ministry.

In its latest report, the Committee noted that there has been a fluctuation in the number of RCS passengers who have benefitted from the UDAN Scheme. While the number of RCS passengers rose from 3 lakh (2017-18), to

# Startup failure gradually reducing in India; awareness needed: STPI DG

PTI ■ PANAJI

Asserting that the rate of failure of startups in the country is slowly declining, Director General of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Arvind Kumar said there is a need to create more awareness about what the government is doing to promote startups. Talking to PTI, Kumar said awareness campaign is very much required amongst the youth about startups.

"I go to a number of engineering colleges, they don't know anything about startups, they don't know about STPI, they don't know anything about what the country and government is doing," he commented.

The STPI DG was in Goa to address the Future Tech Leadership Forum Goa 2023 on Saturday organised by the stakeholders in the state's IT industry. Kumar said there should be a subject on entrepreneurship for students in 12th standard where the product cycle should be explained and they should be made job



producers and not job seekers. He said STPI's directors are going to various colleges and giving lectures to youngsters about startups and also how to get funds for that. "I think awareness is happening but it has to be accelerated," Kumar added.

He said though they have not done any study on the failure of startups, there are studies which claim that the rate in India is one against ten. "Failure is a part of startup ecosystem not just in India but also in the developed part of the world. Our country has just started the journey of startups, so naturally we will fail more,

compared to those countries which have started ten years back," he said. Talking about Centres of Entrepreneurship (COE) created by STPI, Kumar said such initiatives are working to reduce the failure rate.

"COEs have chief mentors who are authority on the particular subject. They guide startups in COEs and do hand-holding.

When something (startup idea) is ready, we call Venture Capitalists, Fund Managers, who see the product and see if they can invest in it," he said. "Failure of startups is also reducing with the passage of time."

# Number of flyers benefitting from RCS-UDAN falls in 2022-23

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI



12 lakh (2018-19), to 31 lakh (2019-20) after the initiation of the Scheme in 2016, it dipped to 15 lakh in 2020-21. "Though, the number of RCS

passengers benefitted grew to 33 lakh in 2021-22, it has again come down to 20 lakh passengers as on 31.01.2023. The Committee would like to know

the reasons for the reduction in number of passengers benefitting from this Scheme during 2022-23.

The Committee also desires to know the details of plans for the year 2023-24, wherein the Ministry aims to increase the number of passengers benefitted to 30 lakh," said the Demand for Grants (2023-24)n report of Civil Aviation Ministry.

It also noted that as per the Output Outcome Monitoring Framework for 2022-23 (till 31.12.2022), the Ministry has not been able to achieve the targets in most cases, with achievements in the range of 40

per cent to 67per cent only. Only in the case of passengers travelled in NER, it has achieved a percentage of 261.5 per cent.

"The Committee notes the low performance of the Ministry on almost all the constituents of the RCS-UDAN Scheme, except one.

The Committee hopes that with the increased allocation, the Ministry would do meticulous planning to ensure full utilisation of funds and achievement of targets," said the report.

The Civil Aviation Ministry launched Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) -

UDAN on October 21, 2016. RCS-UDAN is a flagship programme of the Ministry.

The primary objective of RCS-UDAN is to facilitate or stimulate regional air connectivity and by making it affordable to masses through measures like concessions by Central Government; State Governments/ Union Territories (UTs); and Airport Operators to reduce the cost of airline operations on regional routes/ other support measures and Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to meet the gap, if any, between the cost of airline operations and expected revenues on such routes.



# TREESA-GAYATRI LOSE IN SEMIS

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand's sensational run came to an end as the Indian pair signed off with a second successive semifinal finish at the All England Championships here on Saturday.

The two young shuttlers found the going tough against Korean world number 20 duo of Baek Na Ha and Lee So Hee, losing 10-21 10-21 in a 46-minute women's doubles contest at the Utilita arena.

"We learnt a lot from this match. The difference was they didn't leave a shuttle and we did panic a little bit," Gayatri said after the match.

Treesa added: "When we played against them, their defence was good, it was better than yesterday. We were just panicking and didn't play well, we just kept attacking."

Gayatri's father Pullula Gopichand, the chief national coach, was the last Indian to win the All England crown, in 2001, the first being the legendary Prakash Padukone in 1980.

Gayatri, 20, and Treesa, 19, had a big opportunity to reach the finals but it ended in anticlimax as they played into the hands of the Koreans.

"I was nervous. There was pressure," said Gayatri.

The world number 17 pair was pitted against Baek and Lee, the latter being an experienced player with two world championships medals with former partner Shin Seung-chan.

In fact, Lee and Shin had faced defeat against the Indian pair in the last edition but the



fresh combination of Lee and Baek have been relentless this week with wins over second and eighth seeds, and looked in supreme touch as they came up with a tactical masterclass.

The Koreans turned into a retrieving machine as they defended seamlessly and extend-

ed the rallies with their high tosses and lifts to not allow the Indians to play their short flat rally game.

As a result, Gayatri and Treesa failed to make a good start like they did earlier this week, falling behind 0-4 early on.

Lee and Baek frustrated the

Indians with longer rallies, waiting patiently for their opponents to make errors. It worked perfectly as the Koreans grabbed a 11-5 lead.

Briefly the Indians made it 9-13 but it was a one-way traffic from 14-10, with the Koreans drawing the first blood with

seven straight points, including the last which went long from Gayatri.

The Koreans didn't kill the shots at the nets and kept playing more high lifts, with the Indians sticking with their smashes from the back court.

Gayatri and Treesa couldn't

change their tactics and went wide and long too many times as Lee and Baek zoomed to a massive 11-2 lead at the mid-game interval of the second game.

Gayatri had her moment of brilliance, when she mixed body shots with a drop to grab a point to move to 5-11 after resumption, but such instances were too few.

The Indians managed just five more points before Treesa hit the net to hand 10 match points to the Koreans, who sealed their place in the final after another long rally.

Despite the loss, it was a good week for the young Indians, who started playing together only in 2021 and had surprised all by reaching the semifinals in the last edition after being promoted to the main draw from the reserve list.

This time, Gayatri and Treesa had come into the tournament with a Commonwealth Games bronze medal and wins over higher-ranked pairs such as world No. 7 Tan Pearly and Thinnah Muralitharan at the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship in February.

Gayatri and Treesa accounted for some big scalps such as the seventh seeded Thai pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Ravindra Prajongjai and Japan's former world number ones Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota in the early rounds this week.

"We played against some good players, the confidence was there. So we are looking to the next tournaments. We have a lot more to learn. We will come back stronger," Treesa signed off.



## We believe to seal place in next season's Champions League: Isak

AP ■ NOTTINGHAM

Alexander Isak said Newcastle believe they will seal a place in next season's Champions League after the Swede scored twice, including a stoppage time penalty, to beat Nottingham Forest 2-1 on Friday.

