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NEW DELHI, THURSDAY NOVEMBER 30, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Free grain to poor for five more years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to provide 5 kilograms of free food grains per month to 81.35 crore poor people for another five years, which would cost the exchequer ₹11.80 lakh crore. The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, which focuses on 11 critical interventions for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Additionally, the Cabinet approved a central scheme to provide drones to 15,000 progressive women Self Help Groups (SHGs) with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for two years beginning in 2024-25. The Cabinet also cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for the devolution of taxes between the Centre and States. Additionally, it will review financing for disaster management initiatives for five years beginning April 1, 2026. Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told the media, "Keeping in view the welfare of the beneficiaries and to strengthen food security in terms of accessibility, afford-



ability, and availability of food grains for the targeted population, and to maintain uniformity across the States, the decision has been taken to continue providing food grains free of cost under the PMGKAY for five years. The scheme was last extended until December 31, 2023. The PMGKAY was introduced in 2020 as a pandemic relief measure, providing 5 kg of free food grains per beneficiary per month, in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised food grain under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In December 2022, as the PMGKAY came to an end after multiple extensions, it was subsumed under the NFSA, providing ration for free for one year. Under the NFSA, two categories are covering up to 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population — Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and priority households. AAY households, comprising the poorest of the poor, are entitled to receive 35

kg of food grains per family per month, while priority households receive 5 kg per person per month. Termed as a historic decision, the Government has stated that the extension of free grain distribution under the PMGKAY for the next five years reflects the long-term commitment and vision of the government in addressing national food and nutrition security. This move is expected to help mitigate any financial hardship faced by the affected strata of society in a sustainable manner and ensure a long-term pricing strategy with zero cost to the beneficiaries. This, according to a statement, is vital for the effective penetration of the Public Distribution System. For example, the economic cost of 35 kg of rice for an Antyodaya family is ₹1,371, while the cost of 35 kg of wheat is ₹946. These costs are being borne by the Central Government. As a result, the monthly savings of ration cardholders are significant due to the provision of free food grains, it added. Free grains will be distributed through a network of over 5 lakh fair price shops under a common logo. Beneficiaries can obtain their entitled grains from any fair price shop in the country under the One Nation One Ration Card initiative.

Global applause for Uttarkashi Rescuers Rat hole miners make India proud

PTI ■ LONDON

Human labour triumphing over machinery. This is how the world media described the climax of an incredible and perilous weeks-long rescue operation for 41 construction workers trapped in a collapsed mountain tunnel in Uttarakhand. As rescuers in India on Tuesday evening successfully pulled out all the workers after their 17-day ordeal, the global media provided live coverage of the dramatic rescue operations. "In the end it was a triumph of human labour over machinery as the specialist rat-hole mining experts managed to manually break through the final 12 metres of rubble, using only hand drills and pulleys," The Guardian newspaper wrote. The workers were pulled out through an escape pipe after the last stretch of rubble had been manually drilled by a specialist team of "rat-hole mining" experts who had been flown in to help after the mechanical drill broke down. The dramatic scenes of the first men emerging on stretchers from the entrance of the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel came after more than 400 hours, during which the rescue operation hit multiple obstacles, delays and false promises of imminent rescue, the British newspaper said in a detailed report. "Outside the tunnel, there have been celebrations at the news of the first man coming out of the



(L-R, top row) The 12-member team of 'rat-hole' miners from Rockwell Enterprises Wakeel Hassan (leader), Monu Kumar, Feroze Qureshi, Nasir Khan, Jatin, Devender Kumar, (L-R, bottom row) Munna Qureshi, Irshad Ansari, Rashid Ansari, Naseem Malik, Ankur and Saurabh who successfully rescued the 41 trapped workers from the under-construction Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel in Uttarkashi on Tuesday

tunnel," the BBC reported while providing regular updates on the rescue operation. They were freed after a mammoth rescue operation that overcame many obstacles, it said. "This happy conclusion came after a day filled with anticipation, as authorities announced that there had been a breakthrough in the rescue operations," the British public broadcaster said. Military engineers and miners drill 'rat hole' through debris to complete a painstaking extrac-

tion mission, said London-based daily 'The Telegraph' in its lead story. A portion of the tunnel collapsed on November 12, blocking the exit for the workers who were inside. Food, medicines and other essentials were sent to them through a six-inch pipe pushed through the rubble of the collapsed portion. So-called rat miners were brought in on Monday to drill through the rocks, gravel and metal obstacles by hand from inside a narrow evacuation pipe that pushed through the

debris after machinery failed, France 24 reported. The New York Times in its report said initial drilling efforts were hampered by additional falling debris. And by Day 13, the rescue effort appeared in disarray as an American-made auger machine broke down with less than 20 metres to go in the drilling. As workers tried to extricate it, officials initiated backup plans, including one in which workers began drilling vertically from the mountaintop. New machines were flown in

from different parts of the country. But, in the end, the rescue effort — which also involved international tunnelling experts — found success in manual drilling by "rat hole miners" in the final stretch of the path that had been mostly cleared by the auger machine. The rescue operation faced hiccups even in its final hours, threatening to derail the growing confidence of family members who waited in anticipation of their relatives being pulled to safety, it said.

SC upholds Centre call on Delhi CS tenure extension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a major setback to the AAP Government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday permitted the Centre to extend the tenure of Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, a day before he was set to demit office on November 30, for six months, holding that the Union Government's decision did not violate law or the Constitution. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra held, prima facie, the Centre has the power to appoint and extend the tenure of the Chief Secretary of the national capital territory of Delhi as the officer deals with the entire administration including police, public order and land, which fall beyond the legislative and executive powers of the Delhi Government. "We come to the conclusion that at this stage, bearing in mind the provisions of the judgment of this court in Constitution Bench 2 (2023 judgment on Centre-Delhi government services row) and the subsequent developments which have taken place resulting in the enactment of the amendment to the GNCTD Act 1991, the decision of the Union Government to extend the services of the incumbent



chief secretary for a period of six months cannot be construed to be violative of law or the constitutional distribution of powers between the Union and the government of the GNCTD," the bench said. The bid to extend the tenure of the present chief secretary is the latest bone of contention between the Arvind Kejriwal Government and Lieutenant Governor (LG) V K Saxena, who have been involved in a series of run-ins over various issues. Significantly, the current chief secretary, whose tenure will now be extended, is reportedly not on good terms with the Delhi Government owing to allegations against his son in a case related to acquisition of 19 acres by the National Highways Authority of India in 2018 for construction of the Dwarka Expressway. "It will be farfetched to postulate that the central government is divested of the power to appoint the chief secretary. We clarify that this is on the basis of a prima facie evaluation," the bench said.

India to probe plot to kill Khalistani terrorist in US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday said it has constituted a high-level enquiry committee to probe allegations relating to a conspiracy to kill Sikh extremist Gurbatwint Singh Pannun on the US soil. Announcing this here, the External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India will take necessary follow-up action based on the findings of the committee. The Financial Times, citing unnamed sources, last week reported that US authorities thwarted a plot to assassinate Gurbatwint Singh Pannun, who has been involved in a series of run-ins over various issues. Pannun, a Sikh extremist and known to be an American and Canadian citizen, is wanted by Indian probe agencies on various terror charges. "We have already said during the course of discussions with the US on bilateral security cooperation, the US side shared some inputs pertaining to nexus between organised criminals, gun runners, terrorists and oth-

ers," Bagchi said. "We had also indicated that India takes such inputs seriously since they impinge on our national security interests as well, and relevant departments were already examining the issue," he said. The Financial Times report came weeks after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in a Vancouver suburb in June. Following the report, Bagchi on November 22 said the US side shared some inputs pertaining to nexus between organised criminals, gun runners, terrorists and others. He said the inputs are a "cause of concern" for both countries and they decided to take necessary follow up action. The media report about the alleged plot to kill Pannun came about two months after Trudeau alleged in September that there was a potential link between Indian Government agents and the killing of another Khalistani leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was gunned down in the parking lot of a gurdwara in the town of Surrey in June. India strongly denied the charges, describing them as absurd.

