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KERALA STORY

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IRDAI WORKING TO ENSURE
'INSURANCE FOR ALL BY 2047'

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CAPSULE

KEJRIWAL BLAMES OTHERS FOR HIS FAILURE: CONG

New Delhi: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Thursday said Arvind Kejriwal is the only Chief Minister of Delhi who is seeking full powers to function and is blaming external factors for his failure to deliver.

SOOD TAKES OVER AS NEW CBI DIRECTOR

New Delhi: Senior IPS officer Praveen Sood took over as the new CBI Director on Thursday and he will be in the post for two years, officials said. On his last working day, the outgoing director, Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, handed Sood the charge of the agency at its headquarters here, they said.

4 SENTENCED TO 7 YRS IN ALWAR LYNCING

Jaipur: A court in Rajasthan's Alwar on Thursday sentenced four people to seven years imprisonment for lynching Rabkar Khan on the suspicion of cow smuggling in 2018. The fifth accused in the case was acquitted due to lack of evidence.

IMRAN, WIFE BARRED FROM LEAVING PAK

Islamabad: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi and more than 600 leaders and former Assembly members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party have been barred from leaving the country, media reports said on Thursday. **P8**

FISH DEATHS IN DAL LAKE RAISE ALARM

Srinagar: Thousands of fish in Dal Lake here have died over the past few days with authorities blaming a sudden fluctuation in temperature in the region. Dal Lake dwellers expressed alarm over such large-scale fish deaths even as authorities said the occurrence was an annual affair.

7 more parties ready to attend new Parl launch

Attendees' number increases to 25; BJP urges Opp to show 'big heart' as Cong steps up attack on Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief for the BJP-led NDA Government, seven more parties have accepted the invitation to attend the inauguration of the new Parliament building, raising the number of parties scheduled to attend the launch ceremony to 25, even as the Congress-led Opposition parties have intensified their attack on the Prime Minister and the Union Government. The Congress accused the Prime Minister of being "megalomaniac" and the Government of being "arrogant."

These seven non-NDA parties — BSP, Shiromani Akali Dal, Janata Dal (Secular), Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), YSR Congress, BJD and TDP — account for 50 MPs in the Lok Sabha, and therefore their participation will help the NDA blunt the Opposition's charge that the inauguration of new Parliament building is just a government event.

As the political row over the opening of the building on May 28 escalated, the BJP hit back alleging the Opposition parties have decided to boycott the inauguration just because it has been built at the initiative of Prime Minister Modi. However, the BJP appealed to

the Opposition parties to attend the "historic day" of its inauguration by showing "big heart". Nineteen Opposition parties, including Congress, Left, TMC, SP, AAP, have come together to jointly announce the boycott of the inauguration ceremony, saying they find no value in a new building when the "soul of democracy has been sucked out".

BSP president Mayawati called the Opposition boycott inappropriate and welcomed the inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Modi. She also said the Opposition should have thought about "tribal honour" when it fielded a candidate against Murmu and denied her an unopposed election.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Thursday said it will take part in the inauguration of the new Parliament building with party chief N Chandrababu Naidu instructing Rajya Sabha MP Kanakamedala Ravindra Kumar to represent the party. The JD(S) supreme and former prime minister Deve Gowda too said he would attend the inauguration.

Congress lashed out at the ruling BJP and its president, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for "abiding" with Modi on all occasions, includ-



ing the new Parliament building inauguration. The BJP hit back accusing the Congress of doing politics over a non-issue and raised questions over its role during the presidential election.

They have also protested the decision that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the building, claiming this was an insult to the highest constitutional office of the President of India. Separately, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said if Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla does not inaugurate the new Parliament building, his party would not attend the event.

All 18 NDA members — BJP, Shiv Sena, National People's Party, Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, Jannayak Janata Party, AIDMK, IMKMK, AJSU, RPI, Mizo National Front, Tamil Maanila Congress, ITFT (Tripura), Bodo People's Party, Pattali Makkal Kacchi, MGP, Apna Dal and AGP — are the other attendees.

Plea in SC seeks inauguration of new Parliament by President

New Delhi: A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking a direction to the Lok Sabha secretariat for inauguration of the new Parliament building by President Droupadi Murmu, who is the "first citizen of India and the head of the institution".

The petition says the respondents — the Lok Sabha secretariat and the Union of India — are "humiliating" the president by not inviting her for the inauguration.

The petition by an apex court lawyer comes amid a massive controversy over the scheduled inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28.

New feat: MiG-29K performs night landing on INS Vikrant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy achieved another milestone by undertaking maiden night landing of its MiG-29K fighter jet on indigenously designed and built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Wednesday. Navy officials said here on Thursday. Giving details of the landing in pitch dark conditions considered to be demanding, they said this landing was indicative of Navy's impetus towards "aatmanirbharta". This challenging night landing trial also demonstrates the resolve, skill and professionalism of the Vikrant crew and the naval pilots, they added.

The Indian Navy shared the video of the maiden night landing on Twitter. The all-weather fighter is seen landing on the flight deck of INS Vikrant in pitch darkness.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the Navy for undertaking a successful night landing and said, "This



MiG-29K aircraft makes a maiden night landing on INS Vikrant **PTI**

remarkable achievement is a testimony to the skills, perseverance and professionalism of the Vikrant crew and Naval pilots. Kudos to them."

Landing fighter jets on a normal runway is different compared to landing on a flight deck of an aircraft carrier due to the shorter length of the deck. While landing on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the pilot lowers the tail hook of the jet and aims for an arresting wire, which traps the aircraft and has the strength to bring its speed from 250 km/hr down to 0.

"Night trap" means landing on an aircraft carrier during night-time and is considered even more challenging for naval aviators as the aircraft carrier is moving at a speed of 40-50 km/hr and the pilots have to keep the jets speed relative to the carrier.

The MiG-29K jet is part of INS Vikrant's fighter fleet. The supersonic fighter jet has a top speed of Mach 2 (two times the speed of sound) and can pull up to 8G (eight times the force of gravity) and can climb to an altitude of over 65,000 feet.



Light rain and strong dust-raising winds hit parts of Delhi-NCR on Thursday, lowering the maximum temperature. Similar conditions are expected to prevail in the national Capital and NCR over the next two to three days and no heatwave is predicted until May 30, the India Meteorological Department said **PTI**

Shah promises justice for all, appeals for peace in Manipur

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday appealed to the people of Manipur to maintain peace and promised that justice will be ensured to all sections of society.

Asserting that Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term after the general elections next year, he claimed that the Opposition Congress will not be able to even secure its present tally in the Lok Sabha.

Shah, while laying the foundation stone of the tenth campus of the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) at Changsari in Assam's Kamrup district, said he will travel to Manipur to help resolve disputes.

"I will go to Manipur soon and stay there for three days but before that, both groups should remove mistrust and suspicion among themselves and ensure that peace is



Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah addresses the gathering at the laying foundation ceremony of National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), in Guwahati on Thursday **PTI**

restored in the state," he said. "The Centre will ensure that justice is delivered to all those who suffered in the clashes in the state, but people must hold dialogue to ensure peace," Shah said.

During the last six years, prior to the recent clashes, there was no blockade or bandh in Manipur and "people must ensure the return of

such a situation again." "Charcha ke saath hi shanti ho sakti hain (Peace can only be restored through dialogue)," he said. "The Centre is planning to bring changes in the law to make it compulsory for forensic experts to visit the spot for crimes that attract more than six years of imprisonment," he said.

2 more cheetah cubs die at KNP

PNS ■ BHOPAL

India's ambitious cheetah population revival programme faced a setback as two more India-born cheetah cubs have died at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, a forest official said on Thursday.

With this, the number of cheetah cubs that have died at the KNP rose to three, while three of the 20 adult cheetahs translocated from South Africa and Namibia have also died at the park.

A cub's death had been reported in the park on May 23. The two other cubs also died on the same day, on Tuesday afternoon, but their deaths were reported only on Thursday.

The official did not disclose the reason behind not informing about the deaths of these two cubs on the same day. The KNP houses cheetahs translocated from Namibia and South Africa as part of an ambitious project to revive their population in India after



the species became extinct in the country seven decades ago.

As per an official release, after the death of a cheetah cub on May 23, the forest department's monitoring team kept an eye on the movements of female cheetah Jwala and her remaining three cubs.

Jwala, earlier known as Siyaya, gave birth to four cubs in the last week of March after being translocated from Namibia in September last year.

The monitoring team found on May 23 that the condition of her remaining three cubs was not good and decided to rescue them for treatment.

I-T waiver for retirees' leave encashment hiked to ₹25L

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the Budget announcement, the Finance Ministry on Thursday hiked the tax exemption limit for leave encashment upon retirement for private sector salaried employees to ₹25 lakh. So far, the tax exemption on leave encashment for non-government employees was ₹3 lakh which was fixed in 2002, when the highest basic pay in the government was ₹30,000 per month.

The CBDT, in a statement, said the aggregate amount exempt from income tax under section 10(10AA)(ii) shall not exceed the limit of ₹25 lakh, where any such payments are received by a non-government employee from more than one employer.

Detailed report on P10

Jain collapses in Tihar, put on oxygen support

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed AAP leader and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain has been put on oxygen support and shifted to the Lok Nayak Jayaprakash (LNJP) Hospital due to breathing problems on Thursday.

He was admitted to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Hospital after he collapsed in a bathroom of the Tihar Jail due to dizziness around 6 am on Thursday.

Earlier too Jain had fallen in the bathroom and had a serious spinal injury, the AAP said. Jain, lodged in connection with a money-laundering case in May last year, will undergo all necessary tests as a precautionary measure.

According to AAP sources, Jain has been shifted to an ICU at the LNJP Hospital and he was "critically ill".

The LNJP Hospital is the largest hospital under the



Delhi government. He (Jain) was brought to the emergency department of the LNJP Hospital earlier in the day and doctors examined him, a senior doctor at the city government-run hospital said on the condition of anonymity. Taking to Twitter, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, hours after his colleague Jain was collapsed in Tihar Jail saying "a dictator is bent on killing that good person."

Dynastic parties reneged on high-speed trains: PM

World looks at India with great hope, Modi says; flags off Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

While flagging off the Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that parties which ruled the country for many years and made tall claims of introducing high-speed trains could never get out of the constraints of dynastic politics.

He also said the budget for expansion of the railway infrastructure in Uttarakhand now stands at ₹5,000 crore. Before 2014, it was less than ₹200



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off the inaugural run of the Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express train, via a video conference, from New Delhi on Thursday **PTI**

crore, he said, addressing the launch event of the first Vande Bharat train for Uttarakhand via video conference.

"India of the 21st century can prosper even faster by modernising its infrastructure. Parties in power for a long time

earlier did not realise this. Their focus was on indulging in scams and corruption. They could not get out of the constraints of dynastic politics. They also made tall claims about high-speed trains but years went by and nothing

happened," Modi said. He said for the first time, there is a Government in the country which has the intention ("niyat"), policy ("niti") and dedication ("nishtha") required to achieve development.

Referring to his just-concluded tri-nation visit, Modi said the world looks at India with great hope. "The way we have strengthened our economy, battled poverty and dealt with the challenge of Covid-19 raised the world's confidence in India. People from other countries want to come to India and understand it," he said.

"And this is a great opportunity for a beautiful state such as Uttarakhand," the Prime Minister said.

Recalling his remark made in Kedarnath in 2022 in which he had said the decade belongs to Uttarakhand, the prime minister said the Vande Bharat Express train and a plethora of other road, rail and ropeway infrastructure projects are set to drive the state in that direction.

Vande Bharat in 3 avatars: Chair car, metro, sleepers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN / NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing success and popularity with demands across for the new age Vande Bharat Trains, the Centre on Thursday announced for three versions of the semi-high speed trains — Vande Chair Car, Vande Metro and Vande Sleepers — by the end of this fiscal year.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said in the next three to four years, railway tracks will be upgraded to support the maximum speed of 160 km/h of Vande Bharat trains. While the Vande Chair cars will be put on tracks for the same day

end to end journey to cover a distance of 500-600 km one way, the Vande Metro will be used for local rail network services as the name suggest, while the Vande Sleepers will be long distance full air conditioned with all modern specifications on board.

"There are three formats of Vande Bharat — Vande Metro for less than 100 kilometre, Vande Chair Car for 100-550 kilometre and Vande Sleepers for a journey beyond 550 kilometre. These three formats will be ready by February-March (next year)," Vaishnav said after the launch of Dehradun-Delhi Vande Bharat.

On the occasion Vaishnav said every State will get a Vande Bharat train by mid-June. The production of these trains is being expedited, the Minister said. The Vande Bharat indigenous semi-high speed trains, which are being prepped to replace Shatabdis, Rajdhani and local trains, are being made at the Integrated Coach Factory in Chennai.

"Old tracks were designed to support speeds between 70 and 80 km/h. Around 25,000-35,000 kilometre of tracks are being upgraded to support speeds of 110 km/h, 130 km/h and 160 km/h. It will be done in the next three to four years."

Guv, CM lay foundation stone of the new educational complex

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan today laid the foundation stone of new campus and hostel of Narmadanchal Vidyapeeth at Bargaon in Dindori district. They dedicated the new gate and stair construction work on the Silgi river and also inspected the gau-shala, under-construction school premises and hostel. Construction work of Narmadanchal Vidyapeeth School and Hostel is being done in Bargaon from the CSR head of South East Cold Field Limited Bilaspur at a cost of about Rs. 18 crore. Governor Shri Patel and Chief Minister Shri Chouhan also inaugurated the Divyang Aids Distribution Camp and Health

Camp and distributed motorized tricycles and aids to the Divyangs. The Governor and the Chief Minister offered prayers at the Siddha Maharaj temple and wished for the well being of the people of state. Governor Shri Patel said that the Tribal Welfare Centre Mahakaushal Bargaon is continuously working for the development of the society. Remarkable work is being done here in various other fields besides education, health, environmental protection. For this, all the members associated with the organisation deserve congratulations. The Governor appreciated the academic quality and management of Narmadanchal Vidyapeeth. Mentioning the sickle cell eradication programme run by the state government, he motivated the present tribal brothers to

compulsorily get themselves and their family members checked for sickle cell and others also to be checked. Governor Shri Patel appealed to ensure their participation in the complete eradication of TB by 2047, as per the target of the Central Government. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that he had come to Bargaon in the year 2006, since then till now there has been a lot of change in the form of this tribal welfare centre. During that time Sudarshan ji and Pujya Swami Satyamitrnanand Giri ji were present with him. He said that during his visit to the gau-shala today, he saw that Peepal trees have been planted in the premises for environmental protection, which are working as oxygen banks. The objective

of Tribal Welfare Centre, Bargaon is to provide quality education to the students, develop them physically, mentally and intellectually and build on ideal leadership and make youths self-reliant with moral and human values, so that they can become responsible citizens and serve the society and the nation. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that the work of women empowerment and eradication of social evils can be done only through social service. This centre is fulfilling these responsibilities very well. The Chief Minister also mentioned the ancient and dignified culture of India. He said that this project is doing the work of connecting with the ancient culture of India. The sense of service to man, service to Narayan is reflected in this

centre. He appealed to all the people present to give their participation in this noble work and make the society better. CM Shri Chouhan instructed to get the estimate prepared for the construction of boundary wall of Tribal Welfare Centre. He said that all possible cooperation will be provided by the government to further improve the system of the centre. Union Minister of State for Steel and Rural Development Shri Fagga Singh Kulaste, Chairman Tribal Welfare Centre Shri Manohar Lal Sahu, Secretary Shri Digvijay Singh, Advocate General Shri Prashant Singh, General Manager of SECL Shri Pradeep Kumar, Commissioner Disabled Welfare Shri Sandeep Rajak and public representatives and centre members were present.



A speaker Subhash Atre addresses during a philatelic exhibition and collection of rare coins, organized at Madhav Rao Sapre Museum of Newspapers and Research, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

28-year-old youth commits suicide by hanging at his Durga Nagar residence

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 28-year-old youth committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling at Durga Nagar in the morning on Thursday; Habibganj police have started investigation, reason remained unclear. The police have not received any suicide note from the spot. Mother and grandmother were at home at the time of the incident. Suddenly there was a sound of something falling in the morning and mother went to check he found boy was lying unconscious on the ground. The family took the youth to the hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. The police handed over the dead body

to the relatives after post mortem. Pankaj Gharte (28) of Durga Nagar, Sindhi Bhavan used to work as painter. On Thursday morning at 5.30, he committed suicide. Mother and grandmother were at home at the time of the incident. After the young man died, the noose broke due to which he fell which woke up the mother. Mother and grandmother live with Pankaj in the house. Pankaj was the sole earner. Just 8-9 years ago, the younger brother had died. Now he has hanged himself. Meanwhile a student preparing for bank entrance exams in Ayodhya nagar area committed suicide by hanging with the ceiling, after studying in the library

on Tuesday, he went home and locked the room from inside and committed suicide. Mother informed neighbours after she failed to get a response and took him to Hamidia Hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. TI Nilesh Awasthi told that Shubhanshu Bhardwaj (22) of Durgesh Vihar, JK Road Ayodhya nagar, was preparing for bank entrance exams. After completing his studies from Delhi, he came to Bhopal a month and a half ago. After coaching, he used to visit a library located in MP Nagar. The boy's father works in a gold loan company. He was transferred to Ahmedabad a month and a half ago.

2 cubs of Namibian Cheetah die at Kuno Palpur

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two of the cubs born to Namibian cheetah Jwala at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh died on Thursday amid sweltering heat. The latest fatality took the death toll of cheetahs, translocated from African countries to the Kuno National Park, to six in the last two months. State government officials have suspected that the deaths of the cubs were a case of dehydration and weakness. Madhya Pradesh Chief Conservation of Forest (MPCCF) JS Chouhan said that when the monitoring team visited the park, the cub looked weak, so the team called veterinary doctors and took the cub to the hospital but after 5-10 minutes, the cub died. Cheetah Jwala, earlier



known as Siyaya, was brought from Namibia to Kuno in Sheopur district in September 2022. She gave birth to four cubs in the last week of March this year. The wild cat had already lost a cub to suspected dehydration and weakness on Tuesday and is now left with only one newborn. While experts called the death "unfortunate," they said it was "within expected mortality rates." "Cub mortality is particularly high for wild cheetahs. For this reason, cheetahs have evolved to give birth to large litters compared to other wild cats. This enables them to compensate for high cub mortality rate. Weaker cheetah cubs in a litter will typically survive less than their stronger siblings. This

death should be viewed within the context of 'survival of the fittest,' said another official. The South African cheetah expert also suggested that India should fence two to three habitats for cheetahs as there has never been a successful reintroduction into an unfenced reserve in recorded history. The Supreme Court recently expressed concerns over the death of cheetahs in Kuno and asked the Madhya Pradesh government to rise "above politics" and consider shifting a few to Rajasthan. "It appears that Kuno is not sufficient for so many cheetahs... Why don't you look for a suitable place in Rajasthan? Merely because Rajasthan is ruled by (an) Opposition party does not mean you will not consider it," the top court told Centre.