Victory lifts the Magpies to within one point of fourth-placed Tottenham and with a game in hand to come on Spurs. "We believe and we know that we have it in our own hands and have a good chance," said Isak after Newcastle signed off for the international break with back-to-back wins.

"It is important we have gone into this break with a good feeling with two wins from two games."

Defeat was Forest's first at home in the league since September and leaves Steve Cooper's men still two points above the relegation zone.

"It's always the worst way to lose, in the last couple of minutes, having fought in the game," said Cooper. "We made some poor football decisions around the build-up to the goals and that's something we can only blame ourselves for."

Newcastle ended a near two-month wait for a Premier League win last weekend in beating Wolves and came flying out the blocks at the City Ground.

But the closest the visitors came to turning their early dominance into a lead was when Renan Lodi turned Isak's cross onto his own crossbar.

Instead it was Forest who went in front completely against the run of play thanks to a howler from Sven Botman.

The Dutch centre-back has been a major factor in Newcastle's success this season but his attempted pass back to

goalkeeper Nick Pope was intercepted by Emmanuel Dennis, who produced a stunning chipped finish for just his second Forest goal.

The crossbar came to the home side's rescue again when Sean Longstaff's deflected strike from the edge of the box came back off the woodwork.

Newcastle finally got their reward in first half stoppage time when the club's record signing Isak acrobatically flicked in Joe Willock's cross off the post.

The pattern of play continued after the break as the Magpies laid siege to the Forest goal.

Former Real Madrid and Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Keylor Navas had to be at his best to turn over powerful drives from Elliot Anderson and Bruno Guimaraes.

Anderson then thought he had his first senior goal when he headed in Isak's cross at the back post.

However, the goal was controversially disallowed after a VAR check for offside against Longstaff in the build-up despite the ball breaking to the midfielder off a Forest player.

Just when Forest looked set to hold out for a precious point in their battle to beat the drop, Moussa Niakhate needlessly put his hand up to block Isak's tame header.

The Swedish international's debut season in England has been blighted by injury, but he showed his class by keeping his head to slot past Navas and spark wild scenes of celebration among the away support.

"It's a massive win and I thought we deserved it," said Howe.

"To come back is always a great way to win and the character shown in the group is very pleasing."

## Atalanta beat Empoli 2-1 to boost CL hopes

AP ■ MILAN

Substitute Rasmus Hojlund Scored late to help Atalanta fight back to beat Empoli 2-1 in Serie A and boost its chances of qualifying for the Champions League. Hojlund scored the winner just seven minutes after coming off the bench. Marten de Roon had cancelled out Tyrone Ebuehi's opener for Empoli.

The victory snapped Atalanta's winless run and lifted it to within three points of fourth-placed AC Milan, which visits Udinese on Saturday.

Empoli remained nine points above the relegation zone.

Atalanta had lost three of its past four matches, drawing the other, and lost ground in a tight race for the Champions League spots.

## Ancelotti backs Vinicius to escape Araujo shackles

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti backed winger Vinicius Junior to escape Ronald Araujo's shackles when Los Blancos face Barcelona on Sunday in the Clasico in La Liga.

The Brazilian winger, key for Madrid this season, has been shut down by Barca defender Araujo in recent clashes with the Catalans, with coach Xavi Hernandez deploying the centre-back on the right to directly confront him.

Vinicius has scored twice in 12 games against Barcelona, both times before Araujo started at right-back.

No player has scored from open play against leaders Barca at Camp Nou in La Liga this season, giving champions Madrid a formidable task as they try to eat into their nine-point deficit.

"He's had more difficulties than in other games, but Vini is always Vini, his mobility can help him get the best (from himself) in tomorrow's game," Ancelotti told a news conference Saturday.

"I'm thinking of putting him on the right, let's see. He can play on the right,



Vinicius."

Ancelotti later said he was joking about using Vinicius on the right flank, but reiterated that the forward could be given more liberty to drift from the left.

"Obviously that wasn't serious, but mobility could be important, not having a fixed reference point. Speaking generally, against a forward that's another problem for a defence.

"Vini will play on the left, with more mobility."

Xavi also looked forward to the battle between Araujo and Vinicius.

"Araujo is very physically strong, he's quick, fast, and understands the movements of his opponents," Xavi told reporters Saturday.

"He's responsible, and a leader. He's a world class defender, one of the best in the world. Having Ronald in the team, is a guarantee, an advantage.

"Usually when he takes on Vinicius, he comes out as the winner of the battle, but Vinicius can make a big difference.

"It's not just Ronald, it's (everyone) looking out, and collectively, we've been very good against Madrid."

## RYBAKINA TO FACE SABALENKA IN INDIAN WELLS FINAL

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Elena Rybakina again proved too much for world number one Iga Swiatek, denying the defending champion a return to the Indian Wells final with an emphatic 6-2, 6-2 semi-final victory on Friday.

Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion who stunned top-seeded Swiatek in the fourth round of the Australian Open on the way to the final, will now get a chance to turn the tables on Aryna Sabalenka, who beat her in Melbourne to capture a first Grand Slam title.

World number two Sabalenka advanced with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over seventh-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece.

Rybakina, ranked 10th in the world, was all over Swiatek from the opening game, painting the lines with her punishing ground strokes and serving with pinpoint precision.

Swiatek, winner of the French and US Opens last year in a campaign that included eight titles in all, simply had no answer and surrendered the first set with a double-fault on the first set point.

It was more of the same in the second as Rybakina raced to a 5-0 lead. Swiatek, who revealed after the match she was dealing with "discomfort" in her ribcage, finally managed a hold for 5-1, and pounced to break as Rybakina suddenly struggled with her first serve in the next game.

Rybakina still managed to muster two match points at 40-15, but Swiatek saved one with an overhead and another with a blistering return of a second serve, winning two more points to complete the break for 5-2.



But there would be no comeback. A mis-hit as Swiatek appeared to trip chasing a ball back to the baseline gave Rybakina another match point and she converted it with confidence.

"I didn't expect that I was going to play that good today," admitted Rybakina, who battled through three sets to beat Czech Karolina Muchova in the quarter-finals.

"Hopefully I'm going to play like this on Sunday," she added after denying Swiatek's bid to become the first woman since Martina Navratilova in 1990-91 to win back-to-back titles in the California desert.

## Rib injury threatens Iga's Miami Open defense

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Iga Swiatek's Indian Wells title defense ground to a halt in a straight sets semi-final loss to Elena Rybakina on Friday, the world number one later revealing she is battling a rib injury.

"For sure, Elena played great tennis today, and I feel like against her I have to play better," Swiatek said after falling 6-2, 6-2 to the Wimbledon champion — who also shocked her in the Australian Open fourth round.

"Honestly, I feel like it's more me and kind of my mistakes," she said. "I'm also not feeling 100% physically. I have a little discomfort in my rib, and we're going to consult with medical team."