Midair marital feud diverts flight to Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A fight between a man and his wife midair compelled a Munich-Bangkok bound Lufthansa flight (LH772), which took off from Munich, to make an unscheduled landing at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport on Wednesday morning. Subsequently, the couple was de-boarded. According to sources, a German man and his Thai wife started fighting midair during the flight from Munich to Bangkok. Lufthansa first requested permission to land in Pakistan. When this was denied, the airline made an emergency stop in Delhi because of the unruly passengers. This is one of the very rare conditions where an interna-



tional flight had to be diverted not owing to some medical emergency or safety purpose but for a fight between a man and his wife that went too far. Sources said the wife had first complained about her husband's behaviour to the pilot, saying she was being "threatened" by him and sought intervention. Sources said the 53-year German passenger allegedly

"threw food, tried to burn a blanket using a lighter, shouted at his wife and did not follow the instructions issued by the crew" and hence the pilot diverted the flight. The man was later deboarded by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel at IGI. The wife was travelling on a different PNR ticket and she desired to continue her journey to Bangkok, they said. The airline, as per the sources, is also coordinating with the German Embassy. "The man of German nationality was offloaded at Delhi and handed over to airport security. He has since apologised," they added. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is now mulling whether to consider the apology and allow the man to return to Germany, or hand

him over to law enforcement agencies in India. "The reason for the fight between husband and wife is not known, but the flight had to be diverted due to the fight between husband and wife," sources said. Lufthansa, in a statement, said the flight was diverted to Delhi due to an unruly passenger on board. A similar incident had taken place on October 6 aboard an Air India flight. A man was arrested for allegedly using abusive language and passing lewd comments towards the crew members, the Delhi Police had confirmed. A crew member working in the economy class cabin said that the accused started passing lewd comments and abusing others.

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Government lists 18 Bills for Winter Session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The Centre on Wednesday listed 18 Bills, including legislation aimed at replacing the colonial-era IPC, CrPC, and the Evidence Act, that may come up for debate during Parliament's Winter session, which will be held from December 4-22.

According to a bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the government also plans to bring a Bill that seeks to increase the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from 107 to 114 in a bid to provide representation to Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Scheduled Tribes.

Another crucial legislation awaiting action in Parliament pertains to the appointment of the chief election commis-



sioner and other election commissioners.

Another Bill that is likely to be tabled is one that extends women's quota Bill provisions to J-K and Puducherry.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, is a proposed Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha. If enacted, it would replace the existing Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, aims to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

Besides the Bills, the government has listed the first batch of supplementary demands for grants for the year 2023-24 for presentation, discussion and voting during the session.

Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi, on behalf of the government, has called for an all party meet on December 2. The Winter session of Parliament will commence from December 4 and continue till December 22, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi had said earlier in November.

The women's reservation bill received President Droupadi Murmu's nod, a notification issued by law ministry said in September.

The bill is aimed to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

Shah invokes Mandir, CAA in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The City of Joy on Wednesday witnessed Union Home Minister Amit Shah blowing the election conch shell indicating to the saffron cadres what the BJP's line of campaign in Bengal would be in the run up to the 2024 general elections.

This, even as he invoked Ram Temple, Citizenship Amendment Act, trans-border infiltration, rampant corruption and electoral violence in a massive rally in central Kolkata's Victoria House area.

Falling back on the Ayodhya Ram Temple issue Shah alleged how the Congress and other opposition parties had always tried to stall the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya by delaying the hearing of the case and how Prime Minister Narendra Modi got the issue resolved once and for all.

"The Congress and other opposition parties had always stalled the construction of the Ram Temple by delaying its hearing ... but Modi made it happen



and the good news is on the auspicious day of January 22 he will inaugurate the temple of Lord Rama," Shah said reminding the Prime Minister deserved another term for all the good works he had done in his 10 year tenure.

Turning to the controversial issue of Citizenship Amendment Act which still remains relevant among the 70 lakh-strong Matua community in some of the districts bordering Bangladesh, Shah said CAA would definitely be implemented "come what may." "Let me make an announce-

ment from here that CAA is very much a law and no one can stop it from being implemented ... those people who have come from the other side of the border cannot be stopped from getting their citizenship rights ... they will get their rights after the CAA is implemented," Shah said.

Tagging CAA to the relevant issue of trans-border infiltration that he claimed was continuing unhindered with the help of the Trinamool Congress Government Shah said how the Bengal Chief Minister who once fought against infiltration

Mamata stages dharna, demands MNREGA funds

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At a time when Union Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah attacked the Mamata Banerjee Government from a mega election rally in Kolkata, the Bengal Chief Minister on Wednesday led her team of TMC MLAs to a dharna in protest against non-payment of central dues to the State.

Holding a sit-in protest in the State Assembly the Chief Minister once again reminded the Centre of its federal duties towards the States saying the Narendra Modi Government should at the earliest release the funds under MNREGA and PMRY schemes.

Even as the TMC MLAs wearing black robes protested at the Ambedkar statue the ruling outfit uploaded a post which said "our demand is crystal clear — release the pending dues of MNREGA.

US charges Indian national in plot to kill Sikh terrorist in NY

PTI ■ NEW YORK

An Indian national was on Wednesday charged here by federal prosecutors in connection with his participation in a foiled plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on American soil.

Nikhil Gupta, 52, has been charged with murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, and conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Matthew G. Olsen said.

US authorities said Gupta agreed to pay an assassin USD 100,000 to kill the Sikh separatist leader living in New York City.

"On or about June 9, 2023, CC-1 and GUPTA arranged for an associate to deliver USD 15,000 in cash to the UC in Manhattan, New York, as an advance payment for the murder," according to the charges.

The indictment was not named the US citizen but The Financial Times, citing unnamed sources, last week reported that US authorities thwarted a plot to assassinate banned Sikhs for Justice's

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, and issued a warning to the Indian government over concerns it was involved in the plot.

"As alleged, the defendant conspired from India to assassinate, right here in New York City, a US citizen of Indian origin who has publicly advocated for the establishment of a sovereign state for Sikhs, an ethnoreligious minority group in India," United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams said in a statement.

Williams said that his Office and law enforcement partners neutralised this "deadly and outrageous threat. We will not tolerate efforts to assassinate US citizens on US soil, and stand ready to investigate, thwart, and prosecute anyone who seeks to harm and silence Americans here or abroad."

The Superseding Indictment unsealed Wednesday in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York said and other public court documents details the alleged plot in which Gupta was involved.

In about May 2023, Gupta was recruited by an individual to orchestrate the assassination of the victim in the United States. The plot was directed by an Indian government employee who has described himself as a "senior field officer" with responsibilities in "security management" and "intelligence" and also claims to have served in the Central Reserve Police Force and been trained in "battle craft" and "weapons," the indictment said.

Prosecutors said Czech authorities arrested and detained Gupta on June 30, 2023, pursuant to the bilateral extradition treaty between the United States and the Czech Republic.

NGT seeks fresh reports from Uttarakhand, other States on pollution in the Ganga

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has sought a fresh report from Uttarakhand, noting that some "basic details" regarding the Ganga's pollution were "missing" in the report from the state's 13 districts through which the river or its tributaries flow.