Boy sustains bullet injury during fights

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 16-year-old sustained a bullet injury during a dispute between his uncle and two persons over money dispute at Raslakhedi in the night on Wednesday. Chola Mandir police have booked two miscreants for opening fire at a minor; victim was shot in his hand. Panic prevailed in the night in Raslakhedi area when the accused identified as Dhanraj Kaushik and Ravindra Pratap Singh came to Sukhdev's house started abusing over an old money dispute and when his nephews intervened and opposed the accused opened fire. Sukhdev is involved in agriculture work and had a dispute with his partners Dhanraj Kaushik and Ravindra Pratap Singh. Late in the night on Wednesday the accused came to Sukhdev's house and started to fight and abused him. Hearing the chaos his nephews Guruvinder and Sukhmanjeet came outside the house and tried to pacify and stopped the accused but the accused opened fire. In the firing Sukhdev and Guruvinder escaped while Sukhmanjeet was shot in his hand. He was taken to hospital where his condition is reportedly stable. The accused shot four bullets in which victim got injured and after firing the accused escaped in their car. Based on the complaint after the preliminary investigation the police have registered a case under section 307 of the IPC and started further investigation. The accused escaped the spot and are still at large. The accused holds crime record or not would be investigated, said police.



Madhya Pradesh Minister for Medical Education Vishwas Kailash Sarang takes a trial run before opening Bharat Talkies Railway Over Bridge to the public in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Absconding accused nabbed after 10 months, he carried a reward

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The TT Nagar police arrested the absconding accused in the case of NSA, extortion, loot, accused was absconding for past 10 months and carrying a reward of Rs 10,000. The accused Sachin Pawar alias Sachin Bacha alias Ankit Pawar was absconding in the NSA warrant of Kamla Nagar police and is a watch list criminal of Kamal Nagar police. On November 5 last year Rahul Kushwaha lodged complaint against Aju Shooter and Sachin Bachha of Ambedkar Nagar EWS building along with their other aides took him to the terrace, abused and kicked several times and transferred Rs. 5,000 through UPI from mobile phone. Made indecent videos and threatened that pro-

vide Rs 10,000 or they will make the video viral. In the case, the accused Sachin Bachha absconded after committing the crime and remained absconding, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone 1, Bhopal announced a cash reward of Rs 10,000 for providing details of Sachin. During the investigation, the accused was arrested.

The accused and his accomplices are habitual of committing serious crimes like rioting, vandalism, rioting and robbery and have been booked for 31 criminal cases have been registered against this in TT Nagar police station and other police stations. Meanwhile, Jehangirabad police station arrested a vehicle thief and recovered a stolen scooter from his possession on Wednesday. Suraj Mesram had gone to Aishbagh to play drums and parked vehicle at Ayush Bhawan Barkhedi Road and it was missing when he returned at 9 in the evening. He lodged complaint and based on the complaint vehicle lifter Zaid Mansoori alias Bhaiya was arrested and scooter bearing registration number MP04SZ9382 was recovered.

Bank of Maharashtra tops PSU lenders chart in profit and loan growth in FY23

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has emerged as the top performer among public sector lenders in terms of loan and deposit growth in percentage terms during 2022-23. The Pune-headquartered lender also recorded highest growth in profitability with bottom-line growing almost 126 per cent to Rs 2,602 crore during the year. However, all the 12 public sector banks together recorded 57 per cent jump in net profit at Rs 1,04,649 crore in FY23, according to published yearly numbers of public sector banks (PSBs). In terms of percentage increase in gross advances, BoM recorded 29.4 per cent jump in loans at Rs 1,75,120 crore as of March 2023. It was followed by Indian Overseas Bank and UCO Bank with 21.2 per cent and 20.6 per cent growth, respectively. However, in absolute terms, aggregate loans of the country's biggest lender SBI were nearly 16 times high-

er at Rs 27,76,802 crore. With regard to deposit growth, BoM witnessed 15.7 per cent rise and mobilized Rs 2,34,083 crore at the end of March 2023. Bank of Baroda was second with 13 per cent growth in deposits (Rs 10,47,375 crore) while Punjab National Bank recorded 11.26 per cent increase at Rs 12,51,708 crore, according to the data. BoM retained the top position in terms of garnering low-cost Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) deposits with 53.38 per cent followed by Central Bank of India (50.18 per cent). Total business growth of BoM was also the highest at 21.2 per cent at Rs 4,09,202 crore followed by Bank of Baroda at 14.3 per cent (Rs 18,42,935 crore) at the end of FY23. In terms of Retail-Agriculture-MSME (RAM) loans, BoM registered the highest growth of 24.06 per cent followed by Punjab National Bank at 20.85 per cent and Punjab & Sind Bank at 20.70 per cent on an annual basis.

Educational programmes at RMNH for class 5 to 7

Bhopal: Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal is organizing various environmental educational programmes under Summer Nature Study Programme- Green Cub for the students of class 5 to 7. In continuation of the environmental educational programmes, 'Animal Clay Model Making Workshop' was arranged for the participants on Thursday. Arvind Anupam, Exhibit Preparator of RMNH, Bhopal facilitated the participants with the demonstration to create Relief Model of Indian Paradise Flycatcher and 3D Model of Elephant. At the beginning of session, Shri Anupam informed that pond soil should be selected for clay preparation. Pond soil should be crushed and mashed to get fine soil and adequate quantity of water with little sand can be mashed to get proper clay for model making. During the workshop, participants made Relief Model of Indian Paradise Flycatcher and 3D Model of Elephant with soil under the guidance of Arvind Anupam, Modeller. He also detailed about the various techniques/process of making models which are used in museum. Participants enjoyed the session by learning the techniques of making model out of clay.

BOB announces the list of 12 nominees of the 'BOB Rashtrabhasha Samman'

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Unveiling the long-list of nominations, Sanjiv Chadha, Managing Director & CEO, Bank of Baroda said 'India is a diverse country - a melting pot of cultures, religions and languages. And in its diversity lies its strength and distinctiveness. We believe that the promotion of literature across Indian languages helps strengthen our multiculturalism. We established 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' to recognize and celebrate original Indian language literature and the translations of these works in Hindi. The 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' award will offer a national platform to talented Indian writers from different parts of the country and will give a boost to Indian language literature as well as encourage literary translations.' The five-member awards jury is chaired by renowned author and Booker Prize winner Geetanjali Shree. The other four jury members are Arun Kamal, an Indian poet; Pushpesh Pant, an academic and historian; Anamika, a contemporary Indian poet and novelist; and Prabhat Ranjan, a Hindi fiction writer and translator.

Bank of Baroda (BoB), one of India's leading public sector banks, today announced the long-list of 12 novels, nominated for the first edition of the 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' Award 2023. The unique award has been instituted to recognize and promote literary works in various Indian languages (included under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution) as well as to make the best Indian literature available to Hindi readers through translations, thereby broadening the interest and making the novels accessible to a larger set of readers. The 'Bank of Baroda Rashtrabhasha Samman' Award will be presented to both the author of the original work and the translator of the book in to Hindi. The author of the original work and the respective Hindi translator of the award-winning book will receive Rs 21.00 lakh and Rs 15.00 lakh respectively. Moreover, the authors and the Hindi translators of the next five short-listed books will receive Rs 3.00 lakh and Rs 2.00 lakh each respectively.



Students celebrate their success after the announcement of Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education class 10th and 12th results in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Research Methodology workshop organised at AIIMS

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

AIIMS Bhopal Research Cell is conducting a comprehensive three-day research methodology workshop for its MD/MS/DM /Mch and MSc Nursing students so as to teach them how to conduct a quality research/thesis during their three-year academic tenure at the institute. The institute ensures that the thesis carried out by the

students is of high quality and makes an impact in the medical research and also simultaneously teaches the students the appropriate techniques to conduct a good quality research. The event was inaugurated by Prof (Dr) Ajai Singh on May 24, 2023 who emphasized that research is not only needed as a part of the curriculum but also required to imbibe appropriate and relevant knowledge from the

plethora of research papers published now days. A total of 56 students from various clinical and para-clinical departments of the institute are participating in the workshop and in house faculty members from the institute will be delivering didactic lectures on various aspects of research protocol writing e.g., introduction, methodology, reference manager software, study designs and sample calculation etc.

Women will be financially empowered and self-dependent

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan attended the silver jubilee celebrations and Women's Convention of Dindori district on Thursday...

unveiled the website of Dindori Narmada Yatra. Governor Patel and Chief Minister Chouhan extended best wishes to the people of the district on the silver jubilee of the establishment of Dindori district.

The state government has implemented the PESA Act in 20 tribal-dominated districts to strengthen the traditional rights of the tribal society on water, forest and land.

government has set a target of 2047 for genetic sickle cell anaemia and 2025 for TB eradication. The Governor said that TB disease should not be concealed, in case of symptoms, seek medical advice immediately.

lives of poor sisters, they will move towards self-reliance with dignity. The Chief Minister said that the people of Dindori are praiseworthy. More daughters than sons are born in the district.



College girls protect themselves from the heat of the sun on a hot summer day in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

BMC Commissioner inspects several works at Adampur Chhawani

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bhopal Municipal Corporation Commissioner KVS Chaudhary visited Adampur Landfill Site, ABC Center, Plastic Waste Management and Tree Plantation, inspected other works including site and corporation officials and discussed in detail regarding the progress of the work from the representatives of the company discussed.



Commissioner visited the site and curtain wall. In view of the convenience of vehicular movement for the purpose make a temporary ramp with stones and marble.

site for inspection and also inspected the Animal Birth Control Center located and took information of available dogs and maintenance of the center. The number of dog vehicles to be brought to the center for sterilization and checked the information register of animals sterilized Corporation Commissioner Chaudhary inaugurated all the three ABC centers.

Commissioner visited the built Bio CNG Plant at the site and curtain wall. In view of the convenience of vehicular movement for the purpose make a temporary ramp with stones and marble. Regarding the proposed works at the installation site, the officials and commissioner discussed with the representatives of the company and the approach road, drain at the site and instructed for speedy completion of all works including construction etc.

On Thursday Commissioner Chaudhary reached Adampur Chhawani

It rained on first day of Nautapa in Bhopal

Bhopal: From Thursday Nautpa (Nine days of extreme heat) has started and its first day was with moderate heat, the temperature dropped by 2 to 4 degree Celsius across the state. The temperature in Khajuraho, which was the hottest in the state a day ago, also dropped by 4.5 degree Celsius. It was cloudy during the day in Bhopal due to this the temperature dropped by about 3 degree Celsius the changes are induced due to the active Western Disturbance.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice No.: JHS-N-W-31-23 Date: 20.05.2023. E-TENDERING NOTICE. Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/ Jhansi, DRM's Office, Jhansi, for and on behalf of President of India invite Open Tender through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following works.

एचडीएफसी म्यूचुअल फंड - निवेशक जागरूकता कार्यक्रम. म्यूचुअल फंड्स के बारे में और अधिक जानने के लिए इसमें अवश्य भाग लें. दिनांक तथा स्थान: शनिवार, 27 मई 2023 और रविवार, 28 मई 2023; शाम 6:30 बजे से. होटल ताजसैली रेसिडेंसी, गांधी रोड, म्याडिस - 474 011, मध्य प्रदेश.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-AUCTION NOTICE. On Behalf of the President of India, The Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial)-Jhansi invites E-Auction as per categories given as under: Category Catalogue No Asset Details. Parking JHS-PARKING-12

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. Corporate Office: Unit No. 802, Natraj Rustomjee, Western Express Highway and M.V.Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400069. Bhopal / Bhopal (Old Branch Mandideep) Branch: 2nd Floor, Alankar Complex, Plot No.-10 & 11, MP Nagar Zone-II Bhopal -462001, (MP).

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR AUCTION CUM SALE. Pursuant to taking possession of the secured asset mentioned hereunder by the Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 for the recovery of amount due from borrower/s, offers are invited by the undersigned in sealed covers for purchase of immovable property, as described hereunder, which is in the physical possession, on 'As Is Where Is Basis', 'As Is What Is Basis' and 'Whatever Is There Is Basis', Particulars of which are given below:-

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor (s), Demand Notice Date and Amount, Description of the Immovable property, Reserve Price (RP), Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (10% of RP). Contains 17 auction entries.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY Civil Engineering (Construction) E-Tender Notice Open Tender. Dy. Chief Engineer(Construction), West Central Railway, Kota, for and on behalf of the President of Union of India, invites following open E-Tender. Sr.No.: 1. Tender No.: DY-CE-C-Kota-04-2023-R. Description of work: Km. 105.00 to Km. 129.00 - Linking of Track and other miscellaneous P. Way works between Nayagaon - Khilchipur - Rajgarh stations in connection with Ramganjmandi - Bhopal New BG Rail Line Project in the state of Madhya Pradesh of Kota Division of West Central Railway. Date of Tender Opening: 14.06.2023. Approx. Cost: ₹ 11,48,98,256.89 (Two Packet System). Complete details are available in the E-tender notice uploaded on the website www.ireps.gov.in and also placed on the notice board of the Chief Project Manager, West Central Railway, Kota's Office. Prospective tenderers are advised to regularly visit website before the date of opening to note any changes/corrigendum for the tender. Offers are acceptable through IREPS only. Off line/Manual offer will not be accepted in any condition. Tender Notice No. DY. CE/C/NIT/Kota/10/2023, Dated 23.05.2023. कोटा से बानावा ह स्की को वेस्टसेन लयावना हे जरूरी।

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. Corporate Office: Unit No.802, Natraj Rustomjee, Western Express Highway and M.V.Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai-400069. Bhopal Branch: 2nd Floor, Alankar Complex, Plot No.-10 & 11, Mp Nagar Zone-II Bhopal -462001, (MP). Authorised officer: Satyanand Pandey, Contact : 9981504545. PROPERTY FOR SALE UNDER PROVISIONS OF SARFAESI ACT, 2002 THROUGH PRIVATE TREATY. Whereas the Authorised Officer, Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) has taken the Possession u/s 13(4) of the Securitisation & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (The SARFAESI Act, 2002) of the property ("the Secured Asset") given below The Authorised Officer has received offer of Sale from some interested party against the above mentioned Secured Asset under the SARFAESI Act for recovery of the Secured Debt. Now, the Authorised Officer is hereby giving the Notice to Sale of the above said property through Private Treaty in terms of rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. The Details of the Account are as follows:

Trip strengthened India's image: PM

Used visit to Japan, Oz, PNG for nation's good, says Modi on return

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that he used every moment during his six-day visit across three countries for India's good and his tour was not about his 'glory but India's strength' as BJP workers and supporters accorded him a rousing welcome on his return from Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Addressing people who had gathered to welcome him outside the Palam airport here, he pointed-out that not only Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and that country's ruling party functionaries but a former prime minister and opposition members were present as well during the Indian community's programme in Sydney where he had spoken.

"This was the atmosphere of democracy that everyone joined in the Indian community's programme," Modi said, lauding this show of "democratic soul and strength".

Everyone accorded respect to the Indian representative, and it was not about Modi's glory but about India's strength, he said.

The Prime Minister's comment came against the backdrop of opposition parties, including the Congress and many of those in power in several states, announcing their boycott of the new Parliament building's inauguration by him on Sunday saying the President of India drapadi Murmu should be invited to open the Parliament.

Modi said he speaks confidently of India and its people's strengths abroad and the world



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by supporters gathered at the airport upon his arrival following a three-nation visit to Japan, Papua New Guinea and Australia, in New Delhi on Thursday

listens because people here elected a majority government. World leaders know that what he says is the voice of the 140 crore people of India, the prime minister added.

India, he said, faces the challenges of strengthening its roots while also working its way to a new high as the world expects it to.

"Challenges are big. But it is in my nature to challenge the challenges," the Prime Minister said, exuding confidence in front of a cheering crowd that his government will succeed in meeting these expectations in time.

Global expectations from the country have been rising, he said, adding that the world now wants to know what India is thinking. Modi spoke about the respect accorded by the people of Pacific island countries during the visit, and said they were thankful to India for the Covid-19 vaccines sent to them during the pandemic.

Taking a swipe at his crit-

ics, the Prime Minister said they questioned him for sending the vaccines.

"Remember, it is the land of Buddha, it is the land of Gandhi. We care even for our enemies, we are the people inspired by compassion," he said.

He also asserted that the world is keen to listen to India's story and said Indians should never suffer from a "slave mentality" while speaking about their great culture and traditions and instead speak with courage.

The Prime Minister added that the world agrees with him when he says any attack on our country's pilgrimage sites is not

acceptable.

Modi had on Wednesday strongly raised with his Australian counterpart Albanese India's concerns over incidents of attacks on temples in Australia.

He lauded the strength of India-Australia relationship.

India's reception of G20 delegates in over 150 meetings held across the country have impressed the world a lot, he said.

"All the leaders and other people I met have been so mesmerised and appreciative of India holding the G20 presidency so excellently. This is a matter of great pride for all Indians," Modi said.

India's stature has increased further with this three-nation tour, says BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday said Prime Minister's three-nation foreign tour was "successful" and it has increased 'India's global stature'.

Addressing a press conference here, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad described the Prime Minister's foreign tour as "successful" and said there were many instances which indicated that "India's stature has increased further" with the three-nation tour.

"It is a matter of pride for every Indian and the party especially," he added.

Prasad said India was earning a "new goodwill" in the world under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

"An indication of this came when US President Joe Biden, at the G-7 meeting in Hiroshima, said how the requests for participation in the state dinner to be hosted for Prime Minister Modi had outnumbered the tickets available for it," he added.

Referring to newspaper reports, the BJP leader said some US congressmen have requested Prime Minister Modi to address a joint session of the American Congress.

"Their Speaker will take a call now," Prasad said, adding "All these are indications that India is emerging as a very formidable power in the world under Prime Minister Modi's leadership."

Prasad said India is getting

respect from the top leaders of the world under Modi's leadership as is showcasing its achievements in a range of areas from technology, manufacturing and start-ups to export in the defence sector.

"India, which is the world's fifth (largest) economy, is a powerhouse of talents and technology. India is emerging as a big centre of trading, automobile manufacturing, mobile manufacturing, start-up movement and defence export. India is showing achievements to the world in all these areas," he said.

Prasad asserted that above all, India under PM Modi's leadership is seen as a country which cares for everyone.

Praveen Sood takes charge as CBI's new Director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Praveen Sood on Thursday took charge as the new CBI director on Thursday. He will hold the post for two years' fixed tenure.

Sood took charge at the CBI headquarters here from Subodh Kumar Jaiswal who retired from service on Thursday.

Sood is a 1986-batch IPS officer of the Karnataka cadre and was the State's Director General of Police (DGP). He is the senior-most IPS officer in the country after Research and Analysis Wing chief Samant Kumar Goel (1984-batch, Punjab cadre) who is retiring next month after two extensions of job of one year each.

Sood's name for the top CBI job was cleared in a meeting of a high-powered committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

Born in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh in 1964, Sood joined the IPS at the age 22 years after completing his civil engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

He also holds post graduate degrees from the Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru and the Maxwell



New CBI Director Praveen Sood (L) with outgoing CBI Director Subodh Jaiswal, in New Delhi on Thursday

School of Governance, Syracuse University, New York.