Swiatek said she still planned to defend her title at the Miami Open that starts next week.

"For now I'm preparing to play, but we'll see what (the) next days are going to tell us," she said. "I don't know yet."

She said she hadn't had

much experience of playing through injury, the only example she recalled coming at the 2019 French Open.

"It's a new situation for me, for sure," the 21-year-old said. "For sure now it's a totally different level. So I feel like going on (for) matches you have to be 100% fit.

"I have been playing, so there has been some fatigue all the time," she said. "I would say it's kind of constant, but I'm pretty sure that tomorrow or day after will help in recovery."

## Sabalenka 'feels bad' for Ukrainian players

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to stir tension in the tennis world, and Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka on Friday said that it's not only Ukrainian players who are feeling the strain.

"Of course it's a lot of tension between us," Australian Open champion Sabalenka said after beating Maria Sakkari to reach the final of the combined WTA and ATP Masters 1000 in the California desert.

But, she added, "I still have this belief that I did nothing bad to Ukrainians — not me, not Russian athletes."

The WTA and ATP tours have barred players from Russia and its ally Belarus from competing under their national flags, but insist that individual athletes have a right to compete.



## Boxing World C'ships: Nitu, Preeti, Manju enter pre-quarters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian boxers continued to shine at home as three of them entered the pre-quarters with contrasting wins at the Women's World Championships here on Saturday.

Commonwealth Games gold medalist Nitu Ganghas (48kg) began her campaign with a RSC (referee stopped contest) win over Doyeon Kang of Korea, while Preeti (54kg) eked out a 4-3 split decision victory against Romania's Lacramioara Perijoc.

Manju Bamboriya (66kg), on the other hand, defeated Cara Wharerau of New Zealand by a 5-0 unanimous verdict.

Nitu, who lost in the quarter-final during the last edition, opened her campaign in the best possible way, winning the bout in the first round itself.

In the opening minute, she used her hook and left cross but

wasn't able to connect her jabs.

The boxers then went into a frenzy as they punched each other with both hands. Soon, Kang got the first standing count. With Nitu continuing her onslaught, the Korean got her second standing count 20 seconds later with referee Luca Vadilonga of Italy ruling in the Indian's favour, much to the joy of the partisan crowd at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall.

Having won her opening bout by an RSC verdict, Preeti had to work hard for her second win in the tournament.

"I had prepared a lot for this bout, she had won a silver last time. I want to prove to myself that I'm less than no one," said Preeti.

"I was trying to understand her game in the beginning. In the last round I changed my strategy. She was attacking and getting unbalanced."

Both boxers looked to keep a distance in the first few seconds. Preeti was caught unawares by a Perijoc straight jab but the Haryana pugilist recovered soon.

The 2022 Asian Championships bronze medalist then landed two punches on her Romanian opponent and led 3-2 at the end of the first round.

In the second round, both boxers tried to sidestep each other as Perijoc resorted to body blows.

Preeti danced around the ring, using her nimble feet, as she tried to avoid the Romanian. She landed some accurate punches but lost the round 2-3.

In the final three minutes, Preeti resorted to counter attacking which she did effectively. The round was a draw with the bout going into a review. The evaluator and observer ruled in favour of the Indian.



# INDIA AIM TO SEAL SERIES

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The spotlight will once again be on KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja when India take on Australia in the second ODI here on Sunday, with regular captain Rohit Sharma returning to lead the side after missing the opening game in Mumbai.

India defeated Australia by five wickets in a low-scoring game at the Wankhede Stadium, with Rahul, who struggled to find form during the Border-Gavaskar series leading to him being dropped for the third and fourth Tests, scoring a patient unbeaten 75 as the hosts cantered home.

Jadeja, playing ODI cricket after nearly eight months due to a knee injury and subsequent surgery, scored an unbeaten 45 in the chase of 188 on Friday. He also bowled a tight spell and returned figures of 2/46 to be declared 'Player of the Match'.

With the ODI World Cup being hosted by India later this year, an in-form Rahul and a fully-fit Jadeja will be an asset, and the three-match series will help the selectors assess the duo's progress. India would look to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series and also try to make amends with the bat, after they were in a spot of bother at 4/39, and later 5/83, before Rahul and Jadeja came together at the crease to guide the hosts to victory with 61 balls to spare.

Rohit Sharma's return to captaincy duties will certainly give solidity to the top order, which crumbled to the pace and variations of Australian quick Mitchell Starc.

The lanky left-arm pacer's



three-wicket burst at the start put India under tremendous pressure, with Virat Kohli (4), Suryakumar Yadav (0) and Shubman Gill (20) departing in quick succession after Marcus Stoinis had made an early dent by dismissing Ishan Kishan for three runs. Indian batters have occasionally looked tentative against quality left-arm pacers, and facing Starc in the remaining two games should give them

good practice in home conditions, with efforts focused towards making preparations for the World Cup in October-November.

With Sharma set to open, Kishan will likely make way for the regular captain. While not much should be read into Kohli and Gill's below-par scores in the first ODI, Suryakumar Yadav not being able to find his mojo in the 50-over format is a reason

for concern.

A marauder with the bat in T20s, Suryakumar is evidently still finding his feet in ODIs. He has gone without a fifty in all five ODIs this year. Surya has now played 15 ODIs (13 innings) without a score exceeding 50.

However, with no timeline set for Shreyas Iyer's return, India will keep auditioning Suryakumar for the role at No. 4. India's bowling did a tremen-

dous job in Mumbai with pacers Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj flourishing on a pace-friendly Wankhede pitch. But wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav could not make a strong impression.

However, the team management is not expected to tinker with the bowling line-up, with Pandya playing the role of a third seamer to perfection in Mumbai.

The weather forecast for

## Important we recover properly to perform better: Shami

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ace pacer Mohammed Shami has stressed on the importance of recovery after bowling India to a five-wicket win against Australia in the first ODI at the Wankhede stadium here.

The right-arm quick returned with figures of 6-2-17-3 on Friday as India restricted Australia to 188 in 35.4 overs and then returned to overhaul the target in 39.5 overs.

"The plan was to keep it simple. We had discussed in team meeting as well to make a good start, to keep the ball in good areas and stick to our line and length," he said in conversation with fellow pacer Mohammed Siraj in a video posted on BCCL.Tv.

"The heat was also an issue. When we bowled the first spell it was hot but later it got a bit better to bowl when the wind started blowing." The 32-year-old had missed the training for the first ODI to recover from the fourth and final Test against Australia in Ahmedabad.

"After 40 overs of the Ahmedabad Test, I needed 1-2 days to recover. I completed that recovery and came here for the match," he said.

"The management accepted that I needed recovery. We have played so many matches that we know our skills and ability. So it is impor-



tant that we recover properly to perform better." Siraj also claimed three wickets for 29 runs to play a huge role in India's win.

