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THE CORNERSTONE OF ALL RELATIONSHIPS

WORLD 8

SAM ALTMAN BACK AS OPENAI CEO

MONEY 10

MARKETS GAIN IN HIGHLY VOLATILE TRADE

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12 SPORT

Tunnel rescue Op on last lap



Ambulances on standby near the Silkyara tunnel where rescue operation of 41 workers trapped inside the tunnel for 10 days is underway in Uttarkashi on Wednesday. Horizontal drilling to evacuate trapped workers in the tunnel has reached 44 metres, rekindling hopes of the stranded 41 persons coming out soon

PTI ■ DEHRADUN/UTTARKASHI

In a crucial development on Wednesday evening, a multi-agency operation to rescue 41 men trapped in the Silkyara tunnel reached a promising stage. Ambulances were poised for action, and a specialised ward at a local health centre stood prepared for potential medical attention. As of 6 pm, an official update from Delhi reported that a significant progress was made, with up to 44 metres of an escape pipe successfully inserted into the debris of the collapsed section of the tunnel in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district. Earlier, officials said the American-made auger machine had to drill through a 57 metre stretch of debris to reach the workers, who were trapped when a portion of the under-construction tunnel collapsed 10 days back. By this count, just 13 metres of debris remained to be drilled through. Drilling from the Silkyara-end was put on hold Friday afternoon when the auger machine encountered a hard obstacle around the 22-metre mark, creating vibrations in the tunnel that caused safety concerns. The drilling resumed around midnight Tuesday. As the machine drills through, six metre sections of steel pipes, just under a metre wide, are pushed into the escape passage. Once the pipeway reaches the other end, the trapped workers

are expected to crawl out. A National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team was spotted entering the tunnel in the evening. A team of 15 doctors, including chest specialists, has been deployed at the site in anticipation of the evacuation. Twelve ambulances were on standby at the spot, and the plan was to keep a fleet of 40 ready. A helicopter was also expected to be earmarked for the operation. A special ward to accommodate all evacuated workers was readied at the community health centre in Chinyalisaur. All hospitals in the district as well as AIIMS, Rishikesh are on alert, officials said. Relatives of workers who have spoken to them through a new six-inch pipeline inserted late Monday through the rubble expressed optimism. "Today, we were taken inside the tunnel and we spoke to our family member. Sonu repeatedly told me not to worry now and that we would meet soon," Devashish, whose brother-in-law is among the 41 workers, said. "We called him on Diwali but could not reach him. His colleagues told us that his mobile phone was damaged. Later, we saw his name in the newspaper and learnt that he was trapped inside the tunnel," he said. At a media briefing in Silkyara around 4 pm, Bhaskar Khulbe, a former advisor with the Prime Minister's Office, was upbeat, saying that another six-metre section of the rescue pipe had been inserted over the

past hour. "Hopefully the next two-three hours will be comfortable in terms of assembling for the next push and attaining what all of us are waiting for," he said. Officials had said earlier that the stretch between 40 and 50 metres was the "most crucial" one. Asked to spell out a timeline for workers' evacuation, Khulbe had said, "We hope to celebrate Bagwal with them", possibly meaning Igas, a festival celebrated in the Garhwal region after Diwali. This year Igas will be celebrated on Thursday. Several alternative plans are also in motion if the horizontal drilling from the Silkyara end fails. Officials said about nine metres of horizontal drilling had taken place from the Barkot end of the tunnel - a much longer process that could take several days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami once again on Wednesday morning for updates on the rescue operation. First visuals of the trapped workers were captured early Tuesday with the help of an endoscopic camera sent through the new six-inch pipeline. In a statement, the government said the second lifeline was functioning efficiently, ensuring an ample supply of food items like rotis, sabzi, khichdi, daliya, oranges, and bananas in the tunnel.

Terrorism unacceptable: Modi

PM Modi urges global unity in his virtual address to G20 leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the Israel-Hamas conflict rages on, Prime Minister Narendra Modi cautioned on Wednesday that insecurity and instability in West Asia are matters of concern. He emphasised the need to ensure that the Israel-Hamas conflict does not escalate into a regional conflict. Addressing the G-20 Leaders' summit, he stated, "Terrorism is unacceptable to all of us." Modi stressed that the death of civilians, regardless of the location, is condemnable, and he also welcomed the news of the release of hostages in West Asia. The summit was held in virtual mode. Significantly, the meeting came on a day Israel's Cabinet approved a temporary ceasefire with the Hamas group. Moreover, the virtual meeting of G20 leaders took place a day after leaders of the BRICS grouping held an extraordinary meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Prime Minister Modi, in his opening remarks, said in the last few months, new challenges have emerged and the situation of insecurity and instability in West Asia is a matter of concern. The virtual meeting was attended by leaders such as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Brazilian President Luiz



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the G20 virtual summit in New Delhi on Wednesday

Inácio Lula da Silva, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, and Chinese Premier Li Qiang, among others. "Our coming together shows that we are sensitive to all issues and standing together for their solution. We believe that terrorism is unacceptable to us. The death of civilians, wherever it may be, is condemnable. We welcome the news of the release of hostages. We hope all hostages will be released soon," Modi said. He asserted that it is imperative that humanitarian assistance reaches on time and in a continuous manner. It is important to ensure that the Israel-Hamas war does not take the shape of a regional conflict, Modi said. Highlighting the challenge posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Prime Minister Modi said it should reach people and must be safe for society. He said there are growing concerns across the world on negative use of AI. He said, "India's thinking is

clear, we have to work together on global regulation of AI. We must understand dangers posed by deepfakes to society and individuals." Addressing the G20 leaders, he said, "When on November 16 last year, Indonesian President Joko Widodo handed the ceremonial gavel to me, I had said we will make G20 inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented and decisive. In one year, we have together achieved this." All of us together have taken the G20 to newer heights, he said. "In this world full of mistrust and challenges, it is this trust that binds us together. In the last year, we have expressed confidence in 'One Earth, One Family, and One Future.' Moving away from controversies, we have worked with unity and cooperation," PM Modi said. "I can never forget that moment when in Delhi all of us welcomed the African Union into the G20. This message of inclusivity given by the G20 to the world is unprecedented. It is a matter of pride for India

that under its presidency, Africa was given a voice. In the last year in the G20, the Global South's voice has also been heard," Modi said. The PM asserted that the G20 has increased confidence in multilateralism, and global governance reforms have been given a direction. Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday ahead of the summit, India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said the deliberations will witness "excellent participation" from leaders of the grouping. Kant described the virtual summit as "rare and exceptional," which would give Modi an opportunity to interact with world leaders for a second time during India's G20 Presidency before it passes on to Brazil in December. Noting that several challenges have emerged since the September G20 summit, Kant had said development would be the primary focus of the virtual meeting, and leaders might engage in discussions on a myriad of other issues.

BJP, Congress sling mud over Herald, panauti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The war of words between the BJP and the Congress escalated on Wednesday over the National Herald row and the "panauti" remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi early this week. BJP hit back at the Congress over its condemnation of the seizure of National Herald assets, as the ruling party asserted that the Gandhi family must pay for its "sins". Former Union minister and BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad accused the Gandhi family of capturing National Herald assets by converting the now-defunct newspaper's properties into its "personal properties". Addressing a press conference, Prasad asked the Congress to explain as to how the action taken against "rank dishonesty and loot of public property" can be described as negation of democracy. Attacking the Gandhi scion for his remarks, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan accused the former Congress chief of being "anti-national" for referring to the PM as "Panauti" and said the people of the country will not forgive this. The ED has issued an order to provisionally attach properties worth ₹751.9 crore in the money laundering case being investigated by it. The probe agency also alleged in the statement that the shareholders and donors of the Congress were "cheated" by the office-bearers of AJL and the party. After the ED attached assets of the Congress-promoted National Herald on Tuesday, the Congress said such "petty vendetta tactics" cannot frighten it and dubbed the probe agency a "coalition partner" of the BJP. Its leader KC Venugopal slammed the BJP and the probe agencies as "murderers of democracy". Prasad said the newspaper had prime properties in many cities and alleged that senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul appropriated these assets as the shares of the firm owning it were transferred to a company where the two controlled 76 per cent of shares. What the family did was a case of the "Congress and commerce", he said, citing the use of the phrase in past cases of similar nature involving opposition leaders. Rejecting the Congress' claim that the ED's action was an outcome of the BJP's frustration as it was losing in the current round of Assembly polls, BJP claimed that it was the Congress which will be defeated soundly and noted that the National Herald case probe began on a private complaint before the Modi government came to power in 2014. Both Sonia and her son Rahul are facing cheating and forgery charges and are currently on bail, the BJP leader noted and cited the trial court's critical observations about the allegations against them to make his point.

Israel, Hamas truce to free hostages

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel and Hamas agreed to a four-day ceasefire in the war in Gaza, a breakthrough that will facilitate the release of dozens of hostages held by militants as well as Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, and bring a large influx of aid to the besieged territory, officials said on Wednesday. The truce raised hopes of eventually winding down the war, which was triggered by Hamas' October 7 rampage into Israel. Now in its seventh week, the war has levelled vast swaths of Gaza, fuelled a surge of violence in the occupied West Bank, and stirred fears of a wider conflagration across the Middle East. Still, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would resume the war after the truce and keep fighting "until we achieve all our goals," including the destruction of Hamas' fighting and governing abilities and the return of all hostages. The ceasefire temporarily freezes both sides in the war in place at a tenuous moment. Israeli troops hold much of northern Gaza and say they have dismantled tunnels and much of Hamas' infrastructure there. But Israeli officials acknowledge the group's infra-

structure remains intact elsewhere. In recent days before the truce, Israel underlined that it was determined to take its ground offensive into the south. Residents in Gaza City said the fighting intensified overnight into Wednesday, with gunfire, heavy artillery and airstrikes. "Apparently they want to advance before the truce," said Nasser al-Sheikh, who is sheltering with relatives in the city. Palestinian militants continued firing rockets at Israel throughout the day, without causing casualties. The announcement of the truce capped weeks of indirect, stop-and-go negotiations to free some of the roughly 240 hostages taken by Hamas and other militants during their October 7 raid. The cease-fire is to take effect at 10 am local time (0800 GMT) on Thursday, according to Egypt's state-run Qahera TV channel. Egypt and Qatar, along with the United States, helped mediate the deal between Israel and Hamas. Fifty hostages will be freed in stages, in exchange for the release of what Hamas said would be 150 Palestinian prisoners. Both sides will let go women and children first.

4 Army men martyred in fight with terrorists

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Four Army personnel, including two Captains, were martyred and two others were injured during an encounter between security forces and a group of well-entrenched terrorists in the Solki forest area of Kalakote in Rajouri district on Wednesday. Another senior officer was evacuated to the Command Hospital in Udhampur after sustaining bullet injuries to his arm and chest. The fierce gunfight was going on in the area with the induction of more troops to neutralise two terrorists trapped there, officials said. The Army authorities had not issued any official statement to confirm the number of death till late at night. However, the Nagrota-based White Knight Corps posted a brief statement on X (previously Twitter), stating, "Based on specific intelligence, joint operations were launched in the Kalakote Area and Gulabgarh forest in Rajouri district on November 19. Contact was established on November 22, leading to an intense firefight. The terrorists have been injured and surrounded, and operations are in progress. Our bravehearts are displaying acts

of valour and sacrifice, striving to prevent collateral damage to women and children in the highest traditions of the Indian Army. White Knight Corps salutes their supreme sacrifice." The security forces are proceeding cautiously to prevent any further loss of life while neutralising the terrorists. The suspected movement of terrorists was detected in the area four days ago. Subsequently, a high alert was issued, and search operations commenced in the general vicinity of Kalakote. Ground reports indicated that the security forces encountered heavy gunfire during the search operations in the Solki forest area of Kalakote, based on specific information about the presence of a group of heavily armed terrorists. The initial contact between the security forces and the concealed terrorists was reported around 9 am on Wednesday. One of the Army officers sustained fatal injuries in the initial round of firing. Subsequently, elite Para commandos were swiftly deployed into the forest area to flush out the terrorists positioned in safe hideouts within the densely forested area. They targeted the elite commandos also.

Delhi back to square one with 'severe' pollution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's average air quality turned "severe" on Wednesday with the air quality index reading of 413 in the morning but settled at 395. According to the air quality early warning system, air quality is likely to be very poor from November 23 to 25. The surface wind is likely to be coming from southeast/east directions with wind speed up to 8 kmph during daytime. It will be calm during evening/night. Shallow to moderate fog is likely in the morning on November 23 and 24. The minimum temperature was recorded at 10.6 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal, on Wednesday, while the rela-

tive humidity was recorded at 76 per cent at 8.30 am. Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot shared a notification on the microblogging site X. "Entry of all buses, including All India Tourist buses/Contract Carriage buses/State Transport Buses or holding any other kind of permit into Delhi from other states except CNG/Electric or BS-VI diesel buses will be restricted as and when GRAP IV is invoked. The above-mentioned restrictions shall stand automatically applicable, as and when GRAP-IV is invoked from the date of issuance of this order in Delhi Gazette, and if GRAP IV is revoked, the said restrictions stand terminated automatically; no separate

order will be issued." Data from the Ministry of Agriculture showed Punjab reported 512 farm fires on Wednesday, taking the total number of such cases recorded since September 15 to 36,118. In October, the Delhi Government mandated that only those electric/CNG or BS-VI diesel buses would be allowed to enter the national capital from NCR cities of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Area, a statutory body responsible for formulating strategies to combat pollution in the region, had on



An anti-smog gun being used to spray water droplets to curb air pollution in New Delhi on Wednesday

November 18 asked Delhi and neighbouring States to revoke all emergency measures, under which only CNG, electric, and BS VI-compliant vehicles from other States are allowed to enter Delhi, with exemptions granted to those involved in essential services. The main cause of air pollution in Delhi is vehicle pollution and construction works. The city's daily concentration of fine particles less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter (PM2.5) — which can enter the bloodstream, leading to poor health — remained above 200 micrograms per cubic metre between November 3 and November 9. World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines recommend concentrations stay below an

average of 15 micrograms per cubic metre over 24 hours. According to experts, air pollution has a substantial impact on maternal and child health, raising the likelihood of a variety of negative consequences. Air pollution has been linked to a spectrum of health complications, ranging from respiratory issues to more severe consequences. Expecting mothers exposed to elevated levels of air pollutants face an increased risk of complications. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, 401 and 450 severe and above 450 severe plus.

Mamata cancels Tajpur sea port project pact

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The 2022 bonhomie between Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and business tycoon Gautam Adani formally entered the choppy waters with her Government on Wednesday dissolving the Letter of Intent given to the Adani Ports to develop the Tajpur deep sea port off Digha sea beach in East Midnapore district.

Though senior Trinamool Congress leaders refused to link the Government's withdrawal of the LoI with the reported silent tussle between TMC MP Mahua Moitra and the Adanis in the cash-for-query matter sources said "one half of the (Adani) chapter is over for now."

Bengal which has seen a massive flight of capital in the past five decades partly on account of political and labour issues and partly because of the fast drying up of the Hooghly river port desperately needs a deep sea port for the State to once again stand up and compete with the nearby Paradip and Visakhapatnam ports.

A day after the Chief Minister made a surprise reference at the ongoing Bengal Global Business Summit of her Government's decision to re-open the Rs 25,000 crore Tajpur port for international tender



sources in the Government said that the LoI given to the Adanis had been dissolved and that the Government would soon invite new tenders. Opposition BJP however accused the Chief Minister for hiding facts saying it was not the State but the Adanis who had rejected the Tajpur proposal after carrying out a feasibility study. "It is not the Bengal Government which dissolved the LoI but the Adanis which refused to work here," said a State BJP leader.

Banerjee had on Tuesday said at the BGS that "the proposed deep sea port at Tajpur is ready. You can all participate in the tender. It will attract an investment of about Rs 25,000 crore," triggering speculations about the fate of the project that

the Adani group had intended to develop last year.

Two months after Gautam Adani had attended the 2022 BGS, Banerjee had in October 2022 given the LoI to Karan Adani of the Adani Ports. Soon the Adanis had announced investments at Tajpur worth Rs 10,000 crore for which an initial survey was also conducted. However, there was not much development in the project -- about 170 km from Kolkata -- which had a draft of 12.1 metres. Once completed the project was likely to create 25,000 direct and one lakh indirect jobs the TMC government had said.

While the TMC politicians dismissed possibilities of the Mohua Moitra case impacting the Tajpur prospects some

sources said that the State withdrew the LoI because it was apprehensive of a clause in an agreement that said the Centre would give clearance to the project only if there was nothing adverse in it.

"The State was apprehensive because the Centre could have pulled out of the project shifting the entire liability on the State's shoulders ... why the State would take that risk," a source said.

However others said that Chief Minister's reluctance to tame her MP Moitra who was embarrassing the Adanis in Parliament had irked the business tycoon who was conspicuously absent from the 2023 BGS.

Meanwhile, in a fresh round of a veiled attack on the Centre the Chief Minister while making a strong pitch for her own State once again told the delegates at the Business Summit how the Opposition States were being strangled by the Centre and how the unfriendly tax regime was making it difficult for the industries to thrive. She said that despite nationally India had seen a 40 per cent drop in employment opportunities her State had seen a 42 per cent in creating jobs. Banerjee said that Bengal had received investment proposals worth Rs 3.76 lakh crore in the BGS.

No plans to oppose CPM State Yatra: Kerala's Muslim League

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The genuflection of the ruling CPI-M in front of Muslim League has come out in the open on Wednesday with P K Kunhalikutty, the latter's national general secretary, declaring that his party would not oppose the Nava Kerala Yatra being held by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his council of ministers through the 140 assembly constituencies in the State.

Speaking to reporters at Malappuram, a stronghold of the Muslim League, Kunhalikutty said that his party has no plans to stage any protest rally in the district to counter the CPI-M Yatra which is being portrayed as the latter's 2024 Lok Sabha campaign in Kerala. Kunhalikutty's declaration came within minutes of Leader of the Opposition V D Satheshan charging the chief minister as a criminal. "Till yesterday, we were of the view that Vijayan has the mind of a criminal. But the inhuman attack on the activists of Youth Congress who waved black flag at the chief minister has confirmed that Vijayan is a hardened criminal. He should resign immediately from the post of the chief minister," Satheshan said at Kozhikode on Wednesday morning.



He was referring to the physical assault by the CPI-M activists with the tacit support of police on the protesting Youth Congress workers at Kannur on Tuesday. Many Congress workers suffered injuries (some of them were inflicted serious injuries) and have been hospitalized. Visuals of the CPI-M youth activists attacking their Congress counterparts with rods and helmets have gone viral in the social media. Satheshan said the party would intensify its agitation against the chief minister and his council of ministers in the coming days.

But Kunhalikutty, the de facto chief of Muslim League who is a strong proponent of an alliance with the CPI-M scoffed at Satheshan's statement.

"We have no plans to hold any kind of agitation against the Chief Minister's Nava Kerala Yatra.

We may hold a better Yathra as and when we feel the time is right. I do not know anything about any protest or agitation against the chief minister's Yathra," said Kunhalikutty.

The thaw in the ties between the CPI-M and the Muslim League has been evolving for quite sometime now, according to a seasoned political chronicler of Kerala.

"The Muslim League and the CPI-M were allies in the seven-party front led by the latter during 1967 -1969. Muslim League was a constituent of the EMS Namboodirippadu-led Kerala Government during this period," said the chronicler who did not want his name to be quoted. He pointed out that the present leadership of the CPI-M has close links with all Islamic extremist organizations.

"Many Islamic fundamentalists have made it to strategic

positions in the CPI-M. Elamaram Kareem, MP, K T Jaleel, Mohammed Riyaz (the new husband of Veena, daughter of Pinarayi Vijayan) and A N Shamseer (speaker of the assembly) and A A Rahim (Rajya Sabha member against whom an assault case has been filed by a woman professor) are some of the persons who are influential in the community," he said.

Since the group fighting in the Congress is continuing unabated and the Popular Front of India, SDPI etc have chosen the CPI-M as their temporary refuge center, it is anybody's guess where the loyalty of the Muslim electorate lies.

Moreover, Muslim League has been out of the corridors of power in Kerala since 2016. The League enjoyed the luxury of power as part of the UPA in the center during 2004 to 2014.

"We continue to be part of the UDF in Kerala and that of the INDI alliance at the Centre. The CPI-M is also an important constituent of the INDI alliance.

So what is the big deal now?" asked Kunhalikutty while responding to a query by the media.

The CPI-M has nominated a Muslim League MLA to the director board of Kerala Bank, a State owned Bank and he has joined the Board.

Patole: Not intimidated by Centre's oppression

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Wednesday charged that the Modi government had initiated action through the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against National Herald newspaper, as it feared the BJP's defeat in the Assembly polls in five states and said that his party was "not scared" of its oppression by the Centre.

"The picture emerging shows that the BJP is losing in all these five states. Our leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi are getting a great response from the people. On the other hand, people have turned their backs on the meetings of Prime Minister Modi. The desperate and disappointed Modi government has taken action against the National Herald through the ED as the BJP's defeat is obvious, but the Congress is not scared of this oppression by the Modi government," Patole said.

Talking to media persons in Nagpur, Patole said: "All the documents of the National Herald case are in the public domain. The Modi government has been taking action



against the National Herald ever since it came to power, but nothing has emerged from it so far."

"Every time when defeat is visible, the Modi government tries to divert the attention of the public by misusing the ED and indulging in such activities. But now it will be of no use. The whole country knows the truth of the matter," he said.

"Earlier in the same case Soni and Rahulji were also summoned in the name of investigation and made to sit for 10 hours and were harassed, but nothing came out of it too. No one from the Gandhi family or any of its directors receive salary or profits from the Associated Journal, the company that runs the National Herald. Therefore, BJP's allegation of

a scam is completely baseless," Patole said.

"Now that it is staring at heavy defeat in all the five states, the BJP has tried to revive the stale case again. But the people have recognized the falsehood being spread by the BJP and even the ED cannot save the BJP from defeat this time," the Maharashtra Congress chief said.

On the controversy over Rahul Gandhi's purported "Panauti" reference to Modi, Patole said: "While Rahul Gandhi was speaking at a campaign meeting in Rajasthan, the crowd was chanting slogans of Panauti...Panauti. Rahul Gandhi spoke about this, Rahul Gandhi did not take the name of Narendra Modi or any BJP leader in this, so then why is the BJP reacting? How is this an insult to Modi?"

"During the final match of the Cricket World Cup at Ahmedabad Stadium, the word 'Panauti' trended on social media, it is still trending today. It is a public sentiment but it is seen as the BJP's attempt to show that everyone talks about them only all the time," the State Congress president said.

HC stays ₹32.39 cr tax demand against PayPal

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has stayed the Rs. 32.39 crore tax demand and all related proceedings against PayPal Payments Private Limited, till January 31, 2024.

Granting an interim relief to PayPal, a HC division bench, comprising Justices K R Shriram and Dr Neela Gokhale stayed the enforcement of a substantial tax demand amounting to Rs. 32.39 crore and all associated proceedings against the online payment processing company.

"Pending the hearing and final disposal of this petition, stay the operation of the Impugned Order, the Impugned Demand Notice, the Impugned Notice, the Impugned Penalty Notice, the Impugned Draft Order and the Impugned TPO Order passed by the by the Respondents No.2 (Assessment Unit ITD) and 4 (Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax)," the HC order stated.

