

**OPINION 6**  
A JOURNEY OF NATION  
BUILDING, INSPIRATION

**WORLD 8**  
MAN GUNS DOWN FIVE  
NEIGHBOURS IN TEXAS

**MONEY 10**  
INDIAN ECONOMY TO GROW 6.5%  
IN FY24: NITI AAYOG MEMBER

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## 'Mann ki Baat' spiritual journey of my being: PM

On 100th episode of radio programme Modi says, any subject it got associated with turned into mass movement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that citizens mentioned in his monthly radio programme 'Mann ki Baat' become "inspiration to each other", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said whether it is about 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', or the 'Swachh Bharat' movement, love for Khadi, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav or Amrit Sarovar, "any subject it got associated with was turned into a mass movement" by the people of the country.

The Prime Minister's radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' completed its 100th episode on Sunday. The milestone was regarded as "historic" as the episode was also broadcast live at the United Nations headquarters in New York and the UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, featured in the 100th episode too. Azoulay has hailed the radio programme, saying it is certainly one of the most celebrated, with its hundreds of millions of listeners in more than 50 languages and dialects.

'Mann Ki Baat', the programme hosted by Modi was first aired on October 3, 2014 within months of his becoming the Prime Minister. Modi expressed his deep satisfaction for completing the 100th chapter of the talk. "Mann Ki Baat" has become a spiritual journey of my being," said Modi, while recounting several episodes and individuals who were recognised by the programme. The Prime Minister said each episode of the programme has become like a festival, awaited by all each month. 'Mann Ki Baat' has



become a unique festival of goodness and positivity of the countrymen.

A festival that comes every month, keenly awaited by all of us. We celebrate positivity in this. We also celebrate people's participation in this "he said. Modi also said 'Mann Ki Baat' is the "Mann Ki Baat" of crores of Indians, it is the expression of their feelings."

An emotional Prime Minister said "for me 'Mann Ki Baat' is not a program, for me it is a matter of faith, of worship, or Vrat. Like when people go to worship God, they bring along a Thaal of Prasad. For me, 'Mann Ki Baat' is like a Thaal of Prasad at the feet of God in the form of Janata-Janardan, the people. 'Mann Ki Baat' has become a spiritual journey of my being."

In the centurion episode, Modi spoke, among others, to Sunil Jugran from Haryana who attained fame for his 'selfie with daughter', Vijay Shanti from Manipur who spins thread from lotus flower and Pradeep Sangwan, doing pioneering work of collecting garbage left behind by the tourists in Himalayas.

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### It's 'Maun ki Baat' on China, Adani: Cong

**New Delhi:** The Congress took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday over his 'Mann Ki Baat' radio broadcast, saying the occasion of its 100th episode was heralded with great fanfare but it was 'Maun ki Baat (silence)' on critical issues such as China, Adani, increasing economic inequalities and the wrestlers' protest.

Just ahead of the airing of the programme, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh tweeted: "Today is FekuMaster Special. The 100th day of 'Mann Ki Baat' is being heralded with great fanfare. But it is 'Maun ki Baat' on crucial issues like China, Adani, increasing economic inequalities, price rise of essential commodities, terror attacks in J&K, insults to women wrestlers, non-fulfilment of promises made to farmer organisations, corruption in so-called double-engine State Governments like Karnataka, commensurate with close links to BJP, etc." Continued on Page 2

### 100th episode historic, inspiring, say BJP leaders



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leaders, including Union Ministers, tuned in on Sunday from various locations in India and abroad to listen to the "historic" 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat', calling it an inspiring initiative to connect with the masses. The party had said that nearly four lakh venues would be set up for people to listen to the broadcast as it went all out to make the 100th episode a mega exercise in public connect.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, after listening to the programme with BJP members and others in Mumbai, said through 'Mann Ki Baat', Modi "crafts messages that venture into the nooks and corners of the nation", building bridges between the people and the government. The Minister said

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and others listen to the 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' radio programme, in Mumbai, on Sunday PTI

as the monthly radio programme completed its 100th episode on Sunday, it has "left a splendid trail of impactful leadership examples". "Mann Ki Baat" is not just a radio programme but a movement for "social change for the better", Shah tweeted.

"Modi ji's words to achievers have inspired the young generation to take charge of the nation's destiny and build a better future for all," he said and added that "platforming dialogues on different regions, languages and dialects, he strengthens India's social democracy." Contd on Page 2

## 11 die, 4 critical after inhaling gas in Punjab

Officials suspect chemical thrown in sewerage reacted with methane gas

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/LUDHIANA

In a tragic incident, 11 people, including two children, died, while four others were left critical on Sunday morning after inhaling poisonous gas at Ludhiana's Giaspura area. The incident sent a wave of panic and fear among the locals who confined themselves to their homes, shutting all doors and windows in order to avoid the possibility of inhaling the gas.

Giaspura is a thickly-populated area with several industrial and residential buildings and heavy migrant population. Authorities are suspecting that dumping of some chemicals in the sewer led to the noxious emission.

Four more persons, who were taken ill, are undergoing treatment at a hospital, officials said, adding the area was sealed, the residents were evacuated and a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team was at the spot following the incident.

Though the source of the leakage and the type of the gas were yet to be ascertained, the officials said that they suspected that the poisonous gas was released after some chemical was disposed of in the sewerage in the area and reacted with methane.

All the victims belonged to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and had been staying in Ludhiana.

The incident came to light Sunday morning when some people who came to a local grocery store to buy milk started fainting. Four persons died on the spot while others were



Security personnel at the site after a gas leak incident in the Giaspura area, in Ludhiana district, on Sunday

rushed to the hospital. Among the dead were three members of the family that owned the store and five from another. Police said five females and six males were among the dead.

The Punjab Government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased, and Rs 50,000 for those rendered sick by exposure to the gas.

Taking stock of the situation in the area and civil hospitals, the State Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Balbir Singh said that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann told him to reach the spot and ensure the best treatment for those admitted in hospitals.

"The families of the deceased and other affected families have the Government's unwavering support...Four of the patients, being treated in civil hospitals, are out of danger now," he added. At the same time, the Minister said that exemplary action would be taken against the perpetrators. Later, the Health Minister also visited the affected area in Giaspura.

Even as the investigators were yet to ascertain the source of gas leakage and the type of gas, the preliminary reports

indicate that the deaths were caused due to neurotoxicity that occurs when the exposure to natural or manmade toxic substances (neurotoxins) alters the normal activity of the nervous system that includes brain, spinal cord, and nerves.

"The nature of gas was neuro-toxic...As per the medical examination till now, the deaths were not caused by suffocation but by the harmful effect of the gas on the nervous system of the victims," said Ludhiana Civil Surgeon Dr Hatinder Kaur.

Ludhiana Deputy Commissioner Surabhi Malik said: "It is likely that deaths happened due to gas contamination. Now the teams are going to collect samples from manholes. It is likely that some chemical has reacted with methane."

Malik added that the deaths were caused due to the release of neuro toxins at the spot. "All these aspects are being verified. NDRF is engaged in process of extracting samples from manholes. These samples will be tested for various chemicals. The entire area has been evacuated and the surrounding area has been cordoned off," she said.

Continued on Page 2

## Cong, JD(S) are symbols of instability in K'taka: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sharply attacking the BJP's political rivals in the closely-fought Karnataka election battle, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Congress and the JD(S) are "symbols of instability." Congress-ruled States, the Prime Minister said, are popular for fights among its leaders, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan are the examples and the JD(S) is "the B-team of the Congress and it wants to join Congress in looting Karnataka".

On the second-day of his public rallies in Karnataka's Belur in Kolar district, Modi said Karnataka's Congress unit works round the clock for "one family sitting in Delhi." For every decision, they need to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters during a roadshow ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections, in Mysuru, on Sunday

have a green signal from that family," said Modi hitting-out at the "dynastic politics" in the State. "The JD(S) is a private limited party of a single family. They're spending their energies on welfare of their family,"

Modi said. Modi also held a road-show in Mysuru, winding up his whirlwind two-day campaign tour of Karnataka during which he addressed six public rallies.

He again came down heavily on the Congress for drawing parallels between a snake and himself, and said that the people of Karnataka will give the party a "befitting answer" in the forthcoming Assembly elections. "They are comparing me with snake and seeking votes from people.

For me, people of the country are a form of Lord Shiva. I accept being the snake on the neck of god-like public. The people of Karnataka will give them a befitting answer on May 10," said the Prime Minister. Continued on Page 2

### Shinde Sena launches its Delhi unit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Sunday announced the formation of the Delhi unit of the party. The move aims to expand its reach in the national Capital and it may align with the BJP.

At a meeting here, several senior and veteran leaders from various political parties joined the party and were welcomed into the party fold by senior Shiv Sena leader and former Union Minister Anand Rao Adsl. Adsl emphasised that the party would leverage members experience at the grassroots level to deepen its reach in the National Capital Region.

Adsl said Shinde would soon visit the national Capital to announce the office-bearers of the party's Delhi unit. Continued on Page 2

### DGCA notice to A-I CEO, safety head

Pilot had allowed friend inside cockpit during Dubai-Delhi flight on Feb 27

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued a show cause notice to Air India CEO Campbell Wilson and Head of Safety, Security and Quality Functions Henry Donohoe for the airline's lapse in reporting about the incident of a pilot allowing a female friend into the cockpit during a Dubai-Delhi flight (AI 915) on February 27.

Air India has 15 days to respond from the date of notice issuance. After examining the

response, the DGCA will decide on the action against the crew members and the airline. Earlier this month, the DGCA directed Air India to deroster the entire crew of the Dubai-Delhi flight till investigations are complete. "The show-cause notices were issued to the Air India CEO and the head of flight safety on April 21 for not doing timely reporting of the incident to the DGCA, which is in violation of the regulator's safety instructions.

There was a delay in investigating the incident. Both the executives have been given 15 days to respond to the show-cause notices," the official said. As per the rules, unauthorised people are not allowed to enter the cockpit and any such entry could be in violation of norms.

Continued on Page 2

### India, Russia may mutually accept payments in Mir, RuPay cards

New Delhi: India and Russia will explore the possibility of accepting RuPay and Mir cards in each other's country for hassle-free payments amid sanctions imposed by the West on Moscow.

In the recent high-level Internal Governmental Commission meeting on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), it was discussed and agreed to explore the opportunity of allowing acceptance of these cards, sources said.

The mutual acceptance of RuPay (India) and Mir cards (Russia) will help Indian and Russian citizens to make hassle-free payments in Indian rupees and Russian rouble in their respective countries, sources said. Continued on Page 2

### CAPSULE

#### HPV VAX SOON IN UNIVERSAL PROG

New Delhi: From next month, indigenously developed cervical cancer human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine may be considered for introduction in the Universal Immunisation programme (UIP) as a two-dose regimen for adolescent girls aged 9-14 years, it is learnt. Sources in Health Ministry said that the vaccine will be launched mid-May at an event to be introduced in UIP. P4

#### NITISH SIDESTEPS A QUERY ON LS CONTEST

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday sidestepped a query about possibility of contesting next year's Lok Sabha poll from his pocket borough Nalanda. The JD (U) supreme leader was an MP from the seat until he resigned in 2005 to assume highest seat of power in state. His party, nonetheless, has been able to retain the seat. P5

## 'Mention by PM helped clean Himalayas'

Figuring in a 2020 'Mann ki Baat' episode made many people join our campaign, says Sangwan

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Pradeep Sangwan, who is on a mission to clear the Himalayas of the waste left behind by tourists, said he had almost given up his initiative but a mention from Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his 'Mann ki Baat' programme gave a renewed impetus to his efforts. Sangwan, who established the Healing Himalayas Foundation for the purpose nearly seven years ago, told PTI on Sunday that the Prime Minister mentioning his campaign in an earlier episode of



'Mann ki Baat' boosted his campaign. The Haryana native interacted with Modi during the 100th episode of the programme, broadcast on Sunday.

On the 100th episode of the broadcast, Modi spoke with some of those who have found mention on previous editions of 'Mann ki Baat'. During

Sunday's episode, he also spoke to Sunil Jaglan, another Haryana native and the man behind the 'Selfie with Daughter' initiative. Connecting with Sangwan, Modi, while referring to an earlier episode, said, "We had discussed about the 'Healing Himalayas' campaign."

Modi told Sangwan, "You thought of healing the Himalayas and you ran a campaign. How is your campaign (going) nowadays?" Sangwan told Modi that they began on a nervous note and at one time he was not sure if he would be able to sustain this life long as few people were taking interest in the campaign and not giving much importance to the initiative.

He had almost thought of giving up at one stage, Sangwan told Modi. However, after Modi mentioned the initiative during a 'Mann ki Baat' episode in 2020, things changed as several people joined the campaign. Sangwan told Modi. Modi told him that he was performing a noble duty in the peaks of the Himalayas in the true sense.

"And I firmly believe that hearing your name, people remember how you are associ-

ated with the cleanliness campaign of the mountains," said Modi, and added that several mountaineers are posting photos connected with "swachhta (cleanliness)".

"This is good, due to efforts put in by my friends like you, the notion of 'waste is also a wealth' is percolating into the minds of the people and the environment is also being protected," said the Prime Minister.

Sangwan told Modi, "It (the campaign) is doing fine and from 2020, whatever work we used to do in a span of five years is being done in a year now," to which the Prime Minister exclaimed "Wow!" Sangwan said that earlier they used to conduct six to 10 cleaning drives in a year "but today, we collect five tonnes of garbage on a daily basis from different locations".

Continued on Page 2

## Police give security to wrestlers camped in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Sunday provided security to all seven women wrestlers who have lodged complaints against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh even as the protesting grapplers accused the media of helping Singh more than the players, saying newsmen should not give the WFI chief the platform to speak. In a boost to the top sportsersons, the farmers body Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Sunday expressed solidarity with them and demanded immediate arrest of the BJP MP. A delegation of SKM leaders visited the protest site, met the wrestlers and con-



Photo by Ranjan Dimri

veyed the support of the SKM to them. Meanwhile, the Athletes Commission of the IOA has recommended the national Olympic body to put systems in place to deal with issues of the players "with respect and dignity" in the light of the protest by them against Singh.

The Athletes Commission of the Indian Olympic Association met on Saturday

to discuss the ongoing protest by the wrestlers who have made sexual harassment and intimidation charges against Singh.

On Sunday, sources said that the Delhi Police has also called all the women wrestlers to join the probe and get their 161 CrPC statement recorded so that they could decide the future course of action.

Continued on Page 2

# Curfew lifted from all areas of Sambalpur

Curb on rallies, meetings still in place in violence-hit Odisha district

PTI ■ SAMBALPUR

Curfew has been withdrawn from all areas of violence-hit Sambalpur in Odisha as the law and order situation has "improved" and there is "no apprehension of breach of peace", according to a notification.

However, restrictions on meetings and rallies will remain in force, and written permission from the district administration will be required to organise such events, it said.

The curfew was imposed in six police station areas following a clash between two groups during Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in Sambalpur city mid of this month.

Several people and 10 police personnel were injured and many shops were set on fire in the violence.

The city witnessed two



File photo

clashes - one during a motorcycle procession on April 12 and another during the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations two days later.

The administration was withdrawing the curfew in a phased manner, and the prohibitory orders were lifted from a few more areas on Saturday night, an official said.

Internet services were suspended in the city to curb the spreading of rumours on social media. Sixteen people, who were detained for spreading inflammatory messages on social media following the violence in the western Odisha city

during the Hanuman Jayanti processions, were released, police said. They were released after being issued warnings and had given undertakings that they would not indulge in such activities in future.

The district police have arrested over 100 people for allegedly being involved in the violence.

A four-member BJP MP team is scheduled to visit the violence-hit areas on May 2.

The state unit of BJP has urged the Centre to initiate steps for an NIA probe into the clashes.

# Covid-19: Delhi logs 405 new cases, 3 deaths

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 405 fresh coronavirus cases with a positivity rate of 11.2 per cent, and three Covid-related deaths on Sunday, according to data shared by the city government's health department.

With the fresh cases and fatalities, the national capital's caseload climbed to 20,38,722 and the death toll rose to 26,630, the health department bulletin said.

The fresh cases emerged from 3,617 tests conducted the previous day, it said.

Delhi on Saturday recorded 564 Covid-19 cases with a positivity rate of 14.93 per cent and one Covid-related fatality.

The health department did not issue a bulletin on Friday. On Thursday, the city logged 865 cases with a positivity rate of 16.90 per cent and seven deaths.

The number of active cases in Delhi stands at 3,031. Of these, 2,385 patients are in



home isolation, Sunday's bulletin stated.

Only 246 of the 7,970 Covid-19 beds in the national capital are occupied at present, the data showed.

The number of Covid-19 cases in Delhi had dropped to zero on January 16 for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic. However, the city has witnessed a spurt in fresh cases over the past month.

On April 11, mock drills were conducted in Delhi hospitals to ascertain their preparedness to deal with any eventuality.

Medical experts have said Omicron sub-variant XBB.1.16 could be driving the surge in cases in the city. However, they have maintained that there is no need to panic and people should follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and get their booster shots.

# J'khand: Ten girls from disadvantaged social groups crack JEE-main

PTI ■ RANCHI

At least 10 students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) in Jharkhand's Khunti district, a part of a government project to reduce gender disparities in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities, have qualified for JEE (MAIN) Session-2, an official said on Sunday.

The district administration has now decided to provide the students special coaching at KGBV, Kalamati, for JEE Advance and make all efforts to help them get admission in higher education institutions, Khunti deputy commissioner Shashi Ranjan told PTI.

Results of JEE (MAIN) Session-2 were declared on Saturday. With 87.2 percentile, one secured 1,788 rank in ST category, while another ranked 9,600 in the same bracket.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also congratulated the successful students.

In a tweet, Soren said, "Fabulous! The daughters of Jharkhand are not less than anyone. You have proved that

**"Fabulous! The daughters of Jharkhand are not less than anyone"**

—HEMANT SOREN (J'KHAND CM)

every goal can be achieved with self-confidence, hard work and dedication. Many congratulations and best wishes to all of you for a bright future."

The success of the KGBV students in the competitive exams is credited to 'Sapno Ki Udaan' initiative.

Under this, coaching for IIT-JEE and medical entrance examinations is given, the deputy commissioner said.

At least 57 students are enrolled under the 'Sapno Ki Udaan' project, including 39 taking preparations for medical entrance tests, he said.

"Of the 18 students who prepared for engineering stream, 10 qualified for JEE Main," he said.

Seven of them belong to ST category, two from SC and one from OBC category.

# Woman dupes lawyer on pretext of giving travel package, held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 38-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly cheating an advocate on the pretext of offering her a travel package for a trip to Gujarat. The accused, Paulina, is a resident of northwest Delhi's Indira Vikas Colony, police said.

Paulina and her husband Ricardo Gomes operated from Delhi and Kolkata, respectively. Gomes has been arrested by Maharashtra Police.

The matter came to light when the advocate, a travel enthusiast, approached police alleging that she was duped by a travel agency, Think Trip.

The complainant contacted the agency for a trip to Gujarat and she was asked to make a payment of ₹38,000. The complainant transferred the amount to a bank account registered in the name of Riona 'Tour and Travels, the police said. Later, the accused told her that her trip had been cancelled due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases. When the complainant tried to contact the agency, its number switched off.

# Delhi Police ASI held for taking ₹50,000 bribe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested an assistant sub-inspector of the Delhi Police for allegedly taking bribe from a person in the Inderpur area on behalf of an inspector posted at Rajouri Garden police station. Trilochan Dutt, the ASI, was arrested while he was accepting the bribe.

The CBI had registered an FIR against Inspector Narendra Kumar Pahalwan of the Special Staff, Rajouri Garden police station, and unidentified others for allegedly demanding a bribe of ₹50,000 from a JJ Colony resident Parmet Singh, the officials said.

Singh approached the CBI alleging that the police had caught some people playing 'satta' (betting) in a jhuggi in front of his house, the FIR stated. Pahalwan allegedly demanded ₹50,000 and an agreement to transfer the jhuggi be prepared in his name for not invoking Arms Act and MCOCA charges against Singh, it alleged.

After doing necessary verification using independent witness and concealed recorder, the CBI proceeded with a trap operation.

The agency arrested ASI Dutt during alleged bribe payment who was receiving it on behalf of Pahalwan, the officials said.

The CBI also searched the residences of both the accused, they said.

# Small halts at entry points new mantra to decongest Shimla during peak tourist season

PTI ■ SHIMLA

A 5-10-minute halt at entry points will ensure smooth vehicular movement in the Himachal Pradesh capital reeling from acute traffic congestion during the peak tourist season.

With the advent of summer signalling the peak tourist season in the 'Queen of the Hills', the police have formulated a strategy to ensure hassle free traffic movement in the city.

The summer peak tourist season in Shimla usually lasts from April 15 to June 15.

As part of a trial run, the police are stopping vehicles arriving in the town at the entry points -- Shoghi for those coming from Chandigarh, Chhabra for those entering from upper Shimla/Kinnaur and Heeranagar for those from Mandi, Kangra and Hamirpur districts -- to ensure smooth traffic flow in the city, Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi said. According to police data, about 60,000 vehicles remain parked on the roadsides in the city. On an average, about 12,000 vehicles enter Shimla on weekdays with the number rising to over 26,000 during weekends at the height of the tourist season.

"The flow of traffic goes beyond control at 16 bottlenecks and we are preparing a proposal to set up traffic lights at the three entry points -- Shoghi, Chhabra and Heeranagar -- that will be activated during rush hours," Gandhi told PTI.

# India, Russia may mutually accept...

From Page 1

The meeting, co-chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Russia Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, also agreed to explore the possibility of interaction of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of National Payment Corporation of India and the Faster Payments System (FPS) of the Bank of Russia.

Besides, it was also agreed to look at adopting the Russian financial messaging system, Services Bureau of Financial Messaging System of the Bank of Russia, for cross border payments.

Currently, overseas payments from India and vice versa are through the SWIFT network.

At the given point when sanctions are imposed, sources said, it would not be feasible for India to opt for other than SWIFT network.

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong launched the cross-border connectivity between UPI and PayNow.

Linkage of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Singapore's PayNow now allows people in the two countries to undertake faster and cost-efficient digital transfers.

It will also help the Indian diaspora in Singapore, especially migrant workers and students, through instantaneous and low-cost transfer of money from Singapore to India and vice versa. The PayNow-UPI linkage is the world's first real-time payment systems linkage to use a scalable cloud-based infrastructure that can accommodate future increases in the volume of remittance traffic.

# DGCA...

From Page 1

A cabin crew member of the flight had filed a complaint with the DGCA about the pilot allowing a female friend into the cockpit on February 27. According to the crew member's complaint, the pilots of flight AI 915 were late and boarded the aircraft along with passengers. Then the captain asked the crew if there was any vacant business class seat for his friend.

The pilot's way of speaking and actions offended the cabin crew member who filed the complaint on return. The actual incident occurred on February 27 and it was reported by confidential mail to Campbell and Donohoe on March 3. The first enquiry was conducted by the DGCA on April 21 while Air India had not done any enquiry before that.