"When I get the new ball, I try to bowl inswing. Like when there is a left-hander, I try to bowl inswing. I wanted to take as many wickets in the powerplay. I got one wicket," he said.

"But when I went to fine leg when you were bowling, I was thinking 'what is happening'. I was wondering if the umpire has given you the new ball or what?"

"Then when I came to bowl, the ball was moving off the wicket nicely. So, I also looked to bowl consistently in one area. I also got tips from you and we enjoyed the bowling in Wankhade."



## India can bolster their batting if Rahul keeps wickets in WTC final vs Aus: Shastri

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India coach Ravi Shastri has backed KL Rahul to seal his place as a wicketkeeper-batter for the World Test Championship final at The Oval in June, saying his presence will strengthen the team's batting lineup. Rahul has a good record in England but he was dropped from the playing XI after the first two Tests against Australia at home due to poor form.

The 30-year-old from Karnataka, however, made an impressive return, slamming a match-winning 75 not out in the first ODI against Australia in Mumbai on Friday night.

Shastri feels Rahul can play as a wicket-keeper in the WTC final, especially after KS Bharat couldn't produce the goods in the absence of an indisposed Rishabh Pant.

"He (KL) has really done

well to keep the selectors interested ahead of the WTC final," Shastri told Star Sports.

"Two things, one for the ODI series when Rohit Sharma returns and the other for the WTC final... India can bolster their batting if Rahul can keep wickets. 'Rahul can bat in the middle-order — No. 5 or 6. In England, you have to generally keep wickets from far behind. You don't have to keep up to the spinners a lot. He (KL) has two more ODIs to go before the IPL. He can cement his place in that Indian team."

Rahul has amassed 614 runs at 34.11 with two centuries — one at The Oval —, and one fifty in nine Tests in English conditions. India qualified for the WTC final to be held in June at The Oval against Australia. It will be India's second appearance in the final. They had lost to New Zealand in the 2021 final.

## CSK eyeing stake in MLC's Texas team

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) could be eyeing a stake in the Texas team, one of Major League Cricket's (MLC) six sides.

The four-time IPL winners on Saturday revealed that they will soon make a "major announcement" with regard to their association with the new T20 tournament in the US.

San Francisco Unicorns, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle Orcas, Texas and Washington DC are the six teams competing in the tournament, scheduled to be begin on July 13 this year.

MLC had announced on Friday that another IPL franchise Delhi Capitals, co-owned by GMR Group, will partner with Seattle Orcas to "help build and operate a world-class cricket team".

The Seattle Orcas' lead investor group includes Satya Nadella, chairman and CEO of Microsoft and Soma Somasegar, managing director of Madrona Ventures, among others.

In their cryptic message on social media on Saturday, CSK said, "Major announcement soon. Howdy Texas! Show some yellow to our NRI cousin, @TeamTexasMLC!"

The development comes a day before the MLC Domestic Player Draft scheduled to take place in Houston with more than 100 players eligible to represent the "USA cricket community" in the tournament.

## UPW end Mumbai Indians' winning run in WPL

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

UP Warriorz snapped formidable Mumbai Indians' winning run in the Women's Premier League with a five-wicket victory, after the Uttar Pradesh side extracted more out of a tricky pitch here on Saturday.

On a surface where the ball turned a lot and was also holding up, England's star left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone (3/15) led the way with her excellent bowling as UP Warriorz bundled out Mumbai Indians for 127.

When MI batted, as many as 18 of the 20 overs were bowled by spinners, a WPL record.

In reply, UPW faced some obstacles before competing the task with three balls to spare. Grace Harris (39) and Tahlia McGrath (38) were the main contributors with the bat for UPW, while Deepti Sharma (13 not out) and player of the match Ecclestone (16 not out) also played vital knocks.

UPW lost Devika Vaidya with just one run on the board at the start of the second over. While the successful bowler was Hayley Matthews, most of the credit for the dismissal must go to Harmanpreet Kaur, who pulled off a sensational catch at first slip after the batter got a thick outside edge.

Issy Wong picked up the big wicket of UPW captain Alyssa Healy (8), trapping her in front of the wicket. The on-field umpire was not convinced despite the huge appeal and MI's move to go for a referral proved to be the right call, leav-



## RCB to retire jersey numbers worn by ABD, Gayle

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) will retire the jersey numbers worn by AB de Villiers and Chris Gayle when the two cricketing legends are inducted into the Indian Premier League (IPL) side's Hall of Fame on March 26. "Jersey numbers 17 and 333 will be retired forever as a tribute to @ABdeVilliers17 and @henrygayle, when we induct the legends of RCB into the Hall of Fame," RCB tweet-

ed. Jersey No. 17 had become synonymous with de Villiers, who played 11 seasons (2011-2021) for RCB and scored 4,491 runs in 156 matches for the franchise. The charismatic South African cricketer also slammed 37 half-tons and two centuries for RCB, with a highest score of 133 not out in 2015.

De Villiers, who announced his retirement from all forms of cricket in November 2021, had a strike rate touching 152 for RCB. With Virat Kohli, de

ing the Australian star with no option but to walk back into the dugout.

Defending a small but tricky total on this surface, MI found another reason to celebrate when Yastika Bhatia completed a fantastic one-handed diving catch behind the wicket off the bowling of Nat Sciver-Brunton to send back Kiran Navgire for 12, for which she consumed 16 balls.

UPW were in a spot of bother at 27 for 3 in the beginning of seventh over, when Grace Harris got off the mark with a boundary.

Even as MI picked up three wickets quickly but they were also guilty of dropping three catches, which proved to be crucial in the end.

In the company of Harris, Tahlia McGrath stroked her way to a 25-ball 38 before Amelia Kerr had her caught and bowled. But Harris hit two successive fours on three occasions, after McGrath's dismissal, to reduce the gap.

There was another twist after Kerr dismissed Harris at a crucial juncture, but UPW held their nerves to emerge winners.

Earlier, had it not been for Issy Wong's 19-ball 32, MI would have ended with much less than what they eventually got.

After their skipper Alyssa Healy opted to field first, the UP Warriorz bowlers did a commendable job to keep things tight and take wickets at regular intervals against the strong Mumbai batting line-up.

MI were 56 for two at the end of the 10th over with Hayley Matthews (35) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (25) looking to build a partnership after the departure of Yastika Bhatia (5) and Nat Sciver-Brunton (7).

However, both Hayley and Kaur got out after getting starts, the India captain falling to compatriot Deepti Sharma after the former was done in by the seasoned Ecclestone.

Villiers posted five 100-plus partnerships for RCB and two 200-plus stands, the only pair in the world to post two such partnerships. West Indian hard hitter Gayle played for RCB for seven seasons (2011-2017) and

his jersey No. 333 became the most feared among opposing teams. During the 2013 IPL season, the Jamaican smashed a mindboggling 708 runs in 16 matches for RCB, including an unbeaten 175.