The green panel, which was hearing a matter regarding the prevention and control of pollution in the Ganga, also directed the districts concerned in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal to mention the relevant details.

These include information on the disposal of municipal solid waste, construction or demoli-

tion waste and biomedical waste, discharge of sewage and industrial effluent, and mining and regulation of floodplain zones, the tribunal said.

The green panel had earlier sought reports on the river's pollution from each district across the various states where the Ganga or its tributaries flow.

A bench of Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted that the tribunal had sought a report regarding the river from Uttarakhand's 13 district collectors, who are the ex-officio chairperson of District Ganga Protection Committees.

The bench, also comprising Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Expert Member A

Senthil Vel, said none of the districts disclosed the "basic information" regarding the river's pollution.

In an order dated November 24, it said various "missing" details have to be mentioned for each district. Apart from Uttarakhand, these details are also required from the other districts of the states through which the river or its tributaries flow.

"Therefore, we direct that this order be circulated to the chief secretaries of all the states concerned ie, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal so that the report filed by the concerned district magistrates include the above information," it said.

Himanta launches development of 264 schools under PM Shri school scheme

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that the development of 264 schools in the State under the PM Shri School scheme will help in taking the New Education Policy (NEP) forward.

The state government has selected 264 schools for development and it is a "red letter day in Assam's education sector," the chief minister said while launching the scheme here.

"With the blessings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi we have commenced the launch of

these schools which will be equipped with modern infrastructure," Sarma said.

These schools will also impart a discovery-oriented way of teaching and provide leadership to nearby schools in encapsulating the full spirit of NEP, he said.

PM Shri school is a centrally sponsored scheme intended to develop more than 14,500 schools across the country and more than 20 lakh students are expected to be direct beneficiaries of the scheme.

The scheme will be implemented over a period of five years beginning from 2022.

The chief minister also presented on the occasion the Anundoram Barooah award, comprising ₹15,000 each, to 27,183 students who had passed the Class 10 examinations with 75 per cent and more marks.

He said that from next year this award will be converted to a scholarship to bring an environment of competitiveness among our students.

"The state government will invest ₹45 crore for this project with 30,000 students from Class 5, 8 and 10 eligible to receive ₹15,000 each after appearing for a competitive examination, he said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to the public at large that I, PRAVEEN KUMAR JAIN S/o Lt. SH. Indersen Jain presently residing at 29/102-A, Gali No.10, Opposite Gupta Traders, 60 Feet Road, Vishwas Nagar, Delhi-110032 have become an absolute and lawful owner of the entire Property bearing House No. 60, Shyam Enclave, Karakindooma, Delhi-110092 after the peaceful demise of my Mother on 26.05.2023 vide a Will registered before the Sub-Registrar I+B-Vidya Vihar as Registration No.386 in Book No.3 Volume No.52 on Pages 88 to 91 on 11th day of December 2015.

All or anyone who has any claim or interest in the above said Property by way of Sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, ten, trust, gift, maintenance, inheritance, possession, lease, license, easement or otherwise of whatsoever nature, however it is hereby requested to make known the same in writing to the undersigned together with documentary evidence in support thereof within 10 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which such claim/s or objection/s, if any, shall be considered as waived and/or discharged forever.

MR. PRAVEEN KUMAR JAIN S/o Lt. SH. Indersen Jain Presently residing at 29/102-A, Gali No.10, Opposite Gupta Traders, 60 Feet Road, Vishwas Nagar, Delhi-110032; Contact: 9212452409

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Smt. Gurjeet Kaur and Smt. Gurvinder Lamba are the unequivocal owners of Ground Floor Without Roof Right Balcony on Property No. 62-17, Municipal No. WZ-138 area measuring 150 Sq. Yds., Out of Khassa No. 629, 602, 603, 609 & 640 Situated in the area of Village - Thar Colony known as G-Block, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110058. This legal ownership was established through a Sale Deed dated 20.07.2021 vide doc. No. 13380 executed by Dr. Manjit Kaur and Sale Deed dated 20.07.2021 vide doc. No. 13404 executed by Dr. Manjit Kaur. Smt. Gurjeet Kaur and Smt. Gurvinder Lamba intend to transfer the ownership by way of Sale Deed of the aforementioned property to Mr. Poojesh Singh. Subsequently Mr. Poojesh Singh is in the process of mortgaging the said property with IDFC First Bank Limited (Our Client). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 10 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 10-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 10-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-4/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +9112033161653 / 45622809; e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

Manipur's oldest rebel group UNLF signs peace pact with Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Wednesday signed a peace agreement with United National Liberation Front (UNLF), Manipur's oldest militant organisation dominated by the majority Meitei community, under which the rebel group has agreed to renounce violence.

The development comes days after the ban on the group under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was extended for five years earlier this month.

Representatives of the UNLF signed the agreement here with

senior officials of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and Manipur government, an official spokesperson said.

While political settlements have been finalised with several ethnic armed groups of the Northeast as part of conflict resolution initiatives of the Centre, it is for the first time a valley-based Manipuri armed group has agreed to return to mainstream by abjuring violence and agreeing to honour the Constitution of India and laws of the land.

"A historic milestone achieved!!! (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi gov't's relentless efforts to establish perma-

nent peace in the Northeast have added a new chapter of fulfilment as the United National Liberation Front signed a peace agreement today in New Delhi.

"UNLF, the oldest valley-based armed group of Manipur, has agreed to renounce violence and join the mainstream. I welcome them to the democratic processes and wish them all the best in their journey on the path of peace and progress," Union Home Minister Amit Shah said in a post on X.

The agreement will not only bring an end to hostilities between UNLF and security forces which have claimed pre-

vious lives on both sides over the last more than half a century but also provide an opportunity to address the long-standing concerns of the community, the spokesperson said.

Manipur has been witnessing ethnic clashes between the Meitei and tribal Kuki communities since May resulting in the death of over 180 people. A peace monitoring committee will be constituted to oversee enforcement of the agreed ground rules. The development is likely to be a significant step in restoring peace and normalcy in the state.

It is hoped that the return of UNLF to the mainstream will

also encourage other valley-based armed groups to participate in the peace process in due course.

Hoping that the development will give a fillip to usher in a new era of peace in the Northeast in general and Manipur in particular, Shah said "It is a landmark achievement in realising PM @narendramodi ji's vision of all-inclusive development and providing a better future to the youths in Northeast India."

The UNLF was formed in 1964 and has been operating from both within and outside Indian territory.

The Centre has signed agree-

ments with several armed groups of the Northeast since 2014 to end militancy and promote development.

The Centre has also continued Suspension of Operations (SoO) with 21 Kuki-dominated groups to ensure that peace is established in hilly regions of Manipur. This agreement was signed in 2008.

The Manipur government had announced unilateral withdrawal from the SoO in March against two Kuki-dominated insurgent groups alleging that they were involved in encroaching of forest land. However, the Centre did not endorse it.

Boosting pollination to improve crop yield

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Planting flowers such as marigold and red gram beside food crops on farms in India has been found to attract bees and consequently boosts pollination and improves crop yield and quality, researchers have said.

The first Indian study of its kind undertaken in the Kannivadi region of South India's Tamil Nadu in 24 moringa orchards is published in the Journal of Applied Ecology and was carried out by ecologists from the University of Reading, UK, and the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India.

The scientists worked with smallholder farmers and helped them plant red gram and marigold flowers in 12 orchards while the other 12 had no co-flowering crops planted in them.