The complainant in a special incident report sent to Wilson and Henry Donohoe, had stated, "I have been too shattered and too shocked with certain incidents, threatening and humiliating manner of the Commander when I had raised the DGCA violations made by him..."

# Police gives security...

From Page 1

Sources said that in a day or two the women wrestlers can come to Delhi Police's Connaught Place Police Station to get their statements recorded.

Meanwhile, Bajrang Punia said that the media is supporting BJP MP more than the players. "You see his criminal records."

Does any player, sitting here, or players from other sports, have criminal record?" Bajrang asked during a media interaction. "The players win medals for the country, and he is questioning the medal winners. How many people become MPs in this country, and how many people win Olympic medals. To date, there are hardly 40 Olympic medallists, and thousands have become MPs," he said.

Vinesh Phogat said Brij Bhushan's charge that the wrestlers are involved in politics is baseless. On the other hand, the WFI chief took a jibe on the protesting wrestlers, saying "you don't get justice from Jantar Mantar."

If you want justice, you have to go to the Police, court. They never did that until now. We will accept whatever the court decides..."

Singh also claimed that only a "few families and girls" have levelled allegations against him.

"90 per cent of the athletes & guardians of Haryana trust the WFI. A few families & the girls who have levelled allegations belonged to the same 'akhada'... The patron of that 'akhada' is Deepender Hooda," he added.

Singh said that this battle has gone beyond the athletes now as political parties have become part of it. "From day one of the protest, I felt that this protest was politically motivated and not the voice of the athletes. They have been influenced by politicians. It is clear that these athletes are being used by Congress and other opposition parties. It's evident since the beginning that their (protesting wrestlers) motive is politics, not (my) resignation," he said.

Politicians such as Congress party's Priyanka Gandhi and Bhopinder Singh Hooda, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Jayant Chaudhary, former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik, Delhi government ministers Atishi Singh and Suarbah Bhardwaj have visited the protest site to extend their support to the athletes in the last few days. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi's husband, Robert Vadra, also reached the Jantar Mantar to extend his support to the protesting wrestlers.

Meanwhile, Olympic medallist and wrestler, Yogeshwar Dutt, who is also a member of the committee that probed the allegations of sexual harassment of wrestlers said grapplers now should focus on their sport as FIR has been lodged against Singh.

# 100th episode historic,...

From Page 1

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar joined members of the Indian community in Somerset, New Jersey, in the US at a special event to listen to the 100th episode of the programme. 'Mann Ki Baat' is the story of a changing India - a 'New India' - and is a connection between India and the world, he said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who listened to the 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' at the BJP headquarters here, termed it "historic". The programme strengthens mutual trust and development as well as connects people through radio, he said.

BJP national president JP Nadra tweeted, "Listened to the 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji in Honnalli, Karnataka."

"Mann Ki Baat' has led a transformative change in our society by popularising the stories of the people who have come up with inspiring solutions for the nation's welfare," he said.

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari also called the 100th episode of programme "historic" and said this episode like those

in the past was "special and inspiring". Whichever topic the prime minister took up in his radio broadcast, became "a mass movement", he tweeted after listening to 'Mann Ki Baat' in Nagpur.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, who was in Punjab, said in a series of tweets, "Today the world became witness to the historic 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat', a programme which is completely non-political, completely dedicated to the people, completely dedicated to social welfare and upliftment."

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi adityanath, who is in Karnataka for election campaigning, listened to the radio broadcast in Koppal district, while deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak listened to "Mann ki Baat" in Prayagraj and Shrawasti respectively.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel listened to the 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann ki Baat" radio broadcast and also inaugurated a photo exhibition at the Raj Bhavan here on Sunday. A special programme was held at the Raj Bhawan on the occasion of the 100th episode of "Mann Ki Baat".

Interestingly, the radio programme was broadcast live in more than 300 madrasas of Uttar Pradesh, a BJP office-bearer in the State said on Sunday.

# 11 die, 4 critical...

From Page 1

"We request the people not to spread or believe in rumours. Please stay away from this area till further update," she added.

Meanwhile, Ludhiana police have

registered an FIR under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Sahnewal police station against unknown persons.

As per the FIR, it is suspected that some unknown persons dumped industrial waste illegally into the sewage which led to a chemical reaction and toxic gas was produced leading to deaths.

In a similar incident in June 2015, five people were killed and at least 100 others fell ill after ammonia gas had leaked from a tanker in Doraha town

of the Ludhiana district.

"It is likely that there is some gas contamination. We are collecting samples from manholes. It is quite likely that some chemical reacted with methane in manholes," Ludhiana Deputy Commissioner Surabhi Malik told reporters.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Amarjit Singh Bains said, "A broken manhole has been found in the area and there was a strong smell emanating from it. There is a possibility that the chemical has been poured into the sewerage from that point".

Through the public address system, people are being called to stay away from the area. Police also deployed drones to check for other victims who could be lying unconscious.

The deceased were identified as Abhay (13), Aryan (10), Kalpna (16), Kamlesh (60), Varsha (35), Sourav (35), Preeti (31), Kavilash (40), Navneet (39), Neetu Devi (39) and an unidentified person.

Heart-rending scenes were witnessed outside the mortuary of the civil hospital, where the bodies were brought for post-mortem.

# 'Mention by PM...

From Page 1

He further said that after the Prime Minister mentioned the campaign in his earlier 'Mann Ki Baat' address, things began to speed up in a manner he had never thought. "I am really thankful that you find out about people like you, you get

stories of people like you from remote areas in the Himalayas and working at such altitude and you got our story and brought our work before the world," Sangwan told Modi.

"So, it was an emotional moment for me then, and now, too, that I am able to talk to the country's 'pradhan sevak...'" said Sangwan.

During a previous interaction with PTI, Sangwan had said he came in contact with some students from Himachal

Pradesh while doing his graduation from Chandigarh's DAV College and he started to explore the State with them in 2007-08.

After moving to Himachal Pradesh in 2009, he undertook extensive travel and during that he met a group of people from the "gaddi (shepherd)" community in Lahaul. He was impressed how, even in a very remote area, they cared so much for their environment.

His foundation set up its

# Shinde Sena launches its Delhi unit..

From Page 1

With the launch of the Delhi Unit, the national Capital becomes the 20th State to have a Shiv Sena unit.

"The party will leverage experienced leadership to expand its reach nationally. Our Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has given a governance model to Maharashtra and the party's young leaders bank on that to expand the base in Delhi and other states too," Adsl said.

Shiva Sena also launched the 'Good Governance-Maharashtra Model' and 'Apna Abhiman Danush-Baan' Campaigns along with a 'massive membership drive' in Delhi.

Shive Sena senior functionary Anshuman Joshi said that the party would fight against "rampant corruption in Delhi."

# It's 'Maun ki Baat' on China,...

From page 1

"IIM-Rohtak does some doctored study on 'Mann ki Baat's' impact, while its Director's academic credentials have been questioned by the Ministry of Education itself," Ramesh said.

The Congress, from its official Twitter handle, also took a dig at Modi, alleging that he has been silent on issues such as Chinese aggression, unemployment, price rise, charges against industrialist Gautam Adani's business conglomerate and women's security. **PNS**

# Cong,...

From Page 1

Earlier in a rally at Channapatna in Ramanagara district in South Karnataka, he attacked the Congress and JD(S) and said "dynastic Congress and JD(S) were responsible for political instability in Karnataka." He alleged that both parties saw Karnataka as an ATM, and that they found an opportunity in instability. "The Congress and the

JD(S) are responsible for the instability. They pretend to be two separate parties but are one in their hearts. They assist each other in Parliament," he said.

Meanwhile, speaking in Udupi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the people of Karnataka should choose a BJP Government instead of a 'reverse gear' Government of the Congress.

Karnataka is slated for Assembly elections on May 10. The results will be out on May 13.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is for Notice of the General Public that a Political Party is proposed to be Registered by the name of Universal Family Party. The office of the party is located at Jaobungkhok, PS Patsoi, P.O Langjing Manipur Imphal West, Pin No - 795113. This Party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its Registration as Political Party Under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 - Names/Address of the Office bearers of the Party are as follows:  
President :- Nagaseparm Nilakanta Singh  
Vice-President :- HJiam Kamhai Singh  
General Secretary :- Mayngjam Romem Singh  
Secretary :- Sorohabam Dimarsani Singh  
Treasurer :- Ningthoujam Bijen Singh  
If any one has any objection to the Registration of Universal Family Party, (name of the proposed party) they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 Days of the publication of this notice.

# Court convicts AAP MLA from Seelampur

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another big blow to the Aam Aadmi Party, a Delhi court convicted party MLA from Delhi's Seelampur in connection to a threatening and assaulting case. MLA Abdul Rehman and his wife Asma were convicted for threatening and assaulting Razia Begum, the principal of a government school in Jafrabad Zeenat Mahal, in 2009. According to rules, if the MLA is sentenced for the more than two years, he will be disqualified from the membership of Delhi legislative assembly. The quantum of sentence is likely to be pronounced on the next hearing on May 3. The AAP MLA and his wife face a maximum jail term of seven years.

Additional chief metropolitan magistrate Harjeet Singh Jaspal convicted the two accused in a case registered against them in 2010 under sections 353/506 (Para II) r/w 34 of the Indian Penal Code (use of assault to deter public servants from discharging his duty, criminal intimidation



and acts done in furtherance of common intention). Asma was additionally convicted in charges under section 332 of the IPC (voluntarily causing hurt to deter a public servant from his or her duty).

The court said, "Having carefully considered the entire case, the documents placed on record, the police report, the testimonies of the prosecution witnesses, the statement of accused persons, the arguments advanced by both the sides and the provisions of law and the rule of procedure, this court holds that the prosecution has successfully proved its case, beyond reasonable doubts, against accused Asma that she caused simple hurt on the person of a public servant

in discharge of her duties."

The prosecution has further proved beyond reasonable doubt that both the accused persons i.e. Abdul Rehman and Asma, in furtherance of their common intention, criminally intimidated the complainant and assaulted her, while she was holding the office of the public servant and was in discharge of her duties as a public servant, to deter her from discharging her duties, the court stated.

"Accordingly, both the accused are hereby convicted for the offences under section 353, 506 (Para II) read with section 34 IPC and additionally, the accused Asma is hereby separately convicted for the offence under section 332 of IPC," it said. According to police, the complainant, Razia Begum, on the date of the incident, was holding the principal's post. As per the complainant, on 04.02.2009, while performing duties as a principal of SKV School, Jafrabad, she was slapped by the accused, Asma, thus causing simple hurt to the complainant.

# 'Mann ki Baat' brought silent revolution: LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio broadcast, "Mann ki Baat", has brought a silent revolution in the country.

Saxena, along with several intellectuals, Padma awardees, sanitation workers and anganwadi helpers, listened to a live broadcast of the 100th episode of "Mann ki Baat" at the Raj Niwas on Sunday.

"Mann ki Baat is a unique programme in the world. Through this programme, his (Modi's) straight talk and visions have left an indelible mark. We heard our prime minister today. Like always, he presented his new ideas and the hopes and ambitions of the society's last person in front of us," the LG said after the broadcast.

He said at a time when people are using new means of communication, the prime minister is interacting with people through radio, which is no ordinary feat. "This is such a strong endeavour through which the prime minister has connected the hearts of 135 crore citizens and an attempt to infuse enthusiasm in them. This is also paving the way for



a public opinion to take the country forward," Saxena said.

Ranging from social and economical challenges to humanitarian and environmental difficulties, Modi has interacted with people on an array of issues, the LG noted. He said the "Mann ki Baat" programme is close to his heart.

"All of you know that I have been connected with Khadi for a long time. In the first episode of Mann ki Baat, he (Modi) had spoken about taking Khadi to every village. He had appealed to people to buy Khadi products to help artisans," the LG said. Saxena previously served as the chairperson of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). "Similarly, he spoke about vocal for local, toys, pottery and a honey mission. Through his words, lakhs of artisans have

moved towards self-dependency (aatmanirbharta). I thank him from the bottom of my heart for this silent revolution," Saxena said.

Referring to Modi as the brand ambassador of national interest initiatives, he said the prime minister's different style of working has always inspired people. "Mann ki Baat has proven that the nation comes first for the prime minister. He is motivating people to take the nation ahead," the LG said. In the 100th episode of "Mann ki Baat", Modi said the radio broadcast is an expression of the feelings of crores of Indians and it has ensured that he is never cut-off from people.

Padma awardees, including Dr Arvind Kumar, Zafar Iqbal, Gurcharan Singh and Jamia Millia Islamia University Vice-Chancellor Najma Akhtar, were present at the Raj Niwas.

# BJP facilitates live broadcast of 100th episode of 'Mann ki Baat' to 6,530 organisational blocks

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP facilitated live broadcast of the 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann ki Baat' at 6530 organiza-



tional blocks across the national capital on Sunday. Union Ministers, MPs, and office bearers of National and Delhi BJP listened to the Mann Ki Baat program along with the workers. Apart from this, many civic organizations, R.W.A., business bodies made through their respective mediums to listen to the Mann Ki Baat program at various places.

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with several officials listened to the Mann Ki Baat program at the BJP headquarters. After listening to the programme, he said PM Modi's Mann Ki Baat plays

important role in establishing connectivity with Public. He further went on say that "a person who is big-hearted can only emotionally connect with large number of people. This is a spiritual journey of PM's life."

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while talking to media after listening the program with BJP workers at Gagan Vihar in East Delhi, said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat program has completed 100 episodes but till date he never speaks as a prime minister but has kept his words as a prime servant of the country.

# LG's communication on Kejriwal residence 'unconstitutional', 'undemocratic': Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena ordered Chief Secretary to secure records of expenditure of Rs 44.78 crore on the renovation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence and sought report in the matter, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and PWD Minister Atishi wrote a letter to the L-G claimed that he has no power to "direct executive action of any kind".

In the letter, she urged the L-G to "withdraw his communication" and "restore the scheme of governance intended by the Constitution for Delhi and its people".

"We hope that you will not force the elected government to approach the court once again in respect of your actions," Atishi maintained.

As the PWD minister of the city, she noted that she is primarily responsible for all government business pertaining to the department. She asserted that the L-G's letter



seeking the seizure of records and directing executive action is wholly outside the jurisdiction and authority of the office of the Lieutenant Governor, and bypasses the minister and the council of ministers concerned, who are democratically responsible for the business of the Delhi government.

"As per Rule 4(2) of the Transaction of Business of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Rules, 1993 ("ToBR"), I find myself compelled by my constitutional duty to the people of Delhi in whose name I hold my mandate, to write to you regarding my concerns with the unconstitutional and undemocratic nature of your communication dated April 27," the letter said. The minister also noted

that the letter written by the L-G is politically motivated.

"Needless to say that the insinuations and allegations made in the letter are baseless and devoid of merits and have been made for political reasons," she added. Citing the Constitution's scheme for Delhi's governance as incorporated in Article 239AA and explained by the Supreme Court in 2018, Atishi said the apex court had observed that the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi is bound by the aid and advice of the council of ministers, and he has not been entrusted with any independent decision-making power.

Noting that though the L-G is empowered to seek information about decisions taken by the council of ministers

under Rule 19(5) of the ToBR - information that the ministers do not wish to deny, she said he has no power whatsoever to direct executive action of any kind.

"Your letter dated 27.04.2023, by directing that certain records be seized and taken into protective custody and further directing the submission of a report on the same to your office, grossly oversteps the limited jurisdiction conferred on the Lieutenant-Governor's office by the constitutional scheme.

"The communication does not exercise the power to seek information at all. Rather, it issues executive orders, a power not conferred on the Lieutenant-Governor's office under the constitutional scheme at all, except when exercised on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers," she wrote. Atishi warned that the continual displacement of the constitutional scheme under Article 239AA will denude the democratic mandate of the people of Delhi.

A Raj Niwas order, issued on April 27, cited reports on alleged "gross irregularities" in the renovation of the CM residence by the Public Works Department (PWD).

# LG denies AAP allegations, says home open for everyone to see



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday denied spending Rs 15 crore on renovating Raj Niwas as alleged by AAP, and said his house is open for every individual to come and see.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh had on Wednesday made the allegation saying Saxena spent Rs 15 crore on repair work alone at his official residence, which is built on six acres of land.

In comparison, a new house was built for the Delhi CM on only one acre, he had said.

# BJP to hold indefinite dharna outside Kejriwal's residence



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP will hold an indefinite sit-in outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's house over his allegedly spending Rs 45 crore on renovation of his official residence.

The party will stage a sit-in outside Kejriwal's official residence - 6, Flagstaff Road in Civil Lines - from Monday, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said.

Earlier in the week, the BJP had alleged that Kejriwal spent Rs 45 crore on renovation of his official house during 2020-22.

"The most shameful thing in this is that this scam was done at a time when Corona was in its worst form in Delhi and hundreds of people were dying every day," Sachdeva said.

# IN BRIEF

## NGO SPREADS MESSAGE OF ENV CONSERVATION



New Delhi: Sesame Workshop India, an NGO engaged in early childhood education had recently organized an event spreading the message of environment conservation among school students of Delhi Municipal Corporation Primary Boys/Girls School, Narela Mandi-2 here. Children demonstrated their skills of making waste material useful by planting saplings in plastic bottles and boxes along with converting wet waste into compost in the presence of School Inspector, Mahipal, Principal, Sushila Kumari and Nirmala Kumari, Principal of Nigam Pratibha Balika Vidyalaya, Narela Mandi and Sonali Khan, MD of Sesame Workshop India.

## AIIMS TO ESTABLISH INTERNAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

New Delhi: With an aim to cut delays in transmission of messages within the institute's closed group, the AIIMS authorities have decided to establish an internal message communication application-based system, which incidentally will also have the capability to restrict personal use of mobile phones during working hours.

# First-ever joint PTM organised for all MCD, Govt schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The first-ever joint parents-teacher meeting (PTM) was organised in all the Delhi government and MCD schools of the capital on Sunday with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying that they will now work to transform the civic body-run schools.

According to officials, the meeting was conducted in more than 1,000 Delhi government schools and over 1,500 MCD schools.

"Today, a mega PTM is being held in both MCD and Delhi government schools in Delhi. Just as Delhi government schools have been transformed with the help of all students, teachers, and parents, we will now work together to transform MCD schools as well," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

Education Minister Atishi, who also visited some schools, said in 2015 when the Kejriwal government was formed, the condition of Delhi government schools was the same as MCD schools now.

There was no cleanliness, no drinking facility and benches and desks were broken. But after years of hard work and dedication, the old education system in Delhi was fixed, he said.

While interacting with parents, she expressed her delight at the number of parents who turned up early in the morning and said, "This shows that parents eagerly want to participate in their children's education, and after Delhi government schools, now this opportunity will be provided to parents in MCD schools too."



"The education revolution that was brought in Delhi government schools will now be brought to MCD schools too," she added. Attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Atishi said it was in MCD for the past 15 years and left the schools reeling under several problems.

Noting that the joint PTM is a symbol of the shared responsibility of parents and schools for the education and development of children, she said both parents and schools are equally responsible for the development of their child.

"Our children will progress only when schools and parents will together participate in the process of their education," she opined. She also stressed the importance of parents engaging with their children for at least half an hour every day, even if they are not educated. This would boost the confidence of the children and help them open up about their school experiences. During

the interaction, parents showed confidence in sending their children to Delhi government schools. They said that in the last few years, not only have the school buildings become impressive, but better facilities and environment have also been provided for children's education, and now the schools are providing opportunities for their talents to flourish. Parents said that they no longer have any concerns about their children's education because their future is secure in Delhi government schools.

Mission Buniyaad was also discussed in the meeting. "Mission Buniyaad aims to strengthen the foundation of every child sitting in the classroom - to prepare future engineers, doctors, and CEOs for the country. Our government is committed to provide every child with quality education and opportunities," Atishi had said earlier this month.

# Traffic movement on Nangloi flyover to be hit from May 1 due to PWD maintenance work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Traffic movement on the Nangloi flyover on Rohtak Road will be affected from May 1 as the Public Works department will start work to replace expansion joints on the Peeragarhi-Tikri border carriageway, police said on Sunday.

According to an advisory issued by the police, traffic on the Peeragarhi-Tikri border carriageway will be diverted along the Nangloi flyover. One lane of the Peeragarhi-Tikri Border carriageway will be free for vehicular traffic.

The police have advised commuters to avoid the specified roads and stretches and



instead take alternative routes. "The commuters going towards Tikri border, Mundka should leave with sufficient time at hand to accommodate possible delays on the route. Avail public transport to help decongestion of roads," the police said in a traffic advisory. The commuters have also been asked to park their vehicles only at designated lots.

# Delhi experiences cooler April, with frequent western disturbances leading to rainfall

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi experienced cooler temperatures in April compared to the intense heat it faced in the month last year, with frequent western disturbances leading to more rainfall and below-normal average maximum temperature.

The city recorded an average maximum temperature of 35.32 degrees Celsius in April, equal to that logged in the month in 2020, and the lowest since 2015 (34.5 degrees Celsius), according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). On average, the city logs a maximum temperature of 36.5 degrees Celsius in April. On Sunday, the national capital registered a maximum temperature of 28.7 degrees



Celsius, the lowest in the month since April 4, 2015, when the mercury settled at 26 degrees Celsius.

At the beginning of April, the IMD had predicted above-normal temperatures in most parts of the country barring some parts of northwest India.

The primary weather station in the national capital, Safdarjung Observatory, also did not log any heatwave day.

Last year, the city saw nine heatwave days in April, including four in the first 10 days, the highest in the month since 2010.

Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said five western disturbances (WDs), including two strong ones, kept temperatures in check in northwest India, including Delhi.

# Entry, exit points at Metro's Sarojini Nagar station remodelled

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The entry and exit points at Delhi Metro's Sarojini Nagar station have been remodelled for greater ease of commuters. The station falls on the Pink Line and is located near the busy market it is named after.

The passenger movement at the Sarojini Nagar metro station has been remodelled with separate entry and exit points and additional automatic-fare-collection (AFC) gates to enhance the convenience of passengers since the station caters to a large number of people due to its proximity to the Sarojini Nagar market, a prominent shopping hub in the national capital, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation



(DMRC) said.

As part of the remodelling initiative, Gate No.1 (west side) of the station, which is near the Sarojini Nagar market, has been designated only for commuters' entry. Earlier, this side had six AFC gates each for entry and exit, which have now been modified to 14 gates exclusively for the entry of passengers. This will ease the

inflow of commuters and reduce the waiting time for entry, the DMRC said in a statement.

Additional luggage-scanning machines and frisking points have also been installed for a hassle-free entry of commuters.

Since around 70 per cent of the passengers at the station are women and girls, four dedicated door-frame metal detectors (DFMDs) have been installed for female passengers and two for males for speedy frisking, officials said.

Commuters can now exit from the station through Gate No.2 (east side). Earlier, this side had four gates each for entry and exit and the number has now gone up to 14 gates exclusively for exit. Special

arrangements for the entry and exit of differently-abled commuters have also been made at the station, the officials said. This remodelling initiative has tremendously increased passenger convenience and many commuters have appreciated the effort on social media, the DMRC said.