## Williamson, Nicholls double tons put NZ on top

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Aggressive double centuries for Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls powered New Zealand's dominance in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Wellington on Saturday.

The Black Caps declared their first innings at an imposing 580-4 before reducing Sri Lanka to 26-2 at stumps on day two, leaving the tourists with a very slim prospect of squaring the two-match series.

The in-form Williamson scored 215 and Nicholls posted a career-best 200 not out, with the pair's third-wicket stand of 363 virtually batting Sri Lanka out of the contest.

Their partnership was the fifth-highest by any New Zealand combination and they became the country's first batters to reach 200 in the same innings.

Sri Lankan captain Dimuth Karunaratne will resume on 16 on Sunday and nightwatchman Prabath Jayasuriya remains on four, with the deficit a daunting

554 runs.

Sri Lanka's bowlers struggled to generate life on a flat Basin Reserve pitch, forcing Karunaratne to set defensive fields during much of the mammoth partnership.

Williamson and Nicholls batted at a lively clip from the outset, advancing quickly from a 155-2 overnight score and barely looking troubled as they unleashed an array of attacking strokes through the first two sessions.

Williamson was impenetrable as he reached three figures for the third time in successive Tests, becoming the first New Zealander to pass 8,000 runs in the process.

It was a sixth double-century for the 32-year-old — whose unbeaten 121 was pivotal in a final-ball first Test in Christchurch earlier this week.

Having resumed on 26, Williamson struck 23 fours and two sixes before holing out in the deep off spinner Jayasuriya as he tried to escalate the scoring



rate.

Nicholls marched on from his overnight 18 to reach three figures before pushing past his previous-best score of 174.

His aggressive 240-ball knock, which featured four sixes, represented a remarkable return

to form for the left-hander, whose place in the team was under pressure after failing to reach 40 in his 15 previous innings.

Nicholls said he was aware of criticism of his ongoing selection but said he was made to feel

comfortable by support from his teammates and coach Gary Stead.

"Everyone in the group's been great and you really feel that support," he said.

"For me, it was just about trusting that I had done it

before. It hasn't happened as much as I'd like in the last period.

"Now the challenge is doing it again knowing that the blueprint is there."

Nicholls compared the partnership with a 369-run stand with Williamson against Pakistan in Christchurch two years ago.

"The way Kane's playing, he's in a real zone out there. It was nice to make that partnership into another really big one."

Kasun Rajitha, who was off the field for a period nursing a shoulder injury, lodged the best bowling figures of 2-126.

Matt Henry removed opener Oshada Fernando for six before fellow-seamer Doug Bracewell dismissed Kusal Mendis without scoring via a spectacular catch at point from Devon Conway.

It came from Bracewell's third ball of the match in what is his first Test appearance for more than six years.

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‘There was not one true thing said in this video’  
— Bella Hadid denies anonymous TikTok claims about drug use



# FEAR AND RISKS

More and more countries are banning TikTok citing data security risks. Should users be worried that the app will be wiped off their phones, writes HALELUYA HADERO

TikTok is once again fending off claims that its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, would share user data from its popular video-sharing app with the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

China’s Foreign Ministry on Wednesday accused the United States itself of spreading disinformation about TikTok’s potential security risks following a report in the Wall Street Journal that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US — part of the Treasury Department — was threatening a US ban on the app unless its Chinese owners divest their stake.

So are the data security risks real? And should users be worried that the TikTok app will be wiped off their phones?

**WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS ABOUT TIKTOK?**

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share TikTok user data — such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers — with China’s authoritarian government.

A law implemented by China in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country’s national security. There’s no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it, like other social media companies, collects.

Concerns around TikTok were heightened in December when ByteDance said it fired four employees who accessed data on two journalists from BuzzFeed News and The Financial Times while attempting to track down the source of a leaked report about the company.

**HOW IS THE US RESPONDING?**

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby declined to comment when asked Thursday to address the Chinese foreign ministry’s comments about

TikTok, citing the review being conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment.

Kirby also could not confirm that the administration sent TikTok a letter warning that the US government may ban the application if its Chinese owners don’t sell its stake but added, “we have legitimate national security concerns with respect to data integrity that we need to observe.”

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump and his administration sought to force ByteDance to sell off its US assets and ban TikTok from app stores. Courts blocked the effort, and President Joe Biden rescinded Trump’s orders but ordered an in-depth study of the issue. A planned sale of TikTok’s US assets was also shelved as the Biden administration negotiated a deal with TikTok that would address some of the national security concerns.

In Congress, US Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Jerry Moran, a Democrat and a Republican, wrote a letter in February to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urging the Committee on Foreign Investment panel, which she chairs, to “swiftly conclude its investigation and impose strict structural restrictions” between TikTok’s American operations and ByteDance, including potentially separating the companies.

At the same time, lawmakers have introduced measures that would expand the Biden administration’s authority to enact a national ban on TikTok. The White House has already backed a Senate proposal that has bipartisan support.

**HOW HAS TIKTOK ALREADY BEEN RESTRICTED?**

On Thursday, British authorities said they are banning TikTok on government-issued phones on security grounds, following similar moves by the European Union’s executive branch, which temporarily banned TikTok from employee phones. Denmark and Canada have also announced efforts to block it on government-issued phones.

Last month, the White House said



THERE’S NO EVIDENCE THAT TIKTOK HAS TURNED OVER SUCH DATA, BUT FEARS ABOUND DUE TO THE VAST AMOUNT OF USER DATA IT, LIKE OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES, COLLECTS.

it would give US federal agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices. Congress, the US armed forces and more than half of US states had already banned the app.

**WHAT DOES TIKTOK SAY?**

TikTok spokesperson Maureen Shanahan said the company was already answering security concerns through “transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification.”

In June, TikTok said it would route all data from US users to servers controlled by Oracle, the Silicon Valley company it chose as its US tech partner in 2020 in an effort to avoid a nationwide ban. But it is storing backups of the data in its own servers in the US and Singapore. The company said it expects to delete US user data from its own servers, but it has not provided a timeline as to when that would occur.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is set to testify next week before the House Energy and Commerce Committee about the company’s privacy and data-security practices, as well as its relationship with the Chinese government.

Meanwhile, TikTok’s parent company ByteDance has been trying to position itself as more of an international company — and less of a Chinese company that was founded in Beijing in 2012 by its current chief executive Liang Rubo and others.

Theo Bertram, TikTok’s vice president of policy in Europe, said in a Tweet Thursday that ByteDance “is not a Chinese company.” Bertram said its ownership consists of 60% by global investors, 20% employees and 20% founders. Its leaders are based in cities like Singapore, New York, Beijing and other metropolitan areas.

**ARE THE SECURITY RISKS LEGITIMATE?**

It depends on who you ask. Some tech privacy advocates say

while the potential abuse of privacy by the Chinese government is concerning, other tech companies have data-harvesting business practices that also exploit user information.