Flower visitor numbers and diversity were 50% and 33% higher in sites with red gram and marigold flowers compared to those without. Sites with higher numbers of flower visiting insects also showed better quality of crops, with bigger moringa pods.

The sites with red gram and marigold flowers which had previously suffered from a lack of pollination saw higher yields. Numbers of harvestable moringa fruits increased by 30% in the orchards with co-flowering crops, compared to those



without.

"Greater yields and higher quality fruit will translate to a healthier and better food supply for smallholder communities.

The farming communities can also use the red gram as a protein source in their diets and receive extra income from selling the marigold flowers." The study was produced as part of the TROPICAL project, led by the University of Reading team using UKRI funding from the Global Challenges Research Fund to investigate how research evidence from the UK could be used in tropical landscapes where pollinator dependent crops are grown.

India has many crops of high economic and nutritional value, such as mango and moringa, where there is potential to significantly increase and improve crop pollination services. Intensive farming practices, using large amounts of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, and loss of natural habitats have negatively impacted biodiversity in India, including native bees and other pollinators, said the researchers.

Since smallholder farmers in the tropics, whose crops depend on native pollinators, are particularly vulnerable to these impacts, the study results show how farmers can boost yields while also managing their lands in a more sustainable manner.

Ship Sajag arrives at Muscat for 3-day visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Sajag, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, arrived at Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, Oman, on Wednesday for a three-day visit as part of the overseas deployment of ICG ships to West Asia, Coast Guard officials said here.

The primary objectives of the visit are to strengthen long-standing diplomatic ties,

enhance maritime cooperation, and promote interoperability with the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROP CG) and other maritime agencies, they said.

The itinerary includes professional interactions such as onboard training and lectures on Visit, Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) and Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR), cross-deck visits, joint yoga sessions, planning conferences, and

table-top exercises for Marine Pollution Response (MPR). Activities during the port call involve courtesy calls by the Commanding Officer on various dignitaries and government officials of Oman, including the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard.

Oman and India have historically maintained warm and friendly bilateral relations, sharing common values and diverse cultures.

Landlords can't be deprived of benefit of property: HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Landlords cannot be deprived of beneficial enjoyment of their property and are vested with the right to decide how to utilise their possessions, the Delhi High Court said on Wednesday while upholding an order for vacation of tenanted premises.

The High Court said it is trite law that a tenant cannot dictate to the landlord as to how the property has to be utilised. Landlords cannot be deprived of the beneficial enjoyment of their property. Further, the court is not to sit on the arm-chair of landlords to dictate as to how the property should be utilised.

Congress mulls plan to revive Bihar prospects



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the Congress is mulling its strategy for its revival in States where it has been decimated, former DGP rank officer of Tamil Nadu cadre Braj Kishore Ravi shared his vision for its resurgence in Bihar.

The core of the ideologies of Opposition bloc INDIA revolves around concerted

efforts to uplift marginalised sections of society, tackle unemployment, address various forms of backwardness, and champion secularism, he said.

The former top cop emphasised the necessity of inclusive development for society, stressing the need to integrate all communities and bring backward and deprived communities into the mainstream.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mohammad Sadruddoja, S/o. Mohammad Noorul Hoda, R/o. A-33, Gali No.1, Jaitpur Extn-II, Badarpur, New Delhi-110044 declare that my son's name has been wrongly mentioned in his birth certificate as Md. Mokarram Sader instead of Mohammad Mukarram.
PD(206)A

NEW OKHLA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar (U.P)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <http://tender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

1. **07/Mgr. (Syst.)/Grievance Redressal System/2023-2024, Design, Development, and implementation of Grievance Redressal System For NOIDA. Cost Rs. 33.93 Lacs**

The above tenders can be uploaded by date **06.12.2023 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre-Qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date **07.12.2023 at 11.00 AM**. **Manager (System)**

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

MHA orders Delhi Chief Secretary extension for six months after SC approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

MHA has issued orders effecting the six-month tenure extension of Delhi Chief Secretary after the Supreme Court upheld the authority of the Centre on the issue. In a major setback to the AAP government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday permitted the Centre to extend the tenure of Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, a day before he was set to demit office on November 30, for six months, holding that the union government's decision

did not violate law or the Constitution. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra held, prima facie, the Centre has the power to appoint and extend the tenure of the chief secretary of the national capital territory of Delhi as the officer deals with the entire administration including police, public order and land, which fall beyond the legislative and executive powers of the Delhi government. "We come to the conclusion that at this stage, bearing in

mind the provisions of the judgement of this court in Constitution Bench 2 (2023 judgement on Centre-Delhi government services row) and the subsequent developments which have taken place resulting in the enactment of the amendment to the GNCTD Act 1991, the decision of the Union Government to extend the services of the incumbent chief secretary for a period of six months cannot be construed to be violative of law or the constitutional distribution of powers between the Union

and the government of the GNCTD," the bench said in its order. The bid to extend the tenure of the present chief secretary is the latest bone of contention between the Arvind Kejriwal government and Lieutenant Governor (LG) V K Saxena, who have been involved in a series of run-ins over various issues. Significantly, the current chief secretary, whose tenure will now be extended, is reported-



ly not on good terms with the Delhi government owing to allegations against his son in a case related to acquisition of 19 acres by the National Highways Authority of India in 2018 for construction of the Dwarka Expressway. "It will be farfetched to postulate that the central government is divested of the power to appoint the chief secretary. We

clarify that this is on the basis of a prima facie evaluation," the bench said. It also held that the central government, prima facie, has the power to extend the service of an incumbent chief secretary. The top court, in its order, referred to the May 11 judgement of a five-judge constitution bench which had held that the Delhi government has legislative and executive powers over administration of services except for public order, police and land. The verdict was touted as a big victory for

the AAP government. The bench also noted the subsequent developments such as promulgation of an ordinance by the Centre that took back full control over services, and the passage of the Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act 2023 in Parliament. The bench said the tenure of chief secretaries are normally extended at the recommendation of the state governments concerned, but the position of the top bureaucrat in the Delhi government is distinct. "The position of the chief sec-

retary of the GNCTD is significantly distinct and that the chief secretary performs executive functions related to subjects which fall within the executive and legislative competence of the GNCTD as well as those which lie outside," it said. The court noted that the operation of the amended GNCTD Act, whose validity is under challenge before a constitution bench, has not been stayed and hence, the Centre has the power to appoint a new chief secretary or extend the tenure of the incumbent officer.

Narela to get cricket stadium

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision that will give a decisive push to infrastructure development in the Capital and to strengthen New Delhi's claim for hosting the Olympic 2036, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has identified 50 acres of land near the Urban Extension Road-II for development of an international cricket stadium along with a five-star hotel and a world-class medical facility in Narela, north-west Delhi. Currently, Feroz Shah Kotla stadium (now called Arun Jaitley Stadium) is the only stadium in Delhi that is used to host international cricket matches. At the meeting with DDA officials, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has also directed the authority to further identify land parcels in the vicinity to develop sporting infrastructure related to football, hockey and other Olympic sports, with the view to strengthen Delhi's claims for hosting the Olympics-2036. Raj Niwas official said Lt



Governor Saxena has also approved the proposal to float Request for Proposals (RFQ) for the cricket stadium complex at the earliest with the condition for the same to be completed within two years. "In a departure from the past practice, when DDA would sell land for such projects, it will now be an equity partner in the project on the basis of the cost of land that will be DDA's contribution to the whole enterprise. This, Lieutenant Governor has underlined, would apart from ensuring stake, also ensure recurring income to the DDA," official said. "Coming after the decision

taken by the LG with regards to developing Narela as an education hub by giving land for development of university campuses in the area, the Narela sub-city is set for an unprecedented boom similar to that the city witnessed in East Delhi during the Commonwealth Games 2010," official added. Narela is already home to many relocated and new industries and has recently got a court complex, police station, hospital, jail complex and enhanced bus connectivity. The entire sub-city comprises about 9,866 hectares (ha) of which the project area is of 3,828 ha, land pooling area amounts to 3,537 ha and 2,501 ha come under the green belt. Institutions to which land has already been allotted include NIT (20.8 ha), Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women (20 ha) and National Institute of Homeopathy (4.04 ha). Under the proposed plan, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University is to be allotted 8.08 ha and Delhi Teachers University 4.04 ha.