During his 37 years of service, Sood served in various capacities in the Karnataka Police, including Superintendent of Police of Bellary and Raichur districts, Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Bengaluru City, Commissioner of Police, Mysuru and Bengaluru City, Additional Director General of Police, Principal Secretary (Home), DGP (Internal Security) and DGP (CID), the CBI said in a statement.

He has also worked as advisor to the Government of Mauritius. He has supervised

the investigation of high profile cases involving high net-worth individuals and cases having inter-state and international ramifications besides investigation and detection of crimes including those relating to cyber crime and information technology. Specifically, he worked for strengthening of CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems) and ICJS (Interoperable Criminal Justice System) networks in the Karnataka State along with the judiciary, the CBI said.

After taking over charge, Sood interacted with the officers of the agency.

Cong slams Centre for rolling out fortified rice under PDS

Despite warnings by FSSAI, Niti Aayog, ICMR, the Govt is risking health of 80 cr people, says Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Thursday targeted the Narendra Modi Government over rolling out fortified rice under PDS and accused it of going ahead with the decision without ascertaining the outcome of independent research and the ill effects of such rice on the health of 80 crore poor people.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera asked what was the tearing hurry to implement the scheme of providing fortified rice containing prescribed micronutrients and "what relation does the Government have with the foreign conglomerate Royal DSM" which has bagged a major contract to distribute the rice in the country. He also sought to know whether any quick pro quo was involved.

A couple of days ago, the Government said fortified rice was being distributed through ration shops in 439 districts and other welfare schemes so far while asserting that there is enough global evidence of its health benefits.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address in 2021 said the government aims to distribute fortified rice via government schemes by 2024.

Thereafter, a scheme for the distribution of fortified rice, containing prescribed micronu-



trients -- iron, folic acid, Vitamin B12 -- was launched on October 2021 in a phased manner to address the problem of anaemia among women and children.

Khera alleged the Modi government rolled out fortified rice under the Food Security Act despite "failed" pilot projects and multiple warnings by experts, government officials, FSSAI and Niti Aayog advisors.

This was also mentioned by the director general of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) who called for the need for consultation with a wide range of experts on the effect of fortification of rice on human health before pushing it further, he said.

He claimed that fortified rice, which the government was pushing into the nationwide public distribution system under the Food Security Act, has 20 mg of iron.

"Will 80 crore people pay the price of the ill-conceived imposition of PM Modi's fortified rice? Did the Modi government get enamoured by a foreign conglomerate or were there vested interests involved," the Congress spokesperson asked.

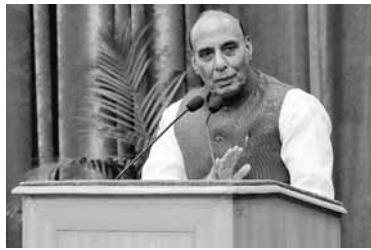
India under 'double-threat' needs tech-advanced military: Def Min Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said here India has to have technologically advanced military and needs to focus on extensive research in this sector as it faces "double threat" on its borders. This note of caution was in apparent reference to ongoing tension at the border in Ladakh with China and frosty ties with Pakistan.

He also urged the industry leaders to come up with innovative solutions to help India become a 'leader' from an 'imitator' in futuristic technologies and stay prepared to deal with challenges emanating from the current global security scenario.

"Today we are one of the largest armed forces in the world, the bravery and valour of our military is praised all over the world. Countries across the world express their willingness to conduct joint exercises with our armed forces. In such a situation, it becomes imperative to have a technologically advanced military to protect national interest. For a country like India, it becomes very important because we are facing double threat on our borders," he said while inaugurating a two day Defence Research and Development



(DRDO) Academia conclave.

Underscoring the significance of the theme of the conclave "DRDO-Academia Partnership - Opportunities and Challenges," Rajnath said, it is dire need that the DRDO and Academia work in partnership with each other to find solutions to the challenges being faced by us in the 21st century.

"The only way for this advancement is research. It is the need of the hour that both DRDO and academia work in tandem," he said adding "the more this partnership grows, I think India's research sector will also grow in the same proportion. Scientists and experts from both the DRDO and academia are sitting here."

Referring to various challenges facing the country, Singh said collective efforts and partnership are needed to confront them effectively.

DGCA asks Go First to submit op revival plan within 30 days

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) asked Go First to submit its "a comprehensive restructuring/revival plan for a sustainable revival of operations" within 30 days. The airline has been asked to furnish the status of availability of operational aircraft fleet, post holders required, pilots and other personnel, maintenance arrangements, funding/working capital, arrangements with lessors and vendors for sustainable revival of operations, stopped flying on May 3 and is undergoing voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings. In response to show cause notice issued on May 8, the airline has requested that they may be allowed to use the moratorium period to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan for restarting operations and present the same to DGCA for the requisite regulatory approvals before restarting operations. Accordingly, DGCA has advised the Go First airline to submit a com-



Go First airline aircrafts, formerly known as GoAir, stand parked at the apron of the Mumbai airport on Thursday

prehensive plan for the revival of its operations, including details about the availability of operational planes and pilots, within 30 days.

Sources said that the revival plan, once submitted by Go First, will be reviewed by DGCA for further appropriate action. DGCA will conduct an audit of Go First's preparedness before approving the resumption of flights, the crisis-hit airline's head of operations has told its staff. DGCA had issued the show cause notice under the relevant provisions of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, for its failure to continue the operation of the service in a safe, efficient and reliable manner.

PCI urges Birla to lift curbs on Parliament coverage by media

New Delhi: The Press Club of India on Thursday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to lift the restrictions on media covering Parliamentary proceedings that were imposed during the Covid pandemic.

In a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Press Club of India (PCI) said a large number of journalists were still being denied the opportunity to cover Parliament proceedings despite having permanent press gallery passes.

The PCI said the "superfluous"

restrictions on media have "no logical basis or rationale" as the Covid situation had eased and even the World Health Organization had announced that it was no longer a global health emergency.

"...We strongly feel that these curbs are part of a wider agenda aimed at controlling media and restricting freedom of press in order to impede free flow of independent news stories and information to the people," the PCI said in the letter.

Ukraine war to be on talks agenda during Modi's visit: US State Dept

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to America, a US State Department spokesperson has said it works with India on its most vital priorities.

Meanwhile, a US expert has said the US administration has decided to play the long game by inviting Prime Minister Modi despite existing challenges in bilateral ties.

"I will say generally that our partnership with India is one of our most consequential relationships. We work with India closely on our most vital priorities," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his Wednesday news conference late on Tuesday.

He said he expects US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti to be able to deepen the relationship between the two countries and work on matters of shared concern.

Responding to questions on Modi's trip, Miller said without giving too much of a trip preview, "certainly, the war in Ukraine will be one of the topics that is under discussion".

"It has been one of the topics under discussion in previous meetings with Prime Minister Modi, as it is in just about any conversation we have with a world leader at this time, or has been the case for the past year," Miller said.

Vitamin-D deficiency hits developing neurons in Schizophrenia: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

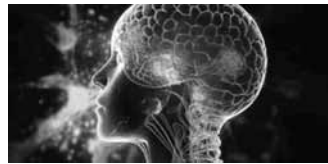
Using a new visualisation tool known as false fluorescent neurotransmitters, neuroscientists at The University of Queensland have discovered how vitamin D deficiency affects developing neurons in Schizophrenia, a serious mental health disorder. In a nutshell, the study, which comes a day after World Schizophrenia Day is marked, highlights the importance of vitamin D in brain development and the potential impact of deficiency on the onset of the mental condition.

Schizophrenia is associated with many developmental risk factors, and while the precise neurological causes of the disorder remain unknown, the men-

tal health disorder is associated with a pronounced change in the way the brain uses dopamine.

Professor Darryl Eyles and his team analysed the functional changes in presynaptic dopamine uptake and release in the presence and absence of vitamin D.

"What we found was that the altered differentiation process in the presence of vitamin D not only makes the cells grow differently but recruits machinery to release dopamine differently," Professor Eyles said. Using the new visualisation tool, the team could then analyse the functional changes in presynaptic dopamine uptake and release in the presence and absence of vitamin D. They showed that dopamine release was enhanced in cells grown in the presence of



the hormone compared to a control.

"This is conclusive evidence that vitamin D affects the structural differentiation of dopaminergic neurons," Professor Eyles concluded.

The team is now exploring whether other environmental risk factors for schizophrenia, such as stress or drug exposure, can also affect the development of dopaminergic neurons.

Founder-director and senior psychiatrist from Manasthali, Dr Jyoti Kapoor, who is in no way

related to the said study stressed on early professional diagnosis and treatment by mental health professionals for managing schizophrenia. "People suffering from the condition are often isolated and stigmatised in society, making it challenging for individuals to feel understood and accepted. When family and community show kindness and compassion towards individuals living with schizophrenia, it creates a supportive environment that can positively influence their well-being."

An official from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment too called for raising awareness and measures to

reduce stigma around this mental illness. "It lifts the lid on the challenges that thousands of people with Schizophrenia from all over the world have to encounter on a day-to-day basis," he said. On its part, the DEPwD observed the World Schizophrenia Day, through the institutions associated with it conducted various events at more than 30 places across India.

These included panel discussions by experts, street play, poster making and quiz competitions, webinars on early intervention in the mental disorders with perspectives from a Psychologist and psychiatrist, display of vocational stalls showcasing products made by persons with schizophrenia among a few others.

Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj, Opp-IT Park, Sahasthradhara Road, Dehradun

Ref. No. : 323 / 11-02(xix)-2/ITCO/URRDA/23 Dated : 25-05-2023

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice- 06/2023-24 (PMGSY-III)

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of Bridges under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of Almora, Bageshwar, Chamoli, Dehradun, Haridwar, Nainital, Pauri, Rudrprayah, Tehri & Uttarkashi for 104 number of Roads with estimated cost totaling to Rs. 939.90 Crore including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent.

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement 01-06-2023.

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD/MBD, only up to or before the time and date of the submission of the Bids (for World Bank funded works) and on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid (for Regular PMGSY Works), either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 28.06.2023 01:00 PM. For further details please log on to www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in

Chief Engineer URRDA, Dehradun

** Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.*

Note: For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

1 dead, 1 hurt in fresh Manipur riot

PTI ■ IMPHAL
One person was killed and another injured in a fresh violence between suspected militants and a group of people in an area bordering Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts in strife-torn Manipur, police said on Thursday.



Closed shops at a market in Imphal on Thursday. Prices of essential commodities such as rice, potato, onion and egg besides LPG cylinders and petrol have skyrocketed after clashes broke out in Manipur after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts

Toijam Chandramoni, 30, was shot dead during the violence on Wednesday, and Leichombam Abungnao, aged 22, was injured when suspected militants opened fire at the group of people, mostly comprising those who were displaced during the recent ethnic clashes in Churachandpur and took shelter in a relief camp at Moirang in Bishnupur, the officer said.

There were reports that militants late Tuesday night torched the houses of some villagers at Toronglaobi in Bishnupur district, he said. "The villagers and those living in the Moirang camp were angry over the burning of their houses. As these people came to know that militants could torch a school located in an area near Thamnepokpi in Bishnupur and Kanganthei in Churachandpur, they went to the locality.

"Once, they reached the spot, militants opened fire at them, leaving two persons injured. One of the two succumbed to his injuries when he was taken to a hospital," the senior police officer said. Following the violence, the authorities clamped curfew for

24 hours in the area and reduced the curfew relaxation hours in several other districts. Meanwhile, the house of Manipur PWD Minister Konthoujam Govindas in Bishnupur district was vandalised on Wednesday by a group of people claiming that the government in the violence-hit state was not doing enough to protect locals from militants belonging to another community, an official said.

The minister who is a BJP leader and his family members, however, were not present at the house when the mob, comprising mostly women, attacked

house in Ningthoukhong area and damaged a portion of a gate, windows, a few furniture and electronic gadgets. This was the first time a minister's house was attacked during the ongoing ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki community people in state that started three weeks ago.

Army and paramilitary forces have been deployed to control the situation in state. Clashes broke out in Manipur after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in hill districts on May 3 to protest against Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The violence in Manipur was preceded by tension over eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute another 40 per cent of the population and reside in hill districts.

The ethnic clashes claimed over 70 lives and some 10,000 army and paramilitary personnel had to be deployed to restore normalcy in northeastern state.

Congress raps Amit Shah for not visiting troubled State

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday attacked Home Minister Amit Shah over his Assam visit, saying he goes all the way to Guwahati but does not deem it fit to visit Manipur which has been "burning for 22 days". Shah is on a day-long visit to Assam to attend three events to mark the completion of two years of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government in the state.

Taking a dig at Shah, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The Union Home Minister goes all the way to Guwahati today, but does not deem it fit to visit Imphal when Manipur has been burning for 22 days."

"This is the same Union Home Minister who held 16 rallies and 15 road shows in Karnataka, but can not find time for the people of Manipur who are suffering a lot due to the ideology and politics of the so-called Double Engine Sarkar," Ramesh said in a tweet.

The Congress on Wednesday demanded Prime Minister call a meeting of community leaders of Manipur in an effort to bring peace in state.

DELHI SERVICES-ORDINANCE ROW Pawar backs Kejriwal in tug of war with BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI



NCP Chief Sharad Pawar in a meeting with Delhi Chief Minister and AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Marlena, in Mumbai, on Thursday

A day after the Shiv Sena (UBT) extended its support to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in his fight against the Centre's controversial ordinance, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday not only announced his party's support to Kejriwal but he also offered to enlist the support of other non-BJP parties against the Modi government's ordinance on the control of services in the national capital.

Announcing his party's decision to support the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at a news conference he addressed jointly with Kejriwal, Pawar made a strong case for bringing all the non-BJP parties together. "The ordinance brought in by the Modi government is an effort to scuttle Parliamentary democracy in the country. This is not an issue limited to Delhi. We must focus on bringing all non-BJP parties together."

Pawar said that he would talk to the leaders of other non-BJP parties to muster support for Kejriwal in his fight against the ordinance. "There is a serious threat to democracy in the country. The Modi government is making all-out efforts to deprive the rights of governments elected by the people

and create hurdles for them. We will support AAP in its fight against the Centre in Parliament". Indicating that he might speak to the Congress leadership for seeking support to Kejriwal, the NCP chief said: "My thinking is that Arvind should get support by talking to non-BJP parties — be it the Congress or BJD. This is not the time for arguments. Democracy has to be saved".

Earlier, Kejriwal — while appealing to Pawar to help him garner support among the non-BJP parties against the ordinance — said: "Sharad Pawar sir is one of the tallest leaders of the country today.

While he himself is supporting us, I request him to Help us garner support from other parties of the country". Slamming the Modi Government for its efforts to destroy the federal structure in the country, Kejriwal said: "Great injustice is being done by the BJP to the people of Delhi.

Even after our 8-year long legal battle in the Supreme Court, the Centre has brought this Ordinance to usurp the state's rights on appointments of officials. The fight has gone beyond Delhi. It's a fight to safeguard the federal structure of the country which the BJP is trying to undermine."

Cong meet to mull poll strategies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress has convened a two-day deliberations starting Friday on its preparedness and poll prospects in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, two of which are held by the party currently.

Party sources said while the Congress units of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan will hold separate discussions on May 26 on their preparations and actions to be taken, the party will also hold strategy meets on Chhattisgarh on May 27.

Buoyed by its poll victory in Karnataka, the Congress has started preparing for the next round of Assembly elections in the three states, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge taking the lead. Poll strategist and former associate of Prashant

Kishor Sunil Kanugolu will be part of the deliberations with the state leaders to strategise the party's preparedness for the next round of Assembly elections.

While Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh are ruled by the Congress, where it is hoping to offset the anti-incumbency factor and factional fighting by replicating the "Karnataka strategy", the party is also determined to make a comeback in Madhya Pradesh, where it lost power after Jyotiraditya Scindia and some of the MLAs switched loyalties to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Assembly elections in five states — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram — are due by the year-end and the Congress is leaving nothing to chance this time. The stunning victory of the party in the

Karnataka polls earlier this month has helped motivate the Congress cadre at the grassroots level, who are going all out to stage another victory for the party. The sources said the strategy meetings of Telangana and Mizoram will be held later.

Kharge will hold separate meetings with the party leaders from these states at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters. The chief ministers of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the state unit chiefs or in-charges and senior leaders from the respective states are expected to take part in the meetings.

The success of the "Bharat Jodo Yatra", which passed through Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and its effect in these states are also likely to be discussed in these meetings. The Congress faces peculiar challenges in several

of these states, especially due to infighting and factionalism. In Rajasthan, it has to tackle a festering feud between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot. Upping the ante, Pilot has given an ultimatum to the party and threatened to launch a state-wide agitation if his demands are not met by May-end.

Concluding his five-day "Jan Sangharsh Yatra" in Jaipur, during which he targeted the Gehlot Government on the issue of corruption, Pilot recently placed three demands — disbanding the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) and its reorganisation, compensation to the youngsters affected by the government exam paper leak and a high-level inquiry into corruption allegations against the previous Vasundhara Raje-led BJP government in the state.

Modi will face votebandi in 2024: Abhishek

'Will jam Delhi with people who were not paid MNREGA dues by Centre'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Abhishek Banerjee

Trinamool Congress' second in command Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday said that he would lead lakhs of job-card holders — who had not been paid their MNREGA dues on account of the central government's refusal to release funds — to Delhi so as to make the BJP Government understand the power of the people of Bengal.

Addressing a Jan Sanyog (reach out) rally at Purulia, Banerjee who is the TMC's national general secretary said, "lakhs of job card holders who

of my two-month long Jan Sanyog Yatra," he said.

Launching a scathing attack on the Prime Minister Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said "when he came to power he showed us the dreams of Acchey Din (good days) but ended up in giving us inflation, unemployment, social tension and notebandi ... they are again making people to stand in queues for exchanging notes (read Rs 2,000 notes) ... but this time the people will stand in queues not to change notes but to change the government ... there will be no notebandi ... now there will be votebandi."

Alleging that the Centre had blocked all the State's dues — from MNREGA to PM housing funds — Banerjee said, "enough is enough we will not take their (BJP's) arrogance and brow-beating ...

now the time has come to pay back." Banerjee who has been under the scanner of the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation for his alleged role in the multi-crore recruitment scam — apart from coal, cow other scams — said "while the people of the country are starving the Prime Minister is making joy trips to foreign countries."

Saying that the BJP's defeat in Karnataka Assembly elections would be repeated in the general elections in 2024, Banerjee said, "in 2024 the people will resort to votebandi like they did in Karnataka." Banerjee has of late been under tremendous pressure both from the judiciary and the central agencies who are trying to find whether he has connections with the recruitment scam that has literally shook the very foundations of the TMC Government.

Centre to boost Unani system of medicine; gives ₹45 cr push

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, Union Ministry of Minority Affairs has come forward to take steps to boost the Unani system of medicine in the country as it cleared a Rs 45 crore worth proposal envisaging upgradation and establishment of various facilities of the alternate medicine system at major metros Hyderabad, Lucknow, Chennai and Bengaluru and Silchar in Assam.

The Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM) has been sanctioned a total amount of Rs. 35.52 crores while National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Bengaluru has been allocated Rs. 9.81 crores for the task to be executed under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram

(PMJVK), a centrally sponsored scheme (CSS). A centre for fundamental research in Unani Medicine at National Research Institute of Unani Medicine for Skin Disorders, Hyderabad will be established at a cost of Rs. 16.05 crores while a Rs. 8.15 crores pre-clinical laboratory facility has been planned at Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine, Chennai. Similarly, a Rs. 8.55 crores for a centre of Ilaj bit Tadbeer (regimental therapy) for musculoskeletal disorders at Central Research Institute of Unani Medicine, Lucknow, and Rs. 2.75 crores for a centre of Ilaj bit Tadbeer (regimental therapy) for skin and lifestyle disorders at Regional Research Institute of Unani Medicine, Silchar have been proposed. NIUM,

Bengaluru will get Rs. 5.55 Crores for establishing a Vishram Girah for patients' attendants and Rs. 4.26 Crores for a skill centre of model Unani cosmetic care, a small-scale Unani pharmacy and Unani crude drug storage.

A senior official said that the proposals were considered by the Empowered Committee of the Ministry of Minority Affairs in its meeting held in March and Rs. 4.86 Crores has already been released to the CCRUM as the first instalment (25%) of total sanctioned cost of its three projects at Chennai, Lucknow and Silchar.

The grant of CCRUM project for Hyderabad and the projects of NIUM, Bengaluru would be released once their DPRs are approved and other technicalities finalized.

India's foodgrain output to touch record high for FY 2022-23: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Agriculture in its third advance estimates, released on Thursday pegged India's overall foodgrains output at a record 330.53 million tonnes in the 2022-23 crop year, as against the actual output of 315.61 million tonnes in the previous crop year.

The wheat production is also estimated to set a record at 112.74 million tonnes in the ongoing 2022-23 crop year (July-June), higher by five million tonnes from the previous year on increased acreage and yield despite unseasonal rains. Besides wheat, a record output has been estimated in rice, maize, oilseeds, and sugarcane.

The foodgrain basket comprises wheat, rice, nutri-coarse

cereals and pulses. "The production of wheat in the country is estimated at 112.74 million tonne, which is higher by 5 million tonne as compared to previous year's production," the agriculture ministry said.

Wheat production had declined to 107.74 million tonnes due to heat wave in key growing states in 2021-22 crop year. The previous record of 109.59 million tonnes in wheat output was achieved during the 2020-21 crop year.

Sowing of wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, had begun from October onwards, while harvesting is expected to get over by June 15 this year. Rice output is pegged at a record 135.54 million tonnes for 2022-23 crop year, as against 129.47 million tonnes in the previous year. Maize production is also estimated to be at a record of

35.91 million tonnes, as against 33.73 million tonnes in the said period. Total production of nutri-coarse cereals including maize has increased to 54.74 million tonnes in 2022-23 as against 51.10 million tonnes in the previous year.

In case of pulses, production is estimated to be marginally higher at 27.50 million tonnes in 2022-23 when compared with 27.30 million tonnes in the previous year. Except for gram and moong, production of tur and urad is estimated to be lower in the 2022-23.

Tur production is pegged lower at 3.43 million tonnes as against 4.22 million tonnes, urad output to be down at 2.61 million tonnes as against 2.77 million tonnes, while gram production is estimated to remain flat at 13.54 million tonnes in same period.

Maha: Four people, 150 sheep killed in accident

Aurangabad: Four people and 150 sheep were killed after a truck carrying the animals hit a tiles-laden truck in Maharashtra's Hingoli district early Thursday morning, a police official said. The accident took place at Malegaon phata on Nanded-Kalamnuri road at around 4 am, he said, adding that traffic movement on the route was disrupted for some time.

The truck carrying the sheep hit the other vehicle loaded with tiles from behind, Kalamnuri police inspector Vajjanath Munde told PTI. Four people and 150 sheep were killed, the official said. The deceased persons were travelling in the truck carrying the animals, he said. Another person travelling in the same truck received injuries and was

sent to a hospital in neighbouring Nanded district for treatment, the official said. The police with the help of locals later removed the trucks from the road and it was cleared for traffic movement, he said.

Three men killed on Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway in Palghar

Palghar: Three men travelling on a motorbike died after their two-wheeler collided with a multi-utility vehicle (MUV) on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Thursday, an official said.

Octogenarian Howrah Bridge to undergo health check!

IIT-Madras team to be engaged

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The 80-year-old iconic Howrah Bridge, which connects the twin cities of Howrah and Kolkata over the Hooghly river, will undergo a detailed health checkup after a gap of 11 years, said a top official of Kolkata port that maintains the structure.

The comprehensive health checkup of the cantilever bridge will be done in consultation with IIT Madras, Kolkata port chairman Rathendra Raman said. The proposed

exercise will be taken up in addition to the routine maintenance of the bridge, he said. "We have decided to conduct an in-depth study on the health of the Howrah Bridge, which hasn't been done for over a decade. This study will provide us with valuable insights on how to improve the bridge's lifespan," Raman said on Wednesday.

A comprehensive health checkup of the bridge was previously conducted 11 years ago, with the expertise of RITES, another official said.



The Howrah Bridge, also known as Rabindra Setu, with 405 metres in length and 21.6 metres in width, is considered a symbol of Kolkata since its inauguration in 1943. The

bridge was taken up for construction after a commission under the chairmanship of Sir R N Mukherjee in 1926 recommended a suspension bridge of a particular type to be

built across the Hooghly river. The port authorities had already started working to scrap the bituminous road surface on the 80-year-old structure and a new layer would be laid to reduce the bridge's load. The National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways & Coasts (NTCPWC), a division of IIT Madras, will advise the authorities for the comprehensive study, the port chairman said.

Raman stated that if necessary, another expert consultant would be appointed to assist the port authorities in the initiative. Every day, the Howrah Bridge facilitates the passage of approximately

80,000 vehicles and 400,000 pedestrians, becoming an integral part of their daily lives. Recognising the bridge's immense importance, the Kolkata port, now known as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, aims at securing its future and preserving the technological marvel, another senior official said.

The scope of the study is yet to be finalised but experts would closely examine issues such as corrosion and fatigue that the bridge had been facing, he said. "The goal is to identify effective strategies to address these challenges and to ensure the longevity of the bridge," the official added.

13-yr-old girl kills younger sister with help of boyfriend

Vaishali: A 13-year-old girl allegedly killed her younger sister with the help of her boyfriend and aunt and burnt the deceased's face with acid and chopped off fingers to conceal the identity in Bihar's Vaishali district, a senior police officer said on Thursday.

Police have arrested all three accused, including the minor, involved in the incident. While the 13-year-old girl has been sent to 'Balika Sudhar Grah' (correction home) in the district, her 18-year-old boyfriend and aunt are in judicial custody, an officer said. Talking to reporters here on Thursday, Vaishali SP Ravi

Ranjan Kumar, said the incident took place on May 15 at Harprasad village when the parents of the girls had gone to a relative's village to participate in a wedding ceremony.

When the parents returned home they found their younger nine-year-old daughter missing, Kumar said, adding the parents lodged a complaint at Jandaha police station. The local police constituted a special investigation team (SIT) and lodged a missing report which was later converted into a murder case after the recovery of the body from a field behind her home on May 19, the SP said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Unedifying

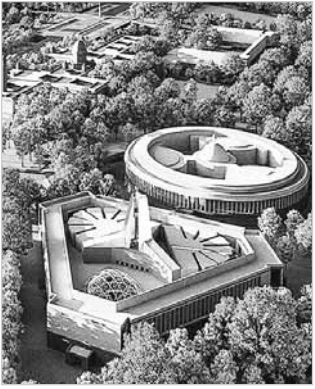
Neither the Oppn nor the Govt has covered itself in glory over the inauguration of new Parliament

By boycotting the inauguration of the new Parliament building, the 20 Opposition parties have not covered themselves in glory, notwithstanding their loud rhetoric. In a joint statement, 19 Opposition parties said that the President is not only the Head of State in India but also an integral part of Parliament as she summons, prologues, and addresses it. "Yet, the Prime Minister has decided to inaugurate the new Parliament building without her. This undignified act insults the high office of the President, and violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution. It undermines the spirit of inclusion which saw the nation celebrate its first woman Adivasi President." While their argument is not without merit, the accompanying bombast—"undignified act," violation "of the Constitution," undermining of "the spirit of inclusion"—is unwarranted and unnecessary. The Opposition's conduct would have been dignified and praiseworthy had it slammed the Government without boycotting the inauguration. After all, the event is about Parliament and Indian democracy, not about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in it. One has to be viscerally anti-Modi to believe that his Government has disrespected President Droupadi Murmu. We should not forget that she became President during Modi's tenure as Prime Minister. The Opposition is making a mountain out of a molehill. In general, the Opposition—indeed the entire political class—must acknowledge the fact that there are ways of expressing one's displeasure over something other than boycotts and bans.

If the Opposition has not reacted appropriately to the inauguration of the new Parliament building, the Government too has not shown great sagacity in handling the issue. And this is not just about propriety and this particular instance. Its continuously aggressive stance towards the Opposition has generated a great deal of divisiveness in our polity. Till a few years ago, many foreign observers were impressed by the fact that politicians in rival parties had good interpersonal relationships; they would fight fiercely each other in Parliament and in public debates, but remained friends otherwise. Healthy dialogue and good relations are also needed because politicians have to interact and work together all the time. For example, there is considerable interaction between the Centre and States, and often both are run by different parties. Unfortunately, the interparty bonhomie is diminishing rapidly. This has also had an effect on public discourse and political debate, which are increasingly becoming bitter and dirtier. From the Bharatiya Janata Party's perspective, its recent rise in political strength and the concomitant rise in assertiveness seem to be bringing various Opposition parties together. Fear is a very strong sentiment; it can work as an effective glue in politics. It has united 20 parties over the Parliament inauguration issue; it can do more in the foreseeable future.

Incidentally, only one of these women, Nimisha Nair alias Fathima Isa, was Hindu and married to a Christian, who subsequently converted to Islam as well. The other two women were Christians before their conversion. The Government of India has refused to repatriate them as they remain hardcore adherents of ISIS philosophy, unlike what has been depicted in the movie. While it has been alleged there are many more such people in prison in Afghanistan, official records only point to four. The film-makers have also suggested that there are "many girls" who have been manipulated into converting to Islam and in support quote then Chief Minister of Kerala, V S Achuthanandan, who, in 2010, said that fundamentalist Muslim organisations were using "money and marriages to make Kerala a Muslim majority state".

In that context, the issue of "manipulative conversion", commonly termed "love jihad", is concerning and cannot be wished away. Not because of the conversion itself, our Constitution allows us the freedom to practice as we wish, but



Neither the Oppn nor the Govt has covered itself in glory over the inauguration of new Parliament

PICTALK



An employee checks Rs 2000 currency notes given by customers at a petrol pump in Gurugram

Terrorists are using newer ways of executing their acts

The world is reeling under the shadow of terrorism. Middle East and North Africa were worst hit in 2022, write SUNIL GOYAL & DIMPLE KHOKHAR

Since the turn of the millennium, few topics have shaped the global discourse as much as terrorism. Following the 9/11 attacks in New York, on September 20, 2001, the U.S. president at the time, George W. Bush, declared a "War on Terror" and sent America to war with Al-Qaeda. The USA first invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to evict the Taliban regime and to chase Osama Bin Laden. Then, two years later, the country invaded Iraq due to highly disputed claims about the regime of Saddam Hussein positing weapons of mass destruction.



Many commentators argue that, rather than solve the problem, the War on Terror served only to validate the use of terrorist tactics, and that it threw these countries into further chaos. The Global Terrorism Index is an annual ranking produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace. As even the definition of terrorism is hotly debated, it is essential to highlight that the methodologies used to measure terrorism are also contested. The Global Terrorism Index ranks 163 countries on four indicators weighted over five years. These four factors are the number of terrorist incidents per year, the number of fatalities caused by terrorists per year, the number of injuries caused by terrorists per year, and the total property damage caused by terrorism per year. The global terrorism index systematically ranks countries of the world according to their terrorist activity. As per the data released by Statista, in 2022, Afghanistan ranked first on the global terrorism index with a score of 8.82 points, making it the country most affected by terrorism on Earth. The ranking also shows that Afghanistan suffered

from the highest number of terrorist attacks and the highest number of fatalities from the terrorist attacks. Although terrorism is a worldwide problem, its victims are highly concentrated in certain areas of the world. The area that saw the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2022 was the Middle East and North Africa. According to Institute for Economics and Peace, the terrorism index in India decreased to 7.43 in 2021 from 7.67 in 2020. Terrorism Index in India averaged 7.65 Points from 2002 until 2021, reaching an all-time high of 8.12 Points in 2011 and a record low of 7.22 Points in 2004. India Terrorism Index - values, historical data and charts - was last updated in May of 2023. A report based on the Global Terrorism Index noted India has a number of low-level conflicts in some of the border areas but the vast majority of the country's population lives outside of these India was among the 25 worst terror-hit countries but also among 56 of the 120 nations surveyed with no respondents selecting war and terror as the biggest threat to their

daily safety, according to the 10th edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI). The international community holds a collective view that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations must be condemned. There cannot be any exception or any justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of the motivations behind such acts. We also recognize that the menace of terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. However, in spite of the progress we have made to tighten the legal, security, financing and other frameworks to combat terrorism, terrorists are constantly finding newer ways of motivating, resourcing and executing acts of terror. Unfortunately, there are also some countries that seek to undermine or subvert our collective resolve to fight terrorism. That cannot be allowed to pass. (Prof. Sunil is Dean and Chairman of - the Board of Studies at Dr BR Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Ambedkar Nagar and Dimple Khokhar is a research scholar)

A fairy tale that is The Kerala Story

The Kerala Story has been making waves ever since it opened in theatres but its content is far from reality, it is a fantasy at best



DEEPAK SINHA

The central theme of the film revolves around three girls who fell victim to "manipulative conversion" to Islam that practically destroyed their lives. The main protagonist is Shalini Unnikrishnan, a convert to Islam. She narrates her ordeal from her prison in Afghanistan, of how she once wanted to become a nurse but was brainwashed and manipulated by religious vanguards, turned into an ISIS terrorist and sent on her way to Syria.

It is loosely based on the accounts of three women from Kerala who converted to Islam and travelled with their husbands to join ISIS in Afghanistan between 2016 and 2018, along with two other women and their husbands. Their husbands were killed in the fighting and these women remain in an Afghan prison. Incidentally, only one of these women, Nimisha Nair alias Fathima Isa, was Hindu and married to a Christian, who subsequently converted to Islam as well. The other two women were Christians before their conversion. The Government of India has refused to repatriate them as they remain hardcore adherents of ISIS philosophy, unlike what has been depicted in the movie.

While it has been alleged there are many more such people in prison in Afghanistan, official records only point to four. The film-makers have also suggested that there are "many girls" who have been manipulated into converting to Islam and in support quote then Chief Minister of Kerala, V S Achuthanandan, who, in 2010, said that fundamentalist Muslim organisations were using "money and marriages to make Kerala a Muslim majority state".

In that context, the issue of "manipulative conversion", commonly termed "love jihad", is concerning and cannot be wished away. Not because of the conversion itself, our Constitution allows us the freedom to practice as we wish, but



because of the motive and the manner such conversions are undertaken. It must be added that such allegations of fraudulent conversions have been made against some Christian denominations as well. Such actions damage the secular fabric of our society, which is why we have stringent laws against it. One estimate suggests about 7000 girls from the State converted to other religions over the last decade and the total number of Indians who joined ISIS was not more than 250, with about 20% from Kerala.

Critics agree that the movie is watchable as a work of fiction, but what detracts and gives weight to allegations that it is nothing more than a propaganda film, is its adverse depiction of all Muslims in general and repeated assertions that there are over 32000 such cases. This is untrue and a Bench of the Supreme Court has reproached the producers of the film for distortion of facts, directing them to add a disclaimer to that effect.

However, this is a theme that resonates greatly with the Hindutva lobby, as we saw from the Prime



TAKEN AT FACE VALUE THIS MAY SEEM TRULY SCARY, BUT THE TRUTH IS IT HAS NO BASIS IN FACT AND IS AIMED AT SPREADING FEAR AND CONSOLIDATING VOTES

Minister's exhortations to the public to see the movie, during his election rallies in Karnataka. Recently, Mr Amit Malviya, head of the BJP IT Cell, wrote on Twitter that "love Jihad is real and dangerous. Our girls are being lured away and used as cannon fodder for radical terror organisations. We can bury our heads in the sand, like an ostrich, at our own peril. It will engulf the rest of us sooner than we think. The Kerala Story is a grim reminder of what lies ahead if we don't act now".

Taken at face value this may seem truly scary, but the truth is it has no basis in fact and is aimed at spreading fear and consolidating votes. Comparison of census data from 2001 and 2011 shows that the Hindu population in Kerala, for example, declined from 56.16% to 54.73%, or 1.43%, while the Muslim population increased from 24.70% to 26.56% or 1.86%. A simple interpolation, at existing growth rates, suggests that the Muslim population would equal that of the Hindu population only by the last decade of this century. Unlikely, as growth

rates overall are on the decline. If anything, in the coming years Kerala's problems will not be about religion, but managing migrants from other states that keep its economy ticking!

Similarly, Mamata Banerjee's ban on the film presently stayed by the Supreme Court, and its "voluntary" non-screening in Tamil Nadu by movie theatres, is over the top and only feeds the long-standing narrative of minority appeasement. We must acknowledge that to be truly secular, breaking the stranglehold of those who benefit by dividing us through religion is inescapable. An essential step in this direction can be the introduction of the long overdue Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which would codify and apply a set of uniform laws related to personal matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance to all citizens, regardless of their religion.

(The author, a military veteran is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MANIPUR UNREST CONTINUES

Sir — As per report the house of Manipur PWD Minister Konthoujam Govindas in Bishnupur district was vandalized by an irate mob on Wednesday, claiming that the state government has not taken any sufficient and appropriate steps to protect locals from armed militants belonging to another community. Govindas, who also holds the Youth Affairs and Sports portfolio, is a senior BJP member. The minister and his family members house was attacked by 100 agitated people, mostly women, ransacked the house in Ningthoukhong Bazar area of Bishnupur district and damaged the gate, windows, a furniture, electronic gadgets and vehicles parked at his residence. This is for the first time a minister and a senior BJP leader's house was vandalized after the ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki community people broke out in Manipur on May 3, claiming the lives of at least 71 people and injuring over 300. With this all is not well for the BJP government in Manipur and have to face the anger of the people.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING IS READY

Sir — The day has finally come when Independent India will have its own, first of a kind Parliament without any colonial influence. May 28th of the year 2023, will be written as a golden day in India's political history as we gave our nation our new Parliament building with more advanced technology, space and improved system. Now that we are almost ready to enter to new building which will be the house of making legislation, relating this to our special history is also very important. The Sengol and all other related aesthetics with are the part and parcel of India's glorified history and rich culture will be put in place on this special occasion.