PayPal had challenged actions of the Assessing officers of the National Assessment Faceless Centre, Delhi. The PayPal had challenged the final Assessment Order dated October 17, 2023 passed under Section 143(3) read with

Section 144C(3) and 144B of the Income-Tax Act, 1961, demand notice issued the same day under Section 156, Penalty notice dated July 30 u/s Section 274 read with Section 271G and another penalty notice from October 17, 2023 along with other orders.

Represented by Senior Advocate Jehangir Mistry instructed by Luthra and Luthra Law Offices, PayPal had claimed they filed income tax returns electronically on February 14, 2021 for 2020-21 declaring a total income of Rs. 12,97,96,680.

However, the IT department had selected the case for complete scrutiny on the grounds of international transactions, refund claim, foreign outward remittance, loss from currency fluctuations etc.

Having issued a notice to the company, the IT department arrived at an increase in PayPal's income by Rs.91,32,63,430. Accordingly, the assessed income under Section 144C(3) of the Act read with Section 144B of the Act was computed at Rs.1,04,30,60,110.

On the same day the Income Tax Department raised a demand notice of over Rs.32,39,48,100, while another penalty notice alleged under-reporting of income.

In its plea before the high court, PayPal cited Section 153(1) of the Act and said that no order of assessment "shall" be made under Section 143 of the Act at any time after the expiry of 18 months (extendable upto 12 months) from the end of the Annual Year in which the income was first assessable.

"Therefore, it is humbly submitted that the statutory limitation period for passing an order of assessment, i.e., the Impugned Order in the present case, expired on "30.09.2023." Therefore, the order passed by the Assessment Unit of ITD on October 17 was "unambiguously beyond the statutory period of limitation" by a month and the order was without jurisdiction, liable to be quashed," PayPal stated in its plea.

"It is humbly submitted that the Impugned Order for the AY 2020-21 is barred by limitation and therefore, void ab initio and without jurisdiction and is therefore, liable to be quashed," the plea added.

On a request for three weeks' time sought by the respondents to file their replies, the high court directed the petitioners to file their rejoinder within two weeks and posted the matter for hearing on January 8, 2024.

81 Indian armed forces personnel reach Australia for AUSTRAHIND-23

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining robust defence ties between the two countries, an Indian armed forces contingent comprising 81 personnel departed for Australia on Wednesday to take part in the second edition of joint military exercise AUSTRAHIND-23.

The exercise will be conducted at Perth, Australia from November 22- December 6, defence ministry said here. Indian Army contingent comprises 60 personnel from a Battalion of the GORKHA Rifles. The Australian Army contingent comprising 60 personnel will be from the 13th Brigade. One officer from Indian Navy and 20 personnel from Indian Air Force will also participate from the Indian side. The Australian contingent will include 20 personnel each from the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force.

Exercise AUSTRAHIND was instituted in 2022 and the first edition was conducted in Mahajan, Rajasthan. It is planned to be an annual training event to be conducted alternatively in India and Australia. Aim of the exercise is to foster collaborative partnership and



share best practices between the two sides. The exercise will also promote inter-operability while undertaking multi-domain operations in Urban and Semi-Urban terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations on peace keeping operations. The joint exercise will promote exchange of ideas and jointly rehearse tactics, technique and procedures for conducting tactical operations. Training curriculum also includes sniper firing, and jointly operating surveillance and communication equipment to achieve a high degree of situational awareness. Casualty management and evacuation will also be rehearsed besides tactical actions at Company/ Battalion level. The exercise will also help in promoting understanding between the two militaries and further strengthen the defence cooperation between the two friendly nations.

Book on Manekshaw's life to transform businesses by Army veteran Bali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

The legendary Sam Manekshaw is the quintessential Indian soldier with exemplary courage who believed in leading by example, and in a battle with the Japanese during World War II, despite being badly hit with bullets in his belly and lungs, he was able to make the Australian doctor treating him break into a hearty laugh with his humour, says a new book.

In "The Winning Culture: Lessons from the Indian Army to Transform Your Business", Indian Army veteran turned executive performance coach Major Gen (ret'd) Neeraj Bali provides tips for leaders poised to revolutionise organisational culture and lead their teams to guaranteed wins.

Writing about a few incidents involving India's first field marshal Manekshaw, the author says in 1942, the former's troops were among the force guarding a bridge over the Sittaung river in then

Burma. "In a battle with the Japanese, Manekshaw was hit nine times with bullets in his belly and lungs. Such was his courage - and the imminence of his death - that the British military commander pinned a military cross on a semi-conscious Manekshaw. But the latter did not fade away, and finally made it on a stretcher to a hospital after 36 hours," the book, published by Pan Macmillan India, says.

There was confusion in the ad hoc facility and, after some effort, Manekshaw's orderly Sher Singh managed to summon an Australian doctor and pointed out the multiple bullet wounds to him. Eager to keep Manekshaw conscious by engaging in small talk, the doctor asked him what had happened to him.

He replied, "A bloody mule kicked me." The doctor broke into a hearty laugh and said, "I see you have a sense of humour. You might be worth saving!"

Safety norms implementation in campus now among criteria for medical college assessment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Implementation of safety measures in teaching blocks, hospitals and hostels will be part of the criteria for assessment and rating of medical colleges along with focus on curriculum, research and laboratory facilities, according to a draft framework.

As part of the draft framework prepared by the National Medical Commission (NMC) and Quality Council of India, there is a parameter related to survey perception of alumni towards quality and reputation of colleges concerned from where they had completed UG or PG programmes in medical education.

The NMC had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Quality Council of India for the purpose of assessment and rating of the medical institutions in July. Both government and private medical colleges in the country will be assessed and rated from the 2024-25 academic session.

Database of alumni will be provided by the medical college. Perceived quality by alumni



will be captured relating to faculty staff, clinical posting, lab and library facilities and teaching hospital. Data for this parameter will be captured from a minimum of 100 alumni, Dr J L Meena, Member Medical Assessment and Rating Board at NMC said on Wednesday. Also, there is a parameter related to capturing feedback from students pursuing undergraduate and post-graduate programmes in the colleges, Dr Meena said.

Anonymous online feedback will be captured from minimum 25 per cent sampled students from each professional year by each programme. Colleges will be required to upload student data in required format. "Students will be required to give anonymous feedback according to requirements of

this parameter. For this parameter, students will rate given facilities on a three points scale," Dr Meena said.

There is also a parameter related to capturing feedback from 25 per cent randomly selected faculty staff from clinical and non-clinical subjects/specialty for which online feedback form will be circulated among sampled faculty staff, Dr Yogendra Malik, Member Ethics and Medical Registration Board of NMC said. Under the hostel accommodation capacities and safety measures, the draft stated that with reference to regulations laid down by medical regulator, the college/institution shall make provision to provide accommodation for at least 75 per cent of all students enrolled and interns, and all girl students who request for it, Dr Malik said. Adequate recreational, dining and round-the-clock security facilities shall be provided at "the hostels. The parameter -- "Amount spent on strengthening of Safety Measures in Campus in last 1 year" -- is related to amount spent by Medical College for strengthening safety measures on the entire campus including teaching hospital.

INS Sumedha to hold EEZ surveillance in Mozambique

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Naval Ship Sumedha, which is on an extended deployment to Africa, arrived in Maputo and will hold joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance with the Mozambique Navy between November 23 and 25.

Giving details here, defence ministry officials said the ship arrived in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, on Tuesday. The port call is aimed at strengthening long-standing diplomatic relations, reinforcing maritime cooperation and boosting interoperability between both the navies, it said. During the visit, the two Navies will hold professional interactions, cross-deck visits, planning conferences and joint EEZ surveillance will be done, it said.

Activities during the port call include courtesy calls by the commanding officer on various dignitaries and government officials of Mozambique, including the Navy Commandant, Mozambique Navy and Mayor of Maputo



City. The ministry said Mozambique and India have traditionally enjoyed warm and friendly bilateral relations, and share common values of democracy, development and secularism. Bilateral Defence Cooperation is also being progressed through regular Joint Defence Working Group (JDWG) meetings, it said.

"Indian Naval ships are regularly deployed overseas as part of Indian Navy's mission of building 'bridges of friendship' and strengthening international cooperation with friendly countries," the state-

ment said. INS Sumedha is part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam and functions under the operational command of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.

The ship is equipped with several weapon systems, sensors, state-of-the-art navigation and communication systems/electronic warfare suits. Sumedha has undertaken various fleet support operations, coastal and offshore patrolling, ocean surveillance and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) missions in the past.

Atishi submits fresh report in Bamnauli land case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the Centre is considering giving extension to chief secretary Naresh Kumar for a six month, Delhi Revenue Minister Atishi on Wednesday submitted a supplementary report to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on corruption allegations against Kumar and his son in the Bamnauli land acquisition matter. In the fresh report, Atishi reiterated her recommendation for suspension of the chief secretary. Based on the findings in the supplementary report, the Vigilance Minister requested the LG to review his position and refer this matter to the ED and CBI investigate to investigate not just the actions of the then DM but also the role of the Chief Secretary and the Divisional Commissioner, along with the role of his son and his business

associates/partners in this matter. Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has already refused to consider the first report forwarded by the Kejrival seeking removal and CBI/ED investigation against Kumar in the Bamnauli land acquisition controversy. The LG observed that the Chief Secretary had taken action against the District Magistrate (DM). The matter pertains to alleged corruption in acquisition of 19 acres of land in southwest Delhi's Bamnauli village. Taking a dig at the AAP government, the leader of opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the AAP ministers are busy in making reports against officials and they did nothing. "They are making every effort to implicate the chief secretary in a corruption case because he (Naresh Kumar)

exposed them in excise policy scam case, sheeshmahal scam case. In this case, Chief Secretary has himself recommended to the MHA for CBI probe. The AAP ministers including Chief Minister do not have any vision to run the government and welfare of the people," Bidhuri said. In view of this, the Vigilance Minister noted that the Chief Secretary and Divisional Commissioner resorted to mere "Shadow Boxing," despite knowing all the facts, the DM was not suspended for three and half months. The Vigilance Minister's report claimed that Chief Secretary did not take any action against the DM South West. Minister Atishi wrote to the LG, that silence and delay in suspension of DM South West seem deliberate and willful at behest of the Chief Secretary and Divisional Commissioner. "The Chief Secretary made every



possible effort to save District Magistrate (DM) South West. Further, the Vigilance Minister requested the LG emphasizing the necessity to suspend CS until investigation takes place," she in her report. Kumar had earlier denied any wrongdoing and alleged that people with "vested interests" against whom vigilance action

through his son, leading to a reasonable suspicion that he may have influenced/pressurized the erstwhile DM to pass the award of the exorbitant award," Atishi said in the fresh report. "In light of the LG's note, the aforementioned findings require some elaboration so that the LG may appreciate the gravity of this matter and the complicity of high-ranking officers. The only recourse available for setting aside the award was for the NHA to approach the competent court under Section 34 of the Act. Even the National Highways Act confers no powers on the DM acting as the arbitrator to rectify his award. So, what exactly were these two senior officers trying to achieve by directing Hemant Kumar (DM South West) to 'undo the wrong' when they, being such high-ranking officers, would have been very well aware that

the DM had no authority under law to do so? If the DM did have the power to 'undo' the award, then why was the new DM South West, Lakshaya Singhal (appointed on 21.09.2023) not given directions to do the same? Why they did the Lakshaya Singhal it over turn the inflated award? Why did the award get overturned only when NHA went into appeal before the High Court? The fact that the new DM was not directed to overturn the inflated award, by the Chief Secretary and the Divisional Commissioner, indicates that both of them were aware that such directions were legally untenable," the report said. "In fact, the Directorate of Vigilance (DoV) report suffers from the same glaring legal defect, when it accepts on face value the propriety of the and the

Divisional Commissioner asking the erstwhile DM to rectify his order. The report not only conflates correction of the award, 'interpretation' of the award, and 'additional award', but also goes on to endorse the legally untenable argument that Hemant Kumar could have modified his award under Section 34 of the Arbitration Act," it said Atishi's first report also recommended that the matter be referred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the chief secretary be suspended till the completion of probe. The minister's first report was sent to Lieutenant General V K Saxena by Kejrival. The LG, however, did not consider it, saying it was based on "preconceived assumptions" while pointing out that a CBI probe was already underway in the matter.

BJP targets AAP on 'corruption' in DJB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Wednesday targeted the AAP led Delhi government on the issue of alleged corruption in Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and demanded a judicial probe. Terming Arvind Kejriwal an "outright dishonest and useless" chief minister, the BJP also alleged he is only concerned about benefiting his friends in liquor business and using public money for self-promotion and not the welfare of people. The BJP's attack came a day after the Supreme Court pulled up the Delhi government for not providing funds for the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors to Alwar and Panipat and said if the dues were not paid within a week, the funds allocated by the AAP government for advertisements will be transferred to the project. Tiwari said the objective of the establishment of Delhi Jal Board in 1998 was that this board would prepare its own basic infrastructure and would meet its expenses from its own revenue. Delhi government will provide financial resources only for big plan head schemes. Tiwari said the proof of how the



Kejrival government, which has shown the dream of providing water to every house, has deceived the public. Today 1350 MGD water is needed in Delhi while the availability is only 950 MGD. It is regrettable that in almost 9 years of rule, Kejrival has not made any efforts to increase the availability of drinking water and Delhi is still a victim of tanker mafia. Tiwari said in the last 5 financial years, Delhi Government has given loans and grants worth Rs 12,700 crore to Delhi Jal Board, but there is no accounting of this money. He further

said said CAG has written about 22 letters to Delhi Jal Board to get the accounts audited but the Kejrival government has not paid any heed to it. Calling Kejrival an "outright dishonest and useless" chief minister, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia, meanwhile, targeted Kejrival and said, "The Supreme Court's comment that came yesterday is a matter of concern for every citizen." Latching on to the top court's observation, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia targeted Kejrival and said, "The Supreme Court's comment that came yesterday is a matter of

concern for every citizen." "It shows that Kejrival waived Rs 144 crore to benefit his friends in liquor business. He can commit liquor scam of worth thousands of crores of rupees, use Rs 50 crore of public money in building 'Sheesh Mahal' of his dreams which was also a scam, made a budgetary provision of Rs 1,150 crore for self-promotion," he alleged. "It shows that Kejrival waived Rs 144 crore to benefit his friends in liquor business. He can commit liquor scam of worth thousands of crores of rupees, use Rs 50 crore of public money in building 'Sheesh Mahal' of his dreams which was also a scam, made a budgetary provision of Rs 1,150 crore for self-promotion," he alleged. The RRTS project entails semi-high speed rail corridors connecting Delhi to Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, Alwar in Rajasthan, and Panipat in Haryana. BJP spokesperson said the RRTS is an 82-kilometer corridor being constructed from Delhi to Meerut through which common people would be able to reach Meerut "in 60 minutes from Delhi".

Delhi HC seeks response on plea seeking meeting in Ramlila Maidan

PTI ■ NW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Wednesday sought response of the Centre, Delhi Police and MCD on a plea seeking permission for holding a large public meeting at the Ramlila maidan on December 4. Justice Subramonium Prasad was informed by Delhi Police that it has received an application from another organisation also for organising a programme at the Ramlila ground from December 3 to 5 and no objection certificate (NOC) has already been issued for it. To this, the court asked the police to place before it the relevant records, including the copy of application of the other organisation and when it was received. The high court listed the matter for November 24 for further hearing. It was hearing a petition filed by Mission Save Constitution, which claims to be working for creating awareness among the masses about their constitutional rights. The petitioner said it is aggrieved



by the pendency of a decision by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Central district, on its application seeking a NOC for organising All India Muslim Mahapanchayat on December 4 at the Ramlila ground. The petitioner organisation had earlier called for a mass meeting on October 29 and initially the permission was granted but later it was revoked. "The petitioner consequently rescheduled their event for December 4 and applied for permission to book Ramlila ground on November 10. "The Horticulture Department

has received an application on November 8 from Mahatyaagi Sewa Sansthan for organising a programme at Ramlila ground from December 3 to December 5. The counsel said NOC has already been granted to Mahatyaagi Sewa Sansthan for December 4, so it is not feasible to entertain another application for the same date. The plea has said the petitioner seeks to initiate a series of events for strengthening all weaker sections beginning with minority communities followed by other communities like SC, ST, OBC, and in the meetings/panchayat voice of all the oppressed would be raised. It said the organisation, whose national convener is advocate Mehmood Pracha, works to enlighten and create awareness among the masses, especially the depressed classes, about their rights as enshrined in the Constitution, and for utilising the constitutional and legal provisions for alleviation of the distress and suffering of such classes.



AIIMS scholar held for rape, terminating pregnancy

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

A PhD scholar of AIIMS-New Delhi was arrested on Wednesday from the Hauz Khas area of the national capital on the charge of raping a woman by giving her sedatives, impregnating her and then terminating her pregnancy, police said here. The woman, in her complaint filed at the Kavi Nagar police station, claimed that she got in touch with the accused through a matrimonial site and they were supposed to get married. However, the accused and his family members started demanding Rs 25 lakh in cash and an SUV. When their demands were not met, they postponed the wedding date on the pretext of examination, the complainant told the police. After this, the accused and his brother-in-law reached the woman's residence in Ghaziabad and raped her after serving a cold drink laced with sedatives. They also recorded some objectionable videos of the woman, Assistant Commissioner of Police Abhishek Srivastav said. The woman claimed the accused had threatened to make the video viral on social media and forced her into physical relations. When she became pregnant he got the pregnancy terminated and refused to marry her, the police official said. The ACP said the accused was arrested from his residence in Delhi's Hauz Khas on Wednesday. An FIR has been lodged against him and 11 others at Kavinagar police station on November 2, he said, adding the rest of the accused would be nabbed soon.

85% society residents unwilling to retrofit generators with CNG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Around 85 per cent of Delhi-NCR residents who have a personal or society generator running on diesel are unwilling to retrofit it with CNG. A survey carried out by LocalCircles said that despite the directions of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which banned the use of diesel generator sets from October 1 to December 31, 2023, as part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to combat air pollution in the region, there is significant resistance among residents. The survey received more than

22,000 responses from Delhi National Capital Region residents located in the cities of Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Faridabad and Ghaziabad. To ease concerns over power disruptions in essential sectors in the NCR, the CAQM in September granted a three-month reprieve for the use of DG sets in nine critical categories of emergency services till December 31. The survey sought to know "How are you/your society complying with the diesel generator restrictions effective from October 1, as the GRAP guidelines for pollution control are in effect?"

Sharpshooter arrested after gunfight with police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested an alleged sharpshooter of the Neetu Dhaboda gang following a brief shootout in Rohini, who was wanted in four criminal cases registered in Bihar, Haryana and the national capital. The gangster was identified as Karan Gogia alias Goga (27), a resident of Uttam Nagar, who was overpowered by members of a crime branch team after he opened fire at them on Tuesday. Police said a bullet hit the bulletproof jacket of one of the police personnel. As the accused tried to reload his pistol, he was overpowered by the raiding team," said Yadav.

said a trap was laid to nab the accused based on information that a sharpshooter of the Neetu Dhaboda gang and some other gang members would come near the helipad area of Rohini. "A trap was laid at the location of information, and a person on a bike was intercepted. He was signalled to stop by the police party, but he attempted to escape and suddenly fell on the road. When the police directed him to surrender, he opened fire on the raiding team, and a bullet hit the bulletproof jacket of one of the police personnel. As the accused tried to reload his pistol, he was overpowered by the raiding team," said Yadav.

Gogia, at an early age, fell into bad company. "In 2018, he came into contact with criminal Pankaj Dabas, alias Cheeta, and from there, he became associated with the gangster Sonu Dariyapur," said Yadav. In 2018, along with Pankaj, Deepak, Sachin, and Tarun, he fired at the house of an individual in the Kanjhawala area of Delhi. Again in 2018, along with Ashwani, an active member of the desperate Kala Jatheri gang, and Sachin, he fired upon and robbed cash from a toll plaza in the Sonipat area of Haryana. His associate Vicky was recently arrested after a shootout.



Lovely launches Rahul's WhatsApp channel

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Arvinder Singh Lovely on Wednesday launched party leader Rahul Gandhi's WhatsApp channel from the party's local office here. Lovely launched the channel in the presence of Congress workers and district and block Congress committee presidents from the DPCC office. Lovely, who was the first to join the channel, later said 42 lakh people have already joined the channel. DPCC is the first state Congress to formally launch it, he said. He said those who believe in the policies of the Congress can directly access Rahul Gandhi's

posts through the channel. Lovely said that while the BJP and its allies are misusing social media to spread fake news, Gandhi's WhatsApp channel will speak the truth without fear of the consequences. Lovely said that besides Congress workers and leaders, common people, Residents Welfare Associations, and those associated with social and other organisations can also join the channel to get direct access to Rahul Gandhi's various activities. He said that more and more people should be encouraged to join the Channel, besides the Congress workers, as the Channel projects the views and policies of the Congress, which will further strengthen the party in Delhi.

AAP, BJP spar over Jangpura shanty demolitions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP and the BJP on Wednesday blamed each other pointing fingers over the demolition of shanties in Jangpura area in south Delhi. The AAP has alleged that the BJP is complicit in the demolition exercise being carried out in southeast Delhi's Jangpura area and stressed that the Arvind Kejriwal-led party is standing by the affected people. Hitting back, the Delhi BJP alleged that

the Aam Aadmi Party government has "done nothing" to improve the lives of jhuggi dwellers in the national capital. A demolition drive was carried out on Tuesday in southeast Delhi with the police saying everything went off smoothly. Addressing a press conference, AAP MLA from Burari, Sanjeev Jha said the BJP, with its "anti-poor" stance, continues its attempts to demolish the homes of the poor and marginalised people living in slums continuously.

He also targeted the BJP, referring to the demolition of shanties in Okhla in December 2022 and then the attempt by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to demolish slums in Govindpuri. "Why do the BJP leaders hold such animosity towards the poor people living in slums? Now, as the cold sets in, while the Delhi government is setting up camps for those living on the streets and constructing the Delhi Urban Shelter Improve-

ment Board (DUSIB) shelter houses, the BJP attempted to run bulldozers in a locality in Jangpura," he said. Jha also noted that there is a ban on construction and demolition in Delhi, owing to pollution. AAP MLA Praveen Kumar said there are 675 clusters under DUSIB, which include the JJ Cluster. Among these 675 clusters, Cluster 223 is the DPS Sunder Nursery Mathura Road cluster, where DUSIB has registered

around 216 slums. This case dates back to 2019 when the two parties went to court. "Since that land belongs to the L&DO, the court had instructed the L&DO to stop encroachments. The High Court had previously clarified this, and in yesterday's decision, it was reiterated that government policy should not be neglected. Government policy should be implemented at the ground level, and work should be carried out accordingly," Kumar said.