The Sarojini Nagar metro station experiences heavy passenger traffic, especially on weekends, holidays and during the festive season, due to its proximity to the Sarojini Nagar market. "It is the busiest station on the Pink Line with an average daily footfall of around 38,000 on weekdays and 65,000 on weekends and holidays. The footfall of the station is steadily increasing, especially after the opening of the mar-

kets post-Covid and touched the highest level of 83,000 in November 2022. In fact, the station's footfall has increased almost six times since its opening in August 2018," the statement said.

Accumulation of huge crowds at the station's entry points, stairs and platform areas was a concern for the DMRC. The entry of passengers had to be stopped at times during peak hours to regulate the movement of commuters, the officials said.

In order to provide a solution to this recurring problem and facilitate a smooth movement of commuters, especially their entry and exit, the DMRC undertook remodelling of the existing facilities at the station, they added.

OPERATION KAVERI

# 229 more evacuees safely return

'1,954 Indians evacuated from violence-hit Sudan till now'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India brought home another batch of 229 people on Sunday under its mission to evacuate stranded Indians from violence-hit Sudan.

The fresh batch of evacuees arrived in Bengaluru, a day after 365 people returned from the African country to Delhi.

"#OperationKaveri One more flight brings back 229 passengers to Bengaluru," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar wrote on Twitter.

Under the evacuation mission, 754 people arrived in India in two batches on Friday.

The total number of Indians who have been brought



Indian nationals, evacuated from violence-hit Sudan under Operation Kaveri, queue to board a flight for Bengaluru, at an airport in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

back home from Sudan now stands at 1,954, according to official data. The Indians were brought back from the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah where

India has set up a transit camp for the evacuees. The first batch of 360 evacuees returned to New Delhi in a commercial plane on Wednesday. The sec-

ond batch of 246 Indian evacuees arrived in Mumbai in a C17 Globemaster aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Thursday. Under "Operation

Kaveri", India has been taking its citizens in buses from the conflict zones of Khartoum and other troubled areas to Port Sudan from where they are being taken to Jeddah in the IAF's heavy-lift transport aircraft and the Indian Navy's ships.

From Jeddah, the Indians are being brought back home in either commercial flight or IAF's aircraft.

India has set up separate control rooms in Jeddah and Port Sudan, and the Indian embassy in Khartoum has been coordinating with them, besides being in touch with the headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in Delhi. Sudan has been witnessing deadly fighting between the country's army and a paramilitary group that has reportedly left around 400 people dead. Jaishankar announced the launch of "Operation Kaveri" on Monday to bring back stranded Indians from the African country.

# Guj HC to hear Rahul's conviction plea tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD

Disqualified Congress Lok Sabha member leader Rahul Gandhi has pleaded to the Gujarat High Court for a stay on the conviction in a case that is "neither serious in nature nor of moral turpitude" and is a "non-cognisable and bailable offence".

After a judge recused herself from hearing the matter last week, the High Court fixed May 2 as the date of hearing.

The offence for which Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was handed a maximum sentence of two years in jail was not a serious matter that warranted his disqualification from contesting elections for eight years, his lawyer argued in the Gujarat High Court on Saturday.

Justice Hemant Prachhah asked the parties to make final submissions on Tuesday. "I will complete this matter because I am going out of India on May 5," he said.

After a sessions court in Surat refused to stay the March 23 conviction by a magisterial court that sentenced the Congress leader to the maximum permissible punishment of two years imprisonment, Rahul Gandhi moved the High Court.

Complainant Purnesh Modi, a Gujarat BJP MLA, questioned the maintainability of Rahul Gandhi's application, claiming that the plea was filed under the wrong provisions of the law.

During a hearing on Saturday, when senior Supreme Court lawyer and senior Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi argued that Rahul



Gandhi was facing irreversible damage, losing his seat in Parliament and his disqualification as an MP, the judge commented that greater duty was cast on him towards the people at large, and he should make statements within limits. The lawyer stressed much on the consequences of the conviction and submitted that Rahul Gandhi's political career was at stake.

He argued that the conviction could be reversed in the future but after losing a place in the Parliament and if re-election was announced for the Wayanad constituency in Kerala, the acquittal would be a "hollow victory" for Gandhi.

"If a bypoll is conducted for the Wayanad constituency which Gandhi represented before he was disqualified, its result cannot be undone even if the Congress leader wins his appeal against the conviction," Singhvi said.

After hearing Singhvi's arguments, the High Court adjourned the hearing for May 2 as advocate Nirupam

Nanavati and lawyer Purnesh Modi sought time to file a reply.

Justice Hemant Prachhah on Saturday began hearing Rahul Gandhi's revision application against the Surat sessions court's April 20 order declining a stay in his conviction for criminal defamation over his "why all thieves have the Modi surname" remark.

Singhvi also questioned the locus of the State Government to oppose Rahul Gandhi's plea and said Purnesh Modi's insistence on opposing it at this stage was to see that Gandhi remained disqualified and thus, these efforts bring the matter into the "political sphere".

Rahul had not named Purnesh Modi in his speech at the election rally at Kolar in Karnataka on April 13, 2019, where he made the remark in question, Singhvi said. Under Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code (criminal defamation), the complainant must be an aggrieved person, which was not the case here, he argued.

"Also, there is no identifiable class of the Modi community so as to maintain a complaint," he said, adding that no one from the 13 crore-strong "so-called community" could file a complaint against Gandhi unless that person was specifically named.

The judge asked the public prosecutor to make submissions on the provisions under which Rahul Gandhi's plea had been filed. Later, Modi's counsel Nirupam Nanavati submitted that Rahul Gandhi could not have filed his plea under multiple provisions and hence his plea was not maintainable.

# Indian Al Qaeda spits venom in mouthpiece, seeks to revive activities

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After a lull of four years following the liquidation of the chief of Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Sambhal-resident Maulana Asim Umar in 2019 in Afghanistan, the terror outfit has sought to revive its insidious activities in India.

The outfit, through a propaganda piece in its official magazine Al Shabab Media, sought to gain traction within the gullible section of Muslims by claiming atrocities against the community during the recent celebration of Navami across the country.

Through the article, the outfit has cited the recent attacks on Masjid Al Aqsa in Israel and those in India from Bihar to Rajasthan carried out during the period of Ramadan.

The outfit blamed the right wing outfits and the Hindu community for carrying out the "attacks" on mosques and madaris (Islamic seminaries).

"The hearts of all Muslims are in great anguish and agony over the attacks on the Al Aqsa Masjid Bait al Maqdis (Jerusalem), and similarly over the violation of the sanctity of the madaris and masjid (mosques) from Bihar to Rajasthan.... Sabillillah and Mahmood of Ghazni shattered and destroyed the idol of Somnath and turned India into a centre of Islam after 17 Jihadi expeditions extended over a period of years," claimed the article in its bid to gain traction among gullible Muslims by exploiting the communal faultlines.

The article further sought to draw



similarity between the Jews and Hindus and highlighted that 'role' of the US in supporting Israel. The outfit further sought to eulogise outlandish concepts of jihadist violence. Counter-terrorism experts and analysts said the outfit is seeking to revive its activities in the country with the twin agenda of getting radicals in its fold and also to counter the activities of the Islamic State, which is a competitor of Al Qaeda globally. They said the agencies should enhance the surveillance on the possible activities of the outfit.

Counter-terrorism expert Rituraj Mate said, "Till Maulana Asim Umar was alive, the AQIS focus was Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Assam and West Bengal. But the latest article suggests that the outfit now seeks to expand its footprint in other Hindi-speaking states like Bihar and Rajasthan."

The timing of the letter suggests that the beheading incident of Rajasthan could have motivated the AQIS to revive itself and gain foothold in Rajasthan. There have been a number of recent incidents in Rajasthan like the railway blast and recovery of 1,000 gelatin sticks. Earlier, a Dholpur-based company, Rajasthan Explosives, was involved in supplying explosives to ISIS, Dr Mate added.

# HPV vax to be introduced in universal immunisation programme soon: Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

From next month, the indigenously developed cervical cancer human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is likely to be introduced in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) as a two-dose regimen for adolescent girls aged 9-14 years.

Sources in the Union Health Ministry said that the vaccine would be launched mid-May at an event to be introduced in the UIP. A sexually transmitted disease, HPV is estimated to cause more than 8 lakh cases every year. HPV vaccination can prevent many cervical cancer-related deaths.

In June last year, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) had recommended the introduction of the HPV vaccine in the UIP with "a one-time catch-up for 9-14-year-old adolescent girls, followed by routine introduction at 9 years."

This was based on fresh evidence on disease burden, evidence on the effectiveness of the single dose of HPV vaccine, clinical trial data and experience of the Government of Sikkim on the introduction of the vaccine.

"The indigenously developed quadrivalent HPV vaccine may be considered for introduction in the UIP as a two-dose regimen, as indicated in the product insert. Immunisation of boys is recommended once 80 per cent routine vaccination coverage is achieved in girls," Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar had said in a writ-



ten reply in Rajya Sabha a few months ago.

HPV usually goes away on its own without any treatment, but in some females, it can cause cervical cancer.

Widespread HPV vaccination can reduce the impact of HPV-caused cervical and other cancers worldwide. These vaccines prevent infection by certain types of HPV. The available HPV vaccines can guard against either two, four, or nine types of HPV. All HPV vaccines guard against minimum HPV types 16 and 18, which is responsible for the greatest risk of cervical cancer, according to health experts.

India accounts for about a quarter of all cervical cancer incidences and nearly a third of global cervical cancer deaths.

According to some recent estimates, every year almost 80,000 women develop cervical cancer and 35,000 die due to it in India.

# Rajnath to visit Maldives, to gift patrol vessel, landing craft

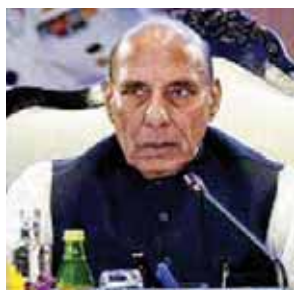
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will hand over a fast patrol vessel and a landing craft to the Maldives as India's "gift" during his visit to the island nation from May 1 to 3.

The Defence Ministry said this on Sunday, noting that Singh's visit to the Maldives will be an "important landmark" in building "strong bonds" of friendship between the two countries.

The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean region and the overall bilateral ties, including in the areas of defence and security, have been on an upward trajectory in the last few years.

India's decision to provide the military platforms to the Maldives came amid China's persistent efforts to expand its



overall influence in the region.

During his visit, Singh is scheduled to call on Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and hold talks with Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid and Defence Minister Mariya Didi.

"In tune with India's commitment to capacity building of friendly countries and partners in the region, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will gift one fast patrol vessel ship and a landing craft to the Maldives National

Defence Forces," the ministry said in a statement.

Singh is also set to take stock of the implementation of various India-assisted projects in the Maldives and will interact with the Indian diaspora.

"India and the Maldives are working closely to effectively address shared challenges, including maritime security, terrorism, radicalisation, piracy, trafficking, organised crime and natural disasters," the ministry said.

"India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) along with its 'Neighbourhood First' policy as well as Maldives' 'India First' policy seek to work together to jointly develop the capabilities within the Indian Ocean region," it added.

On Singh's talks with the Maldivian defence and foreign ministers, it said the entire

gamut of defence relations between the two countries will be reviewed.

The Maldives is also one of the biggest beneficiaries of India's Neighbourhood First policy.

In August last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maldivian President Solih kick-started the India-funded Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP), billed as the largest infrastructure initiative in the island nation.

Under the project, a 6.74-km-long bridge and causeway link will be built to connect Maldivian capital Male with the adjoining islands of Villingli, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane visited the Maldives last month and held talks with his Maldivian counterpart, Major General Abdulla Shamaal.

# Transgender women undergoing GAHT may develop prostate cancer: Study

Risk estimated at 0.14 per cent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As transgender women usually keep their prostates even after gender-affirming surgery because of health complications, they also have the risk of prostate cancer, a first-of-its kind study has said. It estimates the risk at about 14 cases per 10,000 people. The study has been published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Since removing the prostate can lead to urinary incontinence and other com-

plications, doctors leave the gland in place when initiating hormonal treatments to induce female sex characteristics in transitioning people. This process, which is called feminising or gender-affirming hormonal therapy (GAHT), relies on medications and surgery to block testosterone, a male sex hormone. Prostate cancer is fueled by testosterone and therefore, GAHT lowers overall risks for the disease. But transgender women can still develop prostate cancer in ways that remain poorly understood, according to the authors of the study.

"More individuals are openly identifying as transgenders, particularly as advances are made in reducing the discrimination and marginalisation



that this group has faced," said Dr Farnoosh Nik-Ahd, a urologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and the paper's first author.

"Thus, it's important to understand their health outcomes and how to care for this population in the best possible way. The study found 155 confirmed transgender women with prostate cancer and stratified them according to whether they had used estrogen: 116 had never used estrogen, 17 had once used estrogen

but stopped before they were diagnosed with prostate cancer, and 22 were actively on estrogen. The authors found that prostate cancer occurs in transgender women more frequently than published accounts might suggest, with about 14 prostate cancer cases per 10,000 transgender women.

While the numbers are small, they suggest that transgender women taking estrogen may have had delayed diagnoses. The authors also said that lower rates of prostate cancer might have been due to less PSA screening, misinterpretation of PSA levels in patients on gender-affirming hormone therapies, stigma, lack of awareness of prostate cancer risk and the effects of estrogen.

# BJP seeking votes in Modi's name, Cong 'vocal for local' in K'taka: Jairam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said that while the BJP was seeking votes in the Karnataka Assembly polls in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress had adopted the PM's "vocal for local" slogan and was raising issues of the people of the state.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said Karnataka, after four years of the BJP rule, needs 'Vitamin-P' in which the P stands

for "performance" of the Congress and not "polarisation" of the BJP.

Using armed forces' terminology, Ramesh said the Congress is not worried about the "carpet bombing" campaign strategy of Prime Minister Modi and other senior BJP leaders as it has enough "anti-aircraft guns" to deal with it.

The more the carpet bombing campaign the BJP indulges in, the more clearly it indicates its "despair and desperation", the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said.

Ramesh, who is a star campaigner for the party, said the Karnataka polls were about the BJP's "threats" versus Congress' governance guarantees.

He claimed that the Congress would get a "clear majority" that would render "Operation Lotus" totally unnecessary.

Operation Lotus is the term used by opposition parties to describe what they call "poaching" of MLAs by the BJP to topple state governments.

Asked about reports of former



chief minister Siddaramaiah and Karnataka Congress president D K Shivakumar looking to outdo each other for the post of CM, Ramesh said, "This time around, the dissi-

dence in the Congress is at a minimum. There are only a few rebel independent candidates and many of them are withdrawing."

"In any case, the dissidence in the Congress is nothing as compared with the dissidence in the BJP which has lost its former chief minister, deputy CM, members of the national executive and many other national, state and local level leaders," Ramesh said.

He said five top Congress leaders - party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi

Vadra, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar - would probably cover the 224 constituencies among them during the campaign.

"So, I think we are presenting a united front and this I think is the impact of the Bharat Jodo Yatra. Some people criticize the Bharat Jodo Yatra that it would not pay electoral dividends but I think the yatra is giving electoral dividends as it gave a sense of solidarity and a sense of purpose to the Congress," he told PTI over the phone from Karnataka where he is on the cam-

paign trail.

Today the story of Karnataka politics is the "dissidence and disunity" in the BJP, not in the Congress, he stressed.

"Right now everybody is focused on getting the Congress back to power. We are not focussing on individuals. This is not a beauty contest for individuals, this is a choice between political parties, a choice between competing ideologies, a choice between competing visions for Karnataka's future," Ramesh said.

# Abhishek focuses on 240 MLAs in 2026

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a curious response to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claim of 35 out of 42 Bengal Lok Sabha seats in 2024, Abhishek Banerjee, the second in command of the state's ruling Trinamool Congress, on Sunday said his party would bag 240 out of 294 Assembly seats in 2026, prompting critics to wonder whether the TMC was giving up fight in 2024.

Banerjee, who has of late been touring North Bengal as a part of a 2-month-long state-wide public relations exercise ahead of the panchayat elections, said that nothing — "no amount of brow-beating or threat" — could cow him or his party down and that "we won 212 Assemblies in 2021 ... but in 2026 we will win 240 out of 294 Assembly seats simply by the strength of our performance".

He said, "Like Mamata Banerjee defeated the BJP in 2021 when they said 'abki



baar doso paar' (this time 200 seats), in 2026 also they will face a humiliating defeat," but he failed to explain why he was focusing first on 2026 instead of 2024.

Iterating that his aunt and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had outperformed all the parties, he said, "While the BJP leaders won 18 seats in 2019 but failed to perform, Mamata Banerjee, after winning each of her elections, had unleashed a string of projects like Laxmir Bhandar,

Kanyashree, Sabuj Saathi, Swasthya Saathi and others."

During the BJP to defeat the TMC "politically and not with the help of the central agencies", Banerjee — whose party is presently under intense pressure in the wake of a host of scams bursting in its face — said, "Let us fight in the field with our performances ... let us put up our report cards in public and then have a duel... we are sure the BJP will be wiped out."

# Villagers opposing Barsu refinery project meet Pawar in Mumbai



PTI ■ MUMBAI

A delegation of people opposing a proposed oil refinery project at Barsu in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district called on Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar in Mumbai on Sunday.

A section of residents in and around Barsu have been opposing the proposed refinery as they fear the mega project will adversely affect the fragile biodiversity of the coastal Konkan region and also hit their livelihood.

On Friday, as tempers ran high among protesters, the police used tear gas to disperse

them. Pawar tweeted that a delegation led by Satyajit Chavan called on him at the YB Chavan Centre here.

NCP leader and former state minister Jitendra Awhad was also present during the meeting. On Friday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the proposed refinery project would not be implemented without the local people's consent.

Senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar on Saturday said one should ensure development projects do not cause any damage to the environment.

He urged the Maharashtra government to hold discussions with all the stakeholders and find the best possible way out.

# Toll rises to six in building collapse in Maha's Bhiwandi

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

At least six persons were killed and 10 others were injured, while 16 persons were rescued from under the rubble after a three-storey building at Walpada locality of the powerloom town of Bhiwandi in neighbouring Thane district collapsed.

The building located at Vardhman compound at Kailashnagar collapsed all of a sudden late on Saturday afternoon, while the relief and rescue operation continued till Sunday afternoon — for nearly 24 hours — as nearly 30 persons were feared to be trapped under the rubble.

A two-and-half-year-old male child and a 30-year-old man were among the 16 persons rescued from under the rubble during the relief and rescue operation undertaken jointly by teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the local disaster response team that continued till Sunday. The two rescued persons were identified as Shivkumar (child) and Balu Pisal (30).



The preliminary investigations have revealed that the structure may have collapsed due to the weight of a huge mobile tower set up on the terrace of the building and also unauthorised extended constructions undertaken by the owner of the building.

The Bhiwandi police have arrested the owner of the building, Indrapal Patil, and are looking for the civil contractor who had carried out the construction work in the building.

While there was a godown and office of a food product company on the ground and first floors of the building, the flats on the second and third

floors of the structure were occupied by people.

Of the six persons killed in the mishap, three deceased were identified as Navnath Sawant (35), Lalita Ravi Mehta (29) and Mukesh Kori (5). The details of the three other persons killed in the mishap were not immediately known.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde met the injured persons at a Bhiwandi Hospital. He announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the families of each of those killed in the mishap. He said that the state government would bear the cost of medical treatment of the injured.

# Nitish sidesteps query on fighting 2024 poll

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday sidestepped a query about the possibility of contesting the next year's Lok Sabha poll from his pocket borough Nalanda.

The JD (U) supreme leader was an MP from the seat until he resigned in 2005 to assume the highest seat of power in the state.

His party, nonetheless, has been able to retain the seat.

Sitting MP Kaushalendra Kumar, who is serving his third consecutive term, had on Saturday said he was willing to give up the seat if his mentor wished to enter the fray.

When journalists approached the chief minister with a query on the MP's statement, his reply was characteristically cryptic.

"Just leave it. Why do you worry (chhodiye na aap log kahe chinta karte hain)," said the longest-serving chief minister of the state, as he walked



past the posse of reporters with a smirk on his face.

Incidentally, shortly after Kumar dumped the BJP in August last year, there had been speculations that he could contest from Phulpur in adjoining Uttar Pradesh, a Lok Sabha seat formerly represented by Jawaharlal Nehru, where a sizeable chunk of voters are Kurmis, the caste to which the JD(U) leader belongs.

The JD(U) boss, who has vowed to defeat former ally BJP by uniting the opposition in the 2024 general elections, also seemed reluctant to comment on the 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat.

# Learn from my brother, ready to take bullet for nation: Priyanka tells PM

PTI ■ JAMKHANDI

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday remarked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement about verbal abuse, saying one has to take such attacks in their stride in public life, and counselled him to learn from her brother Rahul Gandhi, who "is ready to take a bullet for the sake of the country".

Targeting the Congress over its party president M Mallikarjun Kharge's 'venomous snake' barb at him, Modi on Saturday said till now the party and its leaders had hurled different types of abuses at him 91 times.

At a public meeting here in Bagalkote district, Vadra, commenting on the PM's statement, said: "At least they (91 abuses) are fitting on one page; if you look at the abuses by them to my family and if we start making a list, we will publish books after books about it."

"It is strange what I'm seeing from the past two-three days. I have seen many prime



ministers, Indiraji (Indira Gandhi), she took bullets for this country. I have seen Rajiv Gandhi, he sacrificed his life for this country. I have seen PV Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh working hard for this country," she said.

"But he (Modi) is the first prime minister I have seen, who comes before you and cries that he is being abused. Instead of listening to your grief, he is coming here and telling you his (problems)."

Mocking at Modi, she said someone in his office had made a list not about the problems of the people, but about

who had abused the prime minister many times.

"Have courage, Modiji. Learn from my brother Rahul Gandhi. My brother says he is ready to take a bullet for the sake of this country, not just abuse. My brother says he will stand for truth, whether you abuse, shoot a bullet or stab with a knife," Vadra said.

"Don't fear Modiji, this is public life and one has to bear such things. One needs to have courage and move forward," she said, adding, "Now that I'm talking to you, let me tell you, if you learn one more thing it will be good: listen to the voice of the people."

# Water stagnation at Raichur APMC yards turns into election issue as paddy farmers face huge losses

PTI ■ RAICHUR

Paddy farmers here have been seeking a solution to the water stagnation at the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) yards here bringing them losses, as it deteriorates the quality of rice and leads to reduction in market prices. With less than two weeks to go for the Assembly elections, political parties in the district have made it an election issue.

The Congress and JD(S) have promised to resolve the problems of the paddy farmers and provide additional facilities, if voted to power.

Farmers and labourers in Raichur claim this has been an issue in the city for more than 10 years and that "nothing has been done by the governments in the past" to resolve it.

The major agricultural produce of Raichur include rice,



cotton, groundnut and pulses.