“If policy makers want to protect Americans from surveillance, they should advocate for a basic privacy law that bans all companies from collecting so much sensitive data about us in the first place, rather than engaging in what amounts to xenophobic showboating that does exactly nothing to protect anyone,” said Evan Greer, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Fight for the Future.

Karim Farhat, a researcher with the Internet Governance Project at Georgia Tech, said a TikTok sale would be “completely irrelevant to any of the alleged ‘national security’ threats” and go against “every free market principle and norm” of the state department’s internet freedom principles.

Others say there is legitimate reason for concern.

People who use TikTok might think they’re not doing anything that would be of interest to a foreign government, but that’s not always the case, said Anton Dahbura, executive director of the Johns Hopkins University Information Security Institute. Important information about the United States is not strictly limited to nuclear power plants or military facilities; it extends to other sectors, such as food processing, the finance industry and universities, Dahbura said.

**IS THERE PRECEDENCE FOR BANNING TECH COMPANIES?**

Last year, the US banned the sale of communications equipment made by Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE, citing risks to national security. But banning the sale of items could be more easily done than banning an app, which is accessed through the web.

Such a move might also go to the courts on grounds that it might violate the First Amendment as some civil liberties groups have argued.

*Associated Press*

**China appeals for fair treatment**

China appealed Friday to other governments to treat its companies fairly after Britain and New Zealand joined the United States in restricting use of TikTok due to fears the Chinese-owned short video service might be a security risk.

Governments are worried TikTok’s owner, ByteDance, might give browsing history or other data about users to China’s government or promote propaganda and disinformation.

“We call on the countries concerned to recognize the objective facts, effectively respect the market economy” and provide “a non-discriminatory environment” for all companies, said foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

TikTok is one focus of conflicts between China and other governments over technology and security that are disrupting processor chip, smartphone and other industries.

Legislators and employees in New Zealand’s Parliament will be prohibited from having TikTok’s app on phones, the government said Friday. Britain announced a ban Thursday on TikTok on all government phones.

India has banned TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including the WeChat message service, on security and privacy grounds.

The United States also has imposed restrictions on access by Chinese companies to processor chip and other technology on security and human rights grounds.

The Chinese government accused Washington of spreading false information about TikTok following a report by The Wall Street Journal that US authorities were considering a ban if ByteDance doesn’t sell the company.

The ruling Communist Party blocks most internet users in China from seeing TikTok and thousands of social media and other websites. ByteDance operates a sister short-video service, Douyin, that can be seen in China.



## GOING AYURVEDA WAY



DR RP PARASHER  
CMO (Ayurveda), MCD

As per Ayurveda, a state of Aequilibrium of Vata, Kafa and Pitta in the body denotes health. When any of the three increases or decreases, we may fall ill. Kafa is deposited all over the body during the winter season. The warmth of spring melts the kafa which is the cause of diseases like cough, cold, asthma and other ailments of the respiratory tract. That's why the level of immunity is lowered during change of season and people, especially the children & the elders fall ill easily. People, whose lungs have become weak due to corona infection, are more prone to catch the viral infection. Such types of patients are also facing problems like breathlessness and low levels of oxygen. Since it is a droplet infection, it spreads very fast. If a kid suffering from H3N2 infection attends school, he may spread the infection to a large number of students. Similarly if one member of a family gets infected, the whole family is likely to fall ill.

**How to avert the infection:** Keeping a vigil on feeding and living habits will definitely avert the infection. Observing covid appropriate behaviour is necessary which includes wearing of masks, regular cleaning of hands, avoid hands shake, etc. Cold drinks, ice creams and refrigerated items must be avoided. Do not consume items of cool temperament like rice, kadhi, curd, cauliflower peanuts, arhar daal, etc.

Never use cold water just after consuming fried foods. In case of viral infection, alum or saline gargles in warm water will help to reduce inflammation of the throat and the respiratory tract. Tulsi, Ginger, clove, pippali, cinnamon bark and kali mirch boiled in water, milk or tea will also give relief. Hot soups of tomato and other seasonal vegetables will increase immunity on one hand and reduce inflammation as well as itching on the other hand. Fruits like Amla, Giloy, Anjir, resins, grapes and oranges will provide immunity and strength to the body.

**Ayurvedic treatment:** Ayurvedic drugs are capable of treating the infection within three to five days. Medicines like Sitopaladi churan, Talishadi churan, Laxnivilas Ras, Kafketu Ras, Sanjeevani Vati, Sudarshan ghan vati, Trilokyachintamani ras, Samsheerpannag ras are quite effective to treat the infection. Chyavanprash, Vasa Avleha, Agastya Haritiki provide relief in cough and cold within a few days.

If chewed, Aladi Vati, Lavangadi vati and Vyoshadi vati provide instant relief in cough. Ayurvedic cough syrups containing Tulsi, vasa, jufa, pippali, mulathi, somlata, kantkari are quite effective and safe even in children and elders.

Some people with co-morbidities are getting hospitalised as they are in the high-risk zone. People need to wear masks and take precaution," Dr Rajiva Gupta, a consultant at the internal medicine department of CK Birla Hospital said.

The World Health Organisation, too, recommends that the most effective way to prevent infection with any virus is to get vaccinated and follow prevention measures: "Maintaining at least a 1-metre distance from others, wearing a well-fitted mask when keeping your distance is not possible, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated places and settings, opening windows and doors to keep rooms well ventilated and cleaning your hands frequently." It also advises that people should follow the advice "of your local authorities on getting influenza and Covid-19 vaccines".

Dr. Raman Kumar, physician from Noida said that H3N2 influenza is a respiratory virus which transmits in the same fashion as the Covid virus. The precautions are also the same and should be diligently followed.

cystic fibrosis)/Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)/Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)/Kidney diseases/Liver disorders/Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)/Obese people with a body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher/ People younger than 19 years old on long-term aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications/ People with a weakened immune system/ People who have had a stroke/ Pregnant women and those up to 2 weeks after the end of pregnancy/ People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