It is a big day for every Indian, in our 75th year of Independence, we are proudly moving ahead with the spirit of self-reliance and Aatmanirbharta. We are no more in the mortar and brick estab-

Kazi Nazrul: The rebel poet



Apart from his literary works on religious harmony with humanitarian lines like 'Are they Hindus? Are they Muslims? Who asks questions so asinine? O Captain! Pray tell them 'tis your brothers dying, children of your Mother!'; the pen of Kazi Nazrul Islam also used to act as a sword while protesting against atrocities by the British, thereby earning him the epithet of "rebel poet" and also finding himself landed in prison for urging the youth (through his mighty poems) to engage in a revolution against the imperialist force.

In the current communally-vitiated environment in the society, it would not be out of context if we take a look on Nazrul's opinion on religion as practiced in the society: ---

"No prophet has said, 'I have come for Hindus/ I have come for Muslims/ I have come for Christians.' They have said, 'I have come for the humanity for everyone, like light'. But the devotees of Krishna say, 'Krishna is for Hindus.' The followers of Muhammad says, 'Muhammad is for the Muslims.' The Disciple of Christ says, 'Christ is for Christians.' Krishna-Muhammad-Christian have become national property. This property is the root of all trouble. The matter which deserves to be noticed is that Nazrul's comments were highly relevant then, extremely relevant now and probably to remain relevant after centuries. It is high time we learn to jump into the waters and save the drowning person by seeing the human being in him/her instead of contemplating whether he/she is a Hindu or a Muslim. After all, at the end of the day, we are all children of that Ultimate Divine!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

ishment of Britishers. Lutyens and Baker's Parliament is now replaced with domestically made new Central Vista, which reflects the democratic and aspirational spirit of state of the art architecture design. India had come so far and now we are ready to get rid of colonial establishments where laws for modern India are drafted.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

WOMEN TOPPERS IN UPSC

Sir — Four women Civil Services Examination-2022 aspirants occupying the top four positions, actually underlines the palpable change taking place in the otherwise male dominant scenario in most of the walks of life in the country now, thanks to the Union Public Service Commission's (UPSC) adamant stance keeping the political duress at bay. The icing on the cake, a record over one-third of the successful candidates comprise women- Hats off to Ishita Kishore,

Garima Lohia, Uma Harathi and Smriti Mishra quad for their perseverance, dedication, grit and indefatigability winning them the laurels on the first four slots respectively. Interestingly, a Delhi Police head constable with 667th rank is also on the UPSC list. I squarely acquiesce with the editorial view that the Union Public Service Commission, a Constitution Body, has been doing its jobs professionally in a country where many an institution has been intruded upon by some political powers that be, adversely affecting the institution's public image of stern rectitude. Thankfully, most of the bureaucrats are impartial bearing no political leanings and keeping this prestigious institution clear of any gender bias as is evident from the record in the last couple of years.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

WORLD IS UNDERGOING TRANSFORMATION

That day is not far wherein every being would be divine and have a purity of character



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

That day is not far when we would see a world of purity of character and values, where every being would be divine and would coexist in harmony with nature.

Most of the religious scriptures are known to have described heaven, and paradise in detail as a period of peace, prosperity and happiness which is said to have existed thousands of years ago. That is why the whole concept of paradise has fascinated humans for centuries. However, in reality, paradise or heaven is not a different world but rather a period when everything in this world was perfect and harmonious. In the cycle of time, heaven, which is also called the Golden Age, occurs in the very beginning.

It is followed by the Silver Age, which is characterised by a lesser degree of perfection but is still free of negativity. By the time the Silver Age ends, the human souls lose some of their spiritual energy, and as the Copper Age starts, they are no longer soul-conscious and begin to come under the influence of vices. These vices bring sorrow as well as fear, repentance and a longing for a world without suffering, which the souls remember existed in the past.

Hence, in the hope of regaining that lost world of unalloyed joy, humans start remembering or praying to a Supreme entity who they believe can remove all their sorrows. Now, what needs to be understood practically is that – the same souls, who were divine humans, at the start of the cycle of time, end up becoming vicious and with devilish tendencies. It is at this point when one cycle of time is near its end and a new one is about to begin, that Supreme Power descends on earth to uplift mankind and rejuvenate the whole world, including the elements of nature. God explains to the souls about the cycle of time and the law of karma, whereby they realise that vices are at the root of all the suffering and that one can accumulate a fortune by performing elevated actions.



Not many are aware that the much-awaited greatest event of human history has already occurred. But a majority of humans are still in a deep slumber of ignorance and are still looking for God. In Bhagavad-Gita, Almighty Supreme clearly says that humans cannot reach God by prayer, penance, reading scriptures or doing charitable deeds. HE gives HIS introduction to everyone when God comes to this world at the end of the Iron Age when unrighteousness has reached extreme proportions and humanity is experiencing great sorrow.

He also reminds us of our true identity, that we all are eternal souls and not bodies and finally HE teaches us the unique art of Raj Yoga, by which the souls can cleanse themselves of all their sins and become worthy of taking birth in the Golden Age where there is complete peace, purity and happiness.

That day is not far when we would see a world of purity of character and values, where every being would be divine and would coexist in harmony with nature. There will be no form of violence, be it physical, mental or emotional. Every person will be an embodiment of truth and divine virtues. Pure love and respect will form the basis of relationships. They will be completely free from and ignorant of evil, vices and suffering. Materially, they will be living in opulence and abundance. Science will be used for creating perfect technology and comforts that are foolproof, eco-friendly and safe. People will enjoy perfect health, natural beauty, and a long lifespan and there will be no sign of sickness or untimely death. Everybody will be happy and content. There will be lightness, innocence, purity and joy in every action. This process of world transformation is underway right now.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal & UK)

Who will end the free-run of freebies?



UTTAM GUPTA

Political parties don't want freebies to go. It is their much-cherished tool to harness votes. And they know it works like a charm



In the just concluded assembly elections in Karnataka, the grand old party (GOP) Congress had promised five guarantees viz. Gruha Jyoti, Gruha Lakshmi, Sakhi programme, Yuva Nidhi, and Anna Bhagayain in its manifesto.

Having got a decisive mandate to form the government, Congress pledged to approve all the five guarantees in the very first meeting of the Cabinet. The big question is: is it worth spending so much of taxpayers money?

The guarantees are intended to be a welfare scheme. Under it, the government should ensure that (i) the assistance goes to a person who is desperately in need (one who is poor or very poor); (ii) it should be given for a 'limited period' after which she should stand on her own and (iii) the scheme should be funded in a manner such that it doesn't destabilize the budgetary position.

Under Gruha Jyoti, the GOP promises to provide 200 units of free electricity a month for every single household (HH) in the state. The very idea is abhorrent. It presumes that every HH is so poor that it can't afford to pay even Rs 1000 a month being the cost of 200 units of electricity @ Rs 5 per unit.

Further, in the absence of any mention of 'for how long', it is assumed that free supply will continue for the full term of this government i.e. 5 years. The scheme will impose a 'needless' burden on the state exchequer for that long.

It will also strain the finances of power distribution companies which will have to supply zero tariff power to all HHs on behalf of the state government and won't get paid by the latter in time or paid less or not paid at all as is the case in many states who are already supplying power free or at concessional tariff.

Under Gruha Lakshmi, Every Woman head of a house will get two thousand rupees a month. This again is bizarre! Going by the manifesto, even a billionaire woman is eligible. Distributing money in this manner is a sheer waste of scarce resources. The GOP says "We are keeping the money in the hands of women to

ensure that they're in control and in charge of their own life".

The idea of empowering the woman is fine. But, we must not forget the context. For schemes like PM Awas Yojna where houses are built for the poor and the ownership is vested with the woman head, this makes eminent sense. But, to give money to all and sundry and then trumpet about women's empowerment looks ridiculous. The Sakhi programme under which free bus tickets for all women to travel in Karnataka are provided too suffers from the same absurdity.

Under Yuva Nidhi, the government will provide support to the Youth of Karnataka for two years by paying Rs 3,000 to unemployed graduates and Rs 1,500 to unemployed diploma holders every month. Prima facie, this may be in sync with the principle of extending support to a person who needs it. But, it can't be divorced from the economic status of the family she belongs to. If an unemployed youth belongs to a rich family which can take care of her during the difficult period i.e. when she remains without a job, there is no need for state support.

State support should be given only if the unemployed youth is from a poor HH. That apart, while choosing the beneficiary, the government must ensure that she is not self-employed. The manifesto doesn't talk of any of these riders. Finally, under Anna Bhagayain, the GOP has promised to give 10 kgs of rice per person per month to BPL families. Such families are already getting 7 kg of food per person per month under the National Food Security Act or NFSA (2013).

Redeeming these guarantees will cost around Rs 62,000 crore a year which is even higher than the States' fiscal deficit or FD (excess

of expenditure over receipts) of Rs 60,500 crore during 2022-23. Unless there is a cut in expenditure under some head or an increase in receipt for an equivalent amount, the FD would be Rs 122,500 crore. Expressed as a share of the state gross domestic product (SGDP) this would go beyond 5 percent against the 3 percent ceiling fixed under Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.

The guarantees don't follow the cardinal principles of a welfare scheme. These are neither directed to the needy nor have any terminal date and will have a destabilizing effect on the budget. These benefits distributed by Congress using public money for garnering votes are known in common parlance as 'freebies'. The menace has gripped most of the political parties that use freebies as the key to winning elections.

Emboldened by its victory in Karnataka, the GOP will use freebies even more brazenly in state elections slated towards the end of 2023 as also during general elections in 2024. This will force others including the ruling BJP to offer similar or even more tempting allurements (already, BJP top brass has started galvanizing its thought process in that direction). This rat race will have devastating implications for the finances of both states and the Centre.

Is there any way this menace could be reined in?

To get an answer, let us look at a judgment of the Supreme Court (SC) in S Subramaniam Balaji vs the Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors delivered way back in July 2013. It has been observed that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people. "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree." This

would have led any logical person to believe that the SC would give a strict direction to stem the rot. But, what followed was a lame-duck order.

The SC had held that promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as "corrupt practice" under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the state Assembly.

In the same order, it directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) "to frame guidelines that could govern the contents of the election manifesto of all the recognized political parties as when it had acted while framing guidelines for general conduct of the candidates, meetings, processions, polling day, etc". Further "this can also be included in the model code of conduct - under a separate head for guidelines for election manifesto - for guidance of political parties and candidates".

The ECI never came out with any such guidelines.

After a long hiatus, hearing a PIL seeking directions against 'freebies' on January 25, 2022, the SC observed "this is no doubt a serious issue. Budget for freebies is going above the regular Budget. This disturbs the level playing field". Its concern this time was more intense than it was in 2013. But, what about the action?

On August 3, 2022, the SC asked the parliamentarians to enact a law on curbing freebies but only after a committee set up by it examines all pros and cons. But, the majority of political parties don't want freebies to go away. It seems, India will have to live with this menace eternally.



EMBOLDENED BY ITS VICTORY IN KARNATAKA, THE GOP WILL USE FREEBIES EVEN MORE BRAZENLY IN STATE ELECTIONS SLATED TOWARDS THE END OF 2023 AS ALSO DURING GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 2024

(The writer is a policy analyst)

India to be a major player in the multipolar world

A multilateral world would be to India's advantage. It would also be welcome by the Global South which looks up to India for direction and leadership

There is a shift underway in the international system. The ongoing Ukraine conflict, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a centre for global politics, and the relentless rise of China have all resulted in a move away from a unipolar or bipolar world order to a multipolar one. This move is also one which suits India very well. As India positions itself globally as the leader of the Global South and a rising power, multipolarity assures India a position as one of the centres of power. This thought was very evident in the address made by External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar at the recently held EU-India Pacific Ministerial Forum in Sweden where he pointed out that,



SIMRAN SODHI

(The author, a Delhi-based journalist and foreign affairs analyst, holds a Masters in International Relations from the US University)

"The more European Union and Indo-Pacific deal with each other, the stronger will be their respective appreciation of multi-polarity. A multipolar world is feasible only by a multipolar Asia."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rather busy calendar is another indication in this direction. The G7 Summit in Tokyo which also saw a Quad Summit on the sidelines, a visit to Papua New Guinea and then Australia all tie in to this thought. The PM's much-anticipated visit to the United States next month, which is only the third State visit by a foreign leader in US President Joe Biden's tenure, will further cement not only India's growing stature on the world stage but also be a timely pointer towards multipolarity. It is a

shift India well understands and is cautiously working towards.

The Ukraine crisis has hastened this change. While the US and its Western allies have and continue to routinely condemn Russia over its actions, India has stuck to its guns and played it according to her interests. There was much pressure on India during the first few weeks of the conflict to censure Russian actions but the fact that India did not do so and eventually it also brought about a change in Western attitudes has been a fine diplomatic victory for India. In March last year Biden had termed India's response to the Ukraine conflict as 'some-what shaky'. But with time the messaging out of Washington changed with a gradual accep-



tance of India's position.

India has consistently abstained from the United Nations at resolutions brought in by the Western world against Russia. This has helped India retain an old friend. About half of India's military supplies come from Russia. Courtesy of the Ukraine conflict, India's trade

with Russia is at a record high. Despite the never-ending critique, India continues to buy oil from Russia. It is also worth remembering here that Russia used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) many times when resolutions on Kashmir were tabled. The fact that India has done this fine balancing act, of maintaining and strengthening ties with both the US and Russia, makes it a unique power centre in itself.

Another point in the study is, of course, the Quad (a grouping of the US, India, Japan and Australia). It would not be an overstatement to say that the Quad today is one of the most influential groupings in the world of geopolitics. It is also essentially a

forum to check China. As the politics of the Indo-Pacific take centre stage in the world, India becomes an even more valuable ally not just to the US, but to the entire Western world.

For India, China remains the biggest worry. China's aggressive behaviour at the border and its expansionist agenda in the South China Sea have almost every world leader worried. The Ukraine conflict has also seen another related development and that is the tightening of embrace between China and Russia. And that is unlikely to make India comfortable. That somewhere again takes us back to the argument that for India, censuring Russia over the Ukraine conflict would only result in a closer China-

Russia nexus. Both Russia and China are wary of the West and critical of a world they feel is dominated by Western ideals and nations. The US-China trade wars and the sanctions against Russia by the Western powers have helped consolidate that feeling and what one sees is the beginning of an anti-West Block.

A multilateral world would be to India's advantage and would also be welcome by the Global South. One of the end games of course would be a much-needed change in the structure of the UNSC and a permanent seat for India. That would also be more representative of the present world. The beginnings have been made but it's still quite a long road ahead.

'Imran, wife can't leave Pak'

Former prime minister Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi and more than 600 leaders and former assembly members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party have been barred from leaving the country, media reports said on Thursday.



The sources claimed that some of the PTI leaders and office bearers tried leaving the country in the last three days, however, they were stopped at the airports.

PTI's Secretary General resigns

Islamabad (PTI): Ousted Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan suffered another jolt as the head of his economic team and one of his close aides Asad Umar resigned from all party positions, amid the government's crackdown on the opposition over the May 9 violence.

Dar hints at end of IMF loan programme

Islamabad (PTI): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has hinted that the IMF loan programme to Pakistan may expire on June 30 due to the "restricted time" for its revival but asserted that the cash-strapped country would not default, a media report said on Thursday.

South Korea, US troops hold large live-fire drills



The South Korean army's K-2 tanks fire during South Korea-US joint military drills at Seungjin Fire Training Field in Pocheon, South Korea on Thursday.

The South Korean and US militaries conducted large live-fire drills near the border with North Korea on Thursday, despite the North's warning that it won't tolerate what it calls an invasion rehearsal on its doorstep.

'Undeclared martial law in Pakistan'

Pakistan's beleaguered former prime minister Imran Khan on Thursday filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the deployment of the army to aid the civilian administration in some provinces, terming it as "undeclared martial law" in the coup-prone country.

3 dead in central Japan attack

Three people including two police officers were killed in Nagano in central Japan on Thursday and a suspect with a rifle and knife was holed up inside a building, according to police and media reports.



Police officers stand guard on a street leading to a building where a man is holed up in Nakano, central Japan on Thursday.

South Korea, US troops hold large live-fire drills

The US-South Korean firing exercises, called "Combined annihilation firepower drills," are the biggest of their kind. The drills have been held 11 times since they began in 1977, according to the South Korean Defence Ministry.

S Korea launches first commercial-grade satellite

South Korea successfully launched a commercial-grade satellite for the first time Thursday as part of its growing space development program, as rival North Korea is pushing to place its first military spy satellite into orbit.

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Chinese minister to hold talks amid disputes over tariffs

China's commerce minister will hold talks with officials in the US this week amid sharpening disputes over tariffs and technology, his ministry said on Thursday.

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND NOTICE

Taliban may allow women to resume agency work

The head of a major aid organisation said Thursday that the Taliban have agreed to consider allowing Afghan women to resume work at the agency in the southern province of Kandahar...



in the capital Kabul and Kandahar to persuade them to reverse the ban on the organization's female staff.

प्रधान महाप्रबन्धक, आर उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, ए-1/4 लखनपुर, कानपुर अत्यकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

HK-flagged vessel blocks Suez Canal

A Hong Kong-flagged ship briefly blocked Egypt's vital Suez Canal on Thursday morning, authorities said, the latest such incident in the busy waterway.



vessel had broken down during its transit through the canal due to engine failure. It said the ship was towed away from the area by three tug boats.

'Republicans pushing debt ceiling talks to the brink'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Republicans are pushing debt ceiling talks to the brink, displaying risky political bravado as they prepare to leave town on Thursday for the holiday weekend just days before the US could face an unprecedented default that could hurl the global economy into chaos.

until Tuesday, just two days from June 1, when Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said the US could start running out of cash to pay its bills and face a federal default.

Fitch Ratings agency placed the United States' AAA credit on "ratings watch negative," warning of a possible downgrade because of what it called the brinkmanship and political partisanship surrounding the debt ceiling.

Weeks of negotiations between Republicans and the White House have failed to produce a deal — in part because the Biden administration never expected to be having to negotiate with McCarthy over the debt limit, arguing it should not be used



Speaker Kevin McCarthy addressing mediapersons

as leverage to extract other partisan priorities. McCarthy is holding out for steep spending cuts that Republicans are demanding in exchange for their vote to raise the nation's borrowing limit.

leader says that's not enough. "We have to spend less than we spent last year. That is the starting point," said McCarthy, R-Calif.

abroad. Anxious retirees and social service groups are among those already making default contingency plans.

Wednesday. The Senate, where Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has vowed to move quickly, would also have to pass the package before it could go to Biden's desk to be signed into law, right before next Thursday's possible deadline.

The contours of a deal have been within reach for days, but Republicans are unsatisfied as they press the White House team for more.

back bolstered funding for the Internal Revenue Service if they agree to instead allow the White House to push that money into other domestic accounts, the person said.

At the White House, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre blamed Republicans for risking a devastating default that would hit "every single part of the country" as they demand "extreme" spending cuts that would hurt millions of Americans.

The White House has continued to argue that deficits can be reduced by ending tax breaks for wealthier households and some corporations, but McCarthy said he told the president as early as their February meeting that raising revenue from tax hikes was off the table.