District president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (a farmers' association in the state) Laxman Gowda blamed the problem on improper planning and infrastructure at APMC yards.

"There was no shed at APMC market earlier. The rice sacks used to get soaked in rain water completely and it spoiled the quality of the rice. Because of poor underground drainage system here, the rain water stagnates on the ground,"

Gowda told PTI.

"Even as the government spent Rs 30 crore to build these sheds, the farmers have nothing to benefit from it," he added. "After it rained in Raichur on Friday, the rains caused a loss of around Rs 25 lakh in a single day. Nobody compensates us, not the government nor APMC. It is the farmers who face the loss and suffer." The farmers' association had staged protests multiple times urging the government to resolve the matter.

# 85-yr-old woman stops receiving pension after being declared 'dead'

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Eighty-five-year-old Gattu Devi, who lives in a village in Rajasthan's Ajmer district with her family, was in for a shock when she learnt that her widow pension was stopped by the government declaring that she was dead.

A resident of Banjari village under Todgarh tehsil, the grandmother of three received her last pension of Rs 1,500 in February 2022, which too she discovered recently.

"We did not check the account as we thought the pension was being deposited regularly for the past many years. I went to the panchayat samiti and realised that my mother was declared dead and pension was stopped in February last year," Chunnal Regar, Gattu Devi's son, said.

The authorities of the Department of Social Justice



and Empowerment have initiated an inquiry to ascertain the loophole that led to the mistake. In the meantime, the department has verified Gattu Devi's identity and said her pension along with the arrears will be released next month. According to officials, the octogenarian was declared dead by the panchayat samiti without verification.

To declare someone dead, the panchayat requires a death certificate without which it is impossible to update the system. However, my mother's name was not even present in the list of dead persons, said

Regar. Gattu Devi, accompanied by her son, also visited the e-Mitra centre for biometric identification with a fractured leg, but to no avail.

"We went to the centre three-four times. However her finger prints could not be taken due to old age," her son said.

The issue was resolved after it came to the notice of authorities.

"The matter has come to our notice. Why would the department declare someone dead? There must be some technical error. We will get the matter checked. We have also sent a person to the beneficiary's residence for verification, which has been completed. The pension will be resumed from next month and arrears will also be deposited," said Hari Mohan Meena, Director of the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

# Vijayan: The Kerala Story taking up Sangh Parivar propaganda by raising 'love jihad' issue

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday slammed the makers of *The Kerala Story* film, saying they were taking up the Sangh Parivar propaganda of projecting the state as a centre of religious extremism by raising the issue of 'love jihad' — a concept rejected by the courts, probe agencies and even the Union Home Ministry.

Vijayan said that the trailer of the Hindi film, at first glance, appeared to be "deliberately produced" with the alleged aim of creating communal polarisation and spreading hate propaganda against the state. He said that despite the issue of 'love jihad' being rejected by probe agencies, courts and the MHA, it was being raised in connection with Kerala as the main premise of the film was only to humiliate



the state in front of the world. The CM, in a statement, said that such propaganda films and the alienation of Muslims depicted in them should be viewed in the context of Sangh Parivar's efforts to gain political advantage in Kerala.

He also accused the Sangh Parivar of trying to destroy the religious harmony in the state by "sowing the poisonous seeds of communalism".

Vijayan alleged that since the Sangh Parivar's politics of division was not working in Kerala, as it did in other places, it was trying to spread it through a film based on "fake

stories", unsupported by any fact or evidence.

"In the trailer of the movie, we see a hoax that 32,000 women in Kerala were converted and became members of the Islamic State. This bogus story is a product of the Sangh Parivar's lie factory," the CM contended in his statement.

He added that freedom of expression cannot be a justification for using cinema to spread sectarianism in the state and create divisions.

"It is not a licence to spread lies and communalism and divide the people in the state," he said.

Vijayan urged Malayalis to reject such moves and be vigilant against the attempts to spread communal unrest in the society through false propaganda.

He also warned of legal action against anti-social activities.

# Mumbai police book Cine Dancers' Association president, 7 others in cheating case

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai Police have registered an FIR against the president of Cine Dancers' Association (CDA) and seven other office-bearers on the charge of illegally collecting more than Rs 1 crore from aspiring members, an official said on Sunday.

Along with the CDA president, its general secretary, treasurer, and five other office-bearers have been booked for alleged cheating. Dancers registered with CDA are hired as background dancers for songs in Bollywood movies, serials, and live performances.

As per the complaint, the accused collected money to the tune of Rs 1 crore-Rs 1.5 crore under the pretext of awarding CDA membership even though they did not have permission to



collect money from the court.

The complainant alleged the CDA president and others parked money in the bank accounts of their family members. They prepared fake invoices to release the amount but never gave the account of spending, as per the FIR.

The accused persons used to collect money in the name of granting membership, donations, non-subscription etc., the FIR stated.

The complainant claimed he had paid Rs 50,000 for a CDA membership.

# KCR performs Sudarsana Yagam, inaugurates new secretariat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD

The new Telangana Secretariat, said to be the tallest and one of the largest in the country, was inaugurated on Sunday early morning hours by Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Nara Chandrababhan Rao by performing the 'Sudarsana Yagam'. The Secretariat has been named after BR Ambedkar and the CMO is placed on its sixth floor.

Addressing a gathering of ministers, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, secretaries and heads of all the departments and the secretariat staff in the new secretariat premises, KCR said today was a red letter day in the history of Telangana as the new state of the art secretariat was inaugurated with fervour and much enthusiasm.



"The marvel structure of the new secretariat is the epicenter of the state administration. Today, I am blessed and fortunate that I inaugurated the wonderful new secretariat," the CM said.

Rao said the decision to name it after Ambedkar was taken with an intention that people's representatives and the entire government machinery should work for realising the ideals of Babasaheb.

On the occasion, Rai said the per capita income of Telangana was the highest among all states in India.

The building, the foundation of which was laid in June 2019, has been built with a

height of 265 feet on an area of 10,51,676 square feet in a sprawling 28 acre land. No state has such a tall secretariat, a Press release by the government said.

The 'domes' of the new secretariat have been built on the styles of the Neelakantheswara Swamy temple of the Kakatiya period in Nizamabad, designs of the palaces of the royals of Vanaparathi 'Samsthanam' in Telangana and the pattern of the Hanuman temple in Sarangapur, Gujarat.

The construction was done flawlessly with the instructions of Roads and Buildings (R&B) department, IGBC (Indian Green Building Council), Telangana Technological Services and State police department, the government release added.



PC Chandra Group Managing Director AK Chandra presents PC Chandra Puraskar 2023 to boxer Mary Kom as billiards player Geet Sethi looks on, at a ceremony in Kolkata on Sunday



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PAPER WITH PASSION

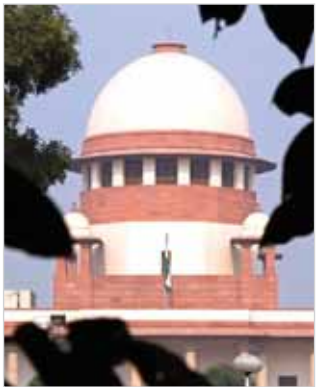
## Unintended consequences

SC empowering States and cops to take suo motu action against hate speech is fraught with danger

The Supreme Court's concern over the increasing prevalence of hate speech is laudable. Such prevalence is the direct consequence of declining standards of public debate. There are politicians and public figures who don't believe in moderation; they make deplorable statements that end up offending the sensibilities of a lot of people, often resulting in anger, further triggering similar statements. Then there are publicity seekers who make remarks just for the heck of it. The apex court has often expressed its displeasure over obnoxious remarks made in public. On Friday, the SC today extended the scope of its 2022 order, directing all states and Union Territories to act suo motu on hate speech. The order it passed last year was meant only for Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. So, now cops will be duty-bound to act on their own against hate speech, failing which, the court warned, they would be held in contempt.

The SC is rightly furious at the growing instances of hate speech, saying that it is "capable of affecting the secular fabric of the country." The apex court's concern for decency and decorum in public life is indeed laudable, but there can be unintended consequences. The most important is the further empowerment of government and police.

It is a well-known fact that government decisions, as also police action, are often guided by not just concerns related to governance but also for political purposes. Law and order is under the control of State Governments. There have been many instances in the past in which police have



invoked Sections 296A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code to register criminal cases against politicians and others opposed to the respective State Government. A criminal case is not a just threat to one's liberty; it also means a lot of trouble. One has to engage a lawyer, get bail, arrange a person competent enough to offer a surety, appear personal on every date, and so on. As they say, the process is the punishment. There is even a term for such actions: strategic lawsuit against public participation or SLAPP. The idea is not to win the case but to silence the opponent. The latest SC direction has the potential of increasing the sting of SLAPP. Since police report to their political bosses in their respective states, they would not just listen to their superiors in filing cases against the individuals State Governments don't like but also not take cognisance of the hate speeches made by ruling party and party functionaries. The rule of law would degrade to the rule of men and women. The SC said that it has been entertaining petitions against hate speeches in different parts of the country for the "larger public good" and to ensure the establishment of the "rule of law." Unfortunately, the order it has passed may not be able to do that despite the judges' best intentions.

### PICTALK



Labourers work at a brick factory ahead of Labour Day, in Patna

# A journey of nation building, inspiration



ARJUN MUNDA

Since its inception, Mann Ki Baat has raised awareness about significant issues and motivated listeners to act for social and national causes

The nation celebrated the 100th episode of the popular radio program 'Mann Ki Baat' hosted by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on April 30th, 2023. I congratulate the PM on the roaring success of the program. Mann Ki Baat has been an important platform where the PM interacts with the people including tribal communities, understands their concerns, shares his personal experiences and creates awareness on important issues. His program has been a great source of inspiration for the tribal youth and motivates them to contribute to the nation's progress. As India celebrates Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the progress, development, and achievements of our nation speak volumes of our potential and our position on the global platform.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mann Ki Baat acted as a channel for educating the public and encouraging vaccination and is largely responsible for the success of India's vaccination story which alone is a sufficient testament to its importance and relevance. Tribal health being the prime focus, the government is committed to eradicating Sickle Cell Disease by 2047 by entailing awareness creation, universal screening, and counselling through the collaboration of Centres and States. To improve the quality of life for tribals through interventions in safe housing, access to clean water and sanitary facilities, enhanced education and healthcare, livelihood support, and cultural aspects, our efforts have always focused on implementing schemes that adopt a habitat-level development approach.

Certain tribes in India are identified as the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, which are at the lowest level of development as they have been neglected for far too long. With 75 PVTG groups scattered across 18 states and the UT of Andaman & Nicobar Island in India, the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Mission, with an allocation of Rs. 15,000 Crores, the government is committed to conservation and development of PVTG communities.



It is part of the PM's 'Reaching the Last Mile' initiative.

The Hon'ble PM in his latest episode suggested the documentation of tribal languages to preserve them, such as Karbi of the Karbi Anglong region of Assam which has been revived through documentation and research. Other tribal languages at risk of extinction will also be preserved through similar efforts. Further, the Ministry also actively supports major tribal festivals such as Medaram Jathara and the Hornbill Festival, which are celebrated with great fervour in the country. This exercise helps in preserving and promoting our tribal cultural heritage.

The Hon'ble PM has observed that tribals are the denizens of the forests and the natural environment. He also discussed how to tackle issues like pollution and climate change, and emphasized the importance of organic farming and millet (shree-anna). Under the Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs taps into the traditional knowledge and skill sets of the tribals and converts it into an economic activity through procurement and value addition of locally available Minor Forest Produce,

targeting livelihood generation and transforming tribals into entrepreneurs.

The Hon'ble PM has suggested that the implementation of schemes be monitored at the grassroots level. Mann Ki Baat has been widely (and rightfully so) referred to as a social revolution and finds a solid base in Jan Bhagidari. The PM also takes note of the issues affecting the public and formulates action-based plans to tackle the problems. One such area is the Padma Awards. Hitherto considered elitist, these awards have now become People's Padma where the efforts of the individuals who have brought changes at the grassroots level and helped in nation-building are being acknowledged. One such instance is the recognition of contribution of unsung tribal heroes in our freedom struggle and the Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museum.

The nation now celebrates it as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas commemorating Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the martyrs of the Mangarh Hill Massacre of Rajasthan and the unsung heroes of tribal communities. Giving impetus to the provision of quality education for tribal children, our focus is not only limited to structured programmes and syllabi.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools provide holistic education with enriching tribal knowledge, languages, history, and experiences. The government is in the process of recruiting 38,800 teachers for its 740 EMRS which will serve 3.5 lakh tribal students.

The PM receives lakhs of letters each month from all over the country. He frequently speaks to the audience members on the phone while the show is in progress. People's confidence in democracy and governance is at an all-time high because of this. It is pertinent to note that, since its inception, Mann Ki Baat has worked to raise awareness about significant issues throughout its successful run of 99 episodes over eight years and to motivate viewers to act for social and national causes. With the latest episode, we have marked the completion of 100 episodes, a grand feat! I am personally grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for guiding the nation through Mann Ki Baat, and instilling a sense of pride, belongingness, and nationalism to further the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

(The writer is Minister of Tribal Affairs; the views expressed are personal)

THE PM RECEIVES LAKHS OF LETTERS EACH MONTH FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. HE FREQUENTLY SPEAKS TO THE AUDIENCE MEMBERS ON THE PHONE WHILE THE SHOW IS IN PROGRESS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### UNPARDONABLE SECURITY LAPSES

Sir — On 14 February 2019, a lone suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into a bus bringing CRPF jawans back from leave, killing 40 jawans, the controversy around it refuses to die. The 'friendly fire' controversy was revived this week by the then J&K governor Satya Pal Malik. While the former BJP leader reiterated several suspicions raised at the time about security lapses and intelligence failure, in recent interviews, he claimed he was being asked not to dwell on the lapses. The attack could have been avoided, he added, if the then home minister Rajnath Singh had not turned down requests for aircraft to move the jawans from Jammu to Srinagar. The mystery of the Pulwama attack remains unsolved despite the voluminous charge sheet filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The government maintained a studied silence on the issue. It is assumed that the explosives originated in Pakistan, nobody quite knows how it got into India. It was a collective failure. The car carrying 300 kilograms of RDX remained undetected while travelling around in Kashmir for 10-15 days. Malik blames it on negligence.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### MINOR VICTORY FOR THE WRESTLERS

Sir — Thankfully 'better late than never', seven females, including a minor, wrestlers' continued protests at the Jantar Mantar in the national capital fructified at last and an FIR was on Friday registered against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brijbhushan Sharan Singh, though the protesters still demanding his arrest. To rub it in, an iconic athlete at the helm of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) affairs, PT Usha instead of supporting her athlete fraternity, outlandishly took them to task for raising their voice against their sexual harassment and the resultant mental trauma they had been undergoing for long—a stance having an adverse bearing on her otherwise huge public persona which

### 100th episode of Mann Ki Baat



It's good to learn that Prime Minister Modi's brainchild, the Mann ki Baat programme is going to reach the hundred mark this Sunday. The prime minister's monthly talk programme on air, through All India Radio has been regular and touched many topics of society. The broad variety of topics right from chil-

dren's examinations to the success story of a common man in the hinterland has infused interest and novelty in this talk show. The top executive of India could reach the last person and share his ideas on various subjects that are of national interest. The way he utilised the medium, which is nearly redundant in public life is exemplary. Though it's one-way communication, we, the Telugu people felt happy when our Telugu writer Gurajada had been cited by the prime minister. That's the hallmark of the success of the programme. The local flavour in the talk has made the people of that locality on the show and the leader. The unique show must go successfully.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

now is caught in the crossfire from many politicians and sports persons including Congress Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi, iconic cricketer Kapil Dev and Neeraj Chopra to name which also flies in the face of PT Usha's stand. Public perception has it that these dilly-dallying tactics in the case snitch on the WFI chief's political clout and verily speaking, in case he is left off the hook, it would simply be grist to the rumour mills that might fly in the face of the ruling regime's claim of 'zero tolerance' for crime.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

### REVERSES OF MAY DAY IN INDIA

Sir — International Workers' Day, also known as International Labour Day, is celebrated across the globe on May 1. May 1 in particular was chosen as the date to mark Labour Day to commemorate the nationwide strike for an eight-hour day in 1886 that began on May 1 and ended as the Haymarket affair in Chicago US. The Haymarket affair refers to the tragic incident where a labour protest rally turned violent after someone threw a bomb at the police leading to the death of several workers.

In India, the first May Day was celebrated in Chennai (then Madras) in 1923 by The Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan and eight-hour day started.

After a century the wheels of "labour day" have been turning back in India. It was specifically after the economic reforms initiated way back in the year 1990-91. With liberalisation hard-earned labour laws are being constantly violated. The pink slips to the workers have been issued in thousands. Outsourcing against regular vacancies has become a norm. Under this piquant situation, targets to complete the work at the cost of the worker's health and family life were ordered to be implemented.

There are crores of ASHA workers, mid-day, meal workers, as also the MGNREGS often have to wait for their wages months together and they have to borrow money to meet their daily expenses. But how many days will they work under these pitiable conditions? Briefly, this is "May Day" in India after one century.

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## The NEP approach to holistic learning

The HEIs must have a roadmap for providing quality education that is holistic, multidisciplinary and inclusive

The higher education system in India is transforming as a result of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). Integrating Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education into the educational system is one of the NEP's fundamental initiatives. The focus is on developing "good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals." It is anticipated that the implementation of NEP 2020 would bring about substantial changes to the educational ecosystem to allow a holistic learning experience for the holistic development of students.

Early universities such as Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila were renowned for their holistic and interdisciplinary education. This emphasis may have waned in many educational institutions in the past few centuries due to various factors.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched NEP-2020 on July 29, 2020, following extensive research and evaluation of the existing education scenario, future requirements, and one of the largest public



consultations. This policy is student-centric, learning-focused, flexible, futuristic, experiential, and interdisciplinary, with an emphasis on the Indian knowledge system.

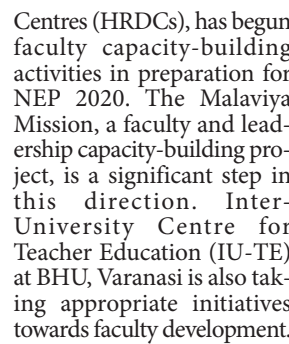
NEP 2020 recommends revamping curriculum, pedagogy and assessment systems that focus on conceptual understanding, learning how to learn, critical thinking, creativity, soft skills, life skills, technical skills, research etc. for enhancing the holistic learning experience. There would be a greater need for learning by doing an approach demanding practical, simulation, training, field visits, internships, apprenticeship etc.

In an endeavour to accomplish NEP 2020, the

University Grants Commission (UGC) has undertaken substantial measures by developing regulations, frameworks, guidelines and other policies. Learning Outcome Based Curriculum Framework; Four Year Undergraduate Curriculum and Credit Framework; Guidelines for Multidisciplinary Institutions; Multiple Entry and Exit options; Academic Bank of Credits; internships and apprenticeships are landmark initiatives by the UGC to promote and facilitate Holistic Education and Learning Experience.

A change towards holistic education and learning experiences would necessitate faculty development to shift them from lecture-based teaching to learner-centred teaching and learning methods. Holistic learning demands a greater emphasis on an interactive, collaborative, and participative methodology. Relationships between students and teachers must be cultivated with great care and equilibrium.

The UGC, via its Human Resource Development



RAJESH JAIN

Centres (HRDCs), has begun faculty capacity-building activities in preparation for NEP 2020. The Malaviya Mission, a faculty and leadership capacity-building project, is a significant step in this direction. Inter-University Centre for Teacher Education (IU-TE) at BHU, Varanasi is also taking appropriate initiatives towards faculty development.

As we move toward attaining the vision and goals of NEP 2020 and sustainable development goal for education (SDG 4), it becomes imperative for the HEIs to have a clear strategic plan. Governments and other statutory bodies will play a key role by providing required levels of regulatory architecture and resource support; hand-holding and capacity building; and developing facilitating mechanisms and systems. To reap the benefits of this scenario, we must commit to making our higher education institutions a hub for holistic and multidisciplinary education and lifelong learning.

(The writer is a former secretary of UGC, Views expressed are personal)

## FIRST COLUMN

## THE POWER OF SELF-TALK

A little voice in our head helps us make sense of the world



SAKSHI SETHI

Often at times, a person may come up with several thoughts in mind such as "I can't do anything right. I shouldn't even try."; "Nobody likes me, I should stop trying to make friends."; "I don't like anything about myself."; "I'm so dumb."; "I look so ugly."; "I am a failure"; "My body is disgusting" and many more... such talks are often a cause of negative self-talk. On the flip side, thoughts such as "I am grateful for all the good things in my life."; "I trust myself to succeed."; "I am worthy of a healthy relationship."; "I am in control of my thoughts and emotions." and many more... contribute towards positive self-talk.

The much talked about term 'Self-talk' is a normal phenomenon. It is the endless stream of thoughts that keeps on running in an individual mind. It is the inner voice, the voice in heads that says things that one often can't say aloud. Self-talk can affect an individual's certainty and the impact of it can be great or awful, depending upon whether it is positive or not.

Every individual has a little voice in their head that helps to make sense of the world. It helps an individual to make good decisions, keep them safe and even motivates them to work towards their goals. On the other side, negative self-talk can have the opposite effect and can



negatively impact self-confidence and self-esteem and often lead to a vicious cycle. When the situation becomes too negative, it can affect the beliefs about selves, making it difficult to find healthy ways to cope with the situation and can ultimately increase stress.

"Our actions are a reflection of our thoughts." However, it is difficult to always practice positive self-talk, especially while undergoing a stressful life event. Negative self-talk can spiral out of control. The negative thoughts can lead to heightened depression and anxiety making the life of an individual difficult to cope with everyday challenges and feelings of overwhelm and burnout. Also, it lowers self-confidence and self-esteem, harms relationships with others and ultimately ruins the chance of success in life as the individual starts creating self-doubt which prevents them from taking risks and pursuing their goals and dreams.

An individual needs to interject those thoughts with periods of mindfulness. Negative self-talk is often experienced by people who have depression or anxiety. It can happen either to an adult or a child depending upon the circumstances. For a learner, engaging in positive self-talk before exams can reduce performance anxiety. For an athlete engaging in positive self-talk will significantly improve their performance. It also helps them stay engaged with the sport and have fun while performing. It can be encouraging and distressing at the same time. Much of the self-talk depends on your personality. Self-talk is something that can enhance the performance and general well-being of an individual. Maintaining a consistent practice of positive self-talk is an art. It is challenging as continuous negative thoughts may hinder an individual's efforts to cultivate a positive outlook on life.

Remember, negative self-talk can lead to a negative self-perception which can cause poor self-esteem, thereby affecting the individual coping mechanism. It can be limiting and stress-inducing for an individual. Shifting to positive self-talk can be a powerful tool for transforming life. With time, positive or negative self-talk becomes a habit and can be changed as the situation demands. Positive self-talk can help keep an individual mindset upbeat and hopeful, which can help them get through difficult and stressful situations. Self-talk does play a crucial role in the overall well-being of an individual and paying attention to it can have a positive impact on the overall well-being of an individual.