Aid to Hardayal library among 18 proposals get MCD House nod amid pandemonium

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid pandemonium, the House of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Wednesday passed 18 proposals which include 6,589 new jobs proposal, grant in aid to Lala Hardayal library, 11,000 CCTV camera in schools, increase in minimum wages, reduction of cost of shooting film and proposal to celebrate municipal day on June 1. Later Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that AAP have passed the proposal of 6589 new jobs in MCD. These new jobs will include 2949 security guards and 3640 sanitation workers. MCD schools will now have separate sanitation workers for cleanliness and security guards for security. The MCD's House meeting on Wednesday witnessed a ruckus as both the BJP and the Congress councilors disrupted the proceedings over the non-formation of a standing committee and increased house tax. The House met on 2.19 pm amid sloganeering by the opposition councilors. As soon as the House meeting was resumed, Mayor Shely Oberai urged the members to allow smooth functioning of the

House amid Congress and BJP councilors continuing raising slogans. Carrying placards with demands demands such as "constitute the standing committee" and "rollback house tax" written on them, Congress and BJP councilors disrupted the proceedings. BJP councilors raised the issue of the dog menace in Delhi and asked for the release of data regarding dog bites in the city. Protesting councilors According to the Mayor Dr Shelly Oberai, a total 23 proposals were tabled. Of these, 18 have been passed, 3 postponed and 2 referred back. Oberai said a grant of Rs 2.26 crore has been sanctioned to Hardayal Library in the first phase. With this, salaries will be given to the employees. Mayor further said about 11,000 CCTV cameras will be installed in schools. The proposal has been passed in the corporation meeting. 15 CCTV cameras have already been installed in each of the 399 school sites of erstwhile South Delhi Municipal Corporation and East Delhi Municipal Corporation. According to the data, 10786 cameras will be installed in 1185 schools. These will have 2776 bullet cameras. The MCD House has passed a pro-



posals to reduce the permission fee in its jurisdiction. Now instead of Rs 75 thousand, you will have to pay Rs 25 thousand for 24 hours. For shooting for 8 hours, a fee of Rs 15,000 will have to be paid. Apart from this, a one-time administrative charge of Rs 2,000 will be charged. Earlier, women councilors from Congress staged a sit-in outside Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberai's office over some "sexist" comments allegedly passed against them during the MCD House meeting on Wednesday. Earlier, the Congress councilors alleged that an AAP councillor asked them if they took "money" when they raised public issues during meeting. They alleged that the same person in a derogatory manner asked them to bring the issues to him if they wanted them resolved. The female protesters demanded an apology from the councillor and action against him. They said they will not budge until the Mayor meets them.

The women also alleged that they were manhandled by the Mayor's staff and AAP councilors when they went to raise the issue with her. The female councilors have demanded a checking of the House recording to identify the person who made the comment. Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely said that it was shocking that without any discussion, amidst chaos, the Mayor passed 22 agendas in the House session of the MCD, which was undemocratic. In a press statement, Lovely said it was a shame that the BJP and the ruling party councilors clashed when the session was in progress and some councilors misbehaved with the leader of the Congress party in the MCD Nazia Danish, when she was speaking, and other women Congress councilors. Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has demanded from Delhi Women Commission Chairperson Swati Malwani to take suo motu cognizance of the case of insult of a woman councilor in the Municipal Corporation House meeting and to ask the Mayor to identify the councillor who made derogatory anti-women remarks and take action.

Spell of rain brings relief to city as air improves

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality improved to 'poor' from 'very poor' category on Wednesday after a spell of rain and favourable wind speed under the influence of a western disturbance. The city recorded an AQI of 258 at 9:05 am, which settled at 290 at 4 pm, improving from 365 at 8 am on Tuesday. After the restrictions lifted under the stage third of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) on Tuesday, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday said all the departments concerned have been directed to ensure strict implementation of restrictions under GRAP Stage-I and Stage-II following a weather department prediction that pollution levels in the national capital might fluctuate. Addressing a press conference, Rai said, "Keeping the improved pollution levels in mind, GRAP-III restrictions have been removed. However, the weather department has predicted that the pollution level could fluctuate if the wind speed slows. To avoid such a situation, all the departments concerned have been directed to ensure strict implementation of GRAP-I and GRAP-II restrictions." "The ban on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel vehicles have been removed and restrictions on construction and demolition lifted," Rai added. The Centre on Tuesday ordered the revocation of restrictions under GRAP Stage-III in the entire NCR with immediate effect following an improvement in the air quality. The Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM), a statutory body responsible for formulating strategies to combat pollution in the region, met on Tuesday in view of the significant improvement in the overall air quality of Delhi-NCR.

MCD drive to clean garbage from railway track sides

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to ensure cleanliness around the railway tracks, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is conducting a special cleanliness drive in collaboration with Northern Railway. Under this, the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) lying on both sides of the railway track is being cleared and disposed of scientifically.

Giving details of the drive, officials said here on Wednesday the quantity of MSW lying on 105 km of railway track in Delhi was assessed as 31989 MT in June 2023 in a joint inspection by MCD and Railways. Till November 15, 9106 MT waste was cleared. The detailed roadmap to remove the MSW lying along the railway track has been prepared in coordination with the Railways. As per this road map, the remaining 22883 MT MSW will be lifted up to March 31 next year, they said. The work of lifting garbage from both sides of the railway tracks from Hazrat Nizamuddin to Lodhi Colony Station, from Lodhi Colony Station to Okhla Station, from Okhla Station to Badarpur Border Station and from Nizamuddin Station to Janata Camp Station is being done at a rapid pace by the Central Zone of MCD. This work would be completed by January 31. At the same time, the garbage lying near the railway line from Bijwasan to Sagarpur flyover is being collected by Najafgarh zone and this work will be completed within a day or two.

The garbage lifting work from Shabdara Railway Station to Saboli Halt in Shahdara North zone will be completed by next month. The work of lifting garbage from Pehragarhi to Nangloi in the Rohini zone and from Azadpur to the Narela railway line in the Civil Line zone has almost been completed. The work of lifting MSW from the railway line in the Keshav Puram zone, will be completed by January 31.