International storyteller festival 'Kathakar' to begin on December 1

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Stories from the distant lands of Australia, Japan, Turkey, Poland, Columbia, the United Kingdom and Mongolia, along with those from different parts of India will regale audiences at the 16th 'Kathakar: International Storytellers Festival'. Besides this humorist Surendra Sharma, poet Ashok Chakradhar, singer Malini Awasthi, actors Kumud Mishra and Manu Rishi Chadha are among the artists performing at the upcoming 'Sahityotsav Jashn-e-Adab Cultural Kaarva'n Virasat', from Friday. Starting from December 1 at Sunder Nursery,

Kathakar festival will celebrate Indian and international oral storytelling traditions through morning and evening sessions, panel discussions and workshops for aspiring storytellers. Festival director Prarthna Gahlote said that the event will be joined by the famous British musician and storyteller Godfrey Duncan, who is known for reviving the ancient art of storytelling in the UK. "Storytelling festivals offer a wonderful and enriching experience! The forthcoming event holds the promise of a diverse array of stories, enlightening discussions, shared laughter, immersive activities, and the

esteemed presence of storytellers and artists. What we eagerly anticipate now is an enthusiastic audience... So, please, join us for an incredible weekend that awaits your participation," Gahlote said in a statement. Katy Cawkwell from the UK, the last of the Kamishibai storytellers from Japan Spice Arthur 702, Colombian story writer and narrator Ramses Hamir Mocketzuma Soler, Jody Edwards from Australia, Marta Maslanka from Poland, and Mongolian throat singer and storyteller D Atarbayan will share tales and experiences from their respective countries. There will also be the inimitable

destango Danish Husain and shadow puppeteers from Andhra Pradesh Chaya Nataka Brundam. The three-day festival will conclude on December 3 with a session by film maker Intiaz Ali, singer Mohit Chauhan, and actor-casting director Mukesh Chhabra. The three-day cultural extravaganza 'Sahityotsav Jashn-e-Adab Cultural Kaarva'n Virasat', organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Culture, will showcase an array of different performances from varied genres of art, culture and literature at India International Centre (IIC). Beginning with a saxophone

recital by Padma Shri Yash Gulati, the inaugural day of the event will be packed with multiple programmes, including play 'Majaz Zinda Hai' by director Salima Raza, panel discussion on 'Rangmanch ki Samajik Zaurat' and Kavi Sammelan featuring the likes of poet Waseem Bareilvi, Surendra Sharma, Ashok Chakradhar and Azim Shakiri. "The best thing about Bhartiya art, culture and literature is that it is timeless and therapeutic. Bhartiya art and literature can actually help people in healing and deal with the stressful lifestyle. It has been our endeavour to connect as many people

from all age groups and all walks of life with our deep rooted art and literature," said Ranjeet Chauhan, poet and founder of Sahityotsav Jashn-e-Adab in a statement. Kashmiri rabab recital by renowned sufi singer Noor Mohammad, 'Sur Sadhna' by singer Malini Awasthi, panel discussion on 'Cinema, Webseries aur Rangmanch: Kabhi Door Kabhi Paas' with actor-writer Manu Rishi Chadha and actor Priyanshu Panyuli are among the events lined up for day two. The list of poets participating in the festival also includes Farhat Ehsaas, Shariq Kaifi, Jamuna Prasad Upadhyay, Sunil Panwar,

Waseem Nadir, Manish Shukla and Javed Mushiri. The festival on its third day will host 'Baitbazi', a fun game of Urdu poetry, 'Natya Katha: Meera' by classical dancer Sonal Mansingh and 'Kabir and Sufi Gaayan' by Rajiv Singh's group from Madhya Pradesh. It will come to a close on November 26 with 'Mehfil-e-Qawwali' by sufi singer Shafi Sopori's group from Kashmir. The festival will also travel to nine other states and UTs such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh and Jammu & Kashmir.

India resumes e-visa services for Canadians after two months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a positive development amid strained diplomatic ties between the two countries, India has resumed electronic visa services for Canadian nationals after a nearly two-month pause, sources said here on Wednesday.

Tensions flared between India and Canada in September following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020.

India rejected Trudeau's allegations as "absurd" and "motivated". Days later, New Delhi announced it was temporarily suspending issuance of visas to Canadian citizens and asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in India. India had also asked Canada to come down hard on terrorists and anti-India elements operating from its soil.

The latest development follows last month's decision by the Indian government to renew certain categories of



visa services for Canadian citizens after a month-long ban. Ottawa had welcomed the decision as "good news for Canadians".

The move to restore e-visa services is a significant step towards mending relations between the two countries following a sharp downturn caused by Canada's allegations. In response to Canada's actions, India took several retaliatory measures, including the expulsion of intelligence officers, pruning of diplomatic staff and the issuing of travel advisories.

The easing of visa restrictions signals a potential thaw in ties, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar previously indicating the country's willingness

to relax these measures. However, he acknowledged that relations between the two countries were going through a "difficult phase".

In October, India resumed visa services in certain categories for Canadian citizens, excluding tourist, employment, student, film, missionary and journalist visas.

The resumption of services for all categories of visas came hours ahead of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's participation in the virtual G20 leaders' summit headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This would be the first time Trudeau would come face to face with Prime Minister Modi, albeit virtually, after ties

between India and Canada took a nosedive following the former's allegations against New Delhi.

On November 12, Trudeau reaffirmed his allegation of Indian involvement in Nijjar's killing and accused New Delhi of violating the Vienna Convention by "kicking out" dozens of diplomats in a sharp escalation of a weeks-long crisis.

External affairs minister Jaishankar last week asserted that India is not ruling out an investigation into Canada's accusation, but highlighted that Ottawa is yet to provide evidence to back its claim.

During an event organised at Wilton Park, an agency of the UK foreign office, in London, Jaishankar was asked if there is any evidence of Indian involvement in Nijjar's killing. "None," he replied.

Noting that he had discussed the issue with his Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly, Jaishankar said: "And we have told them, if you have a reason to make such an allegation, please share the evidence with us. We are not ruling out an investigation and looking at anything which they may have to offer. They haven't done so."

NHAI to undertake safety audit of all under construction tunnels

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

To ensure safety and adherence to the highest quality standards during construction, central road making agency NHAI will undertake safety audit of all 29 under construction tunnels across the country. The decision comes at the backdrop of 41 labourers trapped in an under construction tunnel in Uttarakhand the rescue operation of which is still underway on 10th day by experts from world over overseeing the operations.

NHAI officials along with a team of experts from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) as well as other tunnel experts will inspect the ongoing tunnel projects and will submit a report within seven days.

With a total length of around 79 km, the 29 under-construction tunnels are spread over different locations across the country with 12 tunnels in Himachal Pradesh, 06 in Jammu and Kashmir, 02 each in Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and one each in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh,

Uttarakhand and Delhi respectively.

NHAI also signed a MoU with Konkani Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) where KRCL will provide services for NHAI projects to review design, drawing and safety aspects related to tunnel construction and slope stabilization. KRCL will also conduct safety audits of tunnels and if required, suggest remedial measures. In addition to this, KRCL will organize training programs for capacity building of NHAI officials. This agreement will remain in effect for a period of two years.

Earlier in September 2023, NHAI signed a similar agreement with DMRC, who will provide services for reviewing planning, designing, construction and maintenance of tunnels, bridges and other structures on National Highways across the country. The initiatives highlight NHAI's resolve to create a safe & seamless National Highway network and collaborate with Government Organizations to share best practices for the enhancement of transport infrastructure, contributing towards the goal of Nation Building.

India's CAG elected vice-chair of UN panel of external auditors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Comptroller and Auditor General of India Girish Chandra Murmu has been elected as the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors for the forthcoming year. This recognition underscores India's commitment to the highest standards of external audit and its active participation in shaping the global audit landscape, said a Press statement from the CAG office.

On the side-lines of the panel meeting at New York, Murmu also held a bilateral meeting with Pierre Moscovici, First President of Cour des comptes (Supreme Audit Institution of France) to discuss strengthening of bilateral relations between the two SAs.

The CAG participated in the 63rd session of the Panel of External Auditors, held at the United Nations Headquarters on November 20-21. The Panel of External Auditors comprising of Heads of 12 Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) globally, oversees the external audit of the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes, and Specialized Agencies.

This independent body, including representatives from Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Philippines, Russia, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, conducts financial, performance and compliance audits of UN entities.

The annual meeting served as a unique platform for collaborative discussions on various issues, including follow-up actions on the Secretary-General's response to the Panel Letter, and addressing critical concerns related to Financial and Management, Climate Change, and Digital matters. In the meeting, Murmu led the discussion on critical financial and management issues affecting UN organizations.

In a separate meeting, Murmu along with panel members met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, exchanging views in the areas of risk management, the challenging financial environment, and the imperative for well-structured funding strategies. The Panel members emphasized the pivotal role of the UN system in guiding and managing climate finance issues, alongside expressing concerns about digital transformation.

Air India fined ₹10L for non-compliance of norms

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday imposed a fine of Rs. 10 lakh on Air India for the second time over non-compliance of compensation rules. These pertain to "not providing hotel accommodation for passengers affected by delayed flights, non-training of some of their ground personnel as per the stipulations and non-payment of compensation to international business class passengers who were made to travel on unseviceable seats.

After carrying out inspections of airlines at Delhi, Kochi and Bangalore airports, the DGCA had observed that Air India was not complying with the provisions of the relevant Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR). A show cause notice was also issued to Air India 2023 seeking their response for non-compliance to the provisions of the relevant regulations.

Based on the reply submitted



by Air India, it was found that Air India has not complied with the provisions of the CAR, inter-alia, not providing hotel accommodation for passengers affected by delayed flights, non training of some of their ground personnel as per the stipulations laid down in the CAR and non-payment of compensation to international business class passengers who were made to travel on unseviceable seats. Accordingly, DGCA has imposed a financial penalty of Rs.10 lakhs on Air India for non-compliance of DGCA regulations. This is not the first time that Air India faced a scrutiny for non-compliance of aviation rules. Last year, the airline was fined for Rs 10 lakh for similar violations.

Pursuant to two serious incidents in quick succession involving aircraft of M/s Red Bird Flight Training Academy Pvt. Ltd. on 19th and 22nd

October 2023, DGCA carried out a special maintenance audit of the organisation at its main base at Baramati, Maharashtra and four (04) sub-bases at Seoni, Madhya Pradesh Kalburgi (Karnataka), Belgavi (Karnataka) and Lilabari (Assam).

"The findings from the special maintenance audit revealed deficiencies in personnel training, maintenance schedules and records, internal audit practices, tool and store management and fuel storage and handling. Accordingly, DGCA has initiated enforcement action on M/s Red Bird Flight Training Academy Pvt. Ltd. and a show cause notice has been issued for the deficiencies," it said.

DGCA has reviewed the corrective actions taken by M/s Red Bird Flight Training Academy Pvt. Ltd. on the findings of the maintenance audit. The review has indicated that the flying training organisation has failed to continuously adhere to the provisions of Aircraft Rules, 1937 and Civil Aviation Requirements in order to ensure proper maintenance of the aircraft for ensuring continued safe operations.

Uzbekistan to further develop strategic cooperation with India



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A presentation ceremony of the Strategy "Uzbekistan - 2030" took place here at the Embassy of Uzbekistan. The event was attended by diplomats, representatives of academic and analytical circles, and media workers from Uzbekistan and India.

In September, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of Uzbekistan signed the Decree "On the Uzbekistan - 2030 Strategy". The document is designed for the next seven years and includes 5 priority areas containing 100 goals. They define all the important tasks of the socio-political and socio-economic development of the country.

At the conference, representatives of academic and research centers in India paid special attention to the role of the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy at the current stage of the country's development.

In particular, Skand Ranjan Tayal, the former Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan, noted that Uzbekistan has been going

through a consistent stage of development in recent years, and in the course of these changes, solutions to pressing problems are being found to ensure the interests of ordinary people.

Sanjay Kumar Pandey, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and a leading expert on Central Asia, acknowledged that the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy is a programme adopted after achieving the lofty goals set in the Action Strategy and the Development Strategy. These important documents serve as the basis for great successes in all spheres of life in New Uzbekistan.

Professor Shahid Taslim, head of the Department of Foreign Languages at Jamia Millia Islamia Central University, founder of the first Uzbek language courses in India, noted that the process of change taking place in Uzbekistan in recent years is increasing the interest of Indian youth in learning the Uzbek language. For example, about 300 young students are studying Uzbek at Jamia Millia Islamia.

'1,232 health camps held in first week of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra launch'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said here 1,232 health camps have been conducted in 203 gram panchayats under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra in the first week of its launch, recording a footfall of more than 1,66,000. Also, more than 33,000 Ayushman cards were created at the camps and over 21,000 physical cards distributed, it said.

Under the initiative, Ayushman cards are being created using the Ayushman app and physical cards are being distributed to the beneficiaries.

The ministry said screening of patients for TB is being carried out for symptoms, sputum testing and by using NAAT machines wherever available.

It said more than 41,000 people have been screened by the end of the first week, as on November 21, and over 4,000 of them were referred to higher public health facilities.

The ministry added that under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA), consent of the patients suffering from TB is being taken for receiving assistance from Nikshay Mitras.

The attendees willing to be Nikshay Mitras are also being provided with on-spot registration, the ministry said, adding that more than 2,500 patients gave consent under



the PMTBMBA and more than 1,400 new Nikshay Mitras were registered by the end of the first week.

The ministry said in areas with predominant tribal population, screening of eligible population (up to 40 years of age) is being done for the detection of sickle cell disease through the point of care (PoC) tests for the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) or through solubility test.

It added the cases testing positive are being referred to higher centres for management. The ministry further said more than 24,000 people were screened by the end of the first week and 1,100 of them were found to be positive and referred to higher public health facilities.

Besides, around 1,35,000 people were screened for hypertension and diabetes, and

more than 10,000 were referred to higher public health facilities, the ministry stated.

In a major initiative aimed at saturating the benefits of the central government schemes across the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra from Jharkhand's Khunti on November 15.

To facilitate immediate services, various camps are being set up by the departments such as the postal department, health department and others.

The yatra, designed to inform and empower the citizens about the government's flagship schemes, aims to create awareness and deliver the benefits of welfare programmes directly to the people, the ministry said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that on 1 Bhavesh Khattar S/o Anur K. Khattar 2. Mrs. Rudha Khattar W/o Anur Khattar 3. Shilpa Khattar W/o Prashant Khattar 4. Thea Khattar u/g of Shilpa Khattar are filing application in LADO for substitution/mutation of property no. 67-68 Double Storey New Rajinder Nagar New Delhi-110060 in the name of Sd. Lalaji Narain Khattar on the grounds of Death certificates. Relinquishment deed etc., if there are any objections/claims from the General public on this application, the same shall be communicated to LADO with supporting documents through registered post or by visiting LADO at Nizam Bhawan New Delhi or through an email at bhaveshk@nic.in. Within 30 days of publication of this notice.
Name: Bhavesh Khattar
Address: 67 Double Storey New Rajinder Nagar New Delhi-60, Phone:9801037325

PUBLIC NOTICE
A non-agricultural property, belonging to Khasra number 1841 having land measuring 0.4590 hectare & khasra number 1842 having land measuring 0.2040 hectare having total measuring 0.6630 hectare i.e. 6630 square meters, situated at Village Annekki Hetampur, Tehsil and District Haridwar, belonging to Shri Indrajeet Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora R/o Bhupatwala, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil & District Haridwar and he has purchased the said property from Shri Raman Sharma S/o Shri Krishan Kumar Sharma R/o Mohalla Chaklan, Jwalapur, Tehsil and District Haridwar. In the chain of title Original Sale deed registered in Bahi number 1, Zild 1360/1407, Pages 193/161 to 164 at Serial number 386 dated 20.01.2003 in the Office of Sub Registrar Haridwar & Original Sale deed registered in Bahi number 1, Zild 1407, Pages 165 to 168 at Serial number 387 dated 20.01.2003 in the Office of Sub Registrar Haridwar & Original registered Sale deed registered in Bahi number 1, Zild 1425/1659, Pages 106/205 to 208 at Serial number 8988 dated 25.10.2005 in the Office of Sub Registrar Haridwar was lost somewhere while travelling between home to Sub-registrar office Haridwar by Shri Pran Nath Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora and not found even after many efforts for search. I Pran Nath Arora did not make any misuse of the above mentioned lost title deed. If anyone found the above mentioned title deed please contact Shri Pran Nath Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora R/o Bhupatwala, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil and District Haridwar.

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, HARPREET SINGH am hereby declaring that Mr. RAJWINDER SINGH S/O HARDEEP SINGH was on rent on our premises F 64 DDA COLONY, KHYALATILAK NAGAR, WEST DELHI, DELHI, -110018. from the period JUNE 2022 to MAY 2023. I am further declaring that he already vacated my premises on F 64 DDA COLONY, KHYALATILAK NAGAR, WEST DELHI, DELHI, -110018. If any ID generated by him on this address, please consider this as null and void, and I do have no liabilities whatever against his ID.

CORRIGENDUM
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
Notices under SARFAESI Act for Loan Account No. LBGUR00003218096, Name of the Borrower/ Co-borrower Kanhai Lal/ Varun Gupta, Symbolic & Physical Possession done under section 13(4) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 dated November 20, 2019 & December 21, 2020 respectively and same is published in News Paper The Pioneer (Eng.) & Pioneer (Hindi) dated November 27, 2019 & December 24, 2020. We wish to mention that inadvertently and unintentionally a typographical error has occurred in the said notices and Customer Name was mentioned as Kanhai Lal instead of Kanhaiya Lal. We therefore, request you to please read the same as Kanhaiya Lal. All other details mentioned in the said Notice dated will remain same. We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to you in this regard.
Date : November 23, 2023
Place : Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that Abeni Designs LLP proposes to change its registered address from A 146, Sector 19, Noida 201301 to 84/A, Agcy Villa, Deussa, Chicalim Goa 403711. If someone has an objection please reach out to us at sales.moy@gmail.com

Attack on Indian consulate in US: NIA raids in Punjab

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out raids at 14 locations in Punjab and Haryana in connection with its probe into attacks on the Indian Consulate in San Francisco in the US earlier this year, an official spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said these places located in north India were raided to unravel the complete conspiracy behind the attacks on March 19 and July 2, involving criminal trespass, vandalism, damage to public property and attempts to cause hurt to the consulate officials and set the building on fire through acts of arson.

The locations raided by the NIA were spread across the districts of Moga, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur, Mohali and Patiala in Punjab and Kurukshetra and Yamunanagar in Haryana.

The crackdown led to the seizure of digital data containing information related to the accused persons, along with other incriminating documents, the spokesperson said. The NIA has been probing the case with the aim to identify and prosecute the attackers and send a strong message to such anti-Indian elements.

A team of the NIA had visited San Francisco in August 2023 to probe the incidents of attacks on the consulate. As part of its investigation, the NIA has crowdsourced information to identify and collect information about US-based entities and individuals involved in these violent inci-



dents.

On July 2, India's consulate in San Francisco came under an attack from Khalistan supporters who tried to set the diplomatic facility on fire. The attack came following the killing of separatist Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar in a Canada.

On March 19, a group of pro-Khalistan protesters attacked and damaged the Indian Consulate in San Francisco. Raising pro-Khalistan slogans, the protesters broke open the makeshift security barriers raised by the local police and installed two so-called Khalistani flags inside the Consulate premises. Two consulate personnel soon removed these flags

PUBLIC NOTICE
A non-agricultural property, belonging to Khasra number 1840 having total land area 1.907 Hectare i.e. 19070 square meters, situated at Village Annekki Hetampur, Tehsil and District Haridwar, belonging to Shri Pran Nath Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora R/o Bhupatwala, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil and District Haridwar and he has purchased the said property from Shri Beer Singh S/o Shri Ratan Singh & Shri Rishpal S/o Shri Chamel Singh both residents of Village Annekki Hetampur, Pargana Roorkee, Tehsil & District Haridwar. In the chain of title Original Sale deed registered in Bahi number 1, Zild 1190/1218, Pages 125/431 to 434 at Serial number 1676 dated 25.04.2000 in the Office of Sub Registrar Haridwar and Original Sale deed registered in Bahi number 1, Zild 1425/1657, Pages 105/213 to 216, at Serial number 8686 dated 19.10.2005 in the Office of Sub Registrar Haridwar was lost somewhere while travelling between home to Sub-registrar office Haridwar by Shri Pran Nath Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora and not found even after many efforts for search. I Pran Nath Arora did not make any misuse of the above mentioned lost title deed. If anyone found the above mentioned title deed please contact Shri Pran Nath Arora S/o Shri Govind Ram Arora R/o Bhupatwala, Pargana Jwalapur, Tehsil and District Haridwar.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Punjab National Bank intends to create equitable mortgage of the abovesaid property. Anyone claiming any interest or title on the property or having any objection, can make representation to the Punjab National Bank MCC, New Delhi-1 within seven days of the date of such notice. Otherwise it will be assumed that either there is no claim or waived. No Claim will be entertained in future

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.
Sr. No. Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs.) Name of Branch
1. Praveen Pratap Singh/ Sheetal/ LBDEL00005375230 Apartment No. A, Tower No. EF-29, Ground Floor and First Floor, Tower No- EF, Exclusive Floor, Building Known As Prami Sited At Sector-72, Gurgaon/ November 18, 2023 June 21, 2023 Rs. 2,74,34,454/- Delhi/ NCR & Ambala
The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: November 23, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PM considers Railways as major link for growth: Vaishnav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off a new train service from Mau to Mumbai (Lokmanya Tilak Terminus) through video conferencing on Wednesday. The inauguration train only went up to Prayagraj Jn from Mau. Addressing the function, Vaishnav extended best wishes for Chhath Puja and congratulated the residents of Mau region on the launch of the inaugural Mau-LTT train service. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi considers Railways as a major link in the development of the country.

"Railways are being transformed and 100 per cent electrification of railways has been done in Uttar Pradesh. Railway infrastructure is being strengthened. For this, special attention has been given to investment in Railways, as a result of which new facilities are being provided and employment opportunities are being increased," he said. The Railway Minister said that UP is a huge state which is important from every point of view and keeping this in mind, an allocation of Rs 17,507 crore was made in the Budget for the expansion and development of railway infrastructure in UP in the year 2023-24, which is 16 times more than the average Budget allocation of the Rs 1,109 crore during 2009-14.

"At present, railway projects worth Rs 98,000 crore are going on in UP. Keeping in view the traffic needs of the next 50 years in the state, work



Railway Minister flagging off Mau-LTT Weekly through a virtual medium (inset) while UP Ministers AK Sharma and Anil Rajbhar present at Mau on Wednesday.

of redevelopment of 156 stations is being done, in which Mau Jn station is also included. These stations are being made world class," he said, adding that the PM had laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 stations. "The design for redevelopment of the station has been prepared," he said, adding that the PM has released the 'One Station One Product' scheme, through which, along with providing employment to weavers, craftsmen etc by providing stalls at the stations, their products are being recognized globally.

Addressing the function in Mau, UP Minister of Urban Development Arvind Kumar Sharma expressed gratitude to

the PM and Railway Minister for this new train. He said that the PM is of the opinion that Railways is the carrier of India's economy and at this time Railways is being given a new height. "This new train is a direct proof of this. At present the safety record in the Railways is quite good. Today, the gift of a new train to the people of Purvanchal (eastern UP) by the Railway Ministry has fulfilled a big demand of the people, he said, adding that earlier, people here faced a lot of problems in going to Mumbai and now direct train facility has become available. "Mau's textile industry is quite famous in the country. 50 per cent of the sarees made here go

to Mumbai. This train is also very useful from the point of view of weavers and farmers. This train will be very beneficial in sending clothes as well as agricultural products from here to Mumbai," he said.

General Manager of North Eastern Railway (NER) Soumya Mathur welcomed the guests. UP Labour Minister Anil Rajbhar, MLC Yashwant, Divisional Railway Manager (Varanasi) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and many senior leaders and administrative officers of Mau and NER were also present.

Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh conducted the function.

Fewer cases of dengue this year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Fewer dengue cases have been reported this year in comparison to last year. Records of the district health department revealed that, "This year, the Sangam city registered 467 confirmed dengue cases (From June 1 to till date) compared to previous year (824 cases from June 1 to November 18). Moreover, there was no particular hotspot for dengue in the city this year while number of hotspot in previous year stood 13.