(The writer is an educator. The views expressed are personal)

## Sentence remission of murder convict unjust



RAGHAV CHANDRA

Convicted of daylight lynching of Krishnaiah, Anand Mohan's premature release is a blow to the IAS officer's family, to justice and a slap to civil servants

There can be nothing more heinous than the lynching of a public servant on duty, by a rowdy mob, in broad daylight, in a public place. That the public functionary was the District Magistrate, the highest executive of the district and that the leader of the mob was an elected political leader makes this case even more shocking and significant.

The killing of Indian Administrative Service officer Krishnaiah, then District Magistrate of Gopalganj in Bihar, on December 5, 1994, must rank as the equivalent of a Jallianwala Bagh tragedy in the annals of public administration because of its imperiousness, senselessness and brutality. That civil servants across the length and breadth of the country are anguished by the premature release from behind bars of Anand Mohan, the prime accused, is only natural.

This is not just a blow to justice and to the family of the officer, but a slap to the civil servants across the nation. It will cast a lasting and disheartening spell on the civil service—if allowed to pass, it will further demoralise civil servants forever. That Krishnaiah was a Dalit from a poor social background, does not lend extra salience to this case, because a civil servant on duty is casteless, wedded only to the Constitution.

Civil servants make up the spinal cord that holds a governmental framework together, imparting interoperability and resilience to all other organs. Sardar Patel recognised the value of civil servants. While exhorting them to be impartial and fair in their approach, he also made it clear that governments should be able to keep civil servants happy and content so that they are in a position to give their best.

Woodrow Wilson, who is recognised in America as the father of public administration, spoke at length about the importance and sanctity of civil service.

And yet, we have a case of the main accused in the murder of the District Magistrate being released prematurely in contravention of law. There are many legal grounds that make the remission of the sentence unjustifiable.

The Supreme Court has held the view that for persons convicted of murder, life imprisonment is the rule and death sentence an exception, and a balance between aggravating and mitigating circumstances has to be drawn out. In the famous Macchi Singh case, of killings in Punjab, in 1983, the Supreme Court invoked the concept of "community" and put itself in the shoes of the community and spoke of "collective conscience," when awarding the death sentence to the accused.

The Supreme Court has subsequently also looked at what would define the magnitude of the crime as being enormous. In the Swami Shraddhanand case of Karnataka, in 2006, it has enumerated one of these instances as "when the victim is a public figure generally loved and respected by the community for the services rendered by him and the murder is committed for political or similar reasons other than personal reasons." It has also recognised that "the sentence of imprisonment shall last as long as life lasts, where there are exceptional indications of murderous recidivism and the community cannot run the risk of the



THIS ORDER OF THE BIHAR GOVERNMENT MERITS BEING CHALLENGED. IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT IT IS BASED ON EXTRANEOUS POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND THEREFORE DESERVES TO BE DECLARED UNREASONABLE, ARBITRARY AND UNFAIR, AND STRUCK DOWN

(The author is a former Secretary to the Government of India)



convict being at large. This takes care of judicial apprehensions that unless physically liquidated the culprit may at some remote time repeat murder."

Thus, the Supreme Court has drawn a distinction, based on the circumstances of the crime, the background of the accused and the nature of the victim, between imprisonment for life that should not be commuted and routine life imprisonment that is subject to remission. It has held that once subjected to permanent imprisonment for life, there should not be a case for remission. It has observed, "No other rule has been brought to our notice which confers an indefeasible right on a prisoner sentenced to transportation for life to an unconditional release on the expiry of a particular term including remissions. The rules under the Prisons Act do not substitute a lesser sentence for a sentence of transportation for life... a sentence for life would ensure till the lifetime of the accused as it is not possible to fix a particular period the prisoner's death and remissions given under the Rules could not be regarded as a substitute for a sentence of transportation for life."

In the present case, Anand Mohan was awarded a death sentence by the Sessions Court at the

end of a 13-year trial. On appeal, the Patna High Court commuted that to 'Rigorous Imprisonment for life.' On his further appeal, the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence of "Rigorous Imprisonment for Life". That gave the sentence finality. As elucidated in earlier judgments of the Supreme Court, imprisonment for life means full natural course of life and cannot be mechanically interpreted to be 14 years. This has been further reaffirmed in various judgments such as those of Constitutional benches in Maru Ram v. Union of India and Union of India v. Sriharan. Therefore, the grant of remission by the State of Bihar undertaken through its executive order of April 24, 2023 flies in the face of earlier rulings of the Supreme Court.

Even as per the Bihar Prison Manual, this order of remission is wrong. Rule 481(1)(c) of the Bihar Prison Manual, 2012, provides that convicts whose death sentence has been commuted to life sentence will be eligible for consideration of remission only after completion of 20 years of sentence. In this case, Anand Mohan was finally handed a Rigorous Imprisonment for Life that was confirmed by the Apex Court. Because Anand Mohan had served only 14 years of incar-

ceration, he was not eligible to be considered for remission.

Besides, the policy of remission applicable at the time of conviction has to be considered for deciding the application of premature release as per the Supreme Court. In the present case, there was a notification that stated that there would be no remission for those Convicts who had been guilty of murder of civil servants on duty. Therefore, the Bihar government could not have overlooked the case and amended the Jail Manual with retrospective effect to cause the release of Anand Mohan. Besides being patently illegal such an order is sheer capitulation to criminal forces and thereby a public admission of compromised governance.

This order of the Bihar Government merits being challenged. It should be pointed out that it is based on extraneous political considerations and therefore deserves to be declared unreasonable, arbitrary, unfair, and struck down. A Government that lowers the morale of civil servants and vitiates the rule of law carves out its own perdition. As for civil servants like G Krishnaiah who lay down their lives while in office, one remembers the words of Tennyson, "When can their glory fade?"

## Achieving exports target of two trillion dollars

The rupee payment can come handy and change the trade scenario. The target, though challenging, is doable. With imagination and effort, it can be achieved

According to the foreign trade policy announced on March 31, 2023, the goods and services exports target of \$2000 billion by 2030, has been fixed. Due to the lacklustre performance of our exports so far, many experts are expressing doubts about this ambitious target. But at the same time, a large section of economists is not considering this goal as non-achievable. Ten years ago, in 2012-13, India's export of goods and services were only \$452.3 billion. Since then, our imports grew at a much faster pace, but the export growth has been slowing down.

In 2021-22, though our exports of goods and services had reached \$683.7 billion, imports had reached \$765.6 billion. Over the last 10 years,



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

we see a meagre growth of only 3.27 per cent in the export of goods annually, but the rate of growth of services exports target at 5.94 per cent. Overall, exports did not grow very fast in the last 10 years. But the growth of exports of goods and services was much better at 11.3 per cent last year. That is, while earlier the target of \$1000 billion in 2030 seemed insurmountable, to achieve the target of \$2000 billion in 2030, the country will have to keep the pace of export growth at only 14.81 per cent.

## STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Today, when all the countries of the world are suffering from rising inflation, the rate of inflation in India is still less. India continues to be the fastest-growing economy in

the world. Though import duties account for a major chunk of GST receipts, value addition on imports of intermediate goods is also causing a rise in GST.

## HOW CAN WE INCREASE EXPORTS?

Increasing exports is indeed a challenging task due to the decreasing purchasing power due to the ongoing economic crisis and inflation in the world. Despite this, the growth in India's exports of services and goods is of special importance. Food exports surpassed USD 50 billion in 2021-22. Figures for 2022-23 are yet to come, but food exports still make a significant contribution to total exports.

Significantly, till now India has been more dependent on

imports in the field of defence. But due to the progress made in the defence industry, the country has not only become self-sufficient but the contribution of this industry has also increased in exports. While the country used to get 70 per cent of its defence requirements from imports, it now depends on imports for only 32 per cent of equipment.

Defence exports have grown by more than 10 times in the last 6 years, indicating the potential for exports from this sector in the future.

India has been making big strides in the service sector for the last 30 years, but its importance has increased more in the present times. The progress in the country's software is leaving behind other countries including China.

## RUPEE PAYMENT CAN CHANGE THE TRADE SCENARIO

Many countries of the world which were interested in importing from India earlier; were not able to do so, due to the paucity of dollars. Recently the Reserve Bank of India, through a circular allowed settlement for import and export in rupees. After this the settlement of trade with Russia started in rupees for the first time in December. So far, thanks to the efforts of the Government of India, Indian banks have opened 'Special Vostro Accounts' in 19 countries including England, New Zealand, Germany, Malaysia, Israel, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. With these 19 countries still exporting huge-

ly to India, if are paid in rupees, will now have a large stock of Indian rupees.

## BETTER COMPETITIVENESS

In the past, Indian goods had been lacking competitiveness vis a vis other countries of the world, due to the lack of infrastructure. For some time now there is no shortage of electricity in the country and industry has been enjoying an uninterrupted power supply. There is some reduction in the cost of electricity also, due to solar power etc. Roads, railways and waterways have changed the infrastructure scenario in the country. Better digital infrastructure is also improving India's competitiveness.

In such a situation, while India has so far achieved the

target of \$767 billion, reaching \$2000 billion in the next seven years, does not seem to be an impregnable target. But the country will have to make continuous efforts for the same. Manufacturing in the country will have to be strengthened, costs of production and transactions need to be reduced and the current pace of infrastructure construction be maintained. The fact is that in the year 2013-14, India's GDP was just less than 2 trillion US dollars, and exports were little less than 500 billion US dollars; when the size of the Indian economy expanded to nearly 3.5 trillion US dollars and exports are 767 billion US dollars, in 2030 when we become a \$7 trillion economy, export target of 2 trillion US dollars looks well achievable.

# Man guns down five neighbours in Texas

AP ■ CLEVELAND/TEXAS

A Texas man went next door with a rifle and fatally shot five of his neighbours, including an eight-year-old boy, after they asked him to stop firing rounds in his yard because they were trying to sleep, authorities said.

The suspect, identified as 38-year-old Francisco Oropeza, remained at large more than 18 hours after the shooting and authorities warned that he might still be armed.

The attack happened just before midnight Friday near the town of Cleveland, north of Houston, on a street where some residents say it is not uncommon to hear neighbours unwind by firing off guns.

San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers said Oropeza used an AR-style rifle, and as the search for him dragged into Saturday evening, authorities had widened their efforts to as far as "10 to 20 miles" from the murder scene. He said Oropeza may still have a weapon but that he believes authorities have the rifle used in the shooting.

Capers said they found clothes and a phone while combing a rural area that includes dense layers of forest but that tracking dogs had lost the scent.

"He could be anywhere now," Capers said. Capers said the victims were between the ages of 8 and 31 years old and that all were believed to be from Honduras. All were shot "from the neck up," he said.

The attack was the latest act of gun violence in what has been a record pace of mass shootings in the US so far this year, some of which have also involved semiautomatic rifles.

The mass killings have played out in a variety of places — a Nashville school, a Kentucky bank, a Southern California dance hall, and now a rural Texas neighbourhood inside a single-story home. Capers said there were 10 people in the house — some of whom had just moved there earlier in the week — but that no one else was injured. He said two of the victims were found in a bedroom laying over two children in an apparent



Authorities from multiple agencies work at a location where law enforcement believe they have cornered a suspect who allegedly shot and killed five people in a house the night before, Saturday, in unincorporated San Jacinto County, Texas. AP/PTI

## Mass shooting suspect could be anywhere, says Sheriff

Cleveland (AP): The search for a Texas man who allegedly shot his neighbours, stretched into a second day on Sunday, with authorities saying the man could be anywhere by now. Francisco Oropeza, 38, fled after the shooting on Friday night that left five people dead, including an 8-year-old boy. San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers said on Saturday evening that authorities had widened the search to as far as 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the scene of the shooting. Investigators found clothes and a phone while combing a rural area that includes dense layers of forest, but tracking dogs lost the scent, Capers said.

Police recovered the AR-15-style rifle that Oropeza allegedly used in the shootings but authorities were not sure if he was carrying another weapon, attempt to shield them.

A total of three children found covered in blood in the home were taken to a hospital but found to be uninjured, Capers said. FBI spokesperson Christina Garza said investigators do not believe everyone at

the sheriff said. "He could be anywhere now," Capers said.

The attack happened near the town of Cleveland, north of Houston, on a street where some residents say neighbours often unwind by firing off guns. Capers said the victims were between the ages of 8 and 31 years old and that all were believed to be from Honduras. All were shot "from the neck up," he said. The attack was the latest act of gun violence in what has been a record pace of mass shootings in the US so far this year, some of which have also involved semiautomatic rifles.

The mass killings have played out in a variety of places — a Nashville school, a Kentucky bank, a Southern California dance hall, and now a rural Texas neighbourhood inside a single-story home.

the home was a member of a single family. The victims were identified as Sonia Argentina Guzman (25); Diana Velazquez Alvarado (21); Julisa Molina Rivera (31); Jose Jonathan Casarez (18); and Daniel Enrique Laso (8).

# Trump ups competition with DeSantis

AP ■ IOWA

The competition between Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis is intensifying as the former president is scheduling a return trip to Iowa on the same day that the Florida governor was already going to be in the state that will kick off the Republican contest for the White House.

A Trump campaign official on Saturday said the former president plans to be in Iowa on May 13 to headline an organising rally at a sprawling park in downtown Des Moines.

That's when DeSantis was already slated to headline Iowa Rep. Randy Feenstra's annual summer fundraiser in northwest Iowa and speak at a party fundraiser later that evening in Cedar Rapids.

The Trump campaign official, who requested anonymity to discuss the trip before it was announced, said the Des Moines organising rally has

been in the planning stage for weeks and is aimed at identifying caucus supporters and volunteers.

The move is a sign of the escalating competition between the two men who, at least for now, are leading contenders for the Republican presidential nomination.

Trump and his allies have become increasingly emboldened in their efforts to attack and marginalise DeSantis, who is expected to announce his White House bid sometime after the Florida Legislature wraps up its work in the coming week.

But Trump's trip is also notable for its emphasis on the type of ground-level organising that is vital in Iowa politics and was often missing during his 2016 campaign when Texas Sen. Ted Cruz overtook him and won the state's GOP caucuses.

Trump has been almost singularly focused on swinging at DeSantis, whom he has



attacked for policy positions on entitlement reform, his loyalty to conservative causes, and even his character.

While DeSantis has largely ignored Trump's jabs, a pro-DeSantis super political action committee, Never Back Down, began to respond in paid ads this month.

Meanwhile, the super PAC promoting DeSantis is hiring Iowa staff to begin organising support for the governor before he enters the race. The

stakes for both men are particularly high in Iowa, where the caucuses in February offer opportunities for them to cement their status atop the GOP. A poor performance, however, would give an opening for other Republicans to mount an upstart campaign.

Trump's 2016 Iowa campaign was a seat-of-the-pants operation disparately managed by campaign newcomers who, including the candidate, had little idea what the caucus-

es are. The roughly 1,700 precinct-level Republican political meetings, vestiges of prairie civic life, include a presidential preference question but require in-person participation on a typically frigid winter evening.

Eight years ago, Trump's Iowa team had left contact information for roughly 10,000 Iowans interested in supporting him unprocessed before the caucuses, where Trump had led in lead-up polls, but fell short against Cruz's more organised campaign.

Armed with not just refined 2016 caucus data but the information collected during two national campaigns, Trump's advisers say they are building a data and digital engagement strategy they say would put him in a position to win the caucuses. It's an expectation Iowa GOP strategists say is an absolute must for the former president, who carried Iowa comfortably in the 2016 and 2020 general elections.

## 2 killed, 4 wounded in Mississippi shooting

Bay St Louis (US): Police have charged a 19-year-old man with killing two teens and wounding four others in an early Sunday shooting at a house party on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Cameron Everest Brand of Pass Christian is charged with murder and aggravated assault, jail records show. Bay St. Louis Police Chief Toby Schwartz said in a news release that police identified Brand as the sole shooter through witness and victim statements.

Bay St. Louis is about 15 miles (25 kilometers) west of Gulfport. Hancock County Coroner Jeff Hair told The Associated Press that two teens had died, but said Sunday morning he was not yet prepared to release their identities. Brand was arrested at his home in neighbouring Pass Christian and taken to jail, Schwartz said.

## Known for laughs, DC dinner spotlights risks of journalism

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House Correspondents' Association dinner — known for its fun albeit ferocious jabs at Washington — took a more solemn tone this year as President Joe Biden acknowledged the several American journalists under siege in authoritarian countries around the world.

"We are here to send a message to the country and, quite frankly, to the world: The free press is a pillar, maybe the pillar, of a free society, not the enemy," Biden said in his speech.

The president and first lady Jill Biden, upon arriving at the Washington Hilton on Saturday, met privately with the parents of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who has been imprisoned in Russia since March.

He was charged with spying, despite strong denials from his employer and the US gov-

ernment. Some guests wore buttons with "Free Evan" printed on them.

Also among the 2,600 people attending the gala was Debra Tice, the mother of Austin Tice, who has not been heard from since disappearing at a checkpoint in Syria in 2012. US officials say they operate under the assumption that he is alive and are working to try to bring him home.

"Journalism is not a crime. Evan and Austin should be released immediately along with every other American detained abroad," Biden said. "I promise you, I am working like hell to get them home."

The Bidens also made a beeline for Brittney Griner, the WNBA star and Olympic gold medalist who was detained in Russia for nearly 10 months last year before her release in a prisoner swap. Griner attended with her wife, Cherelle, as guests of CBS News.

"This time last year we

were praying for you, Brittney," Biden said to the basketball star.

The annual black-tie dinner drew a wide array of celebrities and media moguls to Washington, with parties being held across the capital. Among those in attendance were actor Liev Schreiber, singer John Legend and his wife, Chrissy Teigen, the model and television personality.

Actor and former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger opened the dinner with a pre-taped video about the importance of a free and independent press, calling reporters an "ally of the people." Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were seated on the stage along with comedian Roy Wood Jr., a correspondent for "The Daily Show," who was the featured entertainer.

While Biden spent the majority of his speech focused on the issue of press freedom, he took time to take jabs at some of his most vocal political critics.

## Indian-origin man found guilty of killing teens for doorbell prank

New York (PTI): An Indian-origin man has been found guilty of killing three teenage boys who played a doorbell-ringing prank at his house in the US state of California, according to local media reports.

Anurag Chandra, a Riverside County resident, was found guilty of three counts of attempted murder and three counts of first-degree murder on Friday, the New York Post reported.

The incident took place on January 19, 2020, when a group of teenage boys rang Chandra's bell on a dare, the report added. Chandra said that one of the teens flashed his buttocks before running away.

The crash killed all three teenagers who were 16 years old, it said.

During the trial, Chandra testified that he had been afraid for his family's safety that night when he saw a person with a hooded sweatshirt outside his home, and that he chased down the other car to verbally express his anger. The Press-Enterprise newspaper reported.

He also testified that he had drunk 12 bottles of beer on the night of the crash, the newspaper reported.

He followed the boys and rammed their Toyota Prius off the road, which slammed into a tree in Temescal Valley.

Corona residents Daniel Hawkins and Drake Ruiz passed away due to their injuries, along with Riverside resident Jacob Ivascu.

The suspect testified that he did not plan to crash into the boys' car, according to the Riverside Press-Enterprise newspaper.

Chandra also said he did not stop after rear-ending their vehicle because he did not think anyone had been injured.

The driver, who was 18 years old, survived, along with two 13-year-old passengers.

Chandra is already facing charges in connection with a domestic violence incident in 2020 before the fatal crash.

## Emergency aid supplies reach Sudan

Cairo (AP): An aircraft carrying eight tons of emergency medical aid landed on Sunday in Sudan to resupply hospitals devastated by more than two weeks of fighting between forces loyal to rival generals.

The supplies are enough to treat hundreds of wounded, as the civilian death toll from the countrywide violence topped 400.

The conflict erupted on April 15 between the nation's army and its paramilitary force, and threatens to thrust Sudan into a raging civil war.

More than two-thirds of hospitals in areas with active fighting are out of service, a national doctors' association has said, citing a shortage of medical supplies, health workers, water and electricity.

On Sunday, the aircraft carrying medical aid took off from Jordan and landed in the city of Port Sudan, said the



People line up at a gasoline station in Khartoum, Sudan on Saturday. AP/PTI

International Committee of the Red Cross.

The supplies, including anaesthetics, dressings, sutures and other surgical material, are enough to treat more than 1,000 people wounded in the conflict,

the ICRC said.

"The hope is to get this material to some of the most critically busy hospitals in the capital" of Khartoum and other hot spots, said Patrick Youssef, ICRC's regional director for

Africa.

The Sudan Doctors' Syndicate, which monitors casualties, said on Sunday that over the past two weeks, 425 civilians were killed and 2,091 wounded.

The Sudanese Health Ministry on Saturday put the overall death toll, including fighters, at 528, with 4,500 wounded.

Some of the deadliest battles have raged across Khartoum. The fighting pits the army chief, Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, against Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the head of a paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces. The generals, both with powerful foreign backers, were allies in an October 2021 military coup that halted Sudan's fitful transition to democracy, but they have since turned on each other. Ordinary Sudanese have been caught in the cross-fire.

## US conducts first evacuation of its citizens from Sudan war

Washington: Hundreds of Americans fleeing two weeks of deadly fighting in Sudan reached the east African nation's port Saturday in the first US-run evacuation, completing a dangerous land journey under escort of armed drones.

American unmanned aircraft, which have been keeping an eye on overland evacuation routes for days, provided armed overwatch for a bus convoy carrying 200 to 300 Americans over 800 km to Port Sudan, a place of relative safety, US officials said.

The US, which had none of its officials on the ground for the evacuation, has been criticised by families of trapped Americans in Sudan for initially ruling out any US-run evacuation for Americans who wanted out, calling it too dan-

gerous.

US special operations troops briefly flew to the capital, Khartoum, on April 22 to airlift out American staffers at the embassy and other American government personnel. Several thousand US citizens were left behind, many of them dual-nationals.

More than a dozen other nations had already been carrying out evacuations for their citizens, using a mix of military planes, navy vessels and on the ground personnel.

A wide-ranging group of international mediators — including African and Arab nations, the United Nations and the United States — has only managed to achieve a series of fragile temporary cease-fires that failed to stop clashes but created enough of a lull for tens of thousands of

Sudanese to flee to safer areas and for foreign nations to evacuate thousands of their citizens by land, air and sea.

Since the conflict between two rival generals broke out April 15, the US has warned its citizens that they needed to find their own way out of the country, though US officials have tried to link up Americans with their nations' evacuation efforts. But that changed as US officials exploited a relative lull in the fighting and, from afar, organized their own convoy for Americans, officials said. Without the evacuation flights near the capital that other countries have been offering their citizens, many US citizens have been left to make the dangerous overland journey from Khartoum to the country's main Red Sea port, Port Sudan. AP

## King Charles' Coronation screen to have Commonwealth symbolism

PTI ■ LONDON

The cloth screen to be used for the most sacred part of the religious ceremony at the Coronation of King Charles III at Westminster Abbey in London on May 6 will have strong Commonwealth symbolism with each of the member-country names, including India, sewn into the fabric, Buckingham Palace has revealed.