Delhi winter peak power demand may top 5.7K MW this winter

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's winter peak power demand this year may break all previous records, crossing the 5,700-MW mark and power distribution companies (discoms) are fully geared to ensure adequate power availability for its nearly 50 lakh consumers or around 2 crore residents during the winter months. According to the State Load Despatch Centre, Delhi's peak power demand this winter can cross 5700 MW, surpassing the previous peak winter demands. Last year, it had

peaked at 5526 MW, which has been the winter-record in the national capital. The peak winter power demand in BSES (Rajdhani Power Limited) and BSES (Yamuna Power Limited) areas had reached 2338 MW and 1181 MW respectively during last winter. This year, it may go beyond 2400 MW and 1200 MW for BRPL and BYPL respectively. A BSES official said up to 60 per cent of the maximum winter power demand of over 3,600 MW in its areas will be met by green power. It will also bank on surplus power with



other states to meet the increased demand, he said. "Ensuring reliable supply in any season is as much the function of proper power arrangements as also accurate demand fore-

cast and robust distribution network. On all these aspects, BSES discoms are fully geared to ensure adequate power availability for its nearly 50 lakh consumers or around two crore residents during the winter months," he said. Apart from long-term agreements with power plants, over 2,000 MW of green power will play a significant role in ensuring reliable power supply to BSES consumers during the winter months, the official said. This clean energy includes 840 MW of solar power, 540 MW of hydropower, 500 MW of

wind power, around 40 MW from waste-to-energy conversion and over 150 MW of roof-top solar power facilities installed in south, west, east and central Delhi, he said. In fact, up to 60 per cent of the maximum winter power demand of more than 3,600 MW in BSES areas will be met with green power, the official added. According to official, accurate demand (load) forecasting is critical for reliable power supply. It is done on various parameters like (i) Day-ahead in 96 time-slots, (ii) Intra-day basis and (iii) Medium term (from a

fortnight to one year). Among other aspects, weather parameters like Temperature, Rainfall, Cloud Coverage, Wind Speed, Wind Direction and Humidity play an important role in accurate demand forecast. Even holidays and random disturbances have an impact on the power demand. "To meet today's power challenges; BSES uses a mix of advanced statistical forecasting models using complex algorithms, combined with state-of-the-art weather forecasting solutions, including Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning," he said.

'Capital aggregator service scheme to be notified soon'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday announced the Delhi government will notify its 'Delhi Motor Vehicle Aggregator and Delivery Service Provider Scheme 2023'. The scheme stipulates all passenger, service delivery, and e-commerce aggregator platform's vehicles to be electric vehicles after 2030. The scheme introduces the nation's first-ever aggregator scheme exclusively tailored for premium buses and calls for a modal shift in public transportation. The buses that will come to be a part of the initiative will have exceptional quality, comfort, and reliability, and will lead to a reduction in congestion and air pollution, the government said. Addressing a press conference,

Gahlot said the scheme applies to aggregators, delivery service providers, or e-commerce entities operating within the National Capital Territory of Delhi. It will cover those with 25 or more motor vehicles (2W, 3W, and 4W, excluding buses) in their fleet, who use a digital intermediary such as an app or web portal to connect with consumers for their services. The scheme defines a "Premium Bus" as any full-AC luxury public bus having a seating capacity of no less than nine passengers, pre-reserved reclining seats, and equipped with Wifi, GPS, and CCTV, the statement said. The scheme stipulates that the 'onboarded' bus must not be more than three years old, in case the bus is CNG, and the buses joining the service after January 1, 2025, must be electric.

Aurobindo Marg now Sri Aurobindo Marg

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Wednesday approved citizen centric, infrastructure and employee welfare related proposals besides renaming of 'Aurobindo Marg' as 'Sri Aurobindo Marg'. These proposals were given the nod in a meeting here presided over by Chairperson - NDMC Amit Yadav in the presence of Vice-Chairperson - Satish Upadhyay, MLA and Member NDMC, Virender Singh Kadian, Council Members - Kuljeet Singh Chahal, Vishakha Shailani and Girish Sachdeva. Giving details, officials said to respect the sentiments of people, the need to recognize and honour great men and women of our times, roads/ streets/institutions have been re-named in the past. Aurobindo Marg is a long road stretched from the end of Tughlak Road to the



Qutub Minar, Mehrauli. In NDMC, the Aurobindo Marg starts from the end of Tughlak Road and ends at Yusuf Sarai Market and rest of the part of the road i.e. from Yusuf Sarai to Qutub Minar, Mehrauli comes under the jurisdiction of PWD. The Council approved the renaming of Aurobindo Marg under the jurisdiction of NDMC as 'Sri Aurobindo Marg'. In another decision, the Council approved amendment in the previous orders regarding requirement of documentary proof of ownership/occupancy for granting of Health License. This amendment passed only for the proof of ownership and all other document requirements remain the same as pre-

vious. The Council also approved the framing of Recruitment Rules for the post of Financial Advisor (1 No.), Chief Engineer (Electric) - Category 'A', Chemist (Civil) in NDMC. The Council resolved to revive the deemed abolished 01 vacant post of Principal and 01 vacant post of Vice principal in Atal Adarsh Vidyalayas of NDMC. Moreover, on the basis of practice being followed in various Ministries/Departments and instructions issued by DoPT, NDMC had adopted a Merit Point Assessment on a 100 point-scale wherein different attributes of the applicants are given weightage to ensure complete transparency.

BRIEF

Spain envoy inaugurates visa application centre

NEW DELHI: Ambassador of Spain José Maria Ridao Dominguez inaugurated a Visa Application Centre at Gopaldas Bhawan, Connaught Place on Wednesday. The facility was opened by BLS International, a global tech-enabled services partner for governments and citizens in visa processing and consular services. Present on the occasion were top diplomats of several countries and officials of the BLS led by Joint Managing Director Shikhar Aggarwal. "We would like to congratulate BLS International for opening the new visa application centre and improving the visa processing services. It is great to see that BLS understands our philosophy behind the visa/consulate section. We



strongly believe in the dignity of the people and are committed to giving respect to all the people in Spain. We are a visa-friendly country for various reasons, such as trade and tourism, and beyond this, we fully aim to provide positive hospitality to all people in any part of the world. We are happy to share that we have received a green flag from India to open a new consulate in India soon which will be in Bangalore, and at the same time, India will open its consulate in Spain," Ambassador Ridao said on the occasion.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Additional District Judge of the Rohini court on November 24 issued a show cause notice to eight people associated with the UK wire agency, Reuters, including journalists and a legal head, ordering them to appear before the court on Thursday to explain why an earlier order restraining them from publishing articles deemed defamatory was violated. According to court summons notice the journalists sum-

Court summons Reuters journalists in libel case

moned include: Raphael Satter, Zeba Siddiqui, Christopher Bing, Ryan McNeil, Corinne Perkins, John Emerson and Marla Dickerson. Summons were also delivered to Reuters' Chief Legal Officer, Thomas Kim, and Thomson Reuters itself. Earlier on November 16, court had issued summons against Raphael Satter, Zeba Siddiqui and Christopher Bing. Now,

fresh summons had been issued against nine people. The judge had issued the restraining order on December 1, 2022, after a complaint filed by the lawyers of Appin Association of Training Center that accused the journalists of a smear campaign against them. Despite the court order, Satter, along with Zeba Siddiqui and Christopher Bing, published an article on November 17, making several

allegations of hacking against the plaintiff without substantive, irrefutable evidence, as claimed by their lawyers. As per company records, the training company was founded in 2004 and closed its operations in 2013. When contacted, the lawyers for the plaintiff contended that the Reuters article, which alleges Appin's involvement in multiple hacking incidents, highlights a report by Norman Shark, titled

"Operation Hangover" - published in 2013. The report, at best, mentions only the likelihood of Appin's involvement. They alleged that the journalists were selective in their approach, considering only the Norman Shark report and ignoring two related reports by Trend Micro and Blackberry in 2019, which determined that it was Phronesis, a Gurugram-based cyber intelligence firm that

behind the cyber attacks. They added that the Reuters article is based on covert interviews with ex-students of the training institute, who reported that coercive tactics were used by the reporters to elicit information. One-sided conclusions by cyber security experts were also used to give an impression of credence to the story, the lawyers added. "We discovered that the

reporters registered themselves as recruiters on Naukri.com, an Indian job portal, to pursue some of our former students and pose questions related to Appin. These calls were made at odd hours and jobs were offered in exchange for information. After we received complaints of harassment from some students, our lawyers raised the matter with Christopher Lee, Reuters' legal head, but no action was taken," said Vinay Pandey, president of Appin Association of Training Centers.