Ironically, the graph of dengue cases was more in city's posh and semi-urban areas compared to trans-Ganga and trans Yamuna pockets. Statistics claimed, "In 2022, city recorded a total of 1,465 confirmed dengue cases while the figure in 2021 was 1,299". Officials of the Health department claimed that this year saw more cases of viral infections compared to dengue or chikungunya. Data also claimed that prevalence of dengue infection among men was higher than in women in city. District Malaria Officer (Prayagraj) AK Singh told the media, "The department has recorded 467 dengue

cases between June 1 and November 18 this year". The data of dengue patients has been analysed to check which age group and gender is more susceptible to dengue fever and viral infection. The highest number of cases was from the 12-45 years age group with over 300 cases. Areas which reported dengue cases on frequent intervals included Mundera, Naini, Bamrauli, Shantipuram, Jhansi, Civil Lines, Phaphamau, Rajapur, Preetamnagar, Katra, Kalindipuram and Teliyarganj. Moreover, most of the chikungunya cases were reported in three pockets of city west areas.

INVESTIGATION ORDERED: Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak has taken cognizance of the case of death of a newborn due to 'negligence' of doctor and health workers of Baghrai CHC in Pratapgarh. He has formed a team, ordered an investigation and asked the committee to submit its report in two weeks. Pathak said the culprits will not be spared and action will be taken against them. Pragma, wife of Amit Tiwari, of Barau village under Baghrai police station area was admitted to the

Baghrai CHC on the night of November 8 due to labour pain. The family alleged that staff nurse conducted the delivery negligently and the condition of the newborn deteriorated. She was referred to Prayagraj allegedly without first aid and the child died during treatment. Amit alleged that the CHC nurse even got the delivery kit and stitches from the market.

The victim had sent a complaint to the chief minister along with the Health department officials demanding action. Taking cognizance of this, Deputy CM Brijesh Pathak has ordered the CMO to form a team to investigate it. After receiving the report of the committee, strict action will be taken against any medical officer or employee found negligent. It has been said that if necessary action will be taken at the government level also.

ALLEGATION: A game of making fake medical reports is allegedly going on in Tej Bahadur Sapru (Beli) Hospital. A complaint has also been made to the district magistrate who has sent a letter to the CMO directing him to investigate the matter and take action.

The CMO has also written a letter to the CMS of Beli Hospital.

Nirmala Devi of Kirav village under Mauaima police station area complained that she is having a land dispute with Aarti Devi of her village. Aarti suffered an accidental injury on October 31. On this basis she reached Mauaima police station. It is alleged that without referral to CHC she went to Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital and wrongly got a 'fake' report made there. She is threatening to file a fake case. Besides Uday Singh Yadav of Baji village of Mauaima complained that an Electricity department employee has filed a fake case against him even though there was no assault on him. By making a fake injury report, this case has been registered at the Colonelganj police station.

The DM has ordered the CMO to conduct an investigation. Uday said this case has been registered by making a 'fake' injury report from the Beli Hospital.

CMO Dr Ashu Pandey said investigation into the entire matter is being carried out.

Gangsters Act invoked against history-sheeter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Naini police invoked Gangsters Act against history-sheeter Mohd Javed alias Pappu Ganjia who was also a member of Atiq Ahmed gang. Action has also been taken against Ajmal of Kareli. Pappu Ganjia was arrested by the STF from Ajmer a few months ago and is currently in jail.

A total of 42 cases are registered against Pappu of Ganjia locality, Naini. He was absconding for a long time in a case of extortion demand registered at the Naini police station in June last year.

The police were busy searching for him. In August the STF arrested him from Ajmer.

Cases are registered against him under serious sections in many police stations, including Ghurpur, Kotwali and Dhoomanganj. His house was attached just two months before his arrest. In 2020 his luxurious farm house located in Ganjia was demolished. Pappu Ganjia also allegedly grabbed a large amount of land in Naini. All the plotting that took place in Naini was done in his name and his henchmen made away with crores of rupees. He has also been a corporator. Naini

inspector Yashpal Singh said along with Pappu Ganjia, action has also been taken against Ajmal. He is originally from Kaushambi but currently lives in Kareli.

INAUGURATED: A new add-on course 'Certificate course on environmental studies' was inaugurated at SS Khanna Girls' Degree College for undergraduate students. Dr Sippy Singh, Dr Anuradha Singh, Dr Shabnam Parveen, Dr Sarita Agrawal and Dr Durgesh Singh are the course coordinators. The programme was inaugurated by Professor SI Rizvi, Dean Research Development, University of

Allahabad. The 'Saraswati vandana' was presented by Arya Pandey, PG student of Zoology department.

Principal Prof Lalima Singh welcomed the distinguished guests. Dr Shabnam Parveen introduced the speaker. The chief guest highlighted the importance of environmental studies and elaborated on the importance of every organism, ecosystem and circadian rhythms.

The programme was conducted by Dr Sippy Singh and the vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Anuradha Singh. All the members of Science faculty were present.

PM's dream is to eliminate poverty from India: Anil Rajbhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh's Labour and Employment Minister Anil Rajbhar said that the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to eliminate poverty from India as the PM has resolved to make the country self-reliant and a developed nation by 2047. Rajbhar was speaking after inaugurating the 'Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra' in Varanasi district by lighting the lamp in Amarpatti Gram Panchayat building under Chiraigaon block here on Wednesday. The Minister also administered oaths to the people to make India a developed nation by 2047 and to fulfill the dreams of the PM. Thereafter, he flagged off the IEC campaign vehicle.

Highlighting the objective of the yatra, he said that this yatra will reach every gram panchayat. Referring to the PM's 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas' ideals, he said that everyone's efforts should lead to development of all. "This yatra will reach every gram sabha, locality and wards of the entire district and the officers will go door-to-door there apart from listening to the problems of the common people and ensuring the solution on the spot," he said, adding that in the coming years, India will become the



UP Minister Anil Rajbhar flagging off IEC van of Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra in Varanasi on Wednesday.

third economy of the world and self-reliant with the efforts of everyone.

According to Rajbhar, the PM will also come to participate in the yatra in his Varanasi parliamentary constituency. He appealed to the officers/employees to implement this entire programme as per the intention of the government. He also requested the villagers that when officers go to their villages, they should inform them about the problems so that their issues can be resolved.

Apart from gram panchayat in Amarpatti, the yatra also reached Allapur of Chiraigaon block, Jagatpur of Arajiline, Shahababad, Aladdinpur and Korota of Kashi Vidyapeeth,

Chorkala and Chitrasenpur of Sewapuri and Gadkhada and Jathi of Pindra block along with some urban areas during the day.

A grand programme was organised at a total of 12 places, including two primary schools in Ganeshpur. A total of six vans including one for urban areas and five for rural areas are being operated in Varanasi district. Every day, each van will go to two wards in urban areas and two gram sabhas in rural areas.

The Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra is being organised from November 15 to January 26 next year to increase awareness through outreach activities for the saturation of public welfare schemes of the government.

The objectives of the yatra are to ensure carrying the benefits of major schemes to the deprived and dissatisfied people in a timely manner, to spread the benefits of the schemes to the deprived by making the general public aware through sharing the personal stories/experiences of the beneficiaries apart from collecting information, nomination/selection of potential beneficiaries from the details obtained during the visit and providing basic facilities like sanitation facilities, essential financing services, LPG connections, housing for the poor, food security, proper nutrition, reliable health facilities, clean drinking water, quality education etc.

Healthy baby show held at Cholakpur CHC

VARANASI (PNS): A total of 21 parents of children up to one year of age participated with their babies in the 'Healthy Baby Show' organised at Cholakpur Community Health Centre (CHC) on Tuesday. Among the participating children, Pratima's daughter Deepti (14 months) stood first and was declared the healthiest child. Sonali's son Rudra (nine months) and Sunita's daughter Shweta (one year) got the second and third prizes respectively. Apart from this, mothers and fathers of other children also looked very happy to participate in the competition. Deepti's mother Pratima said that during the competition an attempt was made to know how

we are taking care of our child, whether the child was fed mother's milk within an hour of birth or not and what should be fed to the child to keep him healthy. CHC Superintendent Dr RB Yadav, Additional Research Officer RK Srivastava and Health Education Officer Shikha Srivastava encouraged the parents of all the children. They also gave necessary advice for special care and along with this, a public awareness seminar was also organised in which staff nurse, ANMs, ASHA workers and divisional coordinator of Nutrition International (NI) Aparajita Singh were also present. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the main

objective of organising the 'Healthy Baby Show' is to make people aware and encourage parents of children up to one year of age about health standards. "This is an effort to reduce the infant mortality rate," he said, adding that the first 1,000 days of nutrition is very important because malnutrition has the greatest impact on the child in the womb and the first two years of his life. After this, it becomes difficult to remove malnutrition even if efforts are made. The period from conception to the first two years of life, that is the first 1,000 days of life, is very important from the nutritional point of view because this period provides a golden opportunity

to lay the foundation for a well-nourished future of children," he said, adding that for this, it is necessary to increase awareness in the society and family about giving balanced and nutritious diet to pregnant women and children. Deputy CMO Dr HC Maurya said that under the Newborn Care Week, public awareness programmes were held at community and primary health centres in which information was given to the parents about the weight of children depending on their age, vaccination, colostrum feeding (mother's first thick yellow milk), exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, additional supplementary food after six months.

Minister conducts inspection

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Uttar Pradesh Minister of Industrial Development and minister incharge of the district Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' on Tuesday inspected hospital, school, Anganwadi centre and other works under Pahadi block

At Ayurvedic Hospital Bharpura the minister became aware of the facilities being provided to the patients, interacted with them and issued necessary directions. At Bharpura primary school the minister examined the standard of teaching through the students and tasted the mid-day meal. The minister asked questions related to the course but the students failed to respond satisfactorily. The teachers were warned to improve the standard of teaching. The minister inspected the Anganwadi centre too and directed the BEO to make the campus of school and Anganwadi centre safe from monkeys. He inspected the Atal play ground, Bhagat Singh Shaheed Udyan and waste disposal centre too. During the inspection of Padari PHC the minister found discrepancy in registers related to medicines as well as other items. He directed the CMO to suspend the two pharmacists posted at the hospital and initiate departmental action. The CMO was asked to ensure that the records are updated and crystal clear, especially related



UP Minister of Industrial Development and minister incharge of the district Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi' inspecting Padari PHC on Tuesday

to medicines and other equipment. The minister patted Dr Anand Kumar on the back for keeping the campus clean. The minister inspected the cow shelter centre located at Sindhora Ghat and the caretaker was taken to task for not keeping the campus clean. He found stock of fodder sufficient.

ARRESTED: The Rajgarh, Chilh and Dehat Kotwali police arrested three accused of rape on Tuesday. The Rajgarh police arrested an accused of raping a minor girl on Tuesday. One person had lodged a named FIR on October 17 alleging that the accused had enticed his minor daughter away. After registering the case the police started the investigation. Taking action under relevant sections of IPC, including the

POCSO Act, the police succeeded in nabbing the accused of Darwan village under Rajgarh police station and sent him to jail. Meanwhile the Chilh police arrested an accused of raping a minor girl on Tuesday. After a named FIR was lodged by one person on November 20 alleging that the accused had enticed his minor daughter away. After registering the case the police started the investigation. The police sent the accused of Gobaraha village under Chilh police station to jail.

Besides the Dehat Kotwali police arrested an accused of raping a minor girl on Tuesday. A woman had lodged a case on November 7 against unknown person that her minor daughter was enticed away. A case

was registered and the investigation was started. The accused was identified but it was also revealed that the minor girl was raped. Taking action under the relevant sections, including POCSO Act, the police arrested the accused belonging to Jasovar village under Dehat Kotwali police station and sent him to jail.

SUSPENDED: SP Abhinandan suspended head clerk of Padari police station Sachin Kumar Rai with immediate effect on Tuesday. He was found lax in duty and allegedly involved in vitiating the atmosphere of the police station. After issuing the suspension order the SP has appointed the inquiry officer to look into it.

PROGRAMMES HELD: Programmes were held in 14 villages of seven blocks under Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra on Tuesday. In some villages villagers were so enthusiastic that the yatra was not only accorded warm reception but concluded with cultural programmes. Even the women came forward to tell their success stories as Manju Devi of Chhanbey block thanked the government that under Ujjwala scheme she was facilitated with fuel gas connection.

Shamsuddin of village Duhaua under City block said the house provided to him by the government was proving helpful.

Make every booth strong: BJP

VARANASI (PNS): State general secretary (organisation) of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dharampal asked the party office-bearers to make every booth strong for success on all Lok Sabha seats in the state and in this direction, the contribution of every public representative and party's office-bearer and worker needed for Mission 2024. He was addressing a joint meeting of BJP of Kashi and Goraksh (Gorakhpur) regions at Seth MR Jaipuria School in Azamgarh on Tuesday.



BJP leader Dharampal addressing a joint meeting of Kashi and Goraksh regions at Azamgarh on Tuesday.

that on November 26, party workers will first listen to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' at the booth level and then they will inspect the voter lists at outside counters of the booths.

"As per the intention of the party leadership, the voter awareness campaign will be run group wise and to make the world's most popular leader Narendra Modi the Prime Minister of the country for the third consecutive time, the strength of BJP at every booth is necessary," he said, adding that in such a situation, every public representative, office-bearer and worker of BJP need

to contribute for the success of Mission 2024. While sharing the experience of the last assembly elections, he said that irregularities in the voter list came to light at every booth. Therefore, there is a need to be alert from now on to ensure that irregularities are not repeated in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, he said.

State BJP vice-president and in-charge of the campaign MLC Manvendra Singh, while speaking as the special guest, called for everyone to work diligently to make the campaign a success. Regional president of Goraksh Region Sahajanaand Rai welcomed the participants. While expressing his gratitude to everyone, regional president (Kashi Region) Dilip Patel informed about the progress of the campaign and said that a target has been set to create at least 10,000 new voters in every assembly constituency. "The team of the region and the district is fully engaged in achieving this target at any cost," he said.

Regional general secretary Sunil Gupta conducted the meeting. According to Navratan Rathi, media in-charge of Kashi region, in this very important meeting, the MPs, MLAs, MLCs, party office-bearers of Kashi and Goraksh regions were present in the meeting apart from members of the working committee, state office-bearers, district heads, district in-charges and many others. Among those who were present were former BJP state president and MP Dr Ramapati Ram Tripathi, state general secretary and in-charge of Kashi Region Amarpal Maurya, MLC Ashwani Tyagi, state secretaries Shankar Giri and Meena Choubey, UP ministers Anil Rajbhar and Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', MLA Dr Awadhesh Singh, MLC Dharmendra Singh, Ashok Chaurasia, Sushil Tripathi, Santosh Patel, Nagendra Raghuvanshi, Amarnath Yadav, Sant Baksh Singh, Nandji Pandey, Saroj Kushwaha, Kaushalendra Patel and Rakesh Trivedi.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A true leader

The G20 leaders' virtual summit was all about assessing Delhi Declaration commitments

For the first time since September 9-10, when India hosted and presided over the hugely successful 18th G20 Summit in New Delhi, it was time for the top global leaders to interact once again with one another. The decision to host the virtual summit was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 10, aiming to coincide it with the conclusion of India's G20 presidency on November 22 before Brazil formally takes over the grouping's presidency for one year. Invitations were extended to leaders from all G20 member countries, the Chair of the African Union, nine guest countries and heads of 11 international organisations. Modi presided over the virtual summit, whose primary objectives were to address critical issues, assess outcomes and evaluate developments since the Delhi Declaration. Substantial progress had been achieved on key priorities and outcomes following the G20 leaders' summit in September. Noteworthy accomplishments included a consensus on tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling the global rate of energy efficiency improvement, both by 2030. The commitment to these goals, announced for the first time during the Delhi Summit, is anticipated to be a key outcome of COP28. In a joint statement on November 14, the US and China expressed full support for the G20 leaders' declaration to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Both nations also agreed to undertake five significant Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) projects, contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions from sources such as power plants and industrial sites.



India's G20 presidency successfully advocated for the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH), securing a commitment of \$44.5 million. Furthermore, initiatives based on G20 AI Principles, UNESCO's Ethical AI Guidelines and India's "AI for All" Principle are ongoing, led by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The Independent Expert Group on Strengthening of MDBs submitted Volume 2 of its report, which was welcomed by G20 Finance Ministers in October. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) proposed a quota increase to the Board of Governors on November 7, and progress is underway on an action plan for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2023 G20 New Delhi Update, a comprehensive report on progress toward SDGs and India's contributions, was finalised on November 13. Efforts to promote the Principles on Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE) and advance women's leadership through a mentorship platform were also highlighted. A significant accomplishment during India's G20 presidency was the launch of TechEquity, a digital inclusion platform for women. This platform aims to bridge the gender digital divide by providing self-learning courses on digital literacy, financial literacy, tech skill development and core skill enhancement from the G20 and guest countries. Lauded as it is as a global influencer, India has concluded its G20 presidency with an impactful bang!

Participants of the 'longest moustache' competition during the annual Pushkar Fair, in Pushkar

PICTALK



Participant of the 'longest moustache' competition during the annual Pushkar Fair, in Pushkar

The cornerstone of all relationships

Whether lying gets you to hell or not, the truth is that credibility is the foundations of all relationships which must be protected at all costs



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The essence of life is credibility. There is a story from the Mahabharata where there was an announcement in the battle to the effect of "Ashwatthama Hatow" (Ashwatthama is dead). The play on the name Ashwatthama was intended. There was an elephant by the name of Ashwatthama, and the name of the son of Dronacharya was Ashwatthama. Therefore, it was not clear from the announcement who died: was it the man or the elephant? In the middle of the battle, Dronacharya heard this announcement and is reported to have opined, Let Yudhishtira say this.

The essence was simple: Yudhishtira being the 'truthful' man, was expected not to not lie on this. When evoked by the Dronacharya, Yudhishtira said in a loud voice, "Ashwatthama Hatow: ha Iti, Naro va Kunjaro va naiv Janamee" (Ashwatthama is dead, whether it is a man or an elephant, I can't say). Shri Krishna knew that Yudhishtira was going to say this. To fool Dronacharya, strategically, as soon as Yudhishtira said Narova... he blew his conch. In the sound of the conch, the rest of the sentence of Yudhishtira could not be heard. The negation of Yudhishtira added that he did not know whether Ashwatthama, declared dead, was a man or an elephant. That is another story. Just to complete it, Dronacharya closed his eyes to see with his far sight whether Ashwatthama, his son, had died. Then, Krishna prompted Arjun to shower arrows on Dronacharya to kill him.

The story brings out very effectively, the power of credibility. That the story had its twists and turns is another matter. More to the focus of this write-up, the emphasis on credibility remains an important part of one's personality. Whether lying gets you to hell or purgatory according to Christian philosophy or hell according to Hindu philosophy is a separate point. The truth is that trust and credibility are the foundations of all relationships. Be it a husband-wife relationship, a father-child relationship, a



relationship between friends, and more, the point remains. If there is no trust, there is no relationship. Unfortunately, not enough attention is paid to this aspect of character building in the formative years of a child's life, or, for that matter, even the life of a teenager or pre-adult-hood.

No reference is made to the adult stage because it is presumed that personality is fully formed by the time one reaches adulthood. Be that as it may. Like many aspects of life, the value of credibility and trustworthiness is what one inherits from the values of the environment in which one grows up. In the latter years of one's life, credibility becomes progressively more critical and more difficult to acquire (as one walks through the corridors of life), if one does not have it already.

One of the most common responses of a person who does not believe in trustworthiness in a situation where he lies is denial. He responds

with an elan: "I said what I did, so what?" This is a tricky question to answer. It is tricky because it strikes at the foundation of relationships. It's trivial, if, in any case, one does not value one's word.

That such an attitude could shake the foundation of any relationship is a matter of grave enough. But many people do not consider it so. The long and short of this is that it is difficult to carry on any social relationships without credibility. As one observes, "Even the thieves do not like each other, because if they did, the whole 'profession of theft' would be in jeopardy! So be it, but as the actual relationship with one's life with one-self goes, it's difficult to change habits.

Something is missing in the education system where we talk about many things but, also, miss many things. One of the critical things one often misses is the centrality of the practice of credibility or integrity. This should be an outcome of education. To

this, no one would disagree. However, it is rarely seen as a deliberate or conscious outcome choice of education. This matter needs thought. It needs to be thought out because anyone who is not credible can hardly be considered 'educated'. He could be very knowledgeable; he could be very successful, but certainly not educated! It would be akin to attempting to write a play named "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark. How can one be educated without being trustworthy? There is no easy answer to this dilemma. In effect, there are no easy answers to most of the serious dilemmas of life. They are left to be handled by personal choices. Difficult as it may be the matter needs serious attention. Society needs sound individuals with sound values, to have a sound society. This may be a no-choice situation.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)



ONE OF THE CRITICAL THINGS ONE OFTEN MISSES IS THE CENTRALITY OF THE PRACTICE OF CREDIBILITY OR INTEGRITY. THIS SHOULD BE AN OUTCOME OF EDUCATION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DR SS BADRINATH IS NO MORE

Sir — Dr SS Badrinath, the founder of Sankara Nethralaya, has passed away at the age of 83. He was a visionary and a pioneer in the fields of ophthalmology and vitreoretinal surgery. He dedicated his life to improving the accessibility and affordability of eye care in India and beyond. He was also a humanitarian and a philanthropist who established Sankara Nethralaya as a not-for-profit missionary institution for ophthalmic care. He received many awards and honours for his excellence in clinical services, research, and social service, including the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Dr B C Roy Award. Dr. Badrinath's demise is a great loss for the medical fraternity and society at large. He will be remembered as a legend and an inspiration for generations to come. His legacy will live on through the work of Sankara Nethralaya and its staff, who continue to serve the cause of vision with compassion and dedication. We offer our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, colleagues, and patients. May his soul rest in peace.

Sabita Kumari | Hazaribagh

TUNNEL TROUBLE

Sir — When the nation was dipped into the joy of Deepawali, with crackers, 'diyas', sweetness, festivities, and happiness all around, 41 lives were stuck in the darkness of the huge debris mound of the Silkyara tunnel, which was a part of India's esteemed Char Dham National Highway project. Trapped in the tunnel of a Uttarkashi-based tunnel, an area already prone to the seismic activities of tectonic Indian plates submerging with the Eurasian plate, it seems like man was put in a cage by nature itself, so as to remind him that nature does not bow to man's greed. After the first glimpse captured on the endoscopic camera came out, the feared but fine faces of workers appeared before the camera, and the nation as a whole and their families in particular took a deep breath of relief. As all of them are alive, there is no serious casualty to report about.

The writer is Founder & chief mentor IMIB (1 Million For 1 Billion), views are personal

Israel-Hamas agreement



From the kind of agreement that has been reached between Hamas and the Israelis, it seems that an agreement has been reached between the Islamic country and Hamas to surrender to Israel. Otherwise, who makes such an agreement that 50 Israeli hostages will be released in exchange for a ceasefire lasting just

four days? After that, by giving a ceasefire for 4 more days, Israel will free another 50 hostages. Likewise, the entire hostage will be released. What will the Palestinians get in return? Ten or fifteen more days to live? Benjamin Netanyahu clearly said that after releasing the hostages, Israel would start attacking Gaza again. Was this agreement the essence of the meeting called by Islamic countries on this issue a few days ago? Just a few hours before this agreement, the administrators of four Islamic countries—Indonesia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinian Authority—went to China and met its Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Is this one-sided agreement the result of this visit to Beijing? If this is true, then despite Muslims constituting 24 percent of the world's population, they announced defeat in front of only 94 lakh Israelis. In such a situation, the future of Palestinians is in danger.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

The 6-inch alternative hole is now being used to deliver food, drink, and oxygen to these trapped workers.