US Prez picks AF fighter pilot as next Joint Chiefs chairman

Washington: President Joe Biden will announce Thursday that he is tapping Air Force Gen C Q Brown Jr, a history-making fighter pilot with deep knowledge of China, to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Brown's confirmation would mean that, for the first time, both the Pentagon's top military and civilian positions would be held by African Americans. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the first Black Pentagon chief, has been in the job since the beginning of the administration.

The nomination has been long expected. If confirmed by the Senate, Brown would replace Army Gen. Colin Powell.

Biden saw Brown as the right person for the job because of his work modernizing the US fleet of aircraft and its nuclear arsenal and his years of experience in shaping US defenses to meet China's rise, a senior administration official said.

Brown, 60, has commanded at every possible level in the Air Force and in joint commands, including in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. He also helped build and lead the US air campaign against the Islamic State militant group. Brown is a career F-16 fighter pilot with more than 3,000 flight hours and command experience at all levels.

Russia signs deal to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus

AP ■ TALLINN (ESTONIA)

Russia and Belarus signed a deal on Thursday formalising the procedure for deploying Russian nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory. Control of the weapons will remain with Moscow.

The move formalised the deal agreed on earlier by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Putin previously announced in March that his country planned to deploy tactical, comparatively short-range and small-yield nuclear weapons in Belarus. The inking of the deal comes as Russia braces for Ukraine's much-anticipated counteroffensive.



Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, left, and Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin exchange documents on Thursday

Minister Viktor Khrenin said in Minsk during a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu.

"In the context of an extremely sharp escalation of threats on the western borders of Russia and Belarus, a decision was made to take countermeasures in the military-nuclear sphere," Shoigu added.

facility on the territory of the Republic of Belarus." No detail was announced regarding when the weapons would be deployed in Belarus, but Putin previously said that the construction of storage facilities for tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus would be completed by July 1.

Our forces handing control of Bakhmut to Moscow: Wagner

AP ■ KYIV

The head of the Russian private military contractor Wagner claimed Thursday that his forces have started pulling out of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and handing over control to the Russian military, days after he said Wagner troops had captured the ruined city.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, Wagner's millionaire owner with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, said in a video published on Telegram that the handover would be completed by June 1. There was no immediate comment from the Russian defense ministry.

It was not possible to independently verify whether Wagner's pullout from the bombed-out city has begun after a nine-month battle that killed tens of thousands of people.

Ukraine's deputy defense minister said Thursday that Wagner units have been replaced with regular troops in the suburbs but Wagner fighters remain inside the city. Ukrainian forces still have a foothold in the southwestern outskirts, Deputy Minister of Defence Hanna Maliar said.

Prigozhin's Bakhmut triumph delivered a badly needed victory for Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has lost momentum and now faces the possibility of a Ukrainian counteroffensive using advanced weapons supplied by Kyiv's Western allies.

Turkish voters weigh final decision on next prez

AP ■ ANKARA

Two opposing visions for Turkey's future are on the ballot when voters return to the polls on Sunday for a runoff presidential election that will decide between an increasingly authoritarian incumbent and a challenger who has pledged to restore democracy.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a populist and polarising leader who has ruled Turkey for 20 years, is well positioned to win after falling just short of victory in the first round of balloting on May 14.

He was the top finisher even as the country reels from sky-high inflation and the effects of a devastating earthquake in February. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of Turkey's pro-secular main opposition party and a six-party

alliance, has campaigned on a promise to undo Erdogan's authoritarian tilt. The 74-year-old former bureaucrat has described the runoff as a referendum on the direction of the strategically located NATO country, which is at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and has a key say over the alliance's expansion.

"This is an existential struggle. Turkey will either be dragged into darkness or light," Kilicdaroglu said. "This is more than an election. It has turned into a referendum." In a bid to sway nationalist voters ahead of Sunday's runoff, the normally soft-mannered Kilicdaroglu (pronounced KEH-lich-DAH-ROH-loo) shifted gear and hardened his stance, vowing to send back millions of refugees if he is elected and rejecting any possibility of peace negotiations with Kurdish militants.

Germany eco shrinks, signalling recession

AP ■ BERLIN

The German economy shrank unexpectedly in the first three months of this year, marking the second quarter of contraction that is one definition of recession. Data released Thursday by the Federal Statistical Office shows Germany's gross domestic product, or GDP, declined by 0.3 per cent in the period from January to March. This follows a drop of 0.5 per cent in Europe's biggest economy during the last quarter of 2022.

Two consecutive quarters of contraction is a common definition of recession, though economists on the euro area business cycle dating committee use a broader set of data, including employment figures. Germany is one of the 20 countries that use the euro currency. Employment in the country rose in the first quarter and inflation has eased, but higher interest rates will keep weighing on spending and investment, said Franziska

Palmas, senior Europe economist for Capital Economics. "Germany has experienced a technical recession and has been by far the worst performer among major eurozone economies over the past two quarters," Palmas said, predicting further weakness ahead.

The figures are a blow to the German government, which last month boldly doubled its growth forecast for this year after a feared winter energy crunch failed to materialise. It said the economy would grow by 0.4 per cent — up from a 0.2 per cent expansion predicted in late January — a forecast that may now need to be revised downward.

Economists said high inflation hit consumer spending, with prices in April 7.2 per cent higher than a year ago. GDP reflects the total value of goods and services produced in a country. Some experts question whether the figure alone is a useful indicator of economic prosperity given that it doesn't distinguish between types of spending.

US economy growth revised up to 1.3% annual rate

Washington (AP): The US economy grew at a lackluster 1.3 per cent annual rate from January through March as businesses wary of an economic slowdown trimmed their inventories, the government said on Thursday, a slight upgrade from its initial estimate.

The government had previously estimated that the economy grew at a 1.1 per cent annual rate last quarter. The Commerce Department's revised measure on Thursday of growth in the nation's gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — marked a deceleration from the second half of 2022.

Despite the first-quarter slowdown, consumer spending, which accounts for around 70 per cent of America's economic output, rose at a healthy pace.

The steady weakening of economic growth is a consequence of the Federal Reserve's aggressive drive to tame inflation, with 10 interest rate hikes over the past 14 months. Across the economy, the Fed's rate increase have elevated the costs of auto loans, credit card borrowing and business loans. With mortgage rates having doubled over the past year, the real estate market has already taken a beating: Investment in housing fell from January through March. In April, sales of existing homes were 23 per cent below their level a year earlier.

SVB announces layoffs at failed institution; no impact on team based in India

Raleigh (US): The bank that acquired the remnants of Silicon Valley Bank after it failed amid a March bank run announced layoffs Wednesday.

First Citizens Bank of Raleigh, North Carolina, said it was cutting about 500 jobs, or about 3% of its workforce.

CEO Frank Holding said the move would only affect "select" corporate Silicon Valley Bank positions, adding that neither employees in customer-facing jobs, nor members of a team based in India, would be impacted. Silicon Valley Bank was caught unprepared when the Federal Reserve hiked interest rates earlier this year, a move that reduced the value of its reserves of Treasury bonds. It was walloped again when the tech clientele it had courted rushed to withdraw their funds.

Kohinoor display gets 'transparent' makeover

PTI ■ LONDON

The Kohinoor diamond, claimed by India, will go on display with a new exhibition at the Tower of London on Friday within a "symbol of conquest" setting to try and contextualise its turbulent colonial history in a "transparent, balanced and inclusive" way.

Kohinoor, also referred to as Koh-i-Noor, forms part of the new Jewel House exhibition at the tourist attraction and is accompanied by a video which charts the diamond's journey around the globe. The attached labels for specific royal ornaments the Kohinoor has adorned over the years further explain the history of the diamond, which means mountain of light.

"The new exhibition explores the origins of a number of items in the collection, including the Koh-i-Noor," said a spokesperson for the Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), the charity that manages Britain's

palaces. "It references its long history as a symbol of conquest, which has passed through the hands of Mughal Emperors, Shahs of Iran, Emirs of Afghanistan, and Sikh Maharajas. We conducted extensive audience research before putting together this display, as well as consulting local community groups and specialist academics, which has informed our approach throughout and shaped our presentation of the Koh-i-Noor's story," the spokesperson said.

"Our aim throughout has been to present the history in a transparent, balanced and inclusive way, always informed by rigorous research," they added.

Among the labelling to be used, the diamond will be described as a "Symbol of Conquest", to note that it has had many previous owners, including Mughal Emperors, Shahs of Iran, Emirs of Afghanistan, and Sikh Maharajas.



"The 1849 Treaty of Lahore compelled 10-year-old Maharaja Duleep Singh to surrender it to Queen Victoria, along with control of the Punjab. Koh-i-Noor means 'Mountain of Light' in Persian," reads the label.

earlier Mughal cut. It was re-cut in 1852 to improve its sparkle and conform to European tastes." With Queen Alexandra's Crown of 1902, the label reads: "The Koh-i-Noor, sometimes considered lucky, developed a reputation for bringing bad luck to men who wore it. From 1902 it was set in the crowns of several Queens Consort, beginning with Queen Alexandra's Crown, now set with replicas. The Koh-i-Noor is currently set in Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother's Crown, 1937."

The exhibition, which runs until November, has been conceived as a special display of all the jewels that have returned to the Tower of London after their use during the historic Coronation ceremony of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. In a diplomatic move, Camilla had conspicuously chosen not to be crowned queen using the Kohinoor as per royal tradition.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Rafat Ullah Khan S/o. Liyakat Ullah Khan, R/o. Mohalla Bhuddi, Kiratpur, Bijnor, UP-246731, Presently Residing at D/263, 3rd Floor, Jungpura Extn., New Delhi have declare that my name has been wrongfully mentioned in my Bank record as Rafat Ullah instead of Rafat Ullah Khan.

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that, HARINDER KUMAR S/o Late Shri Krishan Narain Peshoria, Cont. 9810643456, Email: - harinderkumar905@gmail.com, R/o. Plot - 14, Eastern Avenue, (Old No. B-36) Maharani Bagh, New Delhi-110065 has applied for the conversion of aforesaid property. The Original Perpetual Sub Lease Deed, Original Completion Letter And Other Papers, Issued by DDA, of aforesaid property have been lost.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given on behalf of Mrs. Prem Lata W/o Mr. Tulsu Ram who is purchasing the Freehold Residential House No. 575-F27 area measuring 26.86 Sq. Yds., falling under Khastar No. 1206-1197 situated at Vaka Siwana Mauja Abadi Madanpuri, Gurgaon, from Mrs. Vandana W/o Mr. Deepak Goyal, who is owner of the aforesaid property vide Sale Deed dated 01.08.2014, which is duly registered vide Document No.10662, at Sub-Registrar, Gurgaon; and intend to mortgage against the financial assistance from India Shelter Finance Corporation Limited, that the Original Sale Deed dated 10.06.2013 executed by Mrs. Santosh Kumari W/o. Mr. Amar Singh in favour of Mrs. Asha Kumari W/o. Mr. Suresh Kumar, which is registered vide Document No.8611, at Sub-Registrar, Gurgaon; is Lost/Misplaced/Not available, an online Lost Property Report vide Application No.132270462300355 has been lodged in this regard. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles. VEHICLES FOR SALE
1) PRO_2110_VOLVO_EICHER REG. NO. HR38AB1942-YOM-2021
2) SWARAJ MAZDA- SAMRAT REG. NO. UP14LT2642-YOM-2022
3) TATA_LPT_1109_FULLY_BUILT REG. NO. UP16HT7467-YOM-2021
4) ASHOK LEYLAND LIMITED -AL_ ECOMET_1215_FBT-REG. NO. HR55AM8881-YOM 2022
5) TATA MOTORS LPT1212 REG. NO. HR55AM0442-YOM-2022

JINDAL LEASEFIN LIMITED
STATEMENT OF STANDALONE AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023
Table with columns for Particulars, Three Months Quarter ended (31.03.2023, 31.12.2022, 31.03.2022), and Year Ended (31.03.2023, 31.03.2022). Rows include Income, Expenses, Profit/Loss, and Total Comprehensive Income.

Statement of Standalone Audited Assets and Liabilities (Rs. in Laacs)
Table with columns for Particulars, As at 31.03.2023 Audited, and As at 31.03.2022 Audited. Rows include ASSETS (Financial, Non-Financial) and LIABILITIES (Financial, Non-Financial).

I-T waiver for retirees' leave encashment raised to ₹25L

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the Budget announcement, the finance ministry on Thursday hiked the tax exemption limit for leave encashment upon retirement for private sector salaried employees to Rs 25 lakh.

So far, the tax exemption on leave encashment for non-government employees was Rs 3 lakh which was fixed in 2002, when the highest basic pay in the government was Rs 30,000 per month.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), in a statement, said the aggregate amount exempt from income tax under section 10(10AA)(ii) shall not exceed the limit of Rs 25 lakh, where any such payments are received by a non-government employee from more than one employer.



The increased limit for tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement or otherwise of non-government salaried employees to Rs 25 lakh w.e.f. 01.04.2023, the CBDT said.

In 2023-24 Budget, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had increased the tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement of non-government salaried employees to Rs 25 lakh, from Rs 3 lakh.

The central government has notified the increased limit for tax exemption on

IRDAI working to ensure 'insurance for all by 2047'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IRDAI Chairman Debasish Panda on Thursday said the regulator is working on three-pronged approach — availability, accessibility and affordability — to ensure 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

India will attain 100 years of independence by 2047 and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has taken several steps in the last 10-12 months to enhance penetration and density of life cover plans.

"We are also working with the councils of both life and general insurance to have a UPI-like moment for the insurance sector. A conceptual framework has been contemplated," he said, adding that this is being proposed through the Bhima trinity - Bhima Sugam, Bhima Vistar, and the woman-centric Bhima Vahak.

Speaking at a CII event here, Panda said IRDAI is moving from a rule-based



approach to a principal-based approach, that the opportunity to invest in the insurance sector is immense given the size of the market, and low insurance penetration.

Sharing some of the reforms undertaken in the last one year, Panda said the authority introduced use and file system, stopped micro management of expenses, a lot of prior approvals done away with and reduction in regulations.

As many as 70-odd regulations have been repealed, 1,000-odd circulars have been done away with and rationalised 79 returns, he said.

Such reforms have facilitated the ease of doing business, promoted healthy competition and encouraged the use of technology, he said.

Further, he said, to meet the distribution challenge, the authority has increased the number of tie-ups that insurance companies can undertake with banks.

Observing that Indian economy today is at an inflection point, he said, the country is among the fastest-growing economies in the world, with strong demographics, large domestic market size and a robust stock market, among others.

"Hence, there is optimism about India, which is drawing investors who are keen to establish a footprint in the sector. India has the largest market as it has 1/5th of the world population. Hence in a world starved of opportunity, India is a beacon of hope and this is rightly termed as the India Century," he said.

Technology adoption is changing the insurance land-

scape in the country, he said, adding, the use of big data, AI, ML are impacting the sector in more ways than one.

The regulator is encouraging insurtech, regtech, and fintech to provide ease of insurance, he said.

Further, to reach the last mile, a state-level insurance plan is being proposed, limits on subordinate debt have doubled and exposure to the BSFI sector has increased, which would help in achieving insurance for all by 2047.

To enhance penetration, he said, we are also trying to do it to reach the last mile through state level insurance plans in line with State-Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) on the banking side.

It will identify the need for the state and accordingly develop plans.

"Depending on the potential and the protection gap, we are trying to create a state insurance plan which will further breakdown into district insurance plans and also

trying to involve the state government in a similar manner what happens in the banking sector, state level insurance committee," he said.

So, he said, once the state governments become equal partners in this effort towards reaching out to all, it will help reaching the objective of achieving Insurance for All by 2047.

In addition, he said, the government is considering amendment of the Insurance Act and that will enable entry of new players in the form of micro, regional, captive and specialised insurance companies and even composite licences can be granted.

By doing this, he said, "we will be able to cater to the different geographies and different strata of the population. So, if you look at the banking side, typically they have differentiating different types of banks also.

So that they are focused in trying to address the needs of that particular geography or population."

Strong performance of Indian banks to continue: S&P Global

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday said Indian banking sector profitability will stabilise at a healthy level, and asset quality will continue to improve.

"Indian banks' earnings will likely remain healthy. The sector has improved substantially in the past seven years, from a period when many public-sector lenders were grappling with bad loans," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Deepali Seth Chhabria said.

A strong recovery is underway in the Indian banking sector, and lenders have just reported their best results in a decade, S&P Global Ratings said. It expects the sector profitability to stabilise at a healthy level, and that banks' asset quality will continue to improve.

Indian banking profitability is benefiting from higher net



interest margins and lower credit costs.

We estimate a system-wide return on average assets (ROAA) at 1.2 per cent for fiscal 2023 (year ending March 31, 2023). System-wide ROAA will likely hover around 1.1 per cent in fiscal 2024.

"The formation of new non-performing loans will remain at cyclical low levels, despite pressure from higher interest rates," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Geeta Chugh said.

"A recovery in written-off accounts is also boosting the profitability of banks," she added

CBDT notifies 21 nations from where investment in startups exempt from angel tax

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has notified 21 countries, including the US, UK and France, from where non-resident investment in unlisted Indian startups will not attract angel tax.

The list, however, excludes investment from countries like Singapore, Netherlands and Mauritius. The government had in the Budget brought overseas investment in unlisted closely held companies, except DPIIT recognised startups, under the Angel Tax net.

Following that, the startup and venture capital industry sought exemption for certain overseas investor classes.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on May 24 notified classes of investors who would not come under the Angel Tax provision.

Excluded entities include those registered with Sebi as Category-I FPI, Endowment Funds, Pension Funds and



broad-based pooled investment vehicles, which are residents of 21 specified nations, including the US, UK, Australia, Germany and Spain, as per the notification.

The other nations mentioned in the notification are Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Israel, Italy, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Russia, Norway, New Zealand and Sweden.

The CBDT notification comes into effect on April 1.

Nangia Andersen India Chairman Rakesh Nangia said by explicitly mentioning this list of countries, the govern-

Markets bounce back from intra-day lows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices bounced back from intra-day lows to settle in the positive territory on Thursday helped by fog-end buying.

In a volatile trade amid the monthly derivatives expiry, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 98.84 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 61,872.62. During the day, it hit a high of 61,934.01 and a low of 61,484.66.

The NSE Nifty gained 35.75 points or 0.20 per cent to end at 18,321.15 after beginning the trade on a weak note.

"Markets oscillated in a narrow range on the monthly expiry day and settled marginally higher. After the flat start, the Nifty slipped gradually lower however support around the 18,200 zone triggered a steady rebound in the final hours," Ajit Mishra, VP-Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Nestle, Asian Paints and Mahindra &



Mahindra were among the major gainers.

Wipro, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, HDFC, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India and Tata Steel were the major laggards.

"On the day of monthly expiry, the Indian stocks traded with high volatility," said Deven Mehata, Equity Research Analyst, Choice Broking.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.36 per cent and smallcap index gained 0.27 per cent.

Among the indices, telecommunication rallied 1.67 per cent, realty jumped 1.10 per cent, FMCG (0.69 per cent), teck (0.58 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.57 per cent), industrials (0.57 per cent) and

power (0.54 per cent). Metal, commodities, energy and financial services were the laggards.

"On the last day of monthly F&O series day, the benchmark indices witnessed a volatile trading session," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Tokyo ended in the green.