1,500 km of train route gets Kavach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said the indigenously-developed automatic train protection system 'Kavach' has been fully installed on 1,500 km of train route and a significant progress has been made to increase its coverage. "We started our journey with the Kavach system in 2016 and till 2020, its pilot work, testing, modification and version enhancement were done. It was in the beginning of 2022, its production and installation started on a large scale," Vaishnaw said during an interaction with media. "Today, we have installed the system on 1,500-km route and a significant progress has been made (for its installation) on another 3,000-km route on the Mumbai-Howrah and the Delhi-Howrah route," he said.

'Kavach' is an automatic train protection system for enhancing safety of running trains. It has been developed indigenously by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) in association with three Indian vendors. 'Kavach' not only helps loco pilots to avoid signal passing at danger and over-speeding but also helps in train running during inclement weather such as dense fog, leading to enhanced safety and efficiency of train operations. Some features of the system are controlling speed of trains by automatic application of brakes in case loco pilot fails to apply the brakes and repeating line-side signal in cab which is very useful for higher speeds. Vaishnaw said that with continuous efforts, the railways has made a significant capacity enhancement to install 'Kavach' on 1,500-km route every year. Elaborating about the system,



he said that it is not a device which can be installed in locomotives only. Instead, according to him, it is a complete system which has multiple components to install at stations, locomotives, tracks and along

the routes in the form of towers and radio equipment. "We floated the tender for 3,000 km installation in December 2022 and the progress report is very encouraging. Radio survey and radio

design, which is the most critical part of the system, is 98 per cent complete. Station Kavach installation is 33 per cent complete, 58 per cent of tower installation along the track has been done," the minister said.

He added that the Kavach next generation, which is a 4G- and 5G-based system, has also been developed and in December 2023 or January 2024, the railways will float a tender for its installation on 3,000 km tracks. "In May-June 2024, we will float another tender for 6,000 km of installation of Kavach," Vaishnaw said. The minister added that as his focus is capacity enhancement, he has set a target of achieving 2,500 km of 'Kavach' installation in 2024-25 from the present capacity of 1,500 km. "In the year 2025-26, we will take the capacity to 5,000 km per year. With this rapid progress of Kavach, we will cover the entire network within a short period of time. For Kavach installation, the Golden Quadrilateral-Golden Diagonal (GQGD) route has got top priority followed by high-density and high-utilisation network areas," he added.



Modi to interact with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with beneficiaries of the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' on Thursday via video conferencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said here on Wednesday. Prime Minister Modi will also launch Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra, it said. The Kendra will provide drones to women Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that this technology can be used by them for livelihood assistance, the statement said. The Yatra is being undertaken across the country with an aim to attain saturation of flagship schemes of the government by ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach all targeted beneficiaries in a time bound manner, a statement issued by the PMO said.

It will provide drones to women Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that this technology can be used by them for livelihood assistance, the statement said. It said 15,000 drones will be provided to women SHGs in the course of the next three years. Women will also be provided necessary training to fly and use drones. The initiative will encourage the use of technology in agriculture, the statement said. Making healthcare affordable and easily accessible has been the cornerstone of the prime minister's vision for a healthy India. One of the major initiatives in this direction has been the establishment of Jan Aushadhi Kendra to make medicines available at affordable prices. During the programme, the prime minister will dedicate the landmark 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra at AIIMS, Deoghar. Further, the prime minister will also launch a programme to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000. Both these initiatives of providing drones to women SHGs and increasing the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras were announced by the prime minister during his Independence Day speech. The programme marks the fulfilment of these promises, the statement said.

Modi will interact with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra on November 30 at 11 am via video conferencing, it said. It has been the constant endeavour of the prime minister to ensure women led development, the statement said. In yet another step in this direction, Prime Minister Modi will launch Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra, it said. The Kendra

Illuminating lives of drug addicts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In keeping with its efforts to curb drug menace in the country, the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment under the Union Social Justice and Empowerment has signed a pact with Ramchandra Mission under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) to reach out to the maximum people in the society. Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar said that the collaboration with the Ramchandra Mission will go a long way to illuminate the lives of individuals and restrict them from

moving towards the path of addiction and help in making a mentally, emotionally and physically strong society. He also talked about various initiatives undertaken through the NMBA that have helped make this Abhiyan a mass movement. Kamlesh D Patel (Daaji), President, Ramchandra Mission stressed on the importance of a conducive familial and social environment that would help prevent as well as overcome substance use. Through their 5000 centers and 16+ crore people connected with the Ramchandra Mission, Daaji affirmed the participation in the NMBA contributing

towards a Nasha Mukta Bharat. As per report of comprehensive National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India conducted by the Ministry through National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), AIIMS, New Delhi, Alcohol is the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians followed by Cannabis and Opioids. Till now through the various activities undertaken on-ground, under the NMBA, 10.72+ crore people have reached out so far while 8,000 master volunteers have been selected and trained to lead the activities in the NMBA districts.

Create culture of quality: Rajnath to makers of military hardware

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called upon the Indian defence manufacturers to create a culture of quality in defence production, terming it as a prerequisite to compete in the international market. Addressing the plenary session of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Quality Conclave on the theme 'Quality Odyssey for self-reliance in defence products', he stated that only quality products create global demand, and it will help in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a global manufacturing hub and a net defence exporter. Rajnath pointed out that those countries, which manufacture quality products, export their equipment to countries across the globe. He added that due to



these platforms are quite high; but it should be kept in mind that importing countries are ready to pay even the highest prices for state-of-the-art products. Stressing that top-quality products bring credibility to the domestic defence industry, the defence minister said manufacturing such equipment within the country will generate increased global demand and bolster India's reputation in the international market. He also underscored the importance of cost control while manufacturing quality defence products. "Cost control should be given utmost importance; however it

should not be at the expense of quality. We have to be globally cost-competitive, but it has to be done by remaining in the top-quality segment. We must move forward with this idea," said Rajnath. He underscored the need to manufacture high-quality military systems which are effective, reliable and safe and can enable the Armed Forces to accomplish the missions successfully. Speaking on the occasion, DRDO chief Samir V Kamat reaffirmed the organisation's commitment towards delivering quality systems. He requested all stakeholders to have firm resolve and synergise towards self-reliance in high-quality indigenous military systems. The conclave provided an opportunity for stakeholders to network with experts to create an ecosystem in the country for producing high-quality indigenous systems, and implementation of standards, policies and global best practices.