Although the teams of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation, Rescue team is working with their full strength to rescue these trapped workers, it is extremely regrettable to note that the lives of these casual and temporary workers are so cheap. They have to die and lose their lives to earn some money. They even risk their lives for critical projects, but despite that, we forget to cheer them on as real heroes and nation-builders. We hope that all 41 labourers returned to normal life safely

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

AUSTRALIAN GAMBLE

Sir — there will be life lessons aplenty in this bloody, beautiful game of cricket. Travis Head was injured, but soon as he burst on to the scene, he lit up the hills of Dharamsala with his maiden WC tonne

and then wrapped it up with a knockout punch to decimate India in the final. The selectors backed him even when he had a broken hand, and the medical team was working to get him back.

It was a big risk that Australians took, and it paid off. He is indeed a legend, and we love him. The credit goes to Head and Labuschagne, who stitched together a big partnership and put us completely out of the game. Indian team tried everything it could, but wicket got slightly better to bat under lights. The 2011 World Cup winner and Indian legend, Sachin Tendulkar, ambled out to the centre and shook hands with almost every Indian player and said we should consume the bitter pill and swallow it for every Indian fan who pinned lofty hopes on this high-octane contest.

Jayanthy S Maniam | Kozhikode

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Transformative approach to upskilling youth

By embracing transformative approach to upskilling youth, we can ensure that they not only thrive but also lead us toward a more sustainable future



MANAV SUBODH

In a world marked by rapid evolution and constant change, it is imperative to recognise the significance of preparing our youth for the future. With over 1.8 billion individuals aged between 10 and 24, as highlighted by the United Nations, the potential of this demographic to drive progress and transformation is immense. But it is equally important to acknowledge the challenges they face in a job market that is constantly in flux.

The statistics are revealing: in 92 countries, nearly three out of four young people aged 15-24 lack the emerging skills needed for employment, as per estimates by the Education Commission and UNICEF. This challenge is particularly pronounced in developing countries where access to education and resources can be limited. This glaring disparity underscores the urgency of providing our youth with skills that are not only relevant but also adaptable, transcending borders and empowering. Let's consider India, a nation with a vast talent pool in the information and technology sector. India has the potential to



become a hub of technology and innovation, expanding beyond its role as one of the biggest IT exporters globally. However, it is imperative to transition from merely acquiring new skills to creating well-rounded individuals with the capacity to address social issues.

Changemakers Mindset: Fostering a Changemakers mindset leveraging entrepreneurial thinking and problem solving is essential to equip the next generation for the 21st century's challenges and opportunities. Global leadership programs and initiatives offer a unique platform to instill this mindset in young students. By immersing them in a curriculum that emphasises on innovation and entrepreneurial thinking around some real life challenges, we can prepare students to excel in the 4th Industrial Revolution. Programs aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development

Goals provide students with a sense of purpose and responsibility, reinforcing the importance of changemaking in creating a more sustainable and socially conscious future. **Nurturing Digital Skills:** Technology is a crucial tool for transformative education. It connects students to a wealth of knowledge and experts worldwide, enabling innovative problem-solving. Beyond job readiness, it empowers youth to address pressing issues using advanced tools like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR).

The focus should shift to a holistic, interdisciplinary education, preparing youth for a tech-centric future in various sectors even in traditionally non-technical fields like medicine or psychology. **Beyond the Classroom:** Learning extends beyond the confines of a traditional classroom. Students acquire knowledge and skills through experiential opportunities, such as engaging in projects centred around environmental sustainability, social justice, and community involvement. **Empowering Youth:** Invol-

ving youth in shaping their own education is crucial. Instead of imposing a strict, top-down approach, a more flexible, bottom-up method is desirable. This means listening to the ideas and opinions of young people about what they're learning. By equipping youth with new skills, we empower them to pass on their knowledge to the next generation in their communities. This results in a collaborative system where everyone has a role in making sure young people gain valuable skills.

The path to equipping our youth for the future is multifaceted. It involves fostering a changemakers mindset, nurturing digital skills, emphasising socio-emotional growth, empowering youth to take charge of their education, and extending learning beyond the classroom. By embracing these transformative approaches to upskilling our youth, we can ensure that they would lead us toward a brighter, more sustainable future.



FIRST COLUMN

'SHAD DARSHAN': BASIS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

'Shad Darshan' are six philosophical systems in Vedic and post-Vedic schools of thought



SWAMI CHARANSHRIT

Shad Darshan, which translates to "Six Philosophies" in Sanskrit, refers to the six classical schools of Indian philosophy that have played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual and spiritual landscape of ancient and medieval India. These philosophical systems, each with its unique perspective and emphasis, provide diverse insights into the nature of reality, consciousness, and the purpose of human existence. Let's explore a brief introduction to each of the Shad Darshan schools.

Nyaya Darshan: The Science of Logic and Reasoning

Nyaya, meaning "logic" in Sanskrit, is a system that focuses on the analysis of reasoning and logic. It provides a structured approach to understanding and validating knowledge through inference, analogy, and deduction. Nyaya philosophers, known as Nyayaikas, seek to establish a systematic methodology for discerning truth and knowledge.

Vaisheshika Darshan: The Atomic Theory of Matter

Vaisheshika is a philosophical system that delves into the nature of the physical world. Founded by the sage Kanada, it explores the concept of atomism and classifies the various elements of the universe. Vaisheshika proposes that everything in the material world is composed of distinct, indivisible atoms. The philosophy also addresses the concept of karma and its role in shaping individual destinies.

Samkhya Darshan: The Enumeration of Reality

Samkhya is one of the oldest schools of Indian philosophy attributed to Sage Kapila. It focuses on enumerating the fundamental components of reality. Samkhya identifies the dualistic nature of existence, distinguishing between Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (matter). The philosophy aims to liberate the individual soul (purusha) from the entanglements of the material world by understanding the true nature of reality.

**Yoga Darshan: The Path to Union**

Yoga, popularized worldwide as a system of physical and mental practices, is deeply rooted in the philosophical framework of Yoga Darshan. Attributed to Sage Patanjali, this system outlines a path to self-realization and union with the divine. Yoga includes ethical guidelines (yamas and niyamas), physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and meditation. The ultimate goal of Yoga Darshan is to achieve a state of inner tranquillity and spiritual enlightenment.

Mimamsa Darshan: The Science of Rituals

Mimamsa, also known as Purva Mimamsa, is a school that concentrates on the interpretation of Vedic rituals and sacrificial ceremonies. The Mimamsa philosophers, called Mimamsakas, meticulously analyze the Vedas to understand the correct performance of rituals and the implications of these actions. The philosophy emphasizes the importance of adhering to Vedic injunctions for individual and societal welfare.

Vedanta Darshan: The End of Knowledge or ultimate knowledge

Vedanta, meaning "the end of the Vedas," is a philosophical system that interprets the Upanishads, the concluding part of the Vedic scriptures. Vedanta explores the nature of ultimate reality (Brahman) and the relationship between the individual soul (Atman) and the cosmic consciousness. Advaita Vedanta, one of the most influential schools within this system, teaches the non-dualistic nature of reality, asserting that the individual soul and Brahman are ultimately one.

Shad Darshan represents a rich tapestry of philosophical thought in ancient India, offering diverse perspectives on metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and spirituality. Each school within this framework contributes unique insights, providing seekers with a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of existence and the paths to self-realization. The enduring legacy of Shad Darshan continues to inspire philosophical inquiry and spiritual exploration in contemporary times.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

All talk and no action on reviving the industry



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

With hardly any investment coming to Kerala, its industries are dying a slow death and the lack of job opportunities is forcing youth to seek jobs abroad



Kerala is fast becoming a graveyard of industries, enterprises and entrepreneurs. A trip from Kasaragod in the north to Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city in the south, offers one the experience of a ghost town. Industries that have been shut down for years and units awaiting their turn to pull down the shutters are what welcome the visitors to the State. It resembles scenes straight out of Western Spaghettis. No entrepreneurs with a little bit of common sense would venture out into this landmass laden with deadly mines!

The State may be the only one of its kind in India where entrepreneurs have resorted to suicide having failed in their efforts to open shop. Sometime back, The Pioneer had reported about the suicide of Sajan Parayil, a man in his early 40s who made a fortune having worked in West Asia for years and invested his savings to construct a convention centre in Anthoor in Kannur. P K Shyamala, the then municipal chairperson, refused to allot building numbers to the Convention Centre for months citing some minor procedure issues. The real issue was the refusal of the entrepreneur to pay speed money (as a bribe is known in Kerala) to the political masters. Shyamala was not an ordinary chairperson. She is the wife of M V Govindan, who is the CPI-M State Secretary. Sajan had invested Rs 20 crore in the convention centre but no investigation was held on the factors leading to his suicide.

Close on the heels of Sajan's suicide, two more UAE returnees took extreme measures because of the high-handedness of the party's local leaders in the Kollam district. The entrepreneurs had set up motor garages and had employed nearly 20 per-



A STUDY BY THE KERALA STATE PLANNING BOARD SAYS THAT ACCORDING TO A SURVEY HELD IN 2013, THERE WERE 25 LAKH GUEST LABORERS IN THE STATE

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

sons in the units. But the party apparatchiks won't allow the garages to function till their palms are greased. Despite all these developments, the CPI-M-led Kerala Government relentlessly campaigns and projects the State as the most investor-friendly destination in India! Though no major industries have been opened in Kerala during the last 20 years, the claims by the government of the day show no dearth of enterprises. Of late, news about start-ups compensates for the failure of the Government in attracting investors to the State. But if any questions are asked about the number of jobs created out of these start-ups, the chances are that the persons who ask such unpleasant questions would be labelled as reactionaries and agents of the Centre.

The Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) report released recently by the Union Ministry of Statistics is startling as well as shocking. The CPI-M Government portrays the State as the role model for the country as well as economically advanced nations in Europe and East Asia. However, according to the PLFS data for 2022-2023, Kerala leads the table of States with the highest unemployment rates. The all-India unemployment rate for the period 2022-2023 stands at 6.7 per cent while in Kerala it is 10 per cent. But the State is a study in contrast. Though unemployment is rampant in Kerala, it has become an El Dorado for migrant workers (Guest Laborers as the CPI-M describes

them). A study by the Kerala State Planning Board says that according to a survey held in 2013, there were 25 lakh Guest Laborers in the State. Migrant workers, as well as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, constitute this workforce. Though there is no data about the latest figures, agencies monitoring the arrival and departure of such migrant labour forces put the figures at 40 lakhs. And many of them have disembarked in Kerala with fake Aadhar cards. Besides the labour-intensive plywood companies, these Guest Laborers work as toddy tappers, at construction sites, hotels, eateries, and hairdressing salons. They live a frugal life and save reasonably. Ali, a resident from Lucknow who runs a hair-dressing salon, makes at least Rs 10,000 per day and flies to his village twice a month. An average casual labourer saves Rs 1,200 per day by working from 8 am to 5 pm. But the Malayali comrades are reluctant to work like these migrant youths and they wile away their time gossiping and consuming liquor.

A disturbing trend that is visible in Kerala is students and youth flying away to countries like Germany, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US for studies and employment. Those who leave the shores of Kerala are unlikely to return as the above-mentioned countries offer vast scope in education, employment and career prospectus. Those who are left behind manage to get jobs as assis-

tants to MLAs, MPs and chairmen of government corporations which make them eligible for State Government pension if they put up 30 months of service. The Public Service Commission has become a scarecrow as only those with the right connections in the right places would get jobs through this agency.

Persons like John Milton hailing from the Idukki district were intelligent enough to see the writing on the wall and "escaped" to neighbouring Tamil Nadu where the garment manufacturing unit started him making money by the hour. "I owe it to the comrades who made life difficult for me forcing me to set up a manufacturing unit at Tirupur. Had I not decided to leave Kerala, I would have ended up as a wreck," said Milton. The same is the case with Shaji George, who returned from Britain to his hometown of Tiruvalla and opened a five-star clubhouse with all modern facilities like tennis and squash courts, a swimming pool and a convention centre meeting global standards. But the local leaders had other ideas. "Why people of Kerala require an establishment like this?" they asked and made the local body authorities deny Shaji the building numbers which alone would allow him to open the clubhouse. "They asked for a hefty sum as a bribe and I am not accustomed to paying speed money (as a bribe is known in Kerala)," said Shaji. Even God may not be able to save God's Own Country!

Antimicrobial resistance: A result of misuse of medicines

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a problem driven by misuse and overuse of antimicrobial medicines, including antibiotics and antivirals

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and become resistant to (or no longer respond to) medicines, making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. As a result of drug resistance, medicines become ineffective, and infections become increasingly difficult or impossible to treat. That is why AMR ranks among the top ten global health threats worldwide.

"Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is a problem driven by misuse and overuse of antimicrobial medicines, including antibiotics and antivirals, and results in critical medicines losing effec-



SHOBHA SHUKLA



BOBBY RAMAKANT

Shobha Shukla and Bobby Ramakant lead the editorial team of Citizen News Service and are on the Board of Global AMR Media Alliance (GAMA) and Asia Pacific Media Alliance for Health and Development, APCAT Media; views are personal

tiveness to treat infections," said Thomas Joseph, Head, AMR Awareness, Advocacy and Campaigns, World Health Organization (WHO), at a recent pre-conference meet of 22nd International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA). "AMR is associated with 5 million deaths a year. Besides this, there is a huge burden of morbidity and healthcare expenditure that can affect household welfare severely. The World Bank estimates that Global GDP could fall by \$1 to \$3.4 trillion annually after 2030 due to AMR," he added. The World Bank estimates that an additional 24 million people will be forced into extreme poverty by 2030 if no action is taken on AMR today.

Drawing attention to World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) which is celebrated between 18-24 November every year, Thomas cautioned that "All stakeholders should realize that if we do not act now, we could go back to a pre-antibiotic era, when even simple infections become untreatable."

Personal experience of surviving AMR

Vanessa Carter, an AMR patient survivor, One Health advocate, Chairperson of the WHO Taskforce of AMR Survivors, and founder of The AMR Narrative was one of the speakers at the 3rd Annual Global Media Forum on AMR, hosted by Global AMR Media Alliance in lead up to WAAW 2023. She shared her eye-opening per-



sonal experience of her battle with AMR

"In 2004, I was 25 years old. I had a severe car accident in Johannesburg, South Africa, and ended up in a hospital with a lot of massive injuries. I had been resuscitated on the side of the road, I was put on life support, I had multiple fractures in my face - a broken

jaw and a broken nose - and also lost one eye. I also had a head injury, major abdominal injury, fractured pelvis, neck, and back injury. But the most complicated injuries were to my face, and it took me 10 years to recover from them, during which time I have had 4 different facial prosthetic implants," said Vanessa. But the worst was yet to come. Six years into the accident and after her fourth implant, one day, while getting into her car, Vanessa saw moisture seeping all over her face. It was pus oozing out from her 4th implanted prosthetic. She underwent emergency surgery, and the doctors did "debridement" and reconstructive surgery to fix up the damaged tissue. Two weeks later, the infection

returned. She got more tissue reconstruction done. But the infection kept on returning and it worsened over time. This went on for the next 11 months during which she was kept under the care of several specialist surgeons. Vanessa was eventually diagnosed with a highly antibiotic-resistant form of MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) infection. She could not undergo any more surgeries for one year, as the doctors had to wait for the tissue to recover. "I had to cover my face as I looked terrible. My face was very red, full of fluid and swollen. I could not wear my artificial eye. I could not go to fetch my child from school because the kids would get scared looking at me," she

recalls. "I lost ten valuable years of my life between 25-35 years of age, being in and out of hospital, and not being able to look in the mirror without seeing a changed face. I nearly got a bloodstream infection and sepsis and almost died. But I am also living with a severe disability now - facial disfigurement which was partially caused by the accident but exacerbated by the fact that we could not treat this infection. When I learned about antibiotic resistance, it came as a surprise why it was not a common knowledge even though it is such a widespread global threat," she shared in the forum.

This is first part of two-part series on AMR. To be continued...

Guterres welcomes Israel-Hamas agreement to release hostages

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday welcomed the agreement reached by Israel and Hamas to release hostages in Gaza, describing it as an "important step in the right direction" but said that much more needs to be done.

Israel and Hamas agreed on Wednesday to a temporary four-day ceasefire to allow the release of 50 hostages held by the militant group in Gaza in exchange for 150 Palestinian detainees and the entry of humanitarian aid into the besieged territory.

The deal, once implemented at 10 am onwards on Thursday, will be the first major diplomatic breakthrough and pause in fighting since the war began after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7.

In a statement issued here, Guterres welcomed the agreement reached by Israel and Hamas, with the mediation of Qatar supported by Egypt and



Palestinians evacuate survivors of the Israeli bombing in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Wednesday.

AP/PTI

the United States.

"This is an important step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done," the UN chief said.

"The United Nations will mobilise all its capacities to support the implementation of the agreement and maximize its positive impact on the

humanitarian situation in Gaza," Guterres added.

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland also

welcomed the announcements of a deal to secure the release of hostages abducted by Hamas and others during the "horrific" attacks on October 7.

Wennesland welcomed the announcement of the 4-day humanitarian pause in Gaza, saying this pause must be used to its fullest extent to facilitate the release of hostages and alleviate the dire needs of Palestinians in Gaza.

He stressed that all parties must live up to their responsibilities to uphold this important agreement.

"This is an important step, but more must be done and I will continue all efforts to bring the suffering to an end," he said.

Wennesland further underlined that it is critical that "we see safe access and a continuous flow of humanitarian aid to all those in need."

He voiced appreciation for the efforts of the Governments of Egypt, Qatar, and the United States for facilitating the agreement.

Alvi sparks controversy by proposing 'one-state solution' to Palestine issue

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan President Arif Alvi has stirred a controversy by proposing a "one-state solution" to the Palestine problem in a significant departure from established policy, prompting the caretaker government to distance itself from the remarks and calls for his resignation.

The presidential office made waves on Friday by advocating for a "one-state solution" to the Palestine issue. However, Alvi's office retracted the statement within a few hours, marking an abrupt about-face in the official position. The presidency initially released a statement attributing to President Alvi the suggestion of a "one-state solution" during a telephonic conversation

with Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas.

"If the two-state solution was not acceptable to Israel, then the one-state solution was the only way where Jews, Muslims and [a] good percentage of Christians could live to exercise equal political rights," the original press release quoted Alvi as telling the Palestinian president.

Almost all news TV channels ran the president's statement, which was also released by the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan.

The Presidency later retracted the press release and issued a new one, which omitted any mention of the controversial proposal.

Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani on Tuesday termed President Arif

Alvi's proposal of a "one-state solution" to the Palestine problem as not being in line with the country's principled and historic stance on the issue.

He was speaking on the floor of the Senate when Pakistan Peoples Party senator Raza Rabbani asked for an explanation from him over the controversial press release.

The foreign minister said the Presidency had not sought input from his ministry before issuing the press release, adding that he was not aware of the context in which the president had suggested the "one-state solution".

Jilani said that soon after the release of the president's statement, his ministry had to issue a clarification, stating Pakistan's official position on the Palestine issue.

South Korea partially suspends inter-Korean pact

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea decided to partially suspend an inter-Korean agreement and restart front-line aerial surveillance of North Korea, hours after the North claimed to have put its first military spy satellite into orbit in violation of U.N. resolutions, officials in Seoul said.

The South Korean announcement — which will likely infuriate North Korea — came as the North's neighbours are trying to confirm whether the launch on Tuesday evening was successful and the satellite can perform reconnaissance functions.

South Korea's military said it assessed that the North Korean spy satellite had entered orbit as the North claimed. But it said it needs more time to verify whether it works. Earlier, the Pentagon said it was assessing the success of the launch, while Japan stated there had been no confirmation of the North's report on the satellite entering orbit.

North Korea's state media



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un watches conditions of a satellite at a satellite control center in Pyongyang, North Korea, Wednesday after North Korea's space agency said its new 'Chollima-1' carrier rocket accurately placed the Mallyong-1 satellite into orbit on Tuesday night.

AP/PTI

claimed the spy satellite transmitted imagery showing space views of key military sites in the US Pacific territory of Guam. It didn't publicize the photos, and many experts remain skeptical about whether the North Korean satellite is advanced enough to conduct meaningful military reconnaissance.

Despite questions about the launch, the United States and its allies strongly condemned it. They believe it was meant to improve the country's missile technology as well as establish a space-based surveillance system.

North Korea says it has sovereign, legitimate rights to

launch spy satellites to cope with what it calls intensifying U.S.-led threats. But UN Security Council resolutions prohibit any satellite liftoffs by North Korea, viewing them as covers for testing its long-range missile technology.

Heo Tae-keun, South Korea's deputy minister of national defense policy, told a televised briefing that the North's latest satellite launch was not only a clear violation of the U.N. resolutions but also "a grave provocation that threatens our national security."

Heo said South Korea decided to respond by partially suspending the 2018 inter-Korean agreement Wednesday and resuming aerial surveillance activities at the border. He added that South Korea will "promptly and strongly punish" North Korea if it uses the South Korean step as a pretext to launch another provocation.

The 2018 agreement, struck during a short-lived era of reconciliation between the rival Koreas, created buffer and no-fly zones along the countries' heavily fortified border. Under the deal, the Koreans were required to halt front-line aerial reconnaissance and live-fire exercises. They also removed some of their guard posts and land mines at border areas.

The deal invited withering conservative criticism in South Korea with critics saying it significantly restricted the operation of the country's aerial surveillance assets, which are much more superior to North Korea's. They also accused the deal of heavily benefiting North Korea, because it only called for mutual reductions of conventional military strength while leaving the North's growing nuclear arsenal intact. South Korea has no nuclear weapons.

The brief Korean rapprochement period evaporated soon after the collapse of broader nuclear diplomacy between North Korea and the US in 2019. North Korea has since ramped up missile tests to modernize its weapons arsenal, prompting the U.S. and South Korea to expand their defense exercises in response.

US and Philippines conduct joint air, sea patrols in SCS

AP ■ BANGKOK

The United States and the Philippines are conducting joint air and maritime patrols in the South China Sea, which come as the two countries step up cooperation in the face of growingly aggressive Chinese activity in the area.

The Philippine Air Force said on Wednesday its aircraft had taken part in joint patrols the day before in the vicinity of Batanes, the northernmost province of the Philippines, which is only about 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Taiwan, a self-governed island that China claims as its own.

The patrols run through Thursday and also include both the US and Philippine navies. They come only days after Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called the situation in the South China Sea increasingly "dire" as China seeks to assert its presence in an area where multiple nations have competing territorial claims.

Asked about the patrols, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Beijing's position had been made clear to both the Philippines and the US.

"The Philippines-US joint patrol drill must not undermine China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests," she said.

The US 7th Fleet said the patrols were part of routine American interaction with its allies and partners in "preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region".

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea as its own waters, which has led to disputes not only with the Philippines but also with Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. These claims have long been regarded as potential flashpoints in the region, and have fuelled US-China rivalry.

Earlier this month a Chinese coast guard ship blasted a Philippine supply ship with a water cannon in disputed waters, and last month a Chinese coast guard ship and an accompanying vessel



Three people were killed and three were missing after a landslide barreled down a heavily forested, rain-soaked mountainside and smashed into homes in a remote fishing community in southeast Alaska.