The "anointing screen" was unveiled this weekend to show a central design of a tree with branches filled with 56 leaves representing the Commonwealth nations, which the palace said is reflective of the 74-year-old monarch's "deep affection" for the organisation.

The anointing, historically regarded as a moment between the Sovereign and God with a screen or canopy in place given its sanctity, takes place before the crowning of a British monarch.

"Each and every element of the design has been specifically chosen to symbolise aspects of this historic

Coronation and the Commonwealth, from the birds that symbolise the joy and interaction among members of a community living in harmony, to the rejoicing angels and the dove that represents the Holy Spirit," said Aidan Hart, the Designer and Iconographer behind the project.

During the anointing ceremony, the Dean of Westminster pours holy oil from the Ampulla into the Coronation Spoon, and the Archbishop of Canterbury anoints the Sovereign on the hands, chest and head. Ahead of the big day next Saturday, the screen was blessed at a special service of dedication at the Chapel Royal at St. James's Palace in London.

The individual leaves were embroidered by staff and students from the Royal School of Needlework, as well as members of the Worshipful Company of Broderers, Drapers and Weavers.

"It has been a wonderful collaborative project to be involved with, and an exciting celebration of craft techniques.



This undated photo issued by Buckingham Palace on Saturday shows a member of the Royal School of Needlework hand embroidering Camilla, the Queen Consort's cypher onto her Robe of Estate, which she will wear at the coronation. AP/PTI

The leaves were a particular pleasure as they were worked on by multiple embroiderers," said Anne Butcher, Head of Studio and Standards

at the Royal School of Needlework. The materials used to create the screen have also been "sourced sustainably" from

across the UK and other Commonwealth nations, with the cloth made of wool from Australia and New Zealand and woven and finished in UK mills.

The script used for the names of each Commonwealth country has been designed as modern and classical, inspired by both the Roman Trojan column letters and the work of Welsh calligrapher David Jones.

The palace revealed that the screen combines traditional and contemporary sustainable embroidery practices and has been gifted for the occasion by the City of London Corporation and City Livery Companies.

"While many things have changed since the last Coronation, one thing that remains the same is the City's unstinting loyalty to and support for the Monarchy," said Nicholas Lyons, the Lord Mayor of the City of London.

The screen is supported by a wooden pole framework, designed and created by Nick Gutfreund of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters, and

the oak wooden poles are made from a windblown tree from the Windsor Estate, which was originally planted by the Duke of Northumberland in 1765.

"I'm so pleased we were able to use sustainable materials at the heart of the screen, including using a windblown tree from the Windsor Estate for the wooden frame," said Project Lead Nick Gutfreund.

Also forming part of the Commonwealth tree are the King's Cypher, decorative roses, angels and a scroll. The screen is three-sided, with the open side to face the High Altar in Westminster Abbey. The two sides of the screen feature a much simpler design than the front, with maroon fabric and a gold, blue and red cross.

It has been revealed earlier that the predominantly Christian Coronation ceremony will also have multi-faith elements, including a multi-faith procession and representatives of the Hindu, Muslim and Jewish faiths handing over key royal regalia to the King at the altar.

## California man gets four years in prison for role in US Capitol riot

Washington (AP): A Southern California man who assaulted police with pepper spray during the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison, federal authorities announced.

Jeffrey Scott Brown (56), of Santa Ana received a sentence of 54 months in federal prison for felony and misdemeanor charges related to the mob attack by supporters of former President Donald Trump, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) said in a press statement on Friday.

More than 1,000 individuals have been arrested, including more than 320 people who have been charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement, the DOJ said. Trump supporters that day tried to stop Congress from certifying presidential election results for Joe Biden, a Democrat, over Trump, a Republican.

Brown and two co-defendants were found guilty at trial in December. Peter J. Schwartz of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, is scheduled to be sentenced in May. It was not clear why Markus Maly of Fincastle, Virginia, was not sentenced on Friday as scheduled. Prosecutors had sought a sentence of 70 months for Brown, who they say dove toward the front of a makeshift police line and used on officers a stolen can of pepper spray handed to him by Schwartz.

Brown's attorney, Samuel C. Moore, sought 40 months in prison, according to court documents. Moore said the conduct involved "less than 10 minutes of Mr Brown's life" and the alleged pepper spray "did not make contact with any specific victim." Still, Moore wrote, Brown admits he should never have been in the Capitol tunnel that day and that he takes responsibility for doing so.



# Pak Prez returns another Bill for changes in anti-corruption laws

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday returned a bill to the parliament about changes in the anti-corruption laws with observation that a similar previous amendment was challenged in the Supreme Court and was still sub-judice.

The bill called the National Accountability (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was passed earlier this month by the parliament and it was sent to President Alvi for his endorsement to become an act.



“The president sent back the bill to Parliament under Article 75 (president’s assent to bills) of the Constitution,” the President’s Office said in a tweet.

It added that the President stated that previous amendments to the NAB law were already under hearing in the Supreme Court and any more

changes in the accountability laws “without reviewing the effects of a pending matter should be reviewed once again.”

The government last year passed the National Accountability (Second Amendment) Act 2022 to restrict the NAB’s role in corruption cases of over Rs500

million and taking away the president’s authority to appoint accountability court judges. The law also reduced the four-year term of the NAB chairman and the bureau’s prosecutor general to three years.

Alvi had refused to sign the bill and it became a law after the joint session of the Parliament on June 10 last year approved it. However, former premier Imran Khan challenged it in the Supreme Court where it is still pending adjudication.

Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party allege that the ruling alliance is tweaking the anti-corruption laws to wriggle out of several graft cases but the government rejects the argument by saying that it is reducing the unnecessary intrusion of NAB powers that hamper business and investment.

# RSP chairman meets Prachanda

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Rashtriya Swatantra Party Chairman Ravi Lamichhane on Sunday called on Nepal’s Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ here, in a significant move as the Maoist leader has been trying to persuade him to join the government to strengthen his fragile ruling coalition.

The Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP), the fourth largest party in Nepal’s Parliament, won two out of three seats of the House of Representatives in recently held by-elections, raising its tally in the lower house to 22.

Lamichhane, former TV journalist and the president of the RSP, won the by-polls held in Chitawan-2 constituency with a huge margin, in a surprise defeat to the ruling alliance. Lamichhane met Prachanda at the Prime Minister’s residence, My Republica newspaper reported.

Prachanda congratulated the RSP chief on his victory on bypolls.

The Prime Minister had congratulated Lamichhane over the phone immediately after he was elected, and he again congratulated him during their meeting today, Press Coordinator Surya Kiran Sharma was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

The RSP was the third largest mem-



ber of the ruling coalition in Nepal before quitting the government after Prachanda denied Lamichhane’s reinstatement to the post of Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister after his citizenship controversy.

Lamichhane’s Parliament membership was revoked by the Supreme Court earlier this year after he was found guilty of not producing a valid citizenship certificate to contest the parliamentary election. He was compelled to obtain back his citizenship and prepare for the by-election.

The meeting between the prime minister and Lamichhane comes at a crucial

time for the Prachanda-led eight-party alliance, as he seeks to persuade the RSP to join the government.

The RSP has not yet withdrawn its support to the Prachanda-led coalition government, though its ministers had already quit the government.

The ruling coalition includes the Nepali Congress, Communist Party Nepal-Maoist Centre, CPN-Unified Socialist, Nagarik Unmukti Party, Janamat Party, Janta Samajwadi Party, Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janamorcha.

# Texas border city struggles with large migrant arrival

Brownsville (AP): Shelters in a Texas city struggled to find space for migrants who authorities say have abruptly begun crossing by the thousands from Mexico, testing a stretch of the US border that is typically equipped to handle large groups of people fleeing poverty and violence.

The pace of arrivals in Brownsville appeared to catch the city on the southernmost tip of Texas off guard, stretching social services and putting an overnight shelter in an uncommon position of turning people away.

Officials say more than 15,000 migrants, mostly from Venezuela, have illegally crossed the river near Brownsville since last week.

That is a sharp rise from the 1,700 migrants that Border Patrol agents encountered in the first two weeks of April, according to US Customs and Border Protection officials.

“It’s a quite concerning because the logistical challenge

that we encounter is massive for us,” said Gloria Chavez, chief of the US Border Patrol Rio Grande Valley Sector.

The reason for the increase was not immediately clear. Chavez said migrants have been frustrated by relying on a glitch-plagued government app that can allow them to seek asylum at a port of entry. Some migrants who crossed this week cited other motivators, including cartel threats that immediately preceded the sudden increment.

The uptick comes as the Biden administration plans for the end of pandemic-era asylum restrictions. US authorities have said daily illegal crossings from Mexico could climb as high as 13,000 from about 5,200 in March.

Other cities — some far away from the southern US border — are also grappling with suddenly large influxes of migrants. In Chicago, authorities reported this week a tenfold increase in the arrival of

migrants in the city, where as many as 100 migrants have begun arriving daily and begun sheltering in police stations.

Brownsville is across the Rio Grande from Matamoros, Mexico, where a sprawling encampment of makeshift tents has housed about 2,000 people waiting to enter the US.

Last week, some tents were set ablaze and destroyed. Some migrants have said cartel-backed gangs were responsible, but a government official suggested the fires could have been set by a group of migrants frustrated over their long wait.

“It was desperation, the cartel,” said Roxana Aguirre (24), a Venezuelan migrant who sat outside a Brownsville bus station on Friday afternoon. “You couldn’t be on the street without looking over your shoulder.” In downtown Brownsville, families from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, and China walked aimlessly, carrying their belongings and talking on their cell phones.

# Uzbekistan citizens vote on changes allowing President’s tenure extension

TASHKENT (AP): Voters in Uzbekistan, the most populous former Soviet Central Asian republic, cast ballots Sunday in a referendum on a revised constitution that promises human rights reforms but that also would allow the country’s president to stay in office until 2040.

Approval appears certain. Backers have conducted an array of promotional events featuring local celebrities, and elections in Uzbekistan are widely regarded as noncompetitive. With four hours until the polls closed, the central elections commission reported turnout at more than 62 per cent, well above the 50 per cent threshold for the referendum to be valid.

The proposed changes include lengthening the presidential term from five to seven years, while retaining the existing two-term limit.

Although President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is in his second term, the change in



In this handout photo released by Uzbekistan’s Presidential Press Office, Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, center, and his family members leave a polling station during a referendum in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Sunday. AP/PTI

term length would allow him to run twice more after his current tenure ends in 2026.

Other changes include abolishing capital punishment and boosting legal protections for citizens, including those accused of crimes. Under Mirziyoyev’s predecessor, Islam

Karimov, Uzbekistan was one of the region’s most repressive countries. Mirziyoyev, who took over after Karimov died in 2016, touts the constitutional changes as showing that Uzbekistan will make freedoms and human rights paramount. The referendum orig-

inally was planned for last year, but was put off in the wake of deadly unrest in the Karakalpakstan region when it was announced that the changes would include rescinding Karakalpakstan’s right to vote on whether to secede.

# 14 injured in roof collapse at house near Ohio State University

Columbus (AP): Part of a house collapsed and 14 people were injured near The Ohio State University on Saturday evening when people climbed onto a roof that was not designed to hold significant weight, authorities said.

Columbus Division of Fire Battalion Chief Steve Martin said his department received a report around 7:40 pm of a roof collapse on East 13th Avenue and arrived to find the roof above a front porch had collapsed while the rest of the home remained intact.

“The few people that were trapped, I believe, were probably unpinning,” Martin said. “It was like their leg was caught under some of the structure and some of the students lifted that off the students. So everybody was kind of out.” First responders initially found 10 injured people and eventually transported 14 accident victims to area hospitals with “various states of injuries” but they all were in stable condition, Martin said.

# Iran’s Parl sacks Min over alleged mismanagement

Tehran (AP): Iran’s parliament voted on Sunday to fire the country’s industries minister over alleged mismanagement amid widespread dissatisfaction with the government.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said 162 of 272 lawmakers present voted in favour of dismissing Reza Fatemi Amin. The chamber has 290 seats. Fatemi Amin survived a previous impeachment in 2022.

The decision came following discussion among lawmakers and government officials who questioned the minister.

Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi defended Fatemi Amin saying all the fields related to the minister’s portfolio showed growth. He urged lawmakers to reinstate the minister.

“The point is that stability in the ministry is important,” he said.

Opponents said the minister failed to manage his field of activities in industry, mines and trade citing skyrocketing



prices of products. The impeachment marks the sixth change in Raisi’s Cabinet in the less than two years since he came to power.

In March, Raisi replaced the minister of agriculture and the head of planning and budget. Raisi dismissed the education minister after a delay in payments to teachers in April.

In December, Raisi replaced the minister of roads after he became terminally ill. Last year, Raisi replaced the labor minister after protests by workers and retirees over payments.

Iran is still reeling after months of protests and a violent security force crackdown

following the September death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini after her arrest by the country’s morality police.

The country’s economic conditions, including high inflation, have contributed to widespread anger at the government. Retirees, workers and teachers have held scattered protests and strikes in recent months. Reports on social media say authorities have detained leaders of teachers’ unions and other labor leaders who have long protested over payments of their wages.

Iran’s currency the rial is at a low of 545,000 to the dollar as the effects of sanctions following the breakdown of Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers shake the economy. The rial was trading at 32,000 to the dollar when the country signed the nuclear accord. The agreement lifted international sanctions in return for strict limits on, and surveillance of, its nuclear activities.

# Man kills 3, self, in dispute among pigeon racers

Madrid (AP): A man fatally shot three people before turning his gun on himself, Portuguese police said Sunday, in what local media described as a dispute among rival pigeon racers.

Andreia Goncalves, police commissioner in the city of Setubal, south of Lisbon, described a dispute between four men aged between 30 and 60, and said one of them had killed the others before shooting himself. She described the deaths as “an isolated situation” related to an unresolved issue between the men.

The four dead individuals were participating in a pigeon race, Portuguese media reported from the scene, and their disagreement also centred on an illegal vegetable garden.

Portugal has restrictive gun laws but firearms are legal for hunting. Of the 80 or so annual homicides that Portugal has registered on average since 2015, around a fifth are committed with firearms, according to police statistics.



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, a worker measures the size of an equipment at Harbin Turbine Company Limited of Harbin Electric Corporation in Harbin in northeastern China’s Heilongjiang Province on this Friday. China’s factory activity declined in April, an official survey showed Sunday, signaling policymakers’ difficulty in sustaining momentum in the country’s economic recovery. AP/PTI

# Tornado damages homes in Florida

Palm Beach Gardens (US): A tornado touched down in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, on Saturday as a powerful storm system brought intense rain and powerful winds to the state, overturning cars, damaging homes and snapping tree branches.

The National Weather Service in Miami said the tornado hit late Saturday afternoon with winds of 100 mph (160 kph) near Palm Beach Gardens Medical

Centre and headed northeast toward the coast. Storm damage forced authorities in the coastal city to close major roadways in the city as workers cleared debris and inspected wreckage. Images from the scene showed cars flipped over on top of each other, cracked tree limbs resting on vehicles and homes, as well as other debris littering streets. The Palm Beach Gardens Police Department has not reported any major injuries or fatalities. AP

# Mexico’s ruling party sweeps mine reform, other bills into law

Mexico City (AP): Mexico’s Senate has approved a wide-ranging reform of laws governing the mining industry, including a requirement that companies pay five per cent of profits to local communities.

The mining bill was among 18 pieces of legislation, some controversial, that was passed in a frenzied rush late Friday and early Saturday.

The bills were approved with little or no debate, based on votes by only senators from Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s Morena party and its allies. The opposition occupied the Senate’s normal headquarters to protest a lack of debate, so the Morena senators and allies met in an alternative chamber.

The new mining law reduces the maximum length of concessions from 50 to 30 years and punishes speculation by allowing authorities to cancel concessions if no work is done on them within two years.

The mining industry, much of it foreign and in a considerable amount Canadian, has drawn complaints because of ecological damage, speculation, and the fact that communities around the mines remain among the poorest in Mexico. Many companies, especially smaller “minor” companies listed on Canadian exchanges, do exploratory work, estimate the presence of minerals, and then do nothing, waiting to sell the concession to a larger player.

# Chinese who reported on Covid to be released soon

Hong Kong (AP): Chinese authorities were preparing on Sunday to release a man who disappeared three years ago after publicising videos of overcrowded hospitals and bodies during the COVID-19 outbreak, a relative and another person familiar with his case said. Fang Bin and other members of the public who were dubbed citizen journalists posted details of the pandemic in early 2020 on the internet and social media, embarrassing Chinese officials who faced criticism for failing to control the outbreak.

The last video Fang, a seller of traditional Chinese clothing, posted on Twitter was of a piece of paper reading, “All citizens resist, hand power back to the people.” Fang’s case is part of

Beijing’s crackdown on criticism of China’s early handling of the pandemic, as the ruling Communist Party seeks to control the narrative of the country. He was scheduled to be released Sunday, according to two people who did not want to be identified for fear of government retribution.

One of them said Fang was sentenced to three years in prison for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a vague charge traditionally used against political dissidents.

The Associated Press could not independently confirm his release and could not confirm the details with the authorities.

Two offices of Wuhan’s public security bureau did not provide a phone number or answer any questions.

# Pope urges Hungary to welcome migrants

Budapest (AP): Pope Francis urged Hungarians to open their doors to others on Sunday, as he wrapped up a weekend visit with a plea for Europe to welcome migrants and the poor and for an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Francis issued the appeal from the banks of the Danube as he celebrated Mass on Budapest’s Kossuth Lajos Square, with the Hungarian Parliament and Budapest’s famed Chain Bridge as a backdrop.

The celebration provided the visual highlight of Francis’ three-day visit that has been dominated by the Vatican’s concern for the plight of neighbouring Ukraine.

Citing local organisers, the Vatican said some 50,000 people attended the Mass, more than 30,000 of them in the square on a brilliantly sunny spring morning.

Among them were President Katalin Novak and Hungary’s right-wing populist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, whose lukewarm support for



Ukraine has rankled fellow European Union members.

Francis has expressed appreciation for Hungary’s recent welcome of Ukrainian refugees. But he has challenged Orbán’s hard-line anti-immigration policies, which in 2015-2016 included building a razor wire fence on the border with Serbia to stop people from entering.

Upon arrival, Francis urged Hungary and Europe as a whole to welcome those who are fleeing war, poverty and climate change, calling

for safe and legal migration corridors.

“How sad and painful it is to see closed doors,” Francis said in his Sunday homily on the Danube. “The closed doors of our selfishness with regard to others; the closed doors of our individualism amid a society of growing isolation; the closed doors of our indifference towards the underprivileged and those who suffer; the doors we close towards those who are foreign or unlike us, towards migrants or the poor,” Francis said.

In a final prayer at the end of the Mass, Francis prayed for peace in Ukraine and “a future of hope, not war, a future full of cradles, not tombs, a world of brothers and sisters, not walls.”

The 86-year-old Francis has tried to forge a diplomatic balancing act in his pleas to end Russia’s war, expressing solidarity with Ukrainians while keeping the door open to dialogue with Moscow.

Office of the Superintending Engineer  
3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh  
Email : sepwdp@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 2305(i) / 984 C Dated : 29/04/2023

### International/National, Expression of Interest (EOI)

Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited for Engineer consultancy work and Project Management for Construction of single span 500 mtr. Two lane A class loading motor bridge over Mahakali River near Jhulaghat in District Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand (India) and 400 mtr. Single span Two lane A-class loading Bridge in District Champawat Uttarakhand over Mahakali River between Khaldhunga (India) and Sirsa (Nepal) separately to connect India and Nepal by motorable road.

Expression of interest (EOI) is invited from reputed International/National firms, organization and joint ventures for feasibility study, Design and Drawing of Bridges, vetting of design and drawing, preparation of DPR, quality assurance, supervision and maintenance during construction of Bridge work by email or in hard copy, on or before dated 13-06-2023, 15:00 hrs. EOI will be opened on dated 13.06.2023, 15:30 hrs in office of SE, PWD, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand (India).

Expression of interest (EOI) documents/details will be available online on PWD website <https://pwd.uk.gov.in> and <https://uktender.gov.in> from dated 12.05.2023.

**Superintending Engineer**

# Indian economy to grow 6.5% in FY24: NITI Aayog member

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Indian economy will grow at around 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal, notwithstanding high oil prices and increased geopolitical tensions, NITI Aayog member Arvind Virmani has said.

Virmani further said that he does not see any impact of the US and European banking crisis on the Indian financial sector.

"So in the current fiscal year because of all the changes which have happened in the last year, I have reduced my India's economic growth forecast by 0.5 per cent.

"So it is 6.5 per cent, again plus minus 0.5 per cent," he told PTI.

Recently, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank projected moderation in Indian economic growth

between 6.3 per cent and 6.4 per cent due to a slowdown in consumption and challenging external conditions.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also lowered India's economic growth projection for the current fiscal to 5.9 per cent from 6.1 per cent earlier. Yet, India will continue to be the fastest-growing economy in the world.

Replying to a question on Reserve Bank of India's flexible inflation targeting, Virmani said, "We should be more like the US Federal Reserve, which has an inflation target but also takes account of GDP," he said.

The government has mandated the central bank to ensure that retail inflation based on the consumer price index (CPI) remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The central bank, which

effected six back-to-back hikes in the key short-term lending rate (repo) since May 2022 to check high inflation, decided to take a pause early this month. The cumulative rate hike since May 2022 is 250 basis points.

Asked whether India can replicate the economic success that has made China central to the world economy and global power, Virmani said that he does not think any other country now will be allowed to follow unfair trade policies which China had followed.

"And my estimate is that roughly 1/3 of China's growth would not have happened, if it did not have these unfair trade policies," he said.

Virmani pointed out that India doesn't follow an asymmetric policy and it can grow at 6.5-7 per cent without following unfair trade policies.

# No conclusion of wrongdoing in SEBI application to SC: Adani Group

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Capital markets regulator SEBI has not concluded any wrongdoing in its application to the country's top court, seeking six more months to complete a probe into allegations against Adani Group, the conglomerate run by billionaire Gautam Adani said.

The Supreme Court had on March 2 asked Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to conclude within two months its probe into allegations levelled by US short-seller Hindenburg Research against Adani Group.

SEBI is to file a status report on May 2 but on Saturday it made an application seeking extension. Hindenburg in January accused Adani Group of accounting fraud and using a web of companies in tax havens to inflate revenue and stock prices, even as debt piled up.

The conglomerate has repeatedly denied all the alle-

gations. SEBI in its application filed on Saturday stated that it needs six months to "arrive at conclusive finding" in case of those where "prima facie violations have been found" and "to revalidate the analysis and arrive at conclusive finding" where "prima facie violations have not been found."

Investigation/examination relating to 12 suspicious transactions, reveals that these "are complex and have many sub-transactions and a rigorous investigation of these transactions would require collation of data/information from various sources along with detailed analysis including verification of submissions made by the companies," SEBI said in the application.