Equity markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. The US market ended lower on Wednesday.

"Global markets maintained their influence, exerting downward pressure on the domestic market in response to weaker cues from the US market and the recession in Germany.

However, as US futures rose, propelled by a sharp increase in sales projections from chipmaker Nvidia, the domestic market was able to efficiently recoup its earlier losses," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Rupee falls 7 paise to close at 82.75 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee fell 7 paise to close at 82.75 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed down by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.76 against the dollar, and finally settled at 82.75 (provisional), down 7 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee touched a high of 82.70 and a low of 82.78 against the greenback.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 82.68 against the dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.13 per cent to 104.02.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined



1.47 per cent to USD 77.21 per barrel.

According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee depreciated on weak domestic equities and a strong US Dollar.

The US Dollar has surged to a 10-week high and breached 104 levels on safe-haven demand as the debt ceiling impasse has deteriorated market sentiments. Hawkish Fed-speak also supported the greenback.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets

and a strong US Dollar. The debt ceiling deadlock is worrying the markets as the June 1 deadline is nearing. Recovery in crude oil prices over the past few days may also weigh on the domestic currency," Choudhary said.

However, FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels.

Traders may remain cautious ahead of US GDP, weekly unemployment claims and pending home sales data. Investors may also watch out for progress on the debt ceiling negotiations. "We expect the USD/INR spot to trade between 82.30 to 83.30 in the near term," he added.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 98.84 points or 0.16 per cent higher at 61,872.62 points. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 35.75 points or 0.2 per cent to 18,321.15 points.

Potent mix of retail, telecom, digital media to put Reliance at top

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance is the best-positioned player in the USD 150-billion Indian e-commerce market ahead of Amazon and Walmart due to it owning the potent combination of largest retail store network, dominant telecom operations and strong digital media, an analyst said.

In a new report, Bernstein Research said India is evolving into a three-player market with Amazon, Walmart and Reliance.

The conventional retail business model starts out either offline (Walmart) or online (Amazon).

"Given distribution challenges and India's propensity to 'skip a generation' in most technologies, we believe the Indian e-commerce market will be different. An integrated model (offline plus online plus prime), strong distribution



capability and superior cost advantage (against online players) are required from the start," it said.

Reliance Industries is building the largest digital ecosystem in India. Its telecom arm Jio has 430 million mobile subscribers, its retail arm has 18,300 retail stores in India (USD 30 billion in sales), and its digital mix is scaling up 17-18 per cent (USD 6 billion, e-commerce).

"It's a disruptive playbook -- integrate offline + online + prime makes it the strongest competitor to Amazon/Walmart," Bernstein

said. Reliance has 400,000-plus people in its retail business. It has, since January this year, hired about 69,000 new employees to replenish turnover (about 66,500 employees exited the company). The turnaround in the company is lower than the 30-40 per cent annual churn seen in organised retail in the country.

It has also laid off some purely on performance-related issues. Close to 570 have been handed pink slips after failing to improve performance and serving notice period post-April 2023.

Govt crackdown soon on developers of delayed power projects: RK Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will crackdown on developers of power projects, who miss the scheduled commercial date of operation or deadline to complete the project, Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh said on Thursday.

Addressing a CII conference, Singh said the electricity generation capacity addition is a big challenge, as people are sitting on several projects won under the bidding process.

Singh said that all these projects (power) are won under the bidding process and if they miss the SCOD (scheduled commercial date of operation or deadline to complete the project), then the developer will be banned from participating in project bidding for one year.



On the second such incident, the developer will be banned for five years, Singh said, adding that he is going to put this (rule) in (policy).

Power project developers are waiting for demand to grow but this will not happen, he said.

Singh also said that until battery energy storage becomes viable, India would have to add thermal power capacity to meet the demand.

At present the battery storage is Rs 10 per unit and the energy rate is Rs 2.30, he explained.

INBRIEF

IIFL FINANCE BACK WITH GOLD LOAN MELA

New Delhi: IIFL Finance is one of India's largest non-banking financial companies with over 2,600 dedicated gold loan branches across India. IIFL Finance is back with its flagship campaign Gold Loan Mela, which will be held between May 15, 2023 until June 30, 2023. Lucky customers can win mega prizes like a car, electric scooters, 32 inch LED TVs, refrigerators, smartphones and many more by availing a gold loan until June 30.



INNOVATIVE INDIA SUMMIT-2023

New Delhi: In keeping with its commitment to take ahead the honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India an economic super power, Summit India has organised the first edition of 'Innovative India Summit - 2023' with an aim to bring country's top thought leaders on one platform and recognise their contribution towards India's growth story. The Summit was held in New Delhi on May 16, 2023.



CBIC extends deadline for filing April GST return for Manipur-based biz

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBIC has extended the deadline till May 31 for Manipur-based businesses to file monthly GST returns, as the north eastern state continues to witness violence due to ethnic clashes.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has issued three Central Tax notifications which said that the due date for filing returns GSTR-1, GSTR-3B and GSTR-7 for the month of April by registered persons whose principal place of business is in Manipur has been extended till May 31. Manipur-registered businesses were to file GSTR-1, which is the statement of outward supplies, for April by May 11.

April GSTR-3B, which is the monthly tax payment form,



was to be filed by May 20. GSTR-7, which was to be filed by businesses who deduct tax at source, for April was filed by May 10.

Clashes broke out in Manipur after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts on May 3 to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The violence in Manipur was preceded by tension over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller

agitations. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals -- Nagas and Kukis -- constitute another 40 per cent of the population and reside in the hill districts.

The ethnic clashes claimed over 70 lives and some 10,000 army and paramilitary personnel had to be deployed in the north eastern state. However, the violence has been continuing as one person was killed and another injured on Thursday.

SBI penalised for sending bills to man despite credit card's expiry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi consumer forum has directed the SBI Cards & Payments Services Pvt. Ltd. to pay Rs 2 lakh to a person here for sending him bill even after his card's expiry and blacklisting him for non-payment of the charges.

The New Delhi District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum comprising its president Monika A Srivastava and members Kiran Kausal and Umesh Kumar Tyagi directed the company to pay the amount to M J Anthony, a former journalist, for "deficiency in providing services". The forum noted that the company had blacklisted him in the CIBIL system of the wilful defaulters maintained by the RBI, which resulted in

the rejection of his applications for credit cards from another bank where he had maintained regular account for nearly two decades.

"This Commission is of the view that the SBI Cards & Payments Services Pvt. Ltd. Has been deficient in providing services to the complainant and though the damage/loss occasioned to the complainant in terms of credit rating cannot be measured in terms of money yet punitive damage ought to be awarded against OP (opposite party) therefore, OP is directed to compensate the complainant by paying a sum of Rs 2 lakh as compensation within two months from the date of this order failing which the sum payable would be Rs 3 lakh," the forum said. The forum passed the

order on May 20 on Anthony's complaint seeking compensation, claiming that he had requested the company to cancel his card in April 2016 much before its expiry and not to renew it.

He did not use the card for any transaction after April 9, 2016 and had destroyed the card according to rules, he said, adding that no payment was due at that time on the card. In September, the complainant received a letter from the company about the cancellation of his card, however, the company continued to send bills relating to the card ignoring his protest e-mails, he said.

The bills were to the tune of Rs 2,946 by May 18, 2017 inclusive of late payment charges and penalty, he said.

Dortmund or Bayern? Bundesliga up for grabs on final day

AP ■ BERLIN

The closest Bundesliga title race for years ends on the final day of the season on Saturday when Borussia Dortmund or Bayern Munich will be crowned champion. Dortmund leads by two points and needs to beat Mainz at home to be sure of ending Bayern's 10-year reign, while Bayern will be hoping for a Dortmund slip-up as it visits Cologne at the same time.

Bayern's goal difference is better than Dortmund's so a draw won't be enough for Dortmund if Bayern beats Cologne.

"We have to win once more. That's all that counts," Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl said.

It would be Dortmund's first German league title since Jürgen Klopp led the "black and yellows" to back-to-back triumphs in 2011 and 2012. Bayern has won every season since. The fact that the Bavarian powerhouse doesn't have the title already wrapped up means the season will be considered a failure — even if Mainz does Bayern a favor and causes an upset on Saturday.

Bayern's total of 68 points is the lowest it's had at this stage of the season since 2011, when interim coach Andries Jonker led the team to third place after Louis van Gaal was fired. Bayern also fired its coach this season, when Julian Nagelsmann made way in March because the club felt its targets in the Champions League, German Cup and Bundesliga were in danger. Bayern was subsequently knocked out of the first two under new coach Thomas Tuchel, but he may yet salvage some lost pride if his former team Dortmund fails to beat Mainz — where he started his senior coaching career.

Dortmund's 70 points are just one more than it managed last season, when it finished 10 behind Bayern. The story



of the Bundesliga this season is one of Bayern's decline, rather than any huge leap made by Dortmund — though the team has developed a new resilience under coach Edin Terzic. "We're ready to take the last step together — as a team, as a club, as a city," Terzic said on Thursday.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Leipzig is assured of third place regardless of its result at home to Schalke, but fourth — the last qualification spot for Europe's premier competition — is still in contention between Union Berlin and Freiburg.

Both teams are level on points, with Union ahead by four goals' difference. Union can book its Champions League place with a win at home over Werder Bremen, or by matching Freiburg's result at Eintracht Frankfurt — provided Freiburg doesn't score four goals more than

Union.

It's already a remarkable achievement for Union and Freiburg — both clubs of modest resources — to be in this position going into the final round.

EUROPA LEAGUE/EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

One of Union or Freiburg will finish fifth and qualify for the Europa League.

Sixth-placed Bayer Leverkusen and seventh-placed Wolfsburg hope to join, depending on what happens in the German Cup final on June 3 between Leipzig and Eintracht Frankfurt.

Because the cup winner gets a European qualification spot, Leverkusen and Wolfsburg will be cheering for Leipzig in the final. If Leipzig successfully defends its title, it will free another Europa League qualification spot (sixth in the Bundesliga), because it has already

qualified for the Champions League. If Frankfurt wins, then the sixth-placed finisher goes to the Europa Conference League. Leverkusen visits Bochum on the final day. Wolfsburg is just a point behind Leverkusen and can be confident of taking three more against already-relegated Hertha Berlin. Frankfurt, three points behind Leverkusen, has only a slim chance of finishing sixth.

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

Augsburg, Stuttgart, Bochum and Schalke are all still playing for survival on the final day. The bottom two are relegated and the team that finishes above them goes into a two-leg relegation-promotion playoff against the second division's third-placed finisher to see which plays in the Bundesliga next season.

All of the final round's matches are played at the same time on Saturday.

India face FC Augsburg in U-17 Asian Cup build-up



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will take on Bundesliga club FC Augsburg's academy team here on Friday as part of their preparation for the AFC Under-17 Asian Cup slated next month. The game will be the Blue Colts' third training match during their preparatory camp in Germany.

Earlier this month, India played two more games against a mix of U-16 and U-19 academy boys from VfB Stuttgart (1-3) and a German regional league side SSV Reutlingen's U-16 academy outfit (6-1).

"We have had a few days to train after our last game, and we're ready for our last two matches here in Germany," said India head coach Bibiano Fernandes.

The India U-17s have been on an extensive preparatory path for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup to be held next month in Thailand, as they camped in Spain for a month before shifting base to Stuttgart on May 16. Having played two match-

es in Stuttgart, and after attending a number of Bundesliga games, the Blue Colts have arrived in Augsburg for the last week of their training in Germany.

"We have had a fruitful time in Germany. The facilities have been fantastic, and the boys have learnt a lot from different sessions given by the coaches in Stuttgart," said Fernandes.

The India U-17s have arrived in Augsburg on Thursday and will play their first game against their hosts on Friday.

"Augsburg are of course one of the top clubs in Europe, and we expect their U-17 team to be of a very high standard as well. It will be a good game, but the boys are improving every day," said Fernandes.

The Blue Colts, after finishing their preparation in Germany, will head to Thailand two weeks ahead of the AFC U-17 Asian Cup, for further training and acclimatisation. They will face Vietnam (June 17), Uzbekistan (June 20), and Japan (June 23) in Group D.



Sindhu, Srikanth, Prannoy enter quarterfinals of Malaysia Masters

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Star Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth booked their places in the quarterfinals of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 tournament with contrasting wins over their respective rivals here on Thursday.

While double Olympic medalist and sixth seed Sindhu disposed of Aya Ohori of Japan in straight games in women's singles, Prannoy had to dig deep to get the better of Shi Feng Li of China in a tough three-game men's singles contest. Later in the day, Srikanth prevailed over India Open champion and eighth seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

Taking the court first, world No. 13 Sindhu extended her domination over Ohori, ranked 28th, taking just 40 minutes to beat the Japanese 21-16, 21-11 in the round of 16. It was her 13th win over the Japanese in as many meetings.

Sindhu will face China's Yi Man Zhang in the quarterfinals.

World No. 9 Prannoy then overcame a game deficit to beat world No. 11 and reigning All England champion Li 13-21, 21-16, 21-11 in one hour and 10 minutes to book his berth in the last-eight stage.

India veterans Atwal, Jeev to tee off at Senior PGA Championship



PTI ■ FRISCO (TEXAS)

Veteran Indian golfers Jeev Milkha Singh and Arjun Atwal will tee off at the USD 3.5 million Senior PGA Championship here.

The Senior Majors are for 50-plus golfers.

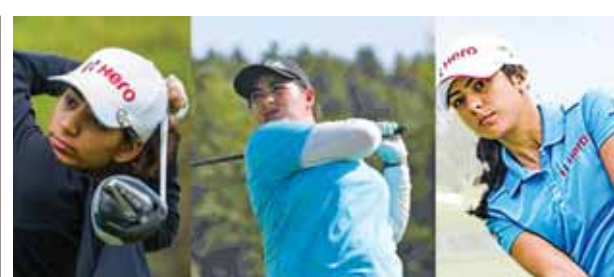
Jeev, who has playing rights on the Senior Tours in Europe and Japan, got a special invite and so did Atwal, India's first and only PGA Tour winner. Atwal was on the waiting list less than a week ago.

"Fields at the Seniors are very strong. They have players who have won Majors on the PGA Tour not too far back.

"Names like Pádraig Harrington, Darren Clarke, Ernie Els and the whole bunch of PGA stars, who are now on the Champions TOUR, as it is called, are good to give many a run for their money in any event," said Atwal.

Jeev, who made his debut at a senior major at the PGA Championships last year, is thrilled to be back in Texas, where he played college golf.

"I've been granted a special invitation to the 83rd Senior PGA. I cannot wait to get back to Texas, where I played all my college golf. This really is a huge honour," said Jeev.



Diksha, Amandeep, Tvesa among five Indians in Belgium

PTI ■ WANZE (BELGIUM)

India's Diksha Dagar, who is showing signs of getting back to form, will hope for a good outing when she leads a squad of five Indians in the Belgian Ladies Open, which is taking place at Naxhelet Golf Club for the second consecutive year.

Diksha and Tvesa Malik got in late into the field, which also comprises Amandeep Drall, Vani Kapoor and Seher Atwal for the second consecutive year.

Diksha and Tvesa returned to Europe at the Naxhelet Golf Club for the summer run of events after a trip to Florida.

While Diksha is slowly getting back to form, Tvesa and Vani, who missed the cut last week, will be looking to making amends as will Amandeep Drall, who last year came within a whisker of winning the Hero Women's Indian Open for her maiden LET success at home.

Seher, who earned the status through the LET Qualifying School, is looking to translate her home success on the LET.

This season India's flag has been flown by Aditi Ashok, who is leading the LET's Race to Costa Del Sol, but this week she is playing on the LPGA, where

her last two starts have seen her finish T-2 and T-5.

Seher Atwal will be among the early starters, teeing off in the second group of the day with Emma Grechi and Emie Peronin of France, while Vani Kapoor is the very next group with two other French stars, Camille Chevalier and Agathe Sauzon.

Just as Vani tees off from the first, Amandeep will play alongside Germans Sophie Witt and Laura Fuenfstueck at the same time from the 10th.

Diksha plays with England's Chloe Franks and Swiss golfer Kim Mettraux from the first in the afternoon wave, and then Tvesa will be among the last few groups from the first with Thailand's Mim Sangkapong and Slovakia's Michaela Vavrova.

Home star Manon De Roey will be teeing it up once again in her home tournament after she finished in a tie for seventh place in 2022. The Antwerp native had a solid start to the LET season with three top-10 finishes, including T3 at the Aramo Saudi Ladies International. Last year, Cara Gainer secured her best-ever finish on the LET by coming second at the Belgian Ladies Open after rounds of 71 (-1), 67 (-5) and 64 (-8).

Aditi falters in opening tie of match play in Las Vegas

PTI ■ LAS VEGAS

India's Aditi Ashok led for most part against French golfer Perrine Delacour but lost the last two holes to go down in the first set of matches at the Bank of Hope LPGA Match-Play here.

It was a closely fought battle, where Aditi led for most part of the match. Aditi had five birdies and so did Delacour, but the latter added a sixth winning birdie on the 18th to outgun the Indian. There are 64 players in the field who will be in action in three days of round-robin play. The winner from each of the 16 groups will advance to the knockout stage on the weekend.

Aditi, who has been in Top-5 in her last two starts, was never in deficit till the 17th as her rival kept fighting back. Aditi opened smartly and went 2-up in the first three holes, with birdies on the first and the third. The Frenchwoman rallied to win the fourth and eighth to tie the match.

Aditi again started the back nine with a birdie and won the 10th hole only to see Delacour get back the hole on 11th. Aditi again won the 13th and lost the 14th and yet again won the 15th.

With the 16th being halved with a bogey from both players on the Par-5, So, Aditi was 1-up with two to play. Once again the gritty Delacour won the 17th



and then won the last hole to upstage the Indian.

Aditi will meet Caroline Inglis, who upset Jennifer Kupcho 4&3 in the other group

match. Aditi will need to win to keep her hopes of advancing to the knockout stage.

Lilia Vu and Brooke Henderson, the two top 10 ranked

players in the field, started with wins at Shadow Creek. Vu never trailed in a 4-and-3 victory over Lauren Hartlage. Henderson took the lead for good with a birdie on the par-5 ninth hole and relied on mistakes by Yaeun Hong and won, 3 and 2.

Among other seeds Maja Stark of Sweden was 4-up through 10 holes only to lose the next four holes against Emma Talley. Stark went back ahead with a par to win the 15th and held on for a 2-up victory.

Celine Boutier, the No. 3 seed, was taken to 18 holes and won when Min Lee made double bogey on the 18th. It was among 13 of the 32 matches that ended on the 18th hole.

India look to continue Pro League supremacy under new coach Fulton

PTI ■ LONDON

Rejuvenated Indian men's hockey team will look to carry on its fine form from the home leg and maintain its supremacy at the top of the standings when it begins the Europe sojourn of the FIH Pro League against Olympic champions Belgium here on Friday.

During the European leg of the tournament, India will also take on the Netherlands and Argentina in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

India overcame a disappointing World Cup campaign earlier this year to climb to the top of the 2022-23 Pro League and maintain an unbeaten record against world champions Germany and mighty Australia.