The slide — estimated to be 450 feet (137 metres) wide — occurred at about 9 pm on Monday during a significant rain and windstorm near Wrangell, an island community of 2,000 people some 155 miles (250 kilometers) south of the state capital of Juneau. Rescue crews found the body of a girl in an initial search and late Tuesday the bodies of two adults were found by a drone operator. Searchers used a cadaver-sniffing dog and heat-sensing drones to search for two children and one adult unaccounted for after the disaster, while the Coast Guard and other vessels looked along a waterfront littered with rocks, trees and mud.

Alaska State Troopers spokesperson Austin McDaniel said a woman who had been on the upper floor of a home was rescued. She was in good condition and receiving medical care. One of the three homes that was struck was unoccupied, McDaniel said.

"Our community is resilient," Wrangell interim borough manager Mason Villaroma told The Associated Press in a phone interview.

"And it always comes together for tragedies like this. We're broken, but resilient and determined to find everybody that's missing."

Gov. Mike Dunleavy issued a disaster declaration for Wrangell, saying he and his wife were heartbroken and praying for all those affected.

The landslide left a scar of barren earth from near the top of the mountain down to the ocean. A wide swath of evergreen trees were ripped out of the ground and a highway was buried by debris, cutting off access and power to approximately 75 homes. Troopers said a large-scale search and rescue mission wasn't initially possible because the site was unstable and hazardous.

UK finance min tables Sunak's tax cuts in Autumn Budget

London (PTI): Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt tabled the Autumn Statement budget in the House of Commons on Wednesday with a series of tax cuts for employees and businesses as had been indicated by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak earlier in the week.

Labelling his budget as an "Autumn Statement for Growth", Hunt said his measures would reward hard work with lower taxes because the Sunak-led government had hit its target to halve inflation by the end of this year.

He also announced increases in the state pension by 8.5 per cent from April 2024 and Universal Credit social benefits by 6.7 per cent.

"If we want people to get up early in the morning, if we want people to work nights, if we want an economy where people go the extra mile and work hard then we need to recognise that their hard work benefits all of us," said Hunt.

"Our choice is not big government, high spending and high tax because we know that leads to less growth, not more. Instead, we reduce debt, cut taxes and reward work. We deliver world-class education. We build domestic sustainable energy and we back British business," he said.

In a boost to employee wages, the finance minister told Parliament that the main 12 per cent National Insurance (NI) tax rate would fall to 10 per cent from January 6, 2024, saving those on an average annual salary of 35,000 pounds over 450 pounds a year.

He also abolished NI payments for the self-employed, known as Class 2 National Insurance, saving that category of workers a significant annual sum.

Hunt also announced tough new measures for job seekers, saying those who fail to find work after 18 months of "intensive support" from taxpayer-funded benefits will be given mandatory work placements.

'Barring of several nuclear inspectors by Iran is 'serious blow' to monitoring'

AP ■ VIENNA

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said Wednesday that Iran's decision in September to bar several experienced U.N. inspectors from monitoring the country's nuclear program constituted "a very serious blow" to the agency's ability to do its job "to the best possible level."

IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that while the UN nuclear watchdog continued to perform its monitoring work, Iran had targeted inspectors "who have a lot of experience, particularly in enrichment and other capacities."

"It takes a long time to prepare inspectors who have the necessary amount of experience, skills and ability to perform their work," Grossi told reporters on the first day of a regular meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna. While refusing to get

into specific numbers or names, Grossi said that the ban concerned one-third of the core group of the agency's most experienced inspectors designated for Iran.

"This is completely uncalculated, this is completely illogical," he said.

Grossi said that he hoped to "reverse" Iran's decision and that he is having "a conversation" about the issue with Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear program. The comments come after a confidential IAEA report last week said that Iran continues to bar several of the watchdog's inspectors from monitoring the country's nuclear program, and that Tehran has further increased its stockpile of near weapons-grade uranium.

The IAEA said that according to its assessment, as of Oct. 28, Iran has an estimated 128.3 kilograms (282.9 pounds) of uranium enriched

up to 60% purity, which represents an increase of 6.7 kilograms since its September report.

Iran has long denied ever seeking nuclear weapons and continues to insist that its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes, such as for use in medicine, agriculture, industry and science.

But the IAEA's director-general has warned Tehran has enough enriched uranium for "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to build them. The 128.3 kilograms enriched up to 60% fissile purity are more than three times the approximately 42 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60% that the IAEA defines as sufficient material to fuel one atomic weapon once refined further.

Uranium enriched at 60% purity is just a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. In September, Iran informed Grossi of its decision to bar several inspectors

from monitoring the country's nuclear program. Iran's Foreign Ministry linked the move to what it said was an attempt by the United States and three European countries to misuse the IAEA "for their own political purposes."

The US and the three European countries had criticized Iran in September in a joint statement, calling on Tehran to step up cooperation with the agency.

In a second confidential report last week, the IAEA said that no progress has been made on its request that Iran explain the origin and current location of man-made uranium particles found at two locations that Tehran has failed to declare as potential nuclear sites.

The report also says that there is no progress thus far in getting more monitoring equipment, including cameras, reinstalled that had been removed by Iran in June 2022.

King Charles III honours K-pop girl group during S Korean president's state visit

AP ■ LONDON

King Charles III paid tribute to K-pop band Blackpink on Wednesday, giving them honorary gongs for their work fighting climate change by raising awareness among young people.

During a three-day state visit by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, Charles made Jennie Kim, Jisoo Kim and Lalisa Manoban honorary Members of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of the group's role as COP26 Advocates for the COP26 Summit in Glasgow 2021.

Roseanne Park (Rosé) was also honored, but since she has dual New Zealand citizenship, her MBE is substantive. In addition to being king of the United Kingdom, Charles is



head of state for 14 realms, including New Zealand, which retained the monarch as their sovereign after gaining independence from the former British Empire.

The honors were presented Wednesday morning in the 1844 Room at Buckingham Palace. The awards are part of

Britain's honors system, which recognizes outstanding service to the nation and the wider world. Non-UK citizens, and those who aren't members of the 14 realms, receive honorary versions of the awards.

Charles had lauded the K-pop girl group on Tuesday at a glittering banquet.

Sam Altman back as OpenAI CEO just days after being removed

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

The ousted leader of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI is returning to the company that fired him late last week, culminating a days-long power struggle that shocked the tech industry and brought attention to the conflicts around how to safely build artificial intelligence.

San Francisco-based OpenAI said in a statement late Tuesday: "We have reached an agreement in principle for Sam Altman to return to OpenAI as CEO with a new initial board."

The board, which replaces the one that fired Altman on Friday, will be led by former Salesforce co-CEO Bret Taylor, who also chaired Twitter's board before its takeover by Elon Musk last year.



The other members will be former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers and Quora CEO Adam D'Angelo. OpenAI's previous board of directors, which included D'Angelo, had refused to give specific reasons for why it fired Altman, leading to a weekend of internal conflict at the com-

pany and growing outside pressure from the startup's investors.

The chaos also accentuated the differences between Altman — who's become the face of generative AI's rapid commercialisation since ChatGPT's arrival a year ago — and members of the company's board who have expressed deep reservations about the safety risks posed by AI as it gets more advanced.

Microsoft, which has invested billions of dollars in OpenAI and has rights to its current technology, quickly moved to hire Altman on Monday, as well as another co-founder and former president, Greg Brockman, who had quit in protest after Altman's removal. That emboldened a threatened exodus of nearly all

of the startup's 770 employees who signed a letter calling for the board's resignation and Altman's return.

One of the four board members who participated in Altman's ouster, OpenAI co-founder and chief scientist Ilya Sutskever, later expressed regret and joined the call for the board's resignation. Microsoft in recent days had pledged to welcome all employees who wanted to follow Altman and Brockman to a new AI research unit at the software giant. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella also made clear in a series of interviews on Monday that he was still open to the possibility of Altman returning to OpenAI, so long as the startup's governance problems are solved.

SC accepts former PM Imran Khan's bail plea

Issues notices to FIA, federation

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday accepted for hearing the bail plea of jailed former premier Imran Khan in the cipher case and issued notices to the Federation and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), seeking their responses in the matter.

In March 2022, Khan and his foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were alleged to have violated the secret laws of the country while handling a communication (cipher) sent by Pakistan's embassy in Washington. The diplomatic cable reportedly went missing from Khan's possession.

A three-member bench comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Ayesha A. Malik, and Justice Yahya Afridi declared as admissible the bail petition filed by the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chairman through his lawyer Salman Safdar.

At the outset of the hearing, Safdar read out loud the first information report registered against Qureshi and Khan in the case after which Justice Masood inquired how far the matter dated back to and the punishment it carries if a person is found guilty. It is from 2022, the lawyer replied.

Safdar then briefed the court on the inquiry report and accusations made against the former prime minister in the case. He added that Khan's then-principal secretary Azam Khan also accused the PTI chief of misusing the cipher.

Justice Masood then inquired whether the role of the co-accused was determined in the case. The lawyer stated Azam Khan from being an accused was turned into a witness for the case.



He added that Azam was "kidnapped" and after the "kidnapping" his statement was recorded under Section 164.

"Look, this is how the truth comes out," said Justice Masood. On this, Safdar then contended that his client was being politically victimised.

During the hearing, Justice Malik asked the lawyer what was the central ground of his

case. "Our case is that this case is not maintainable," responded Safdar. The sections included in the FIR against the PTI chief are those that are included in espionage offences.

"It was never mentioned in the investigation where the spying was done or which enemy country benefited out of it," said Safdar.

To this, Justice Masood observed that the government was contending the accused compromised the code of the cipher. Justice Afridi then brought up the issue of the cable's secrecy and whether the PTI chief had shown the document to anyone.

Safdar told the court that the cipher was not shown to anyone during this time.

"If the contents of a document are shared while waving it, doesn't it mean making it public?" asked Justice Masood while referring to the first time when the PTI chief revealed the alleged conspiracy in a rally.

Pakistan govt recommends names of Imran, 28 others be placed on ECL

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's interim government Wednesday recommended placing the names of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and 28 others on the Exit Control List (ECL) to prevent them from fleeing the country, citing their alleged involvement in a corruption case.

A subcommittee of the federal cabinet recommended placing the names of Khan, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, and 28 others on the ECL in the Al-Qadir Trust case, the Dawn newspaper reported. The case alleges that the ex-premier and his wife, Bushra Bibi, obtained billions of rupees and land

worth hundreds of kanals from Bahria Town Ltd for legalising Rs 50 billion that was identified and returned to the country by the UK during the government led by Khan.

Khan, 71, was initially arrested in the said case earlier this year from the premises of the Islamabad High Court but was later released after the Supreme Court declared the arrest unlawful. On November 14, the PTI chief, who is already imprisoned in Adiala Jail in the cipher case, was again arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the Al-Qadir Trust case. He was then handed over to the watchdog on physical remand.

Kakar summoned by HC in missing Baloch students case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A top Pakistani court on Wednesday summoned caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar to personally appear before it on November 29 in a case involving 55 missing students from the restive Balochistan province and asked the government if it should refer the matter to the UN.

The Islamabad High Court directed Kakar to appear before it if he did not secure the recovery of the missing Baloch students according to the recommendations of the Baloch Enforced Disappearance Commission, Dawn News reported.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani passed the order while hearing a case regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. The commission was established in 2011 to trace missing persons and fix responsibility on the individuals or organisations responsible for it. At the previous hearing, held on October 10, the IHC instructed the state to fulfil its responsibility in recovering the missing Baloch students. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

At Wednesday's hearing, the additional attorney general requested Justice Kayani to not summon the ministers or the prime minister. Expressing his disapproval, the judge said: "There is nothing wrong in this [summoning the Prime Minister and other ministers]. Everyone is trying to make a joke out of this [the case]."

He remarked, "What more injustice can there be towards the people of this country when they are being disappeared?"

"Should we refer this matter to the United Nations and

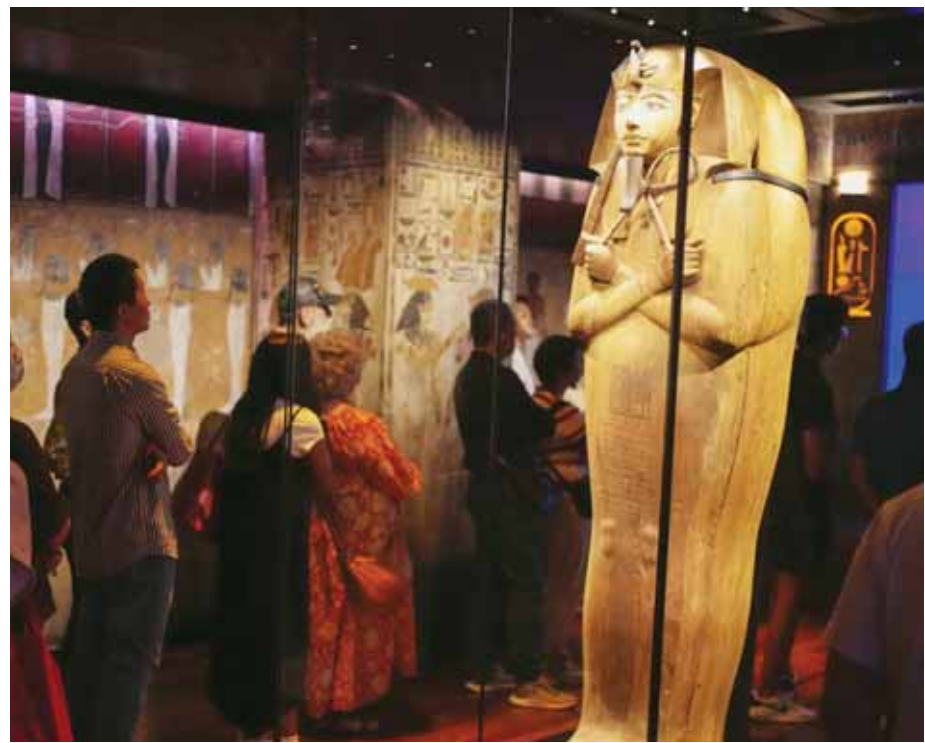
cause an insult to our country?" the judge asked, expressing concern about the increasing number of missing people.

Interim Prime Minister Kakar had last month admitted that according to a UN subcommittee's estimates, around 50 people had been forcibly disappeared in Balochistan.

"Sometimes, we receive complaints in which they give us 5,000 names claiming they are missing. [They are] not ready to accept any UN best practices on collection of data of missing persons," Kakar had said, adding the issue was used as a "propaganda tool" against Pakistan. Assistant Attorney General Usman Ghuman presented a ministerial report on the Baloch missing persons. The court however returned the report expressing displeasure. "The prime minister and interior minister are from Balochistan," said Justice Kayani. "They should be empathetic to this matter, considering it involves Baloch students." Justice Kayani mentioned that the case had previously been heard by former IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah, noting that a commission was formed per the court's orders, and the matter of enforced disappearances was referred to the federal government. "The prime minister should have understood, and we expected he would say these are our children," remarked Justice Kayani.

The judge noted that the former prime minister was also summoned, along with several other high-profile individuals connected to the case. Expressing frustration, he lamented the lack of progress despite efforts.

He mentioned that the prime minister, as well as the ministers for interior, human rights, and defence, would be summoned.



Visitors walk past the coffin of Ramses II, as part of the exhibition titled "Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs", at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Australia, on Tuesday. The exhibition features a collection of artifacts including sarcophagi, animal mummies, jewelry, royal masks, amulets, and golden treasures showcasing the workmanship of Egyptian artisans AP/PTI

Clean slate for voters in Netherlands as longest-serving leader on way out

AP ■ THE HAGUE

One thing is certain for the Dutch voters casting ballots in a general election on Wednesday: Mark Rutte, the Netherlands' longest-serving prime minister, is on the way out. His replacement after 13 years in office could be the country's first female premier or a social democrat who left his job as the European Union's climate czar to return to national politics.

The next prime minister also might turn out to be an anti-Islam lawmaker or a centrist who created his party only three months ago.

The outcome is hard to predict given what happened in other European elections in recent months. Populist and hard-right parties triumphed in some EU member nations and faltered in others, creating conflicting messages on where democracy on the continent was heading.

Spain set the scene in July, when it looked like the far right together with the conservative Christian Democrats might dislodge Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who has led the country since 2018. Somehow, the incumbent hung on, though it required political acrobatics and a risky

alliance with Catalan nationalists.

In September, populist Robert Fico's Smer party won the parliamentary election in Slovakia after campaigning on a pro-Russia and anti-American platform. Fico, returning to power for a fourth time, set up a coalition government that now includes an ultra-nationalist party.

Then the next month, the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, party extended its reach from its dominant base in the country's former communist east by making a strong showing in two state elections in the west. Recent national polls have put the party in second place nationwide with support of around 20 per cent, about double its popularity during the 2021 federal election.

By the time Poland voted later in October, the question of whether the country would continue veering away from democratic rule of law principles under the Law and Justice party attracted international interest. The extreme-conservative party received the most votes but not a majority in parliament, ultimately losing control of the Polish government to a coalition led by the moderate and pro-EU veteran

Donald Tusk.

Now, it's the election in the Netherlands that has people waiting to see which way the continent's democratic balance will tip.

Polls showed four political parties, including the far-right Party for Freedom of firebrand Geert Wilders, were neck and neck going into Wednesday's election. Forming the next government will require weeks or months of coalition talks between parties.

A poll released Tuesday put Wilders' party very narrowly ahead of Rutte's liberal, pro-free trade People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and a centre-left bloc made up of the Labour Party and Green Left. If the ruling party manages to clip Wilders' wings, it would pave the way for Justice and Security Minister Dilan Yesilgoz-Zegerius to become the first woman to occupy the prime minister's office known as the Little Tower.

Yesilgoz-Zegerius was elected leader of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD, after Rutte resigned. Born in Turkey, she is a former refugee who now advocates a crack-down on migration as the Netherlands struggles to accommodate asylum-seekers.

Man kills sister, male friend for 'honour' in Pakistan's Punjab province: Police

PTI ■ LAHORE

In the latest case of honour killing in Pakistan, a man allegedly axed to death his sister and one of her male friends in Punjab province as he suspected them of having an affair, police said on Wednesday.

The incident happened on Tuesday in Alipur tehsil of Muzaffarnagar district of the province, some 375 km from the provincial capital, Lahore.

According to the police officer Haseeb Javed, Mulazim Hussain suspected that his sister Zaitoon Bibi, 20, had illicit relations with Fayyaz Hussain of their locality. "On Tuesday, Mulazim followed his sister who met with Fayyaz at his place. Mulazim reached there and attacked the couple with an axe, killing them on the spot," the police officer said.

After committing the crime Mulazim surrendered before the police and confessed to his crime.

"He killed his sister and her boyfriend as he felt that it has disgraced the family's honour," Javed said and added that a murder case has been registered against the suspect.

A good number of people, especially women, are killed in Pakistan every year in the name of honour.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, around 1,000 women are killed in the name of honour every year in Pakistan. The victims of honour killings are widely perceived to have brought shame and dishonour to their families either by marrying against their will or having an affair.

Most often the family members are behind such killings.

US fighter aircraft strike Hezbollah targets in Iraq after attacks on bases

AP ■ WASHINGTON

US fighter aircraft struck two Hezbollah operations centers in Iraq in response to attacks on US bases that have escalated alongside Israel's operations against Hamas in Gaza, two defense officials said. They said attacks on US bases included the first use of a short-range ballistic missile against US troops, which happened on Tuesday.

The US fighter jets struck Kataib Hezbollah operations center and a Kataib Hezbollah Command and Control node near Al Anbar and Jurf al Saqr, south of Baghdad, on Tuesday, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity to provide additional sensitive details of the attacks. There were Kataib Hezbollah personnel at both sites at the time of the strikes

but the officials said they could not yet confirm whether anyone there was killed. The US strike followed another immediate, unplanned retaliatory strike by an AC-130 gunship that was in the air when the Iranian-backed militants fired two short-range ballistic missiles at Al-Asad Air Base in Iraq late Monday evening. The gunship was able to locate the origin of the missiles, and fired on several militants who had fled in a vehicle.

The officials said the U.S. is trying to communicate that it does not seek wider conflict but that the Iran-backed attacks against American forces must stop, and that the US will take further action if needed. To date, US bases in Iraq and Syria have been struck 66 times since Oct. 17, the day a blast at a hospital in Gaza killed hundreds.

Earthquake shakes eastern Indonesia

Jakarta (AP): A strong, deep undersea earthquake shook the eastern side of Indonesia on Wednesday with no immediate reports of casualties or damages in the area. The 6.0 magnitude earthquake hit an area 94 kilometers (58 miles) west of Tobelo in Indonesia's North Maluku province, at a depth of 116 kilometers (72 miles).

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency said there was no potential danger of a tsunami but warned of possible aftershocks. Indonesia, a vast archipelago and a home of more than 270 million people, is frequently hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions because of its location on the so-called "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Basin.

A magnitude 5.6 earthquake last year killed at least 331 people and injured nearly 600 in West Java's Cianjur city. It was the deadliest in Indonesia since a 2018 quake and tsunami in Sulawesi killed about 4,340 people.

'China is expanding its crackdown on mosques to regions outside Xinjiang'

AP ■ HONG KONG

The Chinese government has expanded its campaign of closing mosques to regions other than Xinjiang, where for years it has been blamed for persecuting Muslim minorities, according to a Human Rights Watch report released on Wednesday.

Authorities have closed mosques in the northern Ningxia region as well as Gansu province, which are home to large populations of Hui Muslims, as part of a process known officially as "consolidation," according to the report, which draws on public documents, satellite images and witness testimonies.

Local authorities also have been removing architectural features of mosques to make them look more "Chinese," part of a campaign by the ruling Communist Party to tighten control over religion and reduce the risk of possible challenges to its rule. President Xi Jinping in 2016 called for the "Sinicization" of religions, ini-

tiating a crackdown that has largely concentrated on the western region of Xinjiang, home to more than 11 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

A United Nations report last year found China may have committed "crimes against humanity" in Xinjiang, including through its construction of a network of extrajudicial internment camps believed to have held at least 1 million Uyghurs, Huis, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Chinese authorities have decommissioned, closed down, demolished or converted mosques for secular use in regions outside Xinjiang as part of a campaign aimed at cracking down on religious expression, according to Human Rights Watch.

In response to an Associated Press request for comment, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing attaches great importance to the protection and repair of mosques, and safeguards the normal religious needs of believers. "The relevant organiza-

tions should abandon their ideological bias against China and stop using religious issues to engage in political manipulation and smear China's image" the ministry said in a statement.

One of the first known references to "mosque consolidation" appears in an internal party document from April 2018 that was leaked to U.S. media as part of a trove of documents known as the "Xinjiang Papers." The file instructed state agencies throughout the country to "strengthen the standardized management of the construction, renovation and expansion of Islamic religious venues" and stressed that "there should not be newly built Islamic venues" in order to "compress the overall number (of mosques)."

"The Chinese government is not consolidating mosques as it claims, but closing many down in violation of religious freedom," said Maya Wang, acting China director at Human Rights Watch. "The Chinese government's closure,

destruction and re-purposing of mosques is part of a systematic effort to curb the practice of Islam in China."