"It is pertinent to note that in the SEBI application filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, there are no conclusions of any alleged wrongdoing," Adani Group said in a statement.

"The SEBI application only

challenges the allegations made in the short-seller's report, which are still under investigation." The delay in the SEBI probe met with skepticism in some quarters.

"This is a joke. @SEBI\_India has been investigating since October 2021 when they replied to my letter of July. While they prima facie see violations (no surprise)-they want 6 months to protect their favorite businessman so that he can get maximum time to cover up," TMC MP Mahua Moitra tweeted.

Priyanka Chaturvedi of Shiv Sena UBT hoped the SC would ensure that the SEBI investigation does not come in a sealed cover. "The public deserves to know the truth, hopefully CJJ (chief justice of India) will truly end the sealed cover based judgements for the sake of transparency."

Quoting a news report of SEBI red flagging "12 suspicious transactions and possible stock price manipulations" and

"THE SEBI APPLICATION ONLY CITES THE ALLEGATIONS MADE IN THE SHORT-SELLER'S REPORT, WHICH ARE STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION"

"possible case of insider trading," she said, the six-month extension sought "is nothing but buying more time - maybe till General Elections?"

"Investigations are already ongoing by SEBI in some cases of Adani Group since 2021 and before, SC mandates investigation but till date even those haven't been concluded." General elections are due in May next year. In the statement, Adani said SEBI is conducting an investigation into allegations made by a foreign short-seller and also into market activity before and after release of its report on January 24.

"We understand that SEBI has approached the Hon'ble Supreme Court for more time to conclude its investigation," it said.

"We have welcomed the investigation, which represents a fair opportunity for everyone to be heard and for all issues to be addressed. We are fully compliant with all laws, rules and regulations and are confident that truth will prevail. We are fully cooperating with SEBI and will continue to provide all our support and cooperation."

In its application to the Supreme Court, SEBI said it has crystallised two sets of categories for the probe. The first covers allegations made in the Hindenburg report. These allegations include "12 suspicious transactions for possible violations related to misrepresentation of financials, circumvention of Regulations and/or fraudulent nature of transactions."

# FPIs invest ₹11,630 cr in equities in April

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused Rs 11,630 crore in the Indian equity markets in April on the reasonable valuation of stocks and appreciation in the rupee.

This came after FPIs infused a net sum of Rs 7,936 crore in equities in March, mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by the US-based GQG Partners. However, if one adjusts for the investments of GQG in Adani Group, the net flow was negative. Going forward, the outlook for FPI flow is expected to remain volatile due to the tight monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve. The interest rate hike by 25 basis points in the coming policy meeting as indicated by the US Fed minutes, could impact FPI investments, Sonam

Srivastava, founder of investment advisory firm Wright Research, said. However, the stability of the Indian economy compared to other emerging markets and reasonable valuations may continue to attract FPIs to Indian equities, she added.

According to data from the depositories, FPIs started the current financial year on a positive note, and invested Rs 11,630 crore in Indian equities in April. In the first half of April, FPIs showed strong buying activity, indicating a renewed sense of optimism in the Indian equity market. However, this optimism was dampened in the third week of the month due to concerns about elevated interest rates and weak economic indicators in the US. Once again they turned aggressive buyers in the last few days of April, and the inflow of foreign capital is

likely to continue in the longer term, Anand Dalmia, co-founder and CBO of Fisdom, said. Srivastava said the prime factors for the inflow in the month include stabilisation of the global scenario, moderation in apprehensions about the banking crisis in the US and Europe, reasonable valuation of Indian equities following consolidation and India's potential to deliver healthy returns over the mid-to-long term horizon. In addition, another important macro factor that has tilted the FPI approach is the appreciation of the rupee. The local currency, which had touched a low of 82.94 to a dollar in late February this year, has now appreciated to 81.75, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Moreover, India's current account deficit is declining, and if this trend con-

tinues the rupee may appreciate further. FPIs are likely to bring more inflows into India in this context, he added.

Apart from equities, FPIs have put in Rs 805 crore in the debt market during the period under review. "As the rate hike stops, the money will start moving in from debt to equities to beat inflation. India is presenting a better opportunity among developed markets and other emerging markets," Divam Sharma, founder of Green Portfolio PMS, said.

With this, FPIs have taken out Rs 14,580 crore from equities in 2023 so far and invested Rs 4,268 crore in the debt markets during the period. The mid-April data on FPI inflows revealed that the financials, automobile components, and information technology sectors were particularly attractive to foreign investors, Fisdom's Dalmia, said.

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# IRDAI tells insurance companies to set social media rules for staff

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Regulator Irdai has asked insurance companies to lay down social media guidelines for their employees to ensure that no unverified or confidential information relating to the organisation is disseminated to the public through these platforms.

An organisation's reputation is closely linked to the behaviour of its employees, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) said, adding "Social media should be used in a way that adds value to the organisation's business."

The Information and Cyber Security Guidelines, which were issued by Irdai to all insurers, have a specific section on 'Acceptable usage of social media' -- which states that the employees should be refrained from disseminating any unverified and confidential information on "any Blogs/Chat forums/Discussion

forums/Messenger sites/Social networking sites".

"Any information received, accessed or obtained by an employee, either in his/her official mail/personal mail/Media Forums or in any other manner, if proposed to be disseminated or shared in any Media Forum, should be forwarded to the Organisation's Compliance team and corporate communication team for prior approval," it said.

Media forums should not be used to report a service fault or to make a complaint, it added.

Irdai further said any personal internet posting or communication which implies that you work for an organisation must include a simple and visible disclaimer like 'the postings on this service are my own personal views and not those of organisation and are not intended to be interpreted as such'.

"The personal image profile in social media affects an

individual's reputation and may affect the reputation of Organisation.

"No form of critique or comment on an Organisation or its business should be made on personal websites or social networking platforms," said the section on guidelines for the usage of social media by employees for personal purposes.

The organisation's Information and Cyber Security Policy (ICSP) identifies responsibilities and establishes the goals for consistent and appropriate protection of the organisation's critical data and information assets. Implementing this policy shall reduce the risk of accidental or intentional disclosure, modification, destruction, delay, or misuse of information assets, the regulator said.

Information assets comprise data or information recorded in electronic, printed, written, facsimile or other systems and the 'system' itself.

# 'Fed interest rate decision, Q4 earnings, macroeconomic data to drive markets'

**New Delhi (PTI):** The US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision, quarterly earnings of corporates and domestic macroeconomic data will influence trading in the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Foreign funds' trading

activity, monthly automobile sales data and global trends would also guide market movement this week, they added. Markets would remain closed on Monday on account of 'Maharashtra Day'.

"The global picture is still muddled between more hikes

and recession. All eyes are on the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) statement, which will be announced on May 3, while the ECB will announce its interest rate decision on May 4. Macroeconomic numbers will keep the market mood subdued in the near

term. "Aside from that, the Indian equity markets are constantly receiving funding from FPIs, and Friday's record buying of Rs 3,304 crore in the cash market showed their confidence in the Indian market," said Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika

Investmart Ltd. In the domestic market, Q4 earnings and auto sales numbers will drive the movement this week. Tata Steel, Titan, Hero MotoCorp and HDFC Ltd are the few Nifty 50 companies that will declare their financial results this week, Gour added.

## BRIEFS

**MACROTECH DEVELOPERS TO INVEST ₹4,500 CR**  
**NEW DELHI:** Macrotech Developers Ltd will invest Rs 4,500 crore this fiscal year on construction of real estate projects as it seeks to ramp up execution capabilities amid strong housing demand. Mumbai-headquartered Macrotech Developers, which sells its properties under the Lodha brand, is one of the leading real estate firms in the country. In an interview with PTI, Macrotech Developers MD and CEO Abhishek Lodha noted that the demand for residential properties continues to be strong despite increase in mortgage rates as well as housing prices.

**MCAP OF NINE FIRMS JUMPS ₹1.84 LAKH CRORE**  
**NEW DELHI:** Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 1,84,225.43 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries Limited and State Bank of India emerging as the biggest gainers, in an overall bullish equity market trend. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,457.38 points or 2.44 per cent. Hindustan Unilever Limited was the only laggard from the top-10 pack. The market valuation of Reliance Industries zoomed Rs 48,238.78 crore to Rs 16,37,408.27 crore. State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) jumped Rs 31,325.39 crore to Rs 5,15,887.19 crore. The mcap of ICICI Bank rallied Rs 23,472.25 crore to Rs 6,40,949.71 crore and that of ITC climbed Rs 21,003.35 crore to Rs 5,28,377.17 crore. The valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) advanced Rs 19,886.94 crore to Rs 11,76,750.92 crore and that of Bharti Airtel gained Rs 18,874.22 crore to Rs 4,45,509.68 crore. Infosys added Rs 10,447.1 crore taking its market valuation to Rs 5,19,662.10 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation surged Rs 8,115.33 crore to Rs 9,42,052.68 crore and that of HDFC climbed Rs 2,862.07 crore to Rs 5,09,126.31 crore.

**DRAUGHT BEER BRAND OI TO OPEN OWN CAFES NOW**  
**MUMBAI:** Pune-based draught beer maker Oi Brewing Company, which hawks its product under the label of Oi, is entering the cafe space and the first facility will come up in the tony Kalyani Nagar area of the city by October. The domestic draught beer market is nascent and concentrated in metro cities like Bengaluru, the largest market with over 50 players, Delhi-NCR, Pune and Mumbai; all operated by small-time players. From revenue and volume perspective the share of draught beer market is just about 1 per cent of the estimated USD 15-billion domestic beer market, which is expected to grow annually by 8.2 per cent between 2023 and 2027 to touch 5.81 billion litres, according to the industry publication Statista.

**BROUGHT MORE FDI THAN ANY OTHER STARTUP: BYJU NEW DELHI:** After financial crime-fighting agency ED searched Byju's premises, the education platform's CEO Byju Raveendran wrote to employees saying the company brought more FDI to India than any other startup and that the firm fully complies with all applicable foreign exchange laws. India's most valuable startup, Byju's was once valued at USD 22 billion and has attracted global investors such as General Atlantic, BlackRock and Sequoia Capital. "As we are funded by 70+ impact investors who have satisfactorily done due diligence on our operations, including all FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) compliance, we are confident that the authorities will also come to the same conclusion," Raveendran said in the memo sent late on Saturday, which was seen by PTI. ED had on Saturday searched three premises in Bengaluru linked to the company over alleged foreign exchange law violations. Searches at 'Think & Learn Private Limited' (Byju's online learning platform) yielded "various incriminating documents and digital data was seized", ED had said. The firm had received foreign direct investment of nearly Rs 28,000 crore between 2011 and 2023, the agency had said, adding the firm remitted Rs 9,754 crore to various foreign jurisdictions during the same period in the name of overseas direct investments. In the internal memo, Raveendran said that the company had sent some money overseas to fund its international acquisitions.

# Min urges export councils to set 2023-24 targets

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The commerce ministry has asked export promotion councils to work on export targets for current fiscal year and chalk out a detailed road map to achieve that.

According to exporters, issues related to the country's outbound shipments were discussed during a meeting chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on April 24.

India's goods and services exports together touched an all-time high of USD 770 billion last fiscal year. While merchandise exports touched USD 447 billion, services exports are estimated at about USD 322 billion.

"The ministry has asked us to work on new exports target for this fiscal and explain ways to achieve," an exporter said.

He said it was emphasised that states and Indian missions abroad be involved in achieving the new target. There was also a discussion on organising a major buyer-seller meet to showcase India's prowess in exports. Latin America and African countries hold huge potential to boost exports.

Apparel Export Promotion Council Chairman Narendra Goenka, who participated in the April 24 meeting, said though there are global economic uncertainties, the sector is likely to grow by 5-10 per cent this fiscal. The country's merchandise exports are likely to cross USD 500 billion this fiscal due to healthy demand for domestic goods in key global markets, including the US, and benefits from trade pacts, according to exporters.

"Together with goods and services, we are targeting exports of USD 900 billion this fiscal," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said. Free trade agreements with the UAE and Australia would provide a huge platform to boost exports to those markets. Ludhiana-based engineering exporter and Sand Tools Association President SC Ralhan said there are healthy signs of economic growth in the US, which accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total outbound shipments.

# Road transport, highways sector has highest number of delayed projects: Govt report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The road transport and highways sector has the maximum number of delayed projects at 402, followed by railways at 115 and the petroleum industry at 86, showed a government report.

In the road transport and highways sector, 402 out of 749 projects are delayed. For railways, out of 173 projects, 115 are delayed, while in the petroleum sector, 86 out of 145 projects are running behind schedule, as per the latest flash report on infrastructure projects for March 2023.

The Infrastructure and Project Monitoring Division (IPMD) is mandated to monitor central sector infrastructure

projects costing Rs 150 crore and above based on the information provided on the Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS) by the project implementing agencies. The IPMD comes under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The report showed that the Muneerabad-Mahaboobnagar rail project is the most delayed. It is delayed by 276 months.

The second-most delayed project is the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail project, which is delayed by 247 months. The third-most delayed project, Belapur-Seawood-Urban Electrified Double Line, is running 228 months behind schedule.

The Flash Report for March

2023 contains information on the status of the 1,449 central sector infrastructure projects costing 150 crore and above.

As many as 821 projects are delayed, 354 reported cost overrun and 247 projects reported both time and cost overrun with respect to their original project implementation schedules.

Of these 165 projects, 52 are mega projects costing Rs 1,000 crore and above. About the road transport and highways sector, report stated that the total original cost of implementation of 749 projects, when sanctioned, was of the order of Rs 4,32,893.85 crore, but this was subsequently anticipated to cost Rs 45,11,68.46 crore, implying a cost overrun of 4.2 per cent.

# Coforge actively scouting for acquisition in data, cloud, other areas: CEO

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

IT company Coforge is actively scouting for acquisition in areas such as data, cloud, healthcare and 'low-code no-code' space, according to its Chief Executive Officer Sudhir Singh. The company "has a few conversations going on right now", Singh said adding both financial and cultural match will be an important consideration.

"We are actively looking for assets in the data space, cloud space, Salesforce space or the healthcare space...We are also looking for acquisitions in the low-code, no-code space, so these four or five areas are important for us," Singh told

PTI. It is pertinent to mention that low-code and no-code are alternative app development methods that use intuitive, graphical interface and pre-configured templates to give users power and flexibility to create applications and automate processes without having to write line-after-line of codes.

The company is "very keen" on buyouts, but will not rush into it. Coforge is not under any pressure and if the valuations are not a match, the company will wait rather than overpay for an asset.

"Valuations should have come down. They have not because firms that are not able to grow organically, continue to buy growth," he said.

# Maruti Suzuki still vulnerable to supply bottlenecks: Official

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Maruti Suzuki India remains "vulnerable to supply side bottlenecks" this fiscal even as it looks to source electronic components through multiple sources, according to a senior company official.

The country's largest car-maker, which could not produce around 1.7 lakh units last fiscal due to semiconductor shortage, is also coming up with measures to reduce the usage of certain kinds of chips in its cars.

"The problem (chip shortage) is a global one. It could affect different models, different companies, different modules differently. All our efforts are to organise supplies through multiple sources," Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Executive Officer (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti said in an analyst call.

He noted that the company is working to do away with certain chips in some models/trims where the requirement is superfluous.

"If there is a particular semiconductor in a particular variant of a model which is superfluous and not

required, so we are removing all such needs so that our consumption is minimum. All such efforts are going on including negotiations at global scale. Having said that we are still vulnerable to supply side bottlenecks," Bharti noted.

When asked about the company position in the ongoing fiscal, he said: "We do not have full year visibility but at least Q1 will be tough and broadly the uncertainty continues."

Semiconductors are silicon chips that cater to control and memory functions in products ranging from automobiles, computers and cell-phones to various other electronic items.

The usage of semiconductors in the auto industry has gone up globally in recent times with new models coming with more and more electronic features such as bluetooth connectivity and driver-assist, navigation and hybrid-electric systems.

Replying to a query, Bharti confirmed that the strong hybrid technology introduced in Grand Vitara could be launched in more models.

# Reliance-BP, Nayara price petrol, diesel at mkt rates

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's private fuel retailers - Reliance-BP and Russia's Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy -- have begun pricing petrol and diesel at market rates for the first time in over a year after a fall in global oil prices cut losses, sources said.

Reliance BP Mobility Ltd (RBML), a joint venture between Reliance Industries Limited and UK's bp, Nayara Energy and Shell sold petrol and diesel at huge losses as they tried to match the below-cost frozen rates of dominant public sector retailers. The losses were despite pricing fuel at slightly higher rates than state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL).

But a fall in international oil prices over the last six weeks has helped bring the PSU pump-matching retail rates at par with cost, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Nayara, the largest private fuel retailer that owns over 7



rates is now likely immediately as IOC, BPCL and HPCL are yet to fully recoup the losses they incurred on selling petrol and diesel at rates below cost last year.

The three public sector retailers have broken even on petrol but there are some losses on diesel, the official said.

Sources said diesel at all Jio-bp outlets is now at par with PSU competition or at market price.

However, Jio-bp -- the brand under which RBML retails fuel -- isn't selling regular diesel but high performance diesel designed for Indian vehicles and roads to give better fuel economy. The diesel is laced with specially developed additives for Indian roads and driving conditions to produce high performance, they said, adding Jio-bp was selling premium diesel at rates that are equivalent to ordinary diesel at PSU pumps.

State-owned IOC, BPCL and HPCL first froze petrol and diesel rates for 137 days beginning early November 2021 when five states including Uttar Pradesh went to the polls.

# Satwik & Chirag are new Asia champions

PTI ■ DUBAI

Star men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday broke a 58-year-old drought, becoming the first Indians after Dinesh Khanna to be crowned champions at the Asia Badminton Championships here.

The 2022 World Championships bronze medallists scripted a sensational comeback after an opening game reversal to edge past the Malaysian combination of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 16-21, 21-17, 21-19 in a nail-biting final to accomplish a magnificent victory in the continental championship.

Khanna is the only Indian to claim the gold medal, having achieved the feat when he beat Thailand's Sangob Rattanusorn in the men's singles final in 1965 in Lucknow.

India's previous best performance in men's doubles at the Asia Championships was a bronze-medal finish by Dipu Ghosh and

Raman Ghosh in 1971.

Satwik and Chirag, who claimed the Swiss Open Super 300 title in Basel, showed tremendous grit as they never gave up after losing the first game and being 7-13 and 11-15 down in the second and third game to secure the first gold for India in doubles.

It was the second title of the season for Satwik and Chirag, who continued to remain the best shuttlers for the country on display this season.

Besides the Asia Championships title, Satwik and Chirag also won the 2022 Commonwealth Games and five career titles on the BWF World Tour.

"I am over the moon. I and Satwik worked really hard for this medal and I am happy that we have finally won the title. Also, I would like to thank everyone back home for supporting me," Chirag said.

Satwik added: "It's a great feeling to win this tournament for the first time and I am sure we will win more such titles in the future. We

will continue to work hard to bring laurels to the country."

The two pairs came into the summit clash after sharing the honours in six meetings, with Satwik and Chirag coming up trumps in the semi-final of the Swiss Open in March this year.

Satwik, 22, from Amalapuram and Mumbai-born Chirag, 25, were relentless in their attack, sending down the shuttle at stiff angles and at a good speed, while Ong and Teo were rock solid in their defence.

There was little to separate the two pairs as the opening game started on an even note.

From 1-1 to 10-10, the two moved neck and neck before a hurried shot at the net by Chirag gave the Malaysians a one-point lead at the break.

The Malaysian duo ran up a series of points to quickly eke out a commanding five-point lead at 18-13. Chirag broke the run but Ong and Teo grabbed six game points when Satwik went long.

The Indians saved two before the Malaysians won an exciting rally



with Teo diving twice to keep the shuttle in play to earn the bragging rights.

After the change of ends, Ong and Teo continued their impressive run, moving to 6-2 early on before zooming to 10-4.

The Malaysians were relentless in their approach as Satwik and Chirag failed to match up to their rivals, allowing the Malaysians to enter the mid-game break with a 11-6 lead.

Ong and Teo maintained a five-point lead at 13-8 before the Indian pair scripted a recovery. Satwik produced a backhand kill followed by a net error from Teo, who also sent the shuttle out, as soon the tables turned.

The Indians were 18-15 up as errors crept into the Malaysians game. Satwik and Chirag earned three game points and converted it on the first chance with Teo committing an error at the net.

The decider started with the two pairs trading blows. Ong and Teo showed great technical acumen as they slowly eked out a three-point

lead at 8-5.

With Chirag spraying his smash into the net and following it up with another, the Malaysians grabbed an 11-8 lead at the break.

The opponents injected power and produced a few body shots to open up a 14-10 lead.

The Indians narrowed it down to 14-15 with Chirag dominating a fast exchange before drawing level.

Following a net error from Ong, Satwik and Chirag went 17-16 up. Ong then sent one wide as the Indians moved to 18-16. A great interception from the Malaysians was followed by a precise return from Chirag as it was 19-17 in India's favour.

A booming smash from the back from Chirag took India to three championship points. They squandered two before Satwik unleashed a body smash at Teo as Chirag lay flat on the court and Satwik broke into a celebratory dance. Before this final, India had won one gold and 17 bronze medals in different categories at the continental Championships since 1962.

# SALERINITANA SPOIL NAPOLI'S TITLE PARTY

AP ■ NAPLES

Napoli missed the chance to win Serie A for the first time in 33 years on Sunday after being held to a 1-1 draw by Salernitana.

Runaway league leaders Napoli needed to win to secure their third league crown with six games remaining in the season after Inter Milan beat closest challengers Lazio 3-1 earlier in the day.

But the long-awaited Scudetto party will have to be put on hold for at least a few more days after Boulaye Dia's stunning strike six minutes from time ensured Salernitana escaped with a point after Mathias Olivera had headed the hosts ahead just after the hour mark.

However the coming mid-week round of matches could finally end Napoli's long wait for glory.

Luciano Spalletti's team are 18 points ahead of Lazio but Juve can close that gap to 17 by winning at Bologna in Sunday's late match and moving into second place.

Depending how that match and Juve and Lazio's games on



Wednesday go Napoli could be crowned champions before they take the field at Udinese on Thursday night.

A win in Udine will ensure Napoli's current stars emulate Diego Maradona, who led southern Italy's biggest club to

their only previous league titles in 1987 and 1990.

## INTER WIN

Earlier during the day, Inter came back from a goal down at half-time at the San Siro thanks to a Lautaro Martinez brace

and another strike from Robin Gosens. Inter's goals all came in the final 13 minutes and moved Inter into Serie A's Champions League places, ahead of AC Milan and Roma on goal difference.

## DEPENDING HOW THAT MATCH AND JUVE AND LAZIO'S GAMES ON WEDNESDAY GO NAPOLI COULD BE CROWNED CHAMPIONS BEFORE THEY TAKE THE FIELD AT UDINESE ON THURSDAY NIGHT

the San Siro, Inter's Henrikh Mkhitaryan rolled in Joaquin Correa's low pass, only for the strike to be ruled out because Argentine attacker Correa was offside before receiving Marcelo Brozovic's through ball.