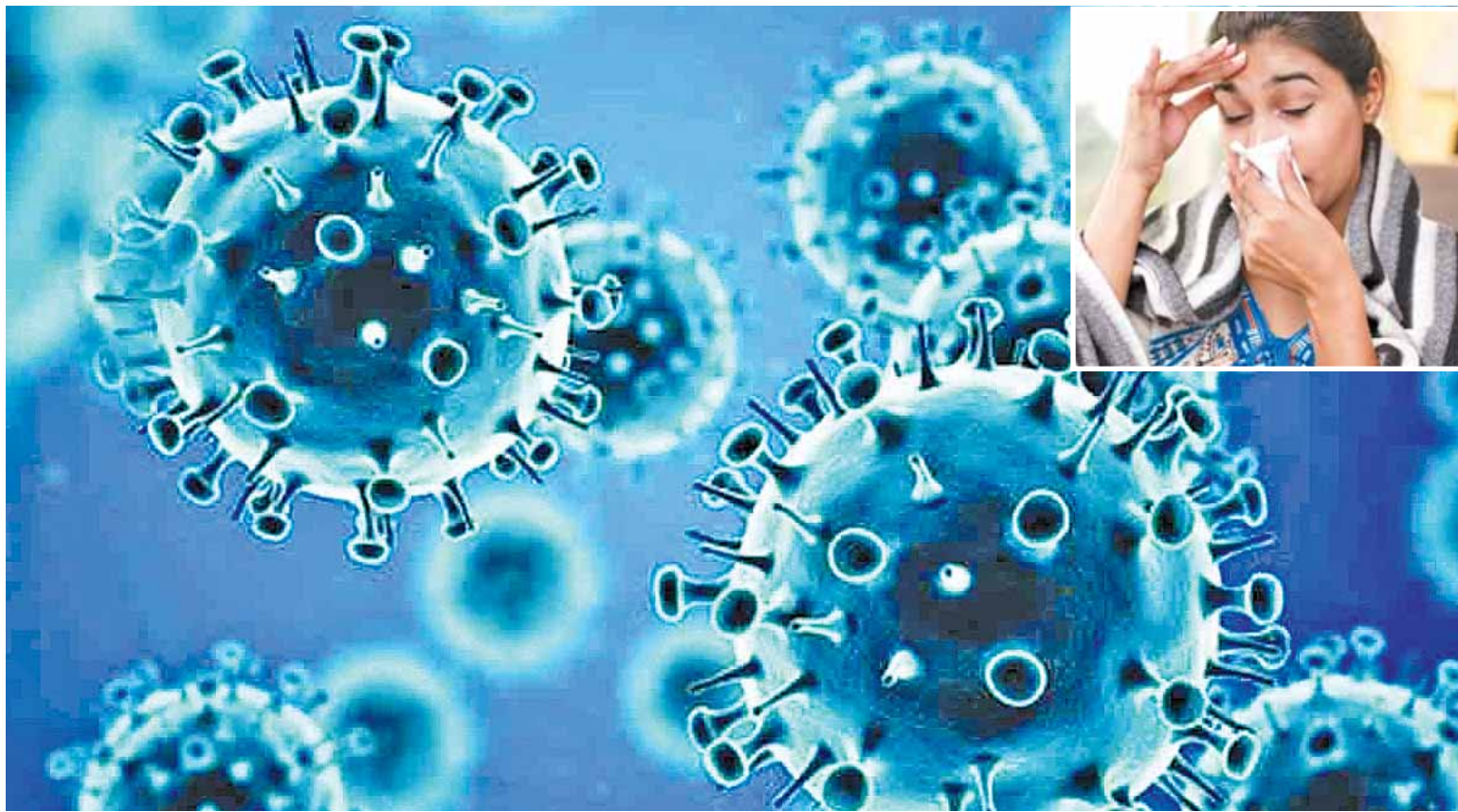
# H3N2: PRECAUTION IS THE KEY

Amid a spurt in cases of the H3N2 virus in the country, one more death has been reported, this time from Gurugram in Haryana. This takes the total number of fatalities to three. Adequate rest, simple home-cooked fresh food, and proper hydration are advised for recuperation at home, doctors tell **THE HEALTH PIONEER**

The health experts said that the first sign of influenza virus is usually a high fever, which begins about four to five days after exposure to the virus and lasts 10 to 15 days. A runny nose, a cough, red and watery eyes, and facial swelling can develop in the initial stage. They added that people at higher risk of developing complications include children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant people, and people with certain long-term health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neuro-developmental problems.

Dr Jugal Kishore Director Professor and Head of Department of Community at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi said that precaution is a key word. It is crucial to avoid crowded places, travel only if necessary, practice good hand and respiratory hygiene, and seek medical advice if symptoms persist for more than two days.

"There is a surge of H3N2 cases in the region now, but the severity of such cases is less.



**What is the H3N2 virus?** According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. There are 4 types of seasonal influenza viruses, types A, B, C and D. Influenza A and B viruses circulate and cause seasonal epidemics of disease. Influenza A viruses are further classified into subtypes according to the combinations of the hemagglutinin (HA) and the neuraminidase (NA), the proteins on the surface of the virus.

**How Does The Virus Transmit?** H3N2 Influenza virus transmitted mainly through infected droplets created when infected pigs

## WHAT/HOW/CAUSES/SYMPTOMS/MANAGEMENT OF H3N2

cough or sneeze. If these droplets land in your nose or mouth, or you inhale them, you can be infected. After this when an infected person sneezes or coughs, the respiratory droplets can travel in the air and reach the nose, and mouth of another individual, making him/her catch the virus and fall sick.

**Common Symptoms of H3N2 virus:** Cough and runny nose/ Body aches/Coughing/Fever/ Vomiting/Nausea/Diarrhea and Chills among few others.

**Tips for Patients infected with H3N2:** In

symptomatic cases, patients should wash hands with soap and water, wear masks and avoid crowded places, cover mouth and nose while sneezing and coughing, avoid touching eyes and nose, take plenty of fluids and take paracetamol for fever and bodyache.

**Who is More at Risk?** Following is a list of all the health and age factors that are known to increase a person's risk of getting serious flu complications, according to US body Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

or CDC

■ Although all children younger than 5 years old are considered at higher risk of serious flu complications, the highest risk is for those younger than 2 years old, with the highest hospitalization and death rates among infants younger than 6 months old.

■ Adults 65 years and older/Asthma/ Neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions/ Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)/Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and

## HEALTH BRIEFS



**GURU NANAK EYE CENTRE CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY:** Delhi-based Guru Nanak Eye Centre celebrated its 37th Foundation Day on .... On the occasion, it released a souvenir, "The glorious history and journey of Guru Nanak Eye Centre", compiled by the staff of GNEC team . It was released by Lt Gen Dr Daljit Singh, Dir. Gen. Medical Services (Army), Prof Poonam Narang (Dir. Prof. Radiology, Deen.

Dr.Kirti Singh, Director of the hospital said, the surgical expertise and clinical acumen of the doctors meets the best among their peers, a fact that is reflected in the annual footfall of 3-4 lakh patients requiring eye care.

**AIIMS, DELHI MOOTS 5G ROUTE:** AIIMS, Delhi is embarking on an installation of a smart fifth-generation cellular network in its premises by June 30, capitalizing on 5G's fast speeds to enhance access to care and improve efficiency.

A five-member panel headed by Prof Vivek Tandon, Department of Neurosurgery has been set up to expedite the process. An office memorandum issued by AIIMS director M Srinivas stated, "To enable maximum utilisation of modern communication technology for patient care, teaching, research, good governance, and for optimal deployment of integrated medical university information system (IMUIS), it is desirable that the entire campus has good strength of 5G mobile network to enable a robust mobile and data connectivity inside the buildings."