In Liaoqiao and Chuankou villages in Ningxia, authorities dismantled the domes and minarets of all seven mosques and razed the main buildings of three of them between 2019 and 2021, according to videos and pictures posted online and corroborated with satellite imagery by the group's researchers. Additionally, the ablation hall of one mosque was damaged inside, according to videos obtained by the group. The Associated Press could not independently verify the changes described in the report. The policy of "consolidating mosques" was also referenced in a March 2018 document issued by the government of Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia. According to the paper, the government wanted to "strictly control the number and scale of religious venues" and called for mosques to adopt "Chinese architecture styles."

Four Indian nationals imprisoned in S'pore

Singapore (PTI): Four Indian nationals in Singapore were sentenced to between 40 and 65 days in jail for conspiring to steal over SGD 1,700 worth of apparel from a retail store by removing the items' price tags. Shihora Ridham Mukeshbhai, 20, Hun Smit Ashokbhai, 21, Kuvadiya Milan Ghansyambhai, 26, and Chauhan Ruchi Sanjaykumar, 25, studied at different schools but lived together in the same apartment in Singapore.

They removed the price tags that contained radio-frequency identification (RFID). By removing it, they contrived to steal the items without setting off the store's security alarm. The Straits Times newspaper reported.

They then bought tote bags at the self-checkout area, stuffed the apparel into the bags, and pretended they had paid for all of their items.

The four shoplifters were on student passes in Singapore. The youngest, Ridham, pleaded guilty to one count of theft in dwelling and another

count of attempting to commit a similar crime. He was dealt the heaviest sentence. The other three admitted to one count of theft in dwelling or attempted theft each. Other similar charges were taken into consideration for sentencing.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Maximilian Chew told the court that one of the shoplifting incidents happened on October 12 at the Uniqlo outlet in Orchard Central. Three other Indian nationals, identified in court documents as Bhavik, 24, Vishal, 23, and Darshan, 22, were also involved in the conspiracy. Bhavik and Vishal planned to steal from the outlet and roped the rest into the plan.

The group went to the store at around 6 pm that day, removed the price tags after picking the items, went to the self-checkout area and bought three tote bags to keep the apparel.

The group left at around 7.30 pm. They stole 64 pieces of apparel worth SGD 1,788 in total.

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Short Term E-Tender Enq. No.7487/P-3/EMP-12490 dated 17-11-23.
 Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No.2023_POWER_112807_1 for Procurement of MS Pipe sizes 200NB, 250NB & 300NB for Dry Fly Ash handling System installed at GGSTP Ropar.
 For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 21-11-23/ 4.00 PM onwards.
 Note:- Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> RTP-138/23

76155/12/2425/2023/29968 Dated CHD :- 11/22/2023

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (Building & Garden)

Tel.No (0240) 2333536-40 Address : Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Executive Engineer (Building & Garden) Head office : Town Hall Pin 431001 E-Tender Call AMC (For Help): Cell No. 9764999592 No/AMC/Dy.Eng/Drng-Bd/119/2023 Date: 22/11/2023

Sr. No	Work Name	Last Date of Tender Submission
1	Regarding appointment of Architect/Project Management Consultant / Green Building Consultant for Construction of Municipal Administration Building at Majnu Hill.	08/12/2023

Note:- 1. For the above started work is available on web site www.mahatenders.gov.in

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer (Building & Garden)
 Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

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Markets gain in highly volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty eked out marginal gains to settle in the positive zone after a highly volatile trade on Wednesday, helped by buying in index majors Infosys, ITC and Reliance Industries.

However, foreign fund outflows from the equity market restricted the upmove in stocks, traders said.

In a choppy session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 92.47 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 66,023.24. During the day, it fell to a low of 65,664.85 and touched a high of 66,063.43. The Nifty edged higher by 28.45 points or 0.14 per cent to 19,811.85.



Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, JSW Steel, HDFC Bank and Maruti were the major laggards. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.33 per cent, while smallcap index declined 0.63 per cent. Among the indices, power jumped 1.41 per cent, auto climbed 0.64 per cent, FMCG (0.34 per cent), capital goods (0.38 per cent) and oil & gas (0.36 per cent). Commodities, financial services, industrials, telecommunication and bankex were among the laggards.

Underlining that the banking system continues to be resilient and there is no immediate cause of worry for the system, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday advised lenders to be more cautious and spot any trend of risk building early.

While banks and NBFCs are showing good performance now, sustaining it requires concerted efforts. In good times like these, banks and NBFCs need to reflect and introspect as to where potential risks could possibly originate," he said. At a time when the system is reporting robust credit growth, Das asked lenders to avoid any form of "exuberance" in their business and to ensure that sectoral and sub-sectoral exposures are "sustainable". In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled in the green, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly with gains. The US markets ended in negative territory on Tuesday.

Rupee volatility low: RBI Guv

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday said the rupee has witnessed "low volatility" and orderly movements as compared to its peers.

Speaking at the annual FIBAC event, Das said household inflation expectations are becoming more anchored, but added that headline inflation is vulnerable to recurring and overlapping food price shocks. It can be noted that the rupee closed at an all-time low of 83.35 against the dollar on Monday, but gained some lost ground in Tuesday's trade.



Das, adding that it will be supporting growth as well. He said the softening in the core inflation gives the RBI the conviction that "monetary policy seems to be working". The headline inflation can come under pressure because of "overlapping and continuing shocks from food inflation", Das said.

He also reiterated the Arjuna analogy to speak about the resolute focus of the central bank on inflation, and also borrowed from the 'Swayamvar' scene in the mythological text to say that just like Arjuna focusing on the bird's eye while calculating the ripples and sound in the room, the central bank also takes into account various other aspects. Meanwhile, he said household inflation expectations are becoming more anchored and cited recent surveys by the Reserve Bank which illustrate this.

Das, who has been at the helm since 2019, said he has focused on communication to set the expectations of households and ensured that the central bank reaches the last person. He said the world is grappling with an unending stream of challenges like volatile commodities, uncertainty around monetary policies, geopolitical events and climate shocks since 2020, making it a "complicated and deadly mix of challenges". He also pitched for reforms in agri marketing and connected value chains for sustained high growth, durable price stability and mitigating price shocks.

IT refund faster now: CII survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 89 per cent of individuals and 88 per cent of firms are of the view that there has been a greater reduction in waiting time to get an income tax refund in the last five years between 2018-2023, a CII survey has said.

The CII Income Tax Refund Survey presented to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also found that 75.5 per cent of the individuals and 22.4 per cent of the firm-level respondents did not pay TDS over and above their estimated tax liability. The survey respondents (84 per cent of individuals and 77 per cent of firms) also felt the process of checking refund status was now smooth. "The extensive measures, which have been introduced by the government in the recent years to streamline, simplify and automate the taxation regime have borne rich dividends as is evident from the upbeat survey results on assessing speed and efficiency of income tax refunds conducted by CII," the industry body's President R Dinesh said. A staggering 87 per cent of the individuals and 89 per cent of firms feel that the process of claiming income tax refund is convenient, the survey said.

NBFCs to see 16-18% assets growth in FY24: CRISIL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's NBFC sector is expected to record a moderate growth of 16-18 per cent in the current fiscal because of relatively slower expansion on unsecured retail loans due to the recent regulatory measures issued by the RBI, CRISIL Ratings said on Wednesday. Assets Under Management (AUM) of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are set to log a healthy 14-17 per cent growth next fiscal on the back of continued strong credit demand across retail loan segments, it said in a release. "Growth may be moderately

lower than 16-18 per cent expected in the current fiscal, as unsecured retail loans, the fastest growing segment in the NBFC AUM pie so far, are likely to see a relatively slower growth as NBFCs recalibrate their strategies due to the recent regulatory measures issued by the Reserve Bank of India," it said. Going forward, diversification in product offerings and funding profile will be key constituents of their growth strategy, it added. The rating agency further said retail credit growth continues to be driven by sound underlying macro and micro factors. "Private consumption is trending well above the long-term



average as retail spends on homes, vehicles and consumer durables remain strong. And backed by healthy balance sheets, NBFCs have been agile to ride this retail credit-growth

wave," it said. Speaking at a webinar, CRISIL Ratings Managing Director Gurpreet Chhatwal said the recent regulatory measures are targeted at unsecured retail loans and do not impact

the secured asset classes where growth is expected to be steady. "Importantly, the regulatory changes do not impact HFCs," he said. According to the agency, the two largest traditional segments of home loans and vehicle finance now comprise 25-27 per cent each of the NBFC AUM. Both segments are expected to report steady growth. In the home loan segment, growth of 12-14 per cent next fiscal will be driven by HFCs' focus on affordable home loans (ticket sizes of less than Rs 25 lakh), while vehicle finance is expected to grow 18-19 per cent this fiscal and sustain 17-18

per cent growth during 2024-25 on the back of solid underlying asset base. "Unsecured loans is now the third largest segment in the NBFC AUM pie. And this segment is likely to see a moderation in growth due to the regulatory measures which affect NBFC AUM growth on both their asset and liability sides on three fronts," said Chhatwal. As per CRISIL Ratings' estimates, bank loan borrowing costs for NBFCs could increase 25-50 bps. However, its impact on the balance sheets of NBFCs will be lower and linked to the extent of their reliance on bank funding.



SBI's unsecured lending to see moderation: Chairman

PTI ■ MUMBAI

SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara on Wednesday said there will be "moderation" in the bank's unsecured lending portfolio following the Reserve Bank of India's tightening of norms. He said the impact of higher risk weights will have a 0.02-0.03 per cent impact on its net interest margins in the December quarter, but a better picture will emerge in the next quarter. "Whatever we were doing, we will continue to do, but there will be a moderation," Khara told reporters on the sidelines of a FIBAC event here, when asked about the RBI's tightening of norms. After asking lenders to be cautious, the RBI increased risk weights on unsecured lending for banks as well as non-banks earlier this month. The RBI has asked lenders to allocate more funds against such risky loan that will result in higher buffers in case of any stress. The move also means personal loans and credit card borrowings will become dearer. Khara said interest rates on such loans will also go up as the cost of funds goes up, pointing out that there will be a capital cost that will have to be borne by the bank because of the new norms. About any possible change in risk perceptions, Khara said there will not be any change from a diligence perspective and that its norms were already "robust". He said the bank's gross non-performing assets from unsecured loans portfolio stands at 0.70 per cent. Earlier this month, Khara said the bank is not concerned with its unsecured loan portfolio and attributed the strong performance of the portfolio to its strategy of lending to salary account customers or those working for well-rated corporates.



NSE inks pact with Bengal Govt for SMEs fund raising

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Wednesday said it has collaborated with the West Bengal government to spread awareness amongst MSMEs in the state regarding fundraising through IPO mechanism using the bourse's SME platform. As part of the pact, NSE with the support of West Bengal government will conduct awareness drives through seminars, MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) camps, knowledge sessions, road shows, workshops to guide corporates across the state for fundraising on its SME platform, Emerge, and handhold companies in the listing process, the bourse said in a statement. "Today at the Bengal Global Business Summit, we have signed a MoU with the NSE to encourage and support the MSMEs of our state to pursue the capital market for growth opportunities. "Listing on the capital market

shall help them raise capital to fuel their growth story. This shall provide an opportunity to showcase their business to a larger set of investors through NSE Emerge platform," Rajesh Pandey, Principal Secretary, MSME and Textiles Department to West Bengal government, said. Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer at NSE, said that the platform helps SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) to raise capital in an efficient manner and increase their visibility through the listing on the stock exchange. Currently, NSE's SME Emerge platform has 396 companies from various sectors listed and total funds raised on the platform till date is over Rs 7,800 crore. The market capitalisation of these companies has crossed Rs 94,000 crore. The platform has 16 companies listed from West Bengal on the platform with collectively fund mobilisation of over Rs 224 crore.

Gandhar Refinery IPO subscribed 5.52 times

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offer of Gandhar Oil Refinery (India) got fully subscribed within hours of opening for bidding on Wednesday and later ended with 5.52 times subscription. The Rs 500.69 crore IPO received bids for 11,72,85,168 shares against 2,12,43,940 shares on offer, translating into 5.52 times subscription, as per data available with the NSE. The portion for non-institutional investors got subscribed 7.70 times while the category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 6.89 times subscription. The quota for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received 1.35 times subscription. The IPO is a fresh issue of up to Rs 302 crore and an offer for sale of up to 1,17,56,910 equity shares. The offer concludes on Friday. The price band for the IPO is Rs 160-169 a share. Gandhar Oil Refinery (India) Ltd on Tuesday said it has raised a little over Rs 150 crore

from anchor investors. Those offering shares in the OFS include promoters — Ramesh Babulal Parekh, Kailash Parekh, and Gulab Parekh — and other shareholders — Fleet Line Shipping Services LLC, Denver Bldg Mat & Décor TR LLC, and Green Desert Real Estate Brokers. Proceeds from the fresh issue component will be used for payment of debt, purchase of equipment and for civil work required for expansion in the capacity of automotive oil at the Silvassa plant. In addition, the funds will be used for expanding capacity of petroleum jelly and accompanying cosmetic product division at the company's Taloja plant as well as expansion in capacity of white oils by installing blending tanks at the plant. Proceeds will also be used for funding working capital requirements. Nuvama Wealth Management (formerly known as Edelweiss Securities) and ICICI Securities are the managers to the offer.

Faceless scrutiny assessment of GST to take time: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST authorities may take some time to introduce faceless scrutiny assessment of tax returns filed under Goods and Services Tax (GST), a senior official said on Wednesday. The faceless assessment — under which there is no physical interaction between the tax officer and the assessee and no physical submission of documents — was first introduced by the Income Tax department and later extended to Customs. "We may take some time to introduce faceless assessment in GST. GST assessments are linked to a particular jurisdictional officer or unit. Changing that may take some time. Some changes would also be required at the policy level to make it effective," GST Network Vice President (Services) Jagmal Singh said at a Ficc event here. Introduced on July 1, 2017, indirect tax reform GST has subsumed 17 local levies, including excise duty, service tax, VAT and cesses.

Mercedes ties up with IISc for research

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mercedes-Benz Research and Development India on Wednesday said it has joined hands with the Indian Institute of Science for advanced research collaboration with focus on electric vehicles. The two partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a two-year association aimed at fostering joint research and promote collaborative innovation with a focus on Electric Vehicles (EV), Mercedes-Benz Research and Development India (MBRDI) said in a statement. "Collaborations that help bridge the gap between industry and academia can enable the scientific research community to offer cutting-edge innovation that meets the evolving demands of the industry and customers," MBRDI Managing Director and CEO Manu Saale said. "We are excited at the possibilities of working closely with the Indian Institute of Science and look forward to bringing the

best of Indian engineering research to the global stage," Saale said. The partnership will focus on driving engineering transformation and pursuing long-term research-oriented projects. Both organisations will leverage each other's existing capabilities, including infrastructure and academic programmes, the company added. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Director Govindan Rangarajan said the collaboration with MBRDI for research and innovation in the area of sustainable mobility and EVs not only promotes energy independence but also creates economic opportunities. "The partnership reinforces our commitment to strengthen industry-academia engagements that can make a significant impact in the coming years," Rangarajan added. As part of the partnership, Foundation for Science Innovation and Development (FSID) will manage IISc's interactions with the industry and facilitate access to IISc's knowledge base and resources.

RBI cautions NBFC-MFIs on interest rates

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stating that some Non Banking Finance Company-Microfinance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs) are making wider net interest margins, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday asked entities to be "judicious" in using the flexibility on the interest rates they charge from borrowers. Speaking at the annual FIBAC

event, Das said the microlending segment serves marginalised clientele and has emerged as an important financial conduit to foster financial inclusion. "Though the interest rates are deregulated, certain NBFC-MFIs appear to be enjoying relatively higher net interest margins. It is indeed for microfinance lenders themselves to ensure that the flexibility provided to them in setting interest

rates is used judiciously," he said. It can be noted that following the crisis in the microfinance segment in Andhra Pradesh that had also led to the creation of the NBFC-MFI segment, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had capped the maximum interest which lenders can charge at 24 per cent. The rate regime was deregulated in 2021, making it possible for entities to charge as much as they want.

Flair Writing IPO fully subscribed on Day 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial share sale offering of pen maker Flair Writing Industries was fully subscribed on the first day of bidding on Wednesday, ending the trade with 2.17 times subscription. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) received bids for 3,13,20,310 shares against 1,44,13,188 shares on offer, according to data available with the NSE. The part for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 2.86 times subscription while the quota for non-institutional investors got subscribed 2.78 times. The

category for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received 53 per cent subscription. Flair Writing's IPO has a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 292 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of equity shares worth up to Rs 301 crore by promoters and promoter group entities. At present, promoters and promoter group entities own 100 per cent stake in the company. The issue has a price band of Rs 288-304 a share. Flair Writing Industries Ltd on Tuesday said it has mopped up Rs 178 crore

from anchor investors. Proceeds of the fresh issue will be used for setting up a manufacturing facility for writing instruments at Valsad district in Gujarat; funding the company's capital expenditure and subsidiary Flair Writing Equipments Pvt Ltd (FWEPL). Besides, the proceeds will be used to support the working capital requirements of the company and subsidiaries FWEPL and Flair Cyrosil Industries. Also, the money will be used for payment of the loan and general corporate purposes.

The company, which owns the over 45-year-old flagship brand 'Flair', is among the top three players in the overall writing instruments industry with a market share of about nine per cent as of March 2023. It manufactures and distributes writing instruments, including pens, stationery products, and calculators, and has also diversified into manufacturing household products and steel bottles. Nuvama Wealth Management Ltd (formerly known as Edelweiss Securities Ltd) and Axis Capital Ltd are the book-running lead managers to the IPO.

BUSINESS BRIEF

BSES TRAINING CENTRE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED
NEW DELHI: BSES is not just providing reliable electricity but also powering the dreams of the youth. As part of these efforts, the discom has launched a specialised vocational training centre for visually impaired youngsters between the ages of 16-35 in Najafgarh.

MOU FOR DISCOM SKILLING
NOIDA: Sector Skill Council and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd signed an MoU for facilitating and working together for Skilling & Learning Development initiatives for distribution sector.

HAVELLS STORE IN GURGAON
GURGAON: Havells India Limited announced the grand opening of its flagship store in the heart of Gurgaon, located on the bustling Golf Course Road.

HEALTHCARE COLLABORATION
NEW DELHI: Molnyke Healthcare India has found 'Largest Sacrum Shaped Bandage' in collaboration with the Asia Book of Records and India Book of Records. Completed recently, the bandage includes messages on pressure ulcer prevention from around 3184 healthcare professionals across India. The collaboration with Molnyke Healthcare India represents a pivotal step towards equipping their staff with the latest advancements in pressure ulcer prevention, thereby elevating the quality of care provided.

ARGENTINA BEATS BRAZIL 1-0 IN WORLD CUP QUALIFYING

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO
Many fans came to the Maracana Stadium to watch Lionel Messi in his likely last match in Brazil, a superclásico in World Cup qualifying against the hosts. Instead, they saw Nicolás Otamendi score the only goal in a 1-0 win for Argentina after a brawl between fans that delayed the start of the game. The World Cup champions inflicted the first home defeat on Brazil ever in World Cup qualifying. It was Brazil's third consecutive loss in the round-robin tournament — another negative mark for new coach Fernando Diniz. Messi left the pitch in the 78th minute amid a mixture of jeers and applause from Brazil fans. Dozens of children arrived at the Maracana wearing the shirts of Barcelona, the star's previous club, and Inter Miami. The Argentine star wasn't able to end one of his last barriers in the sport at the Maracana, though, to score against the Brazilians in a World Cup qualifier. Argentina will return home not only atop the South American qualifying standings but also having given its fans one more chance to celebrate a victory at the historic stadium in Rio de Janeiro. Two years ago, Ángel di



Maria scored the only goal in an empty Maracana to give his team the Copa America title. The violent pre-match incident, starting shortly after the national anthems, stalled the start for 27 minutes. Argentina, led by Messi, headed to the locker rooms for 22 minutes. At least one fan left the stadium bleeding from his head. Rio police said they had arrested eight people due to the brawl.

The aggression between fans was reflected on the field in the first 20 minutes of the encounter; the referee gave fouls against Brazil during that time. The tension eased and allowed Argentina to avoid direct confrontation. Brazil wasted opportunities, with Raphinha's free kick in the 38th minute and Cristian Romero saving Argentina near the goal line six minutes later after a crossed shot by Gabriel

Martinelli. Brazil suggested they would keep the pressure after the break. Rodrigo forced goalkeeper Dibu Martínez to a close-range save in the 54th. But Argentina's goal in the 63rd with a header by Otamendi, who jumped above the Brazilian defenders to meet a corner kick, was one of the few chances the team created. Teenager Endrick, one of Brazil's

big hopes up front, didn't make much difference after he went on in the 72nd. In the 81st, midfielder Joelinton, who had just stepped in as a substitute for Brazil, was sent off after pushing Rodrigo de Paul. Brazil fans ended the match chanting "ole" for every touch of the Argentinians, while the visiting supporters waved their shirts as some of their players celebrated on the pitch. Argentina leads the 10-team South American qualifying competition with 15 points from six matches, followed by Uruguay on 13 and Colombia. Brazil could end the year in sixth position, with seven points. The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada will include 48 teams, meaning direct entry for the top six teams from South America. The seventh-place team can earn a berth in an intercontinental playoff. Also on Tuesday, Colombia won 1-0 at Paraguay; Uruguay beat Bolivia 3-0 in Montevideo; and Ecuador topped Chile 1-0. Peru and Venezuela were still playing at the time the Brazil vs. Argentina match ended. The seventh and eighth rounds of South American qualifying will take place in September after the next edition of Copa America in the United States.

Finland stuns defending champion Canada to reach Davis Cup semis

AP ■ MALAGA
Feeling at home, Finland upset defending champion Canada to reach the semifinals of the Davis Cup for the first time. Otto Virtanen and Harri Heliövaara defeated Alexis Galarnau and Vasek Pospisil 7-5, 6-3 in the decisive doubles match to give the 14th-ranked Finns the victory over No. 1 Canada in the first of the quarterfinals in southern Spain. Virtanen had kept Finland alive by defeating Gabriel Diallo 6-4, 7-5 in the second singles match after Milos Raonic had given Canada the first point with a 6-3, 7-5 win over Patrick Kaukovaala. Finland was backed by some 3,000 thousands Finnish fans at the Martin Carpena arena in Malaga. "We are not in Finland but we feel like we are in Finland," Virtanen said. "I love the pressure of playing in front of these fans, it just makes me play better every time, all the support I get. It means everything to play for my country. Today was amazing." Fuengirola, a town about 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Malaga, is home to the second largest community of Finns outside Finland, and 14 busloads of fans made the trip. They joined more than 1,000 fans who came from Finland, according to local organizers. Finland is the first Scandinavian nation to reach the Davis Cup semifinals since Sweden in 2007. Finland's best performances before this year were three appearances in the World Cup playoffs - the last in 2002. Canada won its first Davis Cup title last year, defeating Australia in the final in Malaga. "This is why we play tennis," Heliövaara said. "Today was definitely one of the highest days of my career in terms of emotions. We knew beforehand there was going to be a big Finnish supporter group, but you never know how good it's going to feel until you actually experience that on court. The emotions are something that I can cherish for the rest of my life." The No. 1 player for both countries were out



injured - Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime with a lower body issue and Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori with a shoulder ailment. Raonic, the former No. 3 in the world, started with four aces and never allowed Kaukovaala to get into the opening match. The 32-year-old Raonic, who hadn't played for Canada in five years, lost just one point on serve in the opening set and three in the entire match. Finland evened the tie when the 22-year-old Virtanen broke serve once in each set against Diallo. In the doubles, Finland broke serve to go up 5-3 in the second set and then closed out the match and tie. Heliövaara said he and Virtanen had never played practiced doubles together. "We went through the signs and through the tactics just 15 minutes before the match," Heliövaara said. "But that's sometimes what works the best. Let it happen. No expectations. Just do your best. Be a good teammate. We did exactly that." Australia will play the Czech Republic in another quarterfinal on Wednesday, with the winner taking on Finland. On Thursday, it will be Italy against the Netherlands and Great Britain against Novak Djokovic's Serbia. The semifinals will be played both on Friday and Saturday, with the winner being crowned on Sunday.