The Indians secured three outright wins from the Rourkela

leg, while also winning a shootout bonus point in the fourth match against the Kookaburras.

India are currently leading the table with 19 points from five outright victories from eight matches and two from shootouts.

The Harmanpreet Singh-led side will look to carry on with their winning momentum when it takes on Belgium on Friday and Great Britain on Saturday in the Lee Valley Stadium here.

Hosts Great Britain will be riding on their recent success in Christchurch, New Zealand where they won 5-2 and 6-1 against New Zealand, and also beat Australia 2-1 and 3-3 (4-2 SO) to gather 19 points from eight games with four outright wins and three from shootouts.

After being blanked by Australia, India women lose to A team Down Under



PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The Indian women's hockey team put up a fighting show against Australia A before going down 2-3 here on Thursday.

Salima Tete (40') and Sangita Kumari (54') netted a goal each for India after Alice Arnott (18') and Ruby Harris (20', 35') had put the hosts in front. India dominated Australia A in the first quarter, earning a penalty corner in the 10th minute but was unable to capitalise.

The hosts then won a couple of penalty corners, but

India's defence held strong to prevent them from taking the lead, and the first quarter ended goalless. India focused on maintaining ball possession in the second quarter, but Australia A took the lead when Arnott (18') scored a field goal. Harris (20') doubled the hosts' lead moments later as she was free at the far post, allowing her to easily put the ball in India's goal.

With the scoreline stacked against them, India began to play aggressively and even made some good attacks, but couldn't find the back of the net as Australia A went into the half-time break with the 2-0 lead.

Australia A extended their lead early in the third quarter when Harris (35') scored her second goal of the game to make it 3-0 for the hosts.



Neeraj's Finland training proposal gets approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra's training proposal in Finland was on Thursday approved in the lead up to his multiple World Athletics — Gold Level events in June. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the Tokyo Olympic champion intends to train at Kuortane Olympic Training Centre in Finland during this time.

Chopra, who recently became the first Indian javelin thrower to become World Number 1, had followed a similar training plan in the year 2022 as well. Among other proposals, the Mission Olympic Cell also approved paddler Payas Jain's proposal for an advanced training camp in Taiwan.

Senior paddlers Manika Batra and Sathiyam Gnanasekaran's proposals to take personal coaches Aman Balgu and S Raman respectively for multiple events were also approved by the MOC. While Manika and Aman Balgu will head to WTT Contender, Zagreb and WTT Star Contender, Ljubljana, Sathiyam and Raman will head to Tunis in addition to the above-mentioned events.

The financial assistance will cover their air travel expenses, camp expenses, boarding and lodging cost, medical insurance and out-of-pocket allowance, among others.

French Open 2023: Alcaraz, Djokovic on same half of draw

Swiatek-Gauff could be in quarterfinals

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz and the man he just replaced atop the rankings, 22-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic, were placed in the same half of the French Open field in Thursday's draw and could face each other in the semifinals.

Alcaraz is seeded No. 1 at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time and was automatically placed in the top section of the bracket. Djokovic is No. 3 and so could have ended up on either half — had he landed in the bottom, he and Alcaraz only could have met in the final at Roland Garros, where 14-time champion Rafael Nadal will be missing for the

first time since he made his debut at the clay-court major in 2005. Play begins Sunday.

Typically, the previous year's singles champions are invited to appear at the draw, so 2022 women's winner Iga Swiatek was present Thursday. Nadal, of course, was not. Still, he was the first player mentioned at the outset of the ceremony by French Tennis Federation president Gilles Morreton, who noted, "Unfortunately, he cannot play the tournament this year."

Swiatek did not appear to show any ill effects from the hurt right thigh that caused her to stop playing in the third set of her quarterfinal match in Rome last weekend.

She indicated almost immediate-



ly that the issue would not prevent her from competing in Paris, where she has won two of her three major trophies. "It's like my favorite tournament in the whole year, so I'm always excited to come back," said Swiatek, who has been ranked No. 1 for more than a year. "Before the tournament, I get this extra motivation to practice harder, to make everything better."

The draw put her in a potential quarterfinal against No. 6 Coco Gauff in what would be a rematch of last year's French Open final.

Alcaraz, who just turned 20, and Djokovic, who just turned 36, have played each other just once previously, in the semifinals of the Madrid Open in May 2022. Alcaraz won that one 6-7 (5), 7-5, 7-6 (5) — a day after beating Nadal in the quarterfinals, becoming the first player to defeat both Djokovic and Nadal at the same clay-court tournament. Alcaraz went on to collect the title there with a straight-set victory over Alexander

Zverev in the final. It was Zverev who ended Alcaraz's 14-match winning streak in the French Open quarterfinals last year. That was also the round where Nadal stopped Djokovic in a four-set, four-hour thriller.

This time, the men's quarterfinals by seeding would be Alcaraz, the reigning U.S. Open champion, against No. 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas, a two-time Slam finalist; Djokovic against No. 7 Andrey Rublev; No. 2 Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open winner, against No. 8 Jannik Sinner; and No. 4 Casper Ruud, runner-up at the French Open and U.S. Open last year, against No. 6 Holger Rune.

Other women's matchups at that round could be No. 4 Elena Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion, against No. 7 Ons Jabeur, a two-time major finalist; No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, who won the Australian Open in January, against No. 5 Caroline Garcia; and No. 3 Jessica Pegula vs. No. 8 Maria Sakkari.

FINAL CALL ON ASIA CUP VENUE TO BE TAKEN AFTER IPL FINAL: BCCI SECY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 A decision on Asia Cup's fate will be taken on the sidelines of the IPL final, which will be attended by a host of top Asian Cricket Council (ACC) dignitaries, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Thursday.
 Pakistan have the hosting rights for this year's Asia Cup but with BCCI deciding against sending its team to the neighbouring country without government permission, PCB chairman Najam Sethi had proposed a 'hybrid model' where they will organise at least four games on home soil and India will play their matches at a neutral venue.
 It couldn't be confirmed whether Sethi has been formally invited for the IPL final.
 "As of now, the decision with regards to hosting of Asia Cup hasn't yet been finalised. We are busy with IPL but the top dignitaries of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), Bangladesh and Afghanistan Cricket Board are coming to watch the IPL final. We will have a discussion and take a final decision in due



course," Jay Shah told PTI.
 It has been learnt from ACC sources that Sethi's proposed hybrid model looks like a feasible solution although ACC had made no formal statements. According to the model, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan play four preliminary matches in Pakistan and India would play all their games at neutral venues.
 The two India-Pakistan games will also be held in Sri Lanka although the PCB wants them in Dubai. The weather in UAE in September is not at all

The PCB doesn't mind playing India at a neutral venue. "PCB would prefer Dubai because it would lead to more gate receipts but it is open to playing in another country (read Sri Lanka) provided the ACC matches the gate receipts amount (USD 0.5 million) that Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) received in 2022 from the Indo-Pak games in Dubai," an ACC source privy to development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.
 The window for the Asia Cup this year is between September 1-17.
FORMAT AND OTHER MODALITIES
 The six teams in the Asia Cup are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal.
 One group will have India, Pakistan and Nepal while the other group will comprise Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
 According to ACC sources, if the 'hybrid model' goes ahead, then Pakistan would like to host the following four games in their country.

These games are Pakistan vs Nepal, Sri Lanka v Bangladesh, Bangladesh vs Afghanistan and Afghanistan vs Sri Lanka.
 As per the format, the top two teams from each group will constitute Super Fours where they again play against each other. After the Super Four round robin phase, the top two teams will play the final.
 The Super Fours will ensure that at least two Indo-Pak encounters are guaranteed, which is profitable for the host nation, broadcaster as well as ACC.
 If India and Pakistan qualify for the summit clash, then it will be three matches between the arch-rivals.
 "Sethi has said that in preliminary round, Pakistan is only playing Nepal. His proposal is to make it six games with two Super four non-India matches, involving Pakistan to be played in Pakistan," the ACC source added.
 As far as final is concerned, even if India doesn't qualify, the ACC will conduct it at a designated neutral country — Sri Lanka or UAE.



MI face IPL champ GT in Qualifier 2

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
 Kash Madhwal's breathtaking bowling performance against Lucknow Super Giants in the Eliminator would have given five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians wings and they would be fancying their chances against defending champions Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 2 to be played in the world's largest stadium here on Friday.
 Mumbai Indians, riding on magical figures of five for five produced by Madhwal at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Wednesday night, knocked out LSG from the race to the final with an 81-run win.
 The massive MI victory was a warning to the rivals that they could lift their game according to the occasion even in the absence of star pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Jofra Archer and batting mainstay Tilak Varma.
 MI pride themselves on thriving when the odds are stacked against them, something they have done throughout the season. Having finished last in the previous edition, Rohit Sharma's team has ground it out this season to remain in contention for a sixth IPL title even with limited resources.
 The likes of Cameron Green, Suryakumar Yadav and Tim David have responded well to the challenges and now form the backbone of the batting department with the young Nehal Wadhwa too making a huge impact, and the opening pair of Rohit and Ishan Kishan doing a fair job.
 It will be a stern test for the Titans' bowling attack, led by Mohammad Shami (26 wickets in 15 matches), to get the better of MI's bat-

ting, which has improved drastically towards the business end of the tournament.
 Madhwal has been a revelation with the ball. The right-arm bowler returned a dream spell of 3.5-0-5-5 against LSG to put his side into the virtual semifinal after a three-wicket burst that set up victory in their crucial last league game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.
 Veterans Piyush Chawla (21 wickets in 15 matches) and Jason Behrendorff (14 wickets in 11 matches) have also been impressive, while an otherwise expensive Chris Jordan also enjoyed a fine outing of 2-1-7-1 in the Eliminator.
 Gujarat Titans, outclassed and outgunned in Qualifier 1 by Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, will have one last chance to gather themselves up and put their best foot forward in familiar conditions here in order to qualify for their second IPL final on the trot.
 It will be imperative for the defending champions that their batting clicks in unison, since Shubman Gill and Vijay Shankar have done bulk of the heavy lifting with the bat in the last few games.
 Gill might have had an off day against CSK but his two centuries in the closing stages of the league round make him the biggest threat for Mumbai Indians.
 With 722 runs in 15 matches at an average of 55.53, including two centuries and four fifties, the India batter has 421 runs more than the second-best GT batter — Shankar with 301 runs in 12 matches — and is also just eight runs short of going past RCB's Faf du Plessis to finish with most runs in this IPL.

Khelo India University Games kick-starts in UP

PTI ■ LUCKNOW
 Uttar Pradesh has become a 'sanganam' of sportspersons from across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday after inaugurating the Khelo India University Games.
 Addressing the inaugural event virtually, Modi said the Commonwealth Games scam demonstrated the approach of the previous government towards sports.
 The scam had surfaced during the tenure of the Congress-led UPA II Government in 2010.
 "Earlier no attention was paid to the development of sports. It was considered that sports is a means only to spend spare time. But today, I am happy that the perception of society and parents has changed in the country," the prime minister said.
 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and



Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur were among those present at the event.
 This year, the Khelo India University Games are being held from May 25 to June 3 in Uttar Pradesh. Over 4,750 athletes from more than 200 universities will be competing in 21 sports. The competitions will be organised in Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Gautam Buddha Nagar.
 The university games are part of various schemes launched by the government to support budding sportspersons and efforts have been put in to strengthen the sports ecosystem in the country.
 The mascot of the games is named 'Jitu', which represents Swamp Deer (Barasingha) - the state animal of Uttar Pradesh. The closing ceremony of the games will be held in Varanasi on June 3.

Individuals showed lot of character to reach successive WTC finals: Rohit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 Captain Rohit Sharma feels all individuals showed a lot of character and stepped up when needed to take India to the World Test Championship final for the second consecutive time, especially after losing in the inaugural edition in 2021.
 India will take on Australia at The Oval in the 2021-2023 cycle WTC final, starting June 7.
 "After the World Test Championship (2021 final) in Southampton, we quickly had to regroup and get ready for the next cycle," Rohit said in a video posted by BCCI on its website.
 "I thought in that cycle we played some really, really tough cricket. We were challenged a lot of times and I thought to come out of that was obviously going to take a lot of character from not just a few individuals, but everyone." Rohit was full of praise for the fighting character of his teammates after the disappointment of losing the inaugural WTC final to New Zealand in 2021.
 "Look, it's a cycle of two years and we play a lot of Test



matches during that period. Lot(s) of players have played in that cycle," he said.
 "Different individuals have stepped up, putting the performances that we were looking for from the individual."
 In the upcoming WTC final, India will be without the services of three key players -- Rishabh Pant, Shreyas Iyer and Jasprit Bumrah. While Bumrah and Iyer are down with injuries, Pant is recovering from a horrific car crash earlier in the year.
 Besides Rohit, Pant and Iyer were the only two Indian batters to average over 40 in the inaugural WTC, scoring more than 500 runs, while Bumrah picked up 45 wickets from 10 Tests during that period.
 Senior India batter

Bharat would be obvious choice to go with in WTC final: Shastri

PTI ■ DUBAI
 Former India chief coach Ravi Shastri feels KS Bharat would be the "obvious choice" of the team management for the wicketkeeper's role in the World Test Championship final against Australia to be played in England next month.
 With India's first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant recovering from a horrific car crash and his back-up KL Rahul recuperating from a surgery on his right thigh, the Indian team management is in a dilemma on who to select between Bharat and Ishan Kishan as its first-choice govmen for the WTC final at The Oval starting June 7.
 Shastri said since Bharat had kept wickets during the Border-Gavaskar series earlier this year, he expected the 29-year-old to get the management's nod ahead of Kishan.
 "You have to see who's a better keeper. Is it Bharat or Ishan Kishan? Now, the fact that Bharat was given a run against Australia, where he played all the Test matches, I think he would be the obvious choice to go with," Shastri said on the ICC Review.
 While Bharat gave a good account of himself behind the stumps, he was below-par with the bat, managing just 101 runs from six innings on turning tracks.
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I am not Bumrah's replacement: Madhwal

PTI ■ CHENNAI
 Kash Madhwal, who engineered Mumbai Indians' comprehensive 81-run win over Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL Eliminator, doesn't consider himself as Jasprit Bumrah's replacement and is happy to fulfil the responsibility entrusted on him by the team.
 Madhwal, an engineer from Uttarakhand, returned impressive figures of 5 for 5 in 3.3 overs as MI inched one step closer to the IPL summit clash on Wednesday night.
 "I am trying my best to fulfil the responsibilities given to me by the team. I am not Bumrah's replacement but I'm trying my best to do what I can," Madhwal told reporters after the match.
 Though the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai has not benefited the pacers much this season, Madhwal spoke about what worked for him.



"The wicket at Chepauk was good. As you saw, the ball was not gripping but skid-

ding. I am a swing/sling bowler, and I pitched my deliveries in hard lengths aiming for wickets," he said.
 Madhwal said skipper Rohit Sharma knew his strengths and how to use him.
 "Rohit bhैया knew that yorkers were my strength but during the nets and practice matches, he also found that I can bowl well with the new ball," he said.
 "So he had an idea as to how to use me as the situation warranted. I'm also very chilled out and relaxed and I'm having fun because I'm pursuing my passion."
 Meanwhile, LSG bowler Naveen-ul-Haq said he enjoyed the "Kohli, Kohli" chants at the stadium on Wednesday as it gave him the passion to play well for his team.
 During the league stage of the ongoing IPL, Naveen-ul-Haq had a heated chat with Royal Challengers Bangalore star Kohli. After the RCB-LSG game, the Afghan even posted Instagram stories

about mangoes whenever the Bangalore-based outfit did not perform well in their matches.
 "I enjoy it. I like everyone in the ground chanting his (Virat Kohli) name or any other player's name."
 "It gives me passion to play well for my team," he said after his brilliant spell of 4/38 against MI, albeit in a losing cause.
 "Well I don't concentrate on the outside or the noise from outside or anything else. I just focus on my own cricket and my own process. Crowd chanting or anyone saying something doesn't affect me."
 "As professional sportsmen you have to take this in your stride. When you don't do well for your team, fans are going to give it to you. And when you do good for your team, (the) same people are going to chant your name. Basically this is part and parcel of the game," he added.

Jason wants to renegotiate ECB contract in order to play MLC T20 in US

PTI ■ MUMBAI
 Opener Jason Roy is mulling over renegotiating his contract with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) in order to take up lucrative offers to play in the first season of the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC) in the United States of America.
 With global cricket ecosystem witnessing an increasing loyalty shift towards franchise-based T20 leagues, a lot of English cricketers like Roy would be sought after in every

league and it might make them think about the amount of time they want to devote in national duty.
 Six players from England - Roy, Topley, Harry Brook, Dawid Malan, Matthew Potts and David Willey - have incremental contracts with the ECB. The report informed that these contracts are worth around GBP 66,000 per year and act as a 'top-up to County salaries'.
 Apart from the right-handed opener batter Roy, who recently played for the two-time Indian Premier



League winners Kolkata Knight Riders, fast bowler Reece Topley is also considering making the same move.
 However, Topley's decision could be influenced by his fitness status following a surgery to his shoulder, reported ESPNcricinfo.
 Topley was also last seen in the IPL, wherein he played a few initial matches for the Royal Challengers Bangalore.
 The report added that England players, who are full central contracts, are not likely to feature in the MLC this

year but Roy has an incremental deal with the ECB, is planning to terminate it, which would help him to take up a role in the league to be played in the US.
 The MLC is slated to be held from July 13-30 this year at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Texas.
 The league has considerable backing from India and Australia, with four IPL team owners investing in as many MLC franchises and Australia's Cricket Victoria and Cricket New South Wales have stakes in

the remaining two teams.
 The MLC's first edition is also set to clash with the English summer as the semifinal and final of the T20 Blast will be on July 15, whereas two County Championship games will also be in the same duration. Additionally, the ECB's Hundred starts on August 1.
 Due to these fixtures, ECB will not issue NOCs which would enable their contracted players to take part in the MLC. While the fully-contracted players will not be able to negotiate a release with the

ECB, those who have incremental contracts are in a position to do so.
 Meanwhile, Surrey are expecting Roy to play the MLC, most likely for LA Knight Riders, which will be between the end of the T20 Blast and the beginning of the Hundred.
 Australia's Marcus Stoinis, South Africa's Quinton de Kock, Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga, South Africa's Anrich Nortje and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips have been revealed as the overseas signings in the MLC.



MI peaking at right time: Cameron Green

PTI ■ CHENNAI
 Cameron Green is finally justifying his Rs 17.5 crore billing just when Mumbai Indians needed him the most and is happy that his team after initial struggles is now a step away from the IPL summit clash.
 Having pummelled Lucknow Super Giants by 81 runs in the Eliminator, MI will face defending champions Gujarat Titans on Friday in the second Qualifier to decide Chennai Super Kings' opposition in Sunday's final.
 Green in fact said even skipper Rohit Sharma told newcomers in dressing room that the five-time champions are slow starters.
 "Obviously, all experience that he (Rohit) has got for India and in IPL, he kind of knows. I think MI never won the first game of IPL and he tries to mention that to us," Green told Star Sports after having scored 40 odd and effecting two run-outs in LSG innings.