He also said that strong 5G connectivity will help the institute stay in touch with its main and outreach campuses like NCI Jhajjar, which will enable senior faculty members to provide their expert advice during off-duty hours.

The other members of committee include Dr Vivek Gupta (computer facility) and superin-

tending engineer Jitendra Saxena. Dr Vikas from telecommunications will be member secretary of the committee and Sunita Cherodath, senior deputy director general, department of telecommunications, will be a special invitee.



**BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS BHUMI UNDP'S SDGs AMBASSADOR:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has announced Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar as their first national advocate for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently.

As a national advocate, Bhumi will support UNDP India's efforts to raise awareness and mobilize support for the SDGs, a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Taking on the new role, Bhumi said, "I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure we leave behind a better world for future generations. The SDGs provide a roadmap for building a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all..."

Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India said that Bhumi's talent and dedication to gender equality and sustainability make her an ideal advocate for the SDGs.

# Cancer Prevention Strategies for Women



DR ADITI AGGARWAL  
Senior Consultant,  
Radiation Oncology, Paras  
Hospital, Gurgaon

As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer is the second most common cause of death globally with cases increasing every year in India as in the world.

Looking at cancers occurring in females, globally breast cancer tops the list followed by colorectal and lung cancers whereas in India, breast cancer is the leading and cervical cancer is the second most common cancer followed by ovary, head neck and colorectal cancers.

When it comes to cancer prevention, it is important to understand the risk factors for these diseases. Breast cancer

occurs more commonly in urban population than rural, pointing towards the westernization and changes in lifestyle that is contributory. Also the reproductive habits have changed over decades, amongst women in India. The older a woman is when she has her first full-term pregnancy, the higher her risk of breast cancer, no/fewer children, no breastfeeding. Poor genital hygiene, multiple births, multiple sexual partners are causative for cervical cancers. Consumption of saturated fats, processed foods, red meat, sedentary lifestyle being risk factors for breast and colorectal, as well as ovarian cancers to some extent. Smoking, tobacco chewing, alcohol are leading causes for head, neck and lung cancers. Family history is another important factor in breast, colorectal and ovarian cancers in few cases.

Amongst risk reduction/cancer prevention strategies that need to be followed, the first and foremost is leading a healthy lifestyle which means, no addictions, healthy diet with adequate



fibers, fruits and vegetables, minimal processed food, low red meat, avoiding constipation. Also moderate amount of exercise in our daily routine for around 30 minutes is recommended to maintain a healthy weight and keep many diseases away, not just cancer. Healthy reproductive habits and good genital hygiene, having children timely, limiting the number of births, avoiding high risk sexual behavior is equally important.

Following a routine of getting yourself tested regularly, termed as screening for breast and cervical cancers should be done by all females. Mammo-

graphy for breast cancer should be undertaken at the age of 45 years, thereafter done once in two years, till the age of 74 years as per USPSTF. Also PAP Smear for cervical cancer should be done for all sexually active females once in 3 years till the age of 65 years. These are simple tests which can detect very early lesions, sometimes even before they become cancerous. Screening for colorectal cancers using a test called colonoscopy is recommended for all those touching 45 to 50 years, done once in 5 to 10 years till the age of 75 years. In case of a positive family history, these tests should start 10 years earlier than the

index case.

Another very effective preventive tool available for cervical cancers is HPV vaccine for all girls, starting at the age of 9 years and given as two doses till the age of 15 years, or three doses till the age of 26 years. We need to educate our daughters to be aware of their bodies and start breast self-examination once a month to understand what is normal for their body and to consult a doctor in case they notice or feel any abnormality. Breast self-examination should be done by all females on a regularly basis once a month after their periods starts.

Head neck cancers would most of the times present with a non-healing ulcer, pain or difficulty in swallowing. These complaints should be addressed by an expert at the earliest. With increasing pollution and smoking in females, lung cancer in females is also on increase.

To summarise, cancer in women is largely preventable by following a healthy lifestyle, regular screening tests, timely vaccination and self-examination.

# Down Syndrome: Untapped Sky-high Potential



ALOK KUMAR 'BHUVAN'

Down Syndrome (DS) is a condition in which extra genetic material causes delays in the mental and physical development of a child. One of the most common genetic disorders, the condition is characterised by the presence of an extra 21st chromosome. It is not a disease and there is no way to prevent it. In India, around 32,000 cases are observed.

Individuals with Down syndrome demonstrate more similarities than differences compared to other typically developing peers.

Demystifying the myths that such children have a bleak future, each day, many new kids on the block are beating the

odds, showing extraordinary achievements, the ability to possess hopes and dreams for the future, and a solid determination to meet their goals.

Though individuals with Down syndrome experience learning difficulties that give rise to developmental delays, not all areas are impacted with an equivalent effect.

Here, I would like to talk about Nagpur's **Devanshi Joshi**, a recipient of 'Role Model' award which was conferred on her by the then President Ram Nath



Kovind in 2021. She has been breaking many stereotypes and misconceptions around intellectual disability through her path-breaking achievements.

Ditto is the case with 24-year-old **Adya Verma**. An advocate by profession, Adya is with our organization, aiding in the creation of Easy Road Documents as well as taking part in numerous lectures and workshops to communicate her vision.

Similarly, **Rashmi Rekha Sahu** with Down Syndrome is charting her own path under the guidance of her parents, both

school teachers. An Odissi dancer, she leaves everybody in awe with her excellent dance expressions and movements. Recently, she successfully accomplished Sangeet Visharad Pratham Khand (IV year) organized by well-known organization, Pracheen Kala.

These are just among a few examples even for many of us who are pursuing with relentless passion to accomplish their potential as well as passion.

On our part, on World Down Syndrome Day 2023 our organization in collaboration with SNAC & CBSM, organiz-

ing a programme where over 500 participants comprising those diagnosed with disabilities will attempt to exhibit their talents.

Such events are an attempt made at creating awareness related to communication skills, primary sign language and easy-read training for intellectual



and developmental disabilities, guidance on career options after school along with education and skill training opportunities, plus ensuring good oral hygiene and healthcare among others – all coming together to promote inclusive living within our society.

Therefore, let us set sails towards reaching success by enabling each child with Down syndrome to gain access to schooling and college environments which come equipped with platforms that allow for auditory/visual modifications, accommodating physical exercises (occupational/speech therapies). Efforts should be made on giving them the extra time required for classwork – all so that we can better comprehend each individual affected by this condition including his/her abilities & special needs.

After all, it is our responsibility as a society to provide opportunities and nurture diversity at every step going forward.

(The writer is Managing Secretary of Manovikas Charitable Society, Delhi)



(The author is AP's vice president for standards and editor at large. Jerome Delay is chief photographer in Johannesburg, South Africa. AP reporters Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Abby Sewell, AP's Syria, Lebanon and Iraq news director, contributed from Baghdad)