India wins nine medals to top Asian Para Archery Championships

AP ■ BANGKOK
World No. 5 Rakesh Kumar led the Indian challenge with a hat-trick of gold as the contingent pipped heavyweights South Korea to top the medal standings with nine medals at the Asian Para Archery Championships here on Wednesday. India bagged four gold, four silver and one bronze, while South Korea finished their campaign with five medals (3-1-1) to settle for the second spot. Rakesh, the 38-year-old Hangzhou Para Asian Games silver medalist, produced a stunning final end to overcome a two-point midway deficit and clinch the men's compound open crown with a 145-144 win over Indonesia's Ken Swagumilang. Earlier, Rakesh partnered Suraj Singh to win the men's compound open team gold with a 147-144 win over Chinese Taipei's Chung-Hung Wu and Chih-Chiang Chng. He then won the mixed team gold with Sheetal Devi defeating Indonesia's Teodora Audi Ayudia Ferelly and Ken

Swagumilang 154-149. India won a fourth gold in women's compound open team event when Sheetal and Jyoti thrashed Korea's Jin Young Jeong and Na Mi Choi 148-137 in a lopsided final. India also returned with four silver medals. In the women's recurve open team final, India lost to Indonesia in the tie-breaker 4-5. The men's recurve doubles team of Harvinder and Vivek Chikara then went down to South Korea 2-6 to settle for a silver. The men's recurve W1 doubles team of Adil and Naveen lost to South Korea 122-137 to bag a third silver. Sheetal Devi also had to settle for a silver after being pipped by Singapore's Nur Syahidah Alim in the shoot-off. Both were tied at 142-142 after the regulation five ends, and the shoot-off too produced a 10-all tie as Nur was adjudged winner with her arrow closer to the centre. Sarita had earlier won a bronze in the women's individual compound category defeating team-mate Jyoti.

AFI prepares tentative domestic calendar for 2024, Federation Cup to be held in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The first major track and field competition of the 2024 season, the Federation Cup, is set to be held in Thiruvananthapuram from May 12 to 15, according to the proposed domestic calendar prepared by the AFI. Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president Adille Sumariwalla said the national body has chalked out a tentative domestic calendar for next year keeping in mind the global competitions, including the Paris Olympic Games. The Federation Cup will be followed by the National Inter State Senior Championships from June 27-30 in Panchkula. "The domestic competition in Panchkula will act as a final selection for the Paris Olympic Games," Sumariwalla said in a release. The Olympics are scheduled to be held from July 26 till August 11. The 2024 World Relays in Bahamas (May 4-5) will be another major international competition as it offers Paris Olympics qualification berths. "We want our core group of athletes to peak at the right time and excel at the international level," Sumariwalla said. The international calendar will commence with the Asian Indoor Championships in Tehran, Iran from February 21 to 23. Asian Games champion shot-putter, Tajinderpal Singh Toor and long jumper Murali Sreesankar will skip the World Indoor Championships scheduled to be held in March, to focus on their Olympic preparation, even though the duo has qualified for the event.

Six franchises spend ₹3.9 crore to select 145 players in UKK players draft

PTI ■ BHUBANESHWAR
Six franchises picked up 145 players from a pool of 290 exponents during the Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) Season 2 draft, held here on Wednesday. On a day when the franchises spent Rs 3.9 crore, 18 players were retained, while 33 youngsters between 16 and 18 years of age were also picked. Mumbai Khiladis picked 16-year-old Sunil Patra from Odisha, while 17-year-olds M Mugilan of Puducherry and Maharashtra's Ganesh Borkar were drafted by Chennai Quick

Guns and Rajasthan Warriors respectively. Maharashtra's Mahesh Shinde became the first pick of the draft for the second successive season. The 28-year-old defender was drafted by Mumbai Khiladis, which also retained Gajanan Shengal and Sreejesh S after their impressive performances in the inaugural edition. Vijay Hajare, Adhithya Ganpule and Laxman Gawas were the other star players to be picked by Rajasthan Warriors, Telugu Yoddhas and Chennai Quick Guns, respectively. Gujarat Giants and Rajasthan

Warriors drafted 25 and 22 players respectively to complete their squads, while defending champions Odisha Juggernauts too ensured a good balance of youth and experience. "Ultimate Kho Kho will be driving young Indian fans in Season 2. What makes it special is that 33 players in Season 2 will be between 16 and 18 years of age. With an average age of 22.5 years, Season 2 is poised to be faster, stronger and bolder," UKK CEO and League Commissioner Tenzing Niyogi said in a statement.

Lakshya, Srikanth lose in China Masters

PTI ■ SHENZHEN
Star Indian shuttlers Lakshya Sen and Kidambi Srikanth suffered contrasting losses to bow out of the China Masters badminton tournament — the season's last BWF Super 750 event — here on Wednesday. World No. 17 Sen, who won the Canada Open this year, went down 19-21 18-21 to seventh-seeded Chinese Shi Yuqi, while world No. 24 Srikanth suffered a 15-21 21-14 13-21 loss to world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand. It was a third consecutive first-round exit on the World Tour for the Srikanth, who has just four quarterfinal finishes to show this season. Both Sen and Srikanth are fighting to be inside the top 16 by April 28 next year to qualify for the Paris Olympics. Young Indian Priyanshu Rajawat also bowed out after losing 17-



21 14-21 to Japan's Kenta Nishimoto in 46 minutes. Srikanth lagged behind in the opening game from the start as Vitidsarn grabbed an 11-6 advantage at the break. The Indian narrowed down the lead to 12-13 but the Thai moved ahead to take the opening game. Srikanth soon regrouped and opened a slim 3-0 lead. Thereafter, there was a tight fight but the Indian managed to establish a 13-10 advantage after the break and kept his dis-

tance to roar back into the contest. Vitidsarn stayed calm and broke off from 8-8 in the decider to stay ahead despite a spirited fight from Srikanth, who had made it 13-15 at one stage. But the Thai reeled off six points to seal the issue. Asian Games bronze medalist HS Prannoy and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty are still in the fray and will play their respective second-round matches on Thursday.

Diksha aims for Race to Costa del Sol title honours; Aditi also to tee up

PTI ■ MARBELLA (SPAIN)
Diksha Dagar will need to emerge victorious in the final leg of the Ladies European Tour (LET) here to become the first Indian to win the 2023 Race to Costa Del Sol, the LET's Order of Merit. Playing her fifth season on the LET, Diksha won the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open and put together a series of consistent performances to put herself in the frame for the big prize. The left-handed Indian star is currently lying third behind Thailand's rookie Trichat Cheenglab and France's Celine Boutier on the LET's Order of Merit. Another Indian competing in the event, Aditi Ashok, is lying eighth on the Race to Costa Del Sol. She has played seven LET events this season, winning the opener in Kenya. There are six players who have a mathematical chance of winning the prestigious title at the end of Sunday's play. They are Trichat, Boutier, Diksha, Johanna Gustavsson, Alexandra Försterling and Ana Peláez Trivino. Trichat, who won the 2023 Big Green Egg Open, has a chance to follow in the footsteps country-mate and 2021 Race to Costa del Sol winner Athaya Thitikul this week as she is enjoying a 168.84 points lead going into the final leg. Trichat can become the sixth player to win both the Race to Costa del Sol and 'Rookie of the Year' titles in the same season. Boutier has had an amazing season, which includes wins at the Amundi Evian Championship and the Women's Scottish Open.



She also finished second in the LPGA's Rolex Player of the Year standings. If she wins this tournament, she'll win the Race to Costa del Sol. Johanna, winner of the Lacoste Ladies Open de France, has had a consistent season. The Swede's form has been building throughout 2023 and her first victory on the Tour came in France in September. The LET winner has to win this week to have a chance of reaching the top spot. Germany's Alexandra, winner of the VP Bank Swiss Ladies Open and the Mallorca Ladies Golf Open, was a co-medallist at LET Q-School in December last year and has had a steady rookie year on the Tour. She captured her first LET title in Switzerland in September and added another last week in Mallorca to put herself in the frame for the Race to Costa del Sol and Rookie of the Year. Alexandra will have to win again this week to have a chance. Ana Peláez Trivino, who was second at the Joburg Ladies Open, Investec SA Women's Open and the Helsingborg Open, is still looking for her first win this season and a Trophy here could give her a chance to take the Race to Costa del Sol.

We didn't get what we want, so don't ask about results in Asian Cup: Stimac

PTI ■ BHUBANESHWAR
India head coach Igor Stimac said he would not consider the upcoming Asian Cup in Doha as an important tournament as the team is competing in the continental showpiece without proper national camp, comments which may ruffle the feathers of the All India Football Federation (AIFF). Stimac wanted at least four weeks of national camp ahead of the continent's premier competition which begins on January 12 but with the first phase of the Indian Super League (ISL) continuing till December 29, the clubs are unlikely to release their players for a long training camp. India face formidable Australia on January 13 and Stimac is unlikely to get more than 10 days of training with all his national team players together. Uzbekistan and Syria are the other two teams in India's group. "We did not get what we wanted. I was very clear, you give me

time and I might give you results for you. Without the time, do not ask about the results or anything like that. Just forget it," Stimac said bluntly. "I will go there (Doha) with pride to represent India with my boys. We are going to do everything but there is no time for us to work, 12-13 days is nothing to prepare," he said after India lost 0-3 to Qatar in a World Cup second round qualifiers match here. The top two teams from each of the six groups as well as the four best third-place sides will advance into the round of 16. Stimac mentioned that most of the countries will be coming for the Asian Cup well prepared with long camps. "We are going to face Uzbekistan who will be preparing for six weeks. I don't consider Australia as a team which we can (beat), they are better than Qatar. They are out of our league. But we are going to try everything and do everything."



'WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ASIAN CUP'
As the national team is not getting enough time for Asian Cup preparation, Stimac said the continental showpiece is no longer a very important tournament for him. "For us the most important thing is the World Cup qualifier. Knowing that we are not going to get enough time for the Asian Cup, I don't consider the Asian Cup as such an important tournament for us," said Stimac. "I don't want to get my players injured there. That is all I am going to take care of. Because there are three games against such big opponents like Australia, Uzbekistan and Syria. We might do something well and we are definitely going to fight and do everything on the pitch. But I am not worried about that. "I need to make sure that we get enough points in our group in

the World Cup qualifiers to make sure that we get five-six home games in the third round and that will be huge for Indian football for the future. So let us stop talking about the Asian Cup." Stimac's comments may not be taken kindly by the AIFF top brass with whom he has had run-ins in the past. The Croatian was served show-cause notice earlier in the year for his public comments though his contract, which was to end after the Asian Cup is over, was extended for another two years until June 2026. "Needs better system" Stimac also talked about the need for improvements in the organisation and logistics in the national team set-up. "We still need to work a lot, we still need many things to do inside our house, inside our family about everything that is connected to football. Qatar spends more in one trip coming here than what we do in the

whole year, on all selections, as clear as that. Organisation-wise, travel, logistics, food, sleep, rest, everything needs to get better and that will help us in future. That is what I am looking for and requesting for." Despite the 0-3 drubbing at the hands of Qatar, Stimac is happy about the performance of the team. He had said before the match that Qatar were "out of the league" for India. "Overall, I am happy because the result (against Qatar) was not our priority. My priority as a coach was to get answers to some questions which were haunting me for some time," he said. "We are not having any more games prior to the Australia match in the Asian Cup. I have my answers and this was a huge win out of this game. I have a clear picture, clarity of what needs to be done and who are the players who can go there."

India's young T20 stars face first real test vs Australia

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM
Suryakumar Yadav will have to suppress the massive disappointment of a World Cup final defeat somewhere in the deeper confines of his heart while leading a sprightly bunch of 'Gen-Next' stars against a strong Australian side in a five-match T20 International series, starting here on Thursday. The scars of defeat are too deep and it would take time for those wounds to heal. With just around 96 hours of turnaround time from World Cup to the next series, it hardly leaves 'SKY' with any chance of introspection as he gets ready to play his favourite format. As the captain of the side, he will not only want to win the series but also check out some of the best young Indian exponents of the shortest format, who will be on trial for next year's ICC T20 World Cup in June and July in the Americas (West Indies and USA). The young guns like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Tilak

Verma, Jitesh Sharma and not-so-young Mukesh Kumar have all made their international debuts in past few months but their first real Test will be against a very strong Australian T20 side which will have some of their World Cup heroes like opener Travis Head, Glenn Maxwell, leg-spinner Adam Zampa and former skipper Steve Smith in its ranks. Then there are IPL performers like Marcus Stoinis, Nathan Ellis, Tim David to name a few and even the T20 side, without its premier pacers, bears a formidable look under Matthew Wade, who will be leading in the series. With skipper Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and KL Rahul not being considered for the shortest format since the 2022 T20 World Cup semi-final defeat, one will get a real idea about the bunch of players, earmarked by the national selectors for next year's mega event. Rinku has been pretty impressive in his short India stint so far and ditto for Yashasvi, Tilak and

Mukesh, while Jitesh, despite his debut in Hangzhou, will have to wait for his turn for a longer rope in presence of Ishan Kishan. Having played mediocre attacks of West Indies, Ireland and some of the 'B' grade sides at the Asian Games, it will be a trial by fire for these youngsters, who would like to make an impression in whatever chances they get during this series and two ensuing ones involving South Africa (away) and Afghanistan (home). The Australian pace attack comprising Kane Richardson, Nathan Ellis, Sean Abbott and left-armed Jason Behrendorff, is way better in terms of quality compared to what they have faced till now in their very short but eventful T20I careers. There are 11 T20 International games that India play before IPL, which will be a two-month affair before the 'Men in Blue' hit the T20 World Cup mode. Hence the next two months will be very important for these youngsters as they would like to further consolidate their spots



for that World Cup. How interim coach VVS Laxman works around the batting order will be interesting as someone like Shubman Gill is bound to come back for the series against South Africa and there would be too many options at the top order. It is expected that Rituraj Gaikwad and one among either Jaiswal or Ishan Kishan will be opening the batting, keeping the right-left combination in mind. Surya, who is the designated vice-captain when Hardik Pandya is there to lead the side, will bat at No. 3 or 4, depending on whether the team management decides to play both Jaiswal and Kishan. Unlike the ODI team, the T20I side has a bevy of left-handers, in fact seven of them — Jaiswal, Kishan, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh along with all-rounders Axar Patel, Shivam Dube and Washington Sundar. It is understood that T20 team's think-tank is looking at Rinku and Jitesh as the two designated finishers, one of whom is like-

ly to get a slot. However the biggest test of this series will be the bowlers. Ravi Bishnoi will get a number of games as selectors want to look beyond Yuzvendra Chahal while Prasad Krishna, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar and Arshdeep Singh will be rotated during the series. Axar Patel, having recovered from hamstring injury, is expected to play all five games in the series. **SQUAD:**
India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Rituraj Gaikwad (vc), Ishan Kishan, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Prasad Krishna, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar, Shreyas Iyer (last two matches only)
Australia: Matthew Wade (c), Aaron Hardie, Jason Behrendorff, Sean Abbott, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matt Short, Steve Smith, Marcus Stoinis, Kane Richardson, Adam Zampa.



Rohit unlikely to play T20Is in near future

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's ODI and Test captain Rohit Sharma is unlikely to play T20 Internationals anymore and had discussed his future in the shortest format before the start of the 50-over World Cup, according to sources in the BCCI. Rohit hasn't played a single game in the shortest format since India's T20 World Cup semi-final exit in November 2022. Hardik Pandya has mostly led the Indian team in T20Is since then. The 36-year-old India skipper has played 148 T20Is scoring 3853 runs at a strike-rate of nearly 140 with four hundreds. "It is not a new development. Rohit hasn't played any T20Is in past one year as the focus was on ODI World Cup. He had extensive discussions with chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar in this regard. He has himself volunteered to stay away from T20Is. It has completely been Rohit's call," a senior BCCI source told PTI on

conditions of anonymity. After Rohit, India have four openers — Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ishan Kishan and Rituraj Gaikwad — and all of them are proven IPL performers. If the younger crop does not perform, the selectors or the BCCI brass might just ask Rohit to reconsider his current stand. It is understandable that at this stage of his career, Rohit would like to manage his workload and ensure that he remains mostly injury free for the remainder of his career. It will be impossible to play three formats and IPL each year and with seven Tests to be played between December 2023 to March 2024, the Indian skipper's focus will be mostly on red-ball cricket. He still has a realistic chance of leading India to another World Test Championship (WTC) final in 2025 and his own form in traditional format has been superb since he started opening for India in 2019.

BUMRAH, SHAMI TO BE ROTATED DURING ENGLAND TESTS: If all goes well, India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will spearhead the attack in two-Test series in South Africa with Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj. However with five Tests in five weeks against England scheduled early next year, the pace trio will be rotated during the series. After his long injury-forced break from competitive cricket due to lower back stress fracture, there were question marks over Bumrah's ability to play red ball cricket but those in the know of things said that the Gujarat man is ready for his comeback. "Bumrah is fighting fit and results were there for everyone to see. He is back at his peak fitness and it is itching to play the Test matches. With Bumrah and Shami, you need to use them based on what is the priority format at a given time. Bumrah will certainly play T20 World Cup if all goes well," the BCCI source added.

Back home: Gambhir returns to Kolkata Knight Riders as 'mentor'

PTI ■ KOLKATA
Gautam Gambhir was on Wednesday named the 'mentor' of Kolkata Knight Riders, an IPL franchise that he had led to title victories in 2012 and 2014. Gambhir, the hero of India's T20 and 50-over World Cup wins, had led Shah Rukh Khan-owned-KKR from 2011 to 2017 before parting ways. For the past two seasons, he was at the helm of Lucknow Super Giants as their 'mentor'. Lucknow qualified for play-offs in both seasons but were unable to go the distance which prompted the franchise to bring in former Australia opener and T20 World Cup winning coach Justin Langer as their Head coach. Once the Sanjiv Goenka-owned

franchise roped in Langer, Gambhir's exit was always on the cards. A lengthy meeting between Gambhir and Shah Rukh at Bollywood superstar's Mumbai home had created a lot of buzz but both LSG and Gambhir had vehemently denied his exit. Venky Mysore, the all-powerful CEO of KKR, announced that Gambhir will join hands with head coach Chandrakant Pandit. "I am not an emotional person and not many things move me. But this is different. This is back to where it all started. Today, there is a lump in my throat and fire in my heart as I think about slipping into that purple and gold jersey once again," Gambhir was quoted as saying in a press note, issued by franchise. "I am not only coming back to KKR but I am coming back to



the 'City of Joy'. I am back. I am hungry. I am number 23. Ami KKR," the former India opener said. KKR's principal owner Shah Rukh Khan said: "Gautam has always been part of the family

sportsmanship they stand for, in creating magic with Team KKR." **EXPECTED TO GET FULL AUTHORITY:** One thing about Gambhir, who is also an elected Member of Parliament, is that he likes to have his own team and full control over the proceedings and he is always ready to bear the brunt of consequences. With Gambhir's re-entry to his 'spiritual home', it will be interesting to see the scope and domain for former Mumbai all-rounder Abhishek Nayar, who had a big say in strategic matters related to team selection and combination. Gambhir has always been the 'Captain' of the ship as principal owner said in his statement, and KKR fans would hope for a turnaround after a few indifferent seasons.

Haris Rauf's PCB contract could be revised after refusing to play Tests in Australia

PTI ■ KARACHI
Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf faces the risk of being downgraded in his central contract and could also be denied permission to play the Big Bash League after opting out of next month's three-match Test series in Australia. Rauf, whose contract carries a monthly retainer of over 4 million Pakistani rupees, is among six players who were handed 'Category B' contracts before the World Cup bound-team's departure to India in September. The 'Category A' has only three players including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi. A reliable source said that some senior officials in the Pakistan Cricket Board were unhappy at the attitude of Haris and also over the statements made by his Lahore Qalandars coach Aqib Javed, who defended the express pace bowler. Pakistan's new chief selector Wahab Riaz hit out at Haris on Monday for first agreeing to be considered for the Tests in

Australia before making himself unavailable two days later citing workload and fitness concerns. Wahab, himself a fast bowler who appeared in three World Cups, made it clear that being a centrally contracted player, Haris should have been available for the Test series. "I and the Director of Pakistan team, Muhammad Hafeez, we went and spoke to him in detail and told him that both the captain and coach wanted him (Haris) to play in Australia as he was an impact bowler and we assured him he would not bowl more than 10-12 overs in a day in Australia," Wahab had said at his press conference while announcing the squad for Australia. "We also spoke to the team physio and trainer and they said Haris had no fitness issues and there would be no problem



with him in Australia," Wahab said. Hours later sources quoting Haris in the Pakistan media said he had never made himself available for the Tests and had told the selectors he wanted to focus on white ball cricket and manage his workload. But the source said that the very fact that Haris didn't come out with a denial directly had convinced the senior board officials he was playing games with the board and selectors. "There has been discussion that if Haris is only focussed on white ball cricket then the central contract given to him also needs to be reviewed since he was placed in category B which carries a monthly retainer of over 4 million rupees plus enhanced match fees, bonuses and a share in the PCB's share of ICC revenues.

"Those players were given top two categories who were considered all format players," the source said. He said it could be expected that the board might either ask Haris for his final decision on red ball cricket and revise his contract and the player also has the option of going freelance and returning the central contract to the board like other international players including Trent Bolt, Jason Roy etc. "A NOC for playing in the Big Bash could also be withheld by the board," the source added. The source said that both Hafeez and Wahab had conveyed their disappointment over Haris' attitude to the PCB chairman Zaka Ashraf. Haris played one Test back in December against England in Rawalpindi where he bowled just 13 overs before getting injured.

RR trades Padikkal for LSG's Avesh ahead of 2024 IPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India fast bowler Avesh Khan has been traded to Rajasthan Royals (RR) from Lucknow Super Giants (LSG), who has acquired the services of top-order left-handed batter Devdutt Padikkal in a direct swap ahead of next year's Indian Premier League. Avesh, who is part of the India squad for the T20I series against Australia beginning in Visakhapatnam on Thursday, has 55 wickets from 47 IPL matches so far. Avesh was purchased by LSG 2022 mega auction for Rs 10 crore. The right-arm pacer, who represented LSG in 22 matches and picked up 26 wickets, was traded to RR for his existing fee.

Padikkal, on the other hand, was bought by RR for Rs 7.75 crore. Both the players were retained by the respective franchises this year. Padikkal too head to LSG from RR for his existing fee. The left-handed batter has 57 IPL matches under his belt, scoring 1521 runs with the help of a hundred and nine half-centuries. He represented RR in as many as 28 matches, scoring 637 runs. Meanwhile, out-of-form middle-order batters Sarfaraz Khan and Manish Pandey have been released by Delhi Capitals. Sarfaraz was bought for Rs 20 lakh while Pandey received a cool Rs 2.40 crore from the franchise. Thus DC has freed an additional Rs 2.60 crore for the auction.