Three minutes later Anderson silenced fans both in Milan and Naples with his fine low finish for the visitors after ex-Lazio defender Francesco Acerbi gifted the ball to his former teammates on the edge of the penalty area.

Inter pushed for the leveller, with Nicolò Barella lashing a volley just wide in the 40th minute, but Lazio were unlucky not to be two ahead at

break.

Acerbi again lost the ball in a dangerous position and Ciro Immobile's low curling shot was pushed away by Andre Onana to Anderson, whose finish was deflected over the bar by Alessandro Bastoni.

Federico Dimarco forced a fine save from Lazio's Ivan Provedel on the hour mark and moments later Inter's Denzel Dumfries shanked his finish when trying to force home an inviting cross from Romelu Lukaku.

Lautaro Martinez missed a brilliant chance when clean through on goal in the 71st minute but six minutes later made up for his error when he finished low past Provedel.

A huge cheer erupted in the stands in Naples after news of Martinez's equaliser filtered through and the noise levels nearly took the roof off after Gosens forced home Lukaku's cross with seven minutes remaining.

Martinez's second in the final minute put the cherry on the cake for Inter and Napoli, who are ready to claim the title in front of a sea of blue and white.

# Ding Liren becomes China's first world chess champion

AP ■ PARIS

Ding Liren became China's first world chess champion on Sunday after a rapid-play tie-break victory over Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi in Kazakhstan.

Ding, 30, takes over as winner of the World Chess Championship from Norway's Magnus Carlsen, who chose not to defend his title after a 10-year reign.

He and Nepomniachtchi had finished on seven points each after the 14 first-stage games played in the Kazakh capital Astana. Each won three, while the other eight ended in a draw.

For the tie-break stage of the match, also in Astana, the contenders then played a tie-break round, in which they had only 25 minutes to make their moves, plus an additional 10 seconds for each move played.

Ding is rated higher than Nepomniachtchi in the faster formats of the game but had played very little such chess in official competitions since January 2020.

Carlsen, considered one of the greatest players of all time,



had held the World Chess Championship title since 2013 and will remain the world's top-rated player.

The two-million-euro (\$2.2-million) prize would have been split 60-40 between the winner and the runner-up if the match had been decided in the initial 14-game series.

Because it reached the tiebreak stage, the prize money will be split 55-45.

No Chinese player had ever previously won the competition, in which men and women can compete.

But China has dominated women's tournaments since the 1990s. Ju Wenjun is the reigning world champion.



# Man City go top of PL

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester City moved to the top of the Premier League as Erling Haaland equalled the competition's single-season goal record and Julian Alvarez scored a stunner to clinch Sunday's 2-1 win at Fulham.

Haaland converted a third minute penalty at Craven Cottage to move level with Alan Shearer and Andy Cole's single-season Premier League record total.

Shearer scored 34 for Blackburn in 1995 and Cole hit the same tally for Newcastle in 1994.

Haaland has reached 34 Premier League goals in just 30 appearances in the competition, scoring more than 21 top-flight teams have managed in total in their first 30 games this season.

It was also the Norway striker's 50th City goal in all competitions since he signed from Borussia Dortmund last year.

Carlos Vinicius equalised for Fulham but Julian Alvarez's first goal in six games, a brilliant long-range effort, lifted City one point clear of second placed Arsenal.

Treble-chasing City, on top for the first time in 10 weeks, have won their last eight league games and are unbeaten in their last 18 matches in all competitions.

Pep Guardiola's red-hot team, who have a game in hand on Arsenal, need to win five of their last six games to be certain of a fifth title in six seasons.

With Haaland's goal spree showing no signs of slowing, few would bet against them taking advantage of Arsenal's collapse.

Arsenal, winless in their last four games, host Chelsea on Tuesday, with City back in action at home to West Ham on Wednesday.

In the immediate aftermath of Wednesday's crucial 4-1 demolition of Arsenal, Guardiola had dismissed suggestions the title race was over.

Guardiola reminded his players they were held to a surprise draw at Nottingham Forest in their next match after beating Arsenal in February.

It was a warning that had the desired affect, even without Kevin De Bruyne, who was missing due to an injury. City took just three min-

utes to move ahead in west London as Riyad Mahrez found Alvarez in the Fulham area and the Argentine forward was flattened by Tim Ream's clumsy challenge.

History in his sights, Haaland took the ball with a determined look and confidently drove his penalty low past Bernd Leno.

Fulham broke out to snatch an equaliser against the run of play in the 15th minute.

Harry Wilson's pass found Vinicius and the Brazilian took advantage of City's sloppy marking to drill a powerful finish past Ederson from 10 yards.

Alvarez has found consistent game-time hard to come by in his first season at City due to Haaland's excellence.

But Guardiola is a big fan of the diminutive World Cup winner and he showed exactly why he has the Spaniard's faith in the 36th minute.

Taking possession 25 yards from goal, Alvarez held off a Fulham challenge before shifting into position to unleash a sublime strike that gave Leno no chance as it whipped into the top corner.

# Perez leads Red Bull 1-2 in Baku

AP ■ BAKU

Sergio Perez won Sunday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix with teammate Max Verstappen in second to ram home Red Bull's supremacy over the rest of the Formula One grid.

Ferrari's pole-sitter Charles Leclerc completed the podium, a respectable third.

"Vamos!" exclaimed the Mexican on the team radio after making it a hugely profitable weekend in Baku where he also claimed Saturday's sprint race.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner acknowledged Perez's "sensational weekend".

He added: "He's always



been outstanding on this track, I don't know what it is about Azerbaijan, but he absolutely excels here."

Red Bull's roll through 2023 after four races now reads four wins plus Saturday's sprint, three poles, and three 1-2s.

Verstappen leads the drivers' championship by just six points ahead of the fifth round of the record 23-race season in Miami.

Perez's engineer told him on the team radio he was the "king of the streets" and with justification as five of his six F1 wins - not counting Saturday's sprint - have come on street circuits, twice in Baku alongside victories in Saudi Arabia, Monaco and Singapore.

The popular Perez, who believes he can really challenge Verstappen for the title, said: "It really worked out today for us (me), we managed to keep the pressure on Max. I think it was very close between us, we pushed to the maximum, we both hit the wall a few times but we (I) managed to keep him under control."

Leclerc conceded that for the time being at any rate Red Bull were in "another league once it comes to the race".

"Over 51 laps it was not possible, they have so much more pace than we do. Everyone is working flat out to understand what we can do in the races to close the gap."

# Barca inch closer to La Liga title



AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona thrashed 10-man Real Betis 4-0 on Saturday to move a step closer to winning La Liga for the first time since 2019.

Andreas Christensen, Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha struck for the hosts at Camp Nou with Guido Rodriguez netting a late own goal to round off the rout.

Edgar Gonzalez's early dismissal made it an easy night for Xavi Hernandez's side, who restored their 11-point lead

with six games remaining after second place Real Madrid had thrashed Almeria 4-2 to cut the gap.

With his side comfortably winning, Xavi brought on 15-year-old forward Lamine Yamal to become the club's youngest ever player to debut in La Liga.

Betis also brought on veteran Joaquin Sanchez, 41, for his final appearance at Camp Nou before he retires at the end of the season, and he was afforded a standing ovation by Barcelona supporters.

# Toulouse win French Cup title

AP ■ PARIS

Logan Costa and Thijs Dallinga both scored twice as Toulouse crushed holders Nantes 5-1 on Saturday to win the French Cup for the first time since 1957.

Costa headed Toulouse in front inside four minutes, adding a second in similar fashion before Dallinga bagged a brace with barely half an hour played at the Stade de France.

Zakaria Aboukhallal rounded off a memorable triumph for Toulouse late in the second half after Ludovic Blas struck a consolation from the spot for Nantes.

"It's an iconic competition in this country and we're proud. We've done it, we've gone down in club history," said Costa.

However, Toulouse risk being unable to play in Europe next season if AC Milan qualify for the Champions League or Europa League as both clubs are owned by US investment firm RedBird Capital Partners.

## MONACO CL HOPES FADE

Monaco's hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League were dealt a new blow on



However, Toulouse risk being unable to play in Europe next season if AC Milan qualify for the Champions League or Europa League

Clairefontaine national youth academy, was the hero for Montpellier with two goals.

Faitout Maouassa and English former Arsenal winger Stephany Mavididi also scored for the away side as they effectively secured survival by moving 11 points clear of the bottom four with five games remaining.

This was a second successive heavy defeat for Monaco, after Philippe Clement's team went down 3-0 away at Lens last weekend.

They remain fourth in the table, five points behind third-placed Lens who do not play until Tuesday.



# PUNJAB WIN KINGS BATTLE

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Punjab Kings sealed a stunning four-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings with Sikandar Raza holding his nerve to knock off the required three runs off the final ball in a tense Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

Chasing 201 for a win, Punjab needed nine runs from the final over bowled by Matheesha Pathirana who conceded just two from the first three deliveries. But Raza remained calm under immense pressure, scoring two runs each from the next two deliveries.

Raza (13 not out) sent the final ball towards the boundary but Maheesh Theekshana stopped it just before the ropes in a brilliant fielding effort but by that time the PBKS batters had completed three runs to the stunned silence of the home crowd at Chepauk.

Punjab finished at 201 for 6 as Prabhsimran Singh (42), Liam Livingstone (40), Sam Curran (29) and Jitesh Sharma (21) playing crucial roles as CSK opener Devon Conway's brilliant knock of 92 not out went in vain.

Punjab batters did well to pull off a win after victory looked difficult in the middle overs before Livingstone and Curran turned things around. The 24 runs conceded by Tushar Deshpande in the 16th over proved crucial in the final analysis.

With 22 runs needed from 12 balls, Jitesh Sharma (21 off 10 balls) hit the first ball for a four and got two off the next. He fell off the fourth ball, caught by substitute Shaik Rasheed in the deep. The third umpire ruled the batter out after the fielder caught the ball and tripped back close to the boundary rope.

Deshpande finished with 3



for 49 from his four overs while Ravindra Jadeja took 2 for 32 in his quota of four overs.

Punjab batters began the run chase with a rapid stand between captain Shikhar Dhawan (28) and Prabhsimran Singh before the former fell to Deshpande. The openers brought up the 50 in the powerplay. Dhawan's attempt to cut

over the in-field saw him find Matheesha Pathirana off the top-edge.

Prabhsimran and Atharva Taide (13) added 44 runs in quick time before the latter became Jadeja's first victim. Prabhsimran jumped out of the crease and saw the ball turn slightly, beating him for Dhoni to complete an easy stumping.

Taide was the next to go, caught and bowled by Jadeja for 13 as Punjab slipped to 94 for 3 in the 11th over.

Things seemed to slip away from PBKS as the batters could not find the big over and required run-rate kept climbing. But Raza and M Shahrulkh Khan (2 not out) scored 15 runs from eight balls to see

PBKS cross the target.

Earlier, CSK rode on Conway's superb unbeaten 92 to post 200 for 4. Dhoni sent the home crowd into raptures with two sixes from the last two deliveries.

The talismanic Dhoni walked in at the fall of Ravindra Jadeja (12) to a massive roar from the crowd. He could not

connect the first ball he faced from Sam Curran (4-0-46-1) and picked up a single from the next delivery, thumping one down the ground.

One delivery later, Dhoni hit a six from a wide delivery and then smacked a full toss for a maximum to finish on 13 not out as CSK finished the innings in style.

Opting to bat first, Conway, who struck 16 fours and a six during his 52-ball unbeaten knock, and his opening partner Ruturaj Gaikwad (37) added 86 for the first wicket to put the home team on the road to a good total.

For Punjab, Curran, Rahul Chahar, Arshdeep Singh and Sikandar Raza took one wicket apiece.

Conway and Gaikwad continued their impressive form with the bat as they got the team off to yet another strong start, raising 50 runs in the sixth over.

Conway hit two boundaries off Kagiso Rabada's first over to set the tone and continued to bat fluently. He hit two consecutive fours in the sixth over bowled by Curran as CSK gradually stepped up the pace. The powerplay yielded 57 runs as the Punjab Kings bowlers struggled to make an impression.

Gaikwad fell against the run of play, jumping out to a Sikander Raza delivery to be stumped by Jitesh Sharma for 37.

The big-hitting Shivam Dube was pushed up the order and he hit two big sixes, including one off Rabada. He helped add 44 runs in 26 balls with Conway to enable the Super Kings up the ante.

Dube looked good for more when he fell while going for a big hit only to be caught by Shahrulkh Khan in the deep for a 17-ball 28.



## RCB eye revenge against Lucknow

AP ■ LUCKNOW

Royal Challengers Bangalore will aim to shed the over reliance on their celebrated top-order when they face a belligerent Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL here on Monday.

RCB have struggled to maintain momentum provided by Virat Kohli, Faf du Plessis and Glenn Maxwell, who have done all the scoring in the eight games so far.

With most teams bunched up closely in the standings, the margin for errors has reduced in the second half of the competition.

Kohli, du Plessis and Maxwell can't be expected to do the job in every game and it is high time the likes of Mahipal Lomror, Shabbaz Ahmed and Dinesh Karthik step up.

The fielding and catching too needs to improve, something which was pointed by Kohli himself after the loss to KKR.

The former India captain will continue to lead the side unless du Plessis, who has been used as an 'Impact Player', regains full fitness.

Mohammad Siraj has

been the stand out bowler for RCB and he needs support from the other fast bowlers. Harshal Patel is tasked with bowling the tough overs but he would want to bring down his economy rate from 9.94.

LSG, on the other hand, head into the game after a thumping victory against Punjab Kings. The batting performance against Punjab was a testament to the fire-power they possess. No total is safe when Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran get going.

Skipper K L Rahul, however, will be the feeling heat and would want to make a statement at LSG's home ground. The pitch in Lucknow has been bit of a letdown and worked against the strengths of the home team.

Spinners have enjoyed bowling in Lucknow with Ravi Bishnoi shouldering the responsibility alongside Amit Mishra. Afghan pacer Naveen Ul Haq has been tidy in the absence of Mark Wood. Avesh Khan has conceded close to 10 runs per over in seven games and he would be looking to change that.

## No regrets, made right decisions on not retaining the likes of Gill: Mysore



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders "do not regret" losing players who are now bringing laurels to other franchises, said team CEO and managing director Venky Mysore on Sunday, adding they made the decisions based on "available information".

Shubman Gill's loss has been Gujarat Titans' gain as the India opener played a key role in winning the title in their maiden appearance last season.

"There is actually happiness when we see some of the players we have developed go to other franchises and do well - Shubman Gill is an example," Mysore told reporters.

With 483 runs, Gill was among the top-five rungetter last season. This time too, the youngster has been in fine form with 333 runs from eight innings (41.62 average).

It's not just Gill, former KKR players Kuldeep Yadav (Delhi Capitals), Piyush Chawla (Mumbai Indians) and Ajinkya Rahane (Chennai Super Kings) have been in fine form for their respective franchises.

Rahane, who got limited opportunities at KKR last season, has been a transformed player under the talismanic MS Dhoni and made a Team India comeback in Tests after 15 months.

"It's always difficult to lose

such players and when they do such well. Yesterday also I was telling Gill (49) that I was enjoying your batting but I was hoping that you would not take the game away from us. Score some runs, but let us... (win)," Mysore added.

Blaming it on the IPL rules, Mysore said: "The limitation as you know, the rules the IPL and BCCI make. In 2022 auction, we were allowed to keep only four players. There's always a debate. There is always eight or nine whom we would like to keep, you had to select four out of those."

"It's tough but that's the system though. It happens to every team. (KKR captain) Shreyas (Iyer) was with Delhi and he's with us, so on and forth... I can give any number of example."

"It's never a regret, and the decisions were made based on the set of information that was available at that point. We believe those were the right decisions we made, but it's always tough to lose some players."

KKR had retained Andre Russell, Varun Chakravarty, Venkatesh Iyer and Sunil Narine ahead of IPL 2022.

"Iyer, Varun took us to the final in 2021. Russell arguably the best T20 allrounder, Narine I don't have to say much about him. Those decisions were difficult and in the process you just let some players go.

PTI ■ ROME

The local boy Jaiswal Talented youngster Yashasvi Jaiswal's maiden century (124) went in vain as Tim David struck three successive sixes in the final over as Mumbai Indians pulled off a stunning six-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in their Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

The 21-year-old Jaiswal smashed 124 off just 62 balls, which was studded with 16 boundaries and eight maximums, at a strike rate of 200 to single-handedly take the Royals to 212 for 7 after electing to bat.

Mumbai Indians fought back with crucial knocks from Cameron Green (44) and Suryakumar Yadav (55 off 29 balls) in the middle, before David finished the match off, along with Tilak Varma (29 not out), as the home side chased down the target with three balls to spare.

With 17 needed off the final over bowled by Jason Holder, David hammered three consecutive sixes off the first three deliveries to finish off the game as MI reached 214 for 4 in 19.3 overs to hand captain Rohit Sharma a birthday present.

David smashed an overall five sixes and two fours during his knock of 45 not out off just 14 balls. He added 62 runs from only 23 balls for the unconquered fifth wicket with Varma to turn tables on the



Royals.

Sandeep Sharma gave the Royals the perfect start when he cleaned up Rohit (3), who turned 36 on Sunday, but the pair of Kishan and Green led the recovery, taking the hosts to 58/1 in the powerplay.

Green added 62 runs for the second wicket with Kishan, who perished for a 23-ball 28 to Ravichandran Ashwin (4-0-27-2).

With MI needing a Suryakumar special, the batter smacked an incredible six off Ashwin over fine leg off the first ball he faced, and got off the blocks quickly with three fours off Holder as MI reached 98 for 2 at the halfway mark.

But Ashwin struck again to have Green caught at deep midwicket for a 26-ball 44.

With the spin duo of Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal

not allowing MI to keep up with the asking rate, Suryakumar trained his guns on RR impact sub Kuldeep Sen, hitting the seamer for three runs and a six to collect 18 runs off four balls.

Suryakumar's explosive innings, however, ended courtesy an outstanding fielding effort from Sandeep. The batter tried to lift a short ball outside off from Boult over short fine leg, but Sandeep kept running ahead with his eyes fixated on the ball, putting in a forward dive to complete a spectacular catch.

The local boy Jaiswal clobbered 16 fours and eight sixes to make 124 from just 62 balls to single-handedly power Rajasthan Royals to the big total, while Mumbai Indians conceded their third consecutive total in excess of 200 this season.

Jaiswal, who took his tally past 400 runs to be the highest run scorer this season and also recorded the highest score of this IPL, had a special liking for Rily Meredith (4-0-51-1) as he hit half of his fours and a six against the Australian pacer.

Despite the other Royals batters failing to provide support from the other end, Jaiswal ensured the run-rate never dropped. His knock began with a sturdy 72-run opening stand with Jos Buttler (18).

Buttler got off the mark on his eighth ball while Jaiswal hit a six each off Cameron Green (3-0-31-0) and Jofra Archer (4-

0-41-1) in the first couple of overs to provide RR the early

'GROWN AS A LEADER'

Mumbai Indians players and coaching staff on Sunday paid glowing tributes to Rohit Sharma after he completed 10 years as captain of the five time IPL champions.

Rohit was handed the leadership role for the first time on April 24, 2013. He went on to guide the Mumbai Indians to titles in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020.

On eve of MI's clash with Rajasthan Royals, the team and coaching staff spoke about captain Rohit's decade at the helm.

"He's grown as a leader. I mean he's grown into leadership," said Kieron Pollard, the team's batting coach who made a huge contribution to the franchise's success in his playing days.

"Obviously, it was entrusted onto him in 2013 in the middle of a season. He was still pretty young at that point in time."

Pollard, who was part of team when Rohit took over captaincy in 2013, said the Mumbai franchise was a quick learner.

"That shows you that a person has a great acumen of what he can accomplish and we are lucky to have him as a leader. He has a wealth of experience, so it's a matter of tapping into that and continuing to see him grow."

## Fakhar's 180 script Pakistan's 7-wicket win

AP ■ RAWALPINDI

Fakhar Zaman smashed a third consecutive century to guide Pakistan to a seven-wicket victory over New Zealand in the second ODI on Saturday.

The 33-year-old left-handed opener hit an undefeated 180 off 144 balls for his tenth ODI hundred.

It followed his 117 in the first match and 101 against the same opponents in January as Pakistan chased a stiff 337-run target in 48.2 overs.

The win gives Pakistan a 2-0 lead in the five-match series with the last three matches in Karachi on May 3, 5 and 7.

Along with Zaman, skipper Babar Azam hit a brisk 66-ball 65 and Mohammad Rizwan a 41-ball 54 not out as Pakistan achieved their second highest successful ODI chase behind



349 against Australia in Lahore last year.

New Zealand were guided to 336-5 by a second successive hundred for Daryl Mitchell, who made 129, Tom Latham's 98 and 51 by Chad Bowes.

Zaman is the 12th batsman to score three or more hundreds in consecutive ODIs with Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara the only man to hit four on the trot. Azam has achieved the feat twice.

When on 98, Zaman joined West Indian Shai Hope as the second fastest to 3,000 ODI runs in 67 innings. South African Hashim Amla is the fastest to the milestone in 57.

Once Imam-ul-Haq fell for 24 with the team's total at 66, Zaman and Azam added 135 for the second wicket and even the fall of Azam and Abdullah Shafique (seven) did not derail Pakistan's chase.

Azam hit five boundaries and a six in his 25th ODI fifty.

"It was my lucky day to score again against New Zealand as I got chances," said Zaman.

"I try to take my time at the start and then with five players in the circle it becomes easier to score."

Visiting skipper Latham described Zaman as "outstanding".

"We were very happy at the halfway mark," said Latham. "Fakhar played an outstanding knock. They were able to build partnerships and that was a big tick in the batting department."

Zaman, who smoked six sixes and 17 fours, completed the chase with Rizwan in an unbroken fourth wicket stand of 119.

## Nagal clinches Rome ATP Challenger title

PTI ■ ROME

India's tennis ace Sumit Nagal became the country's first player to win an ATP Challenger event on European clay court, pulling off an upset win over higher-ranked Dutchman Jesper de Jong here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Nagal defeated de Jong, more than 100 places above the Indian in the ATP singles rankings, 6-3 6-2 to clinch his third ATP Challenger title and the first since the triumph in Buenos Aires in 2019.

Nagal, ranked 347th in the world, had little difficulty overcoming his Dutch opponent three years younger and currently ranked 234th in the

world.

A regular member of the Indian Davis Cup squad, Nagal had to play six tough matches, including two rounds of qualifiers, en route to the final.

He defeated Italy's Jacopo Berrettini in the first round of qualifiers before overcoming a tough challenge from Norway's higher-ranked opponent Victor Durasovic (ATP rank 302) in a gruelling three-setter to secure a place in the main round.

The 2015 Wimbledon boys' doubles title winner then thrashed home favourite Francesco Maestrelli (ATP rank 172) in the first round before blanking wildcard Fausto Tabacco of Italy 6-3, 6-0 to secure a berth in the quarter-finals.