POONAWALLA FINCORP LIMITED
Registered and Corporate Office: 201 and 202, 2nd Floor, AP81, Koregaon Park Annex, Mundhwa, Pune - 411036, Maharashtra

APPENDIX IV [SEE RULE 8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Poonawalla Fincorp Limited (Formerly known as Magma Fincorp Limited) of the above Corporate/Registrar office under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (hereinafter referred as the "said Act") and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13 (2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a demand notice below dated calling upon the below Borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken 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 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules 2002 on this 25th day of November of the year 2023.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Poonawalla Fincorp Limited (Formerly known as Magma Fincorp Limited) the amount and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. Details of Property taken in possession are herein below:

Name of Borrowers	Description of Property	Possession taken Date	Date of statutory Demand Notice	Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)
MANISH VERMA KALPANA VERMA SHRIKANT VERMA NEETU VERMA	ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PROPERTY OF THREE STORED HOUSE WITH THE LAND UNDERNEATH BEARING NAGAR NIGAM NO. 4/20/A-1 AND A-2, MEASURING AREA 326.32 SQ. METER CONSTRUCTED AT PLOT NO. A-1 AND A-2 LAND BEARING KHARATA NO. 37 AND 739 SITUATED AT ANAND PURAM, MAUZA- JOGIPURA, WARD- LOHAMANDI, TEHSIL AND DISTRICT- AGRA, PIN-282010, UTTAR PRADESH BOUNDED AS EAST : PROPERTY OF SRI RAM DULARE SHARMA, WEST : PROPERTY OF SRI SOBRAN LAL SHARMA, NORTH : ROAD OF 25 FEET WIDE AND NIKAS, SOUTH : OTHERS PROPERTY.	25.11.2023	14.07.2023	Loan No. LAP009410000005021084 & LAP009410000005025772 Rs. 2,82,92,790/- (Rupees Two Crores Eighty Two Lacs Ninety Two Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety only) AND Rs. 32,19,720/- (Rupees Thirty Two Lacs Nineteen Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty only) TOTAL Rs. 3,15,12,510/- (Rupees Three Crores Fifteen Lacs Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Ten only) payable as on 14.07.2023 along with interest @ 11.25 % till the realization.

Place: Uttar Pradesh
Dated: 30.11.2023

Authorised Officer
Poonawalla Fincorp Ltd.
(Signature)

SRF LIMITED
Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor, Mayur Vihar Phase, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091
Corporate Office: Block-C, Sector 45, Gurugram, Haryana-122 003
Tel. No (Regd office) : (+91-11) 49482870; Fax : (+91-11) 49482900
E-mail: cs@srf.com, Website: www.srf.com; CIN: L18101DL1970PLC005197

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Share Certificates pertaining to shares of the Company detailed below have been reported lost and request(s) for issue of duplicate Certificates in lieu thereof have been received by the Company. Shareholder(s)/Claimant(s) shall also be entitled to Bonus Shares in the ratio of (4:1) on these shares from Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority :-

Sl. No.	Folio No.	Name of the Share Holder / Legal Heir (Claimant)	Cert.No.	Dist.No. (from)	Dist.No. (to)	Lost Shares
1	SRF0027716	MOHAN VADEHRA (SHAREHOLDER)	363136-39	16942292	16942309	18
			512136-39	24962084	24962101	18
			90060462	8754046	8754065	20
			90187452	14844830	14844839	10
			1138382	296517874	296518137	264
2	S0006711	SUNIL KUMAR AGARWAL (CLAIMANT)	1132312	295287942	295288141	200
			90254745	9029256	9029305	50
3	SRF0036165	VASUDEVA VENKATESH SHARMA (CLAIMANT)	1135824	296006350	296006749	400
			90076229-31	9241530	9241629	100
4	SRF0144862	I M SHARMA (SHAREHOLDER)	705352-3	59748084	59748183	100
			1135279	295886362	295886761	400
5	M 0005423	MADHURI SINGHAL (SHAREHOLDER)	21997	1919976	1920000	25
			22728	1940201	1940225	25
			54944	2811881	2811891	11
			64954	3372365	3372384	20
			76603	3562538	3562548	11
			82361	3661738	3661745	8
			132997	5497936	5497985	50
			90028184-8	7147478	7147677	200
			1133762	295586658	295588057	1400

Any person having any claim/objection in respect of the above requests should lodge such claim/objection with the company at its Corporate Office within 15 days of the publication of this notice, failing which the company will consider to give effect to the above requests.

Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with the aforesaid share certificates.

For SRF LIMITED
Sd/-
RAJAT LAKHANPAL
Sr. VP (Corporate Compliance) & Company Secretary

Place: Gurugram
Date: 29-11-2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that MR. HANUMAN SINGH S/O. MR. AAN SINGH, the owner of A PLOT NO. 28 AREA MEASURING 100 SQ. YDS. i.e. 83.61 SQ. MTR. KHASRA NO. 251, SITUATED AT VILLAGE HAKKATPUR ALIAS KHUDA BANS, PARAGANA LONI, TEHSIL & DISTT GHAZIABAD, vide Registered General Power of Attorney Dated 03.04.2003 Executed By Mr. Hari Singh Gussain S/o Mr. Madan Singh Gussain, General Power of Attorney dated 03.04.2003 All Persons are hereby informed that MR. PREM KUMAR & MR. VINOD KUMAR & MRS. ANU DEVI are mortgaging the said property with SFG India Credit Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Company Limited) General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/interest/lien in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Mr. Prasenjit Lata, Advocate FF 18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Vastha Khari, Indraprastha, Gurgaon-122004. Email: cs@sgciassociates@gmail.com, Ph: 7011172761, 613279837

Form No. INC-26
(Pursuant to Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014)

Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for change of registered office of the Company from one state to another

BEFORE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT (REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NORTHERN REGION)

In the matter of sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014

And

In the matter of KOALA LEARNING PRIVATE LIMITED having its registered office at "G-92, Basement, Kalkaji, South Delhi, Delhi-110019"

.....Applicant Company

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make an application to the Central Government, power delegated to Regional Director under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013, seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of Special Resolution passed at the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company dated October 17, 2023 to enable the Company to change its registered office from "National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi" to the "State of Karnataka".

Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of registered office of the Company may deliver or file on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and ground of opposition to the Regional Director, Northern Region at the address: B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, P.D. Deendayal Anandodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003 within fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy of the Applicant Company at its registered office at the address mentioned below.

"G-92, Basement, Kalkaji, South Delhi, Delhi-110019"

For and on behalf of
KOALA LEARNING PRIVATE LIMITED
Sd/-
Sumeet Agarwal
Director
DIN- 07932476

Date: 29.11.2023
Place: New Delhi

Contribute to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, corporate sector told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday appealed to the corporate sector to contribute generously to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF) and ensure the well-being of the brave soldiers who spend their lives safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the country. He made this appeal here while addressing the corporate heads during the AFFDF Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Conclave organised by the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, Ministry of Defence. Expressing gratitude to the retired and serving Armed Forces personnel for their unmatched valour and sacrifice, Rajnath asserted that it is the collective responsibility of the entire nation to ensure the welfare of the soldiers and their families. He stated that the soldiers fulfil their duties in difficult circumstances and deal with challenges with courage and promptness. The defence minister described the heads of businesses, industries and the corporate sector as wealth creators who contribute to the economy and ensure prosperity



and security of the nation. He urged the corporate sector to share the created wealth or profit with other people in the society, especially the Armed Forces personnel, beyond their tax paying obligations. He emphasised that voluntary contributions hold more importance than compulsory obligations. "When the tax money reaches the soldiers, it is like a legal obligation. But, it is not the same with voluntary contributions. A soldier will feel attached to even ₹5 given as voluntary contribution more than ₹100 given as tax," he said. On the occasion, Rajnath also

felicited the prominent CSR contributors to the AFFDF, including State Bank of India, ICICI Bank Limited, Indus Towers Limited, General Insurance Corporation, BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited, ECGC Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, LIC Golden Jubilee Foundation, Container Corporation of India Limited and Security Printing & Minting Corporation of India Limited. A number of initiatives have been taken by the government for the welfare of the ex-servicemen. Recently, Medical Treatment Grant for the veterans/dependents was increased to ₹50,000 from Rs 30,000, Vocational Training Grant for Widows was enhanced to ₹50,000 from ₹20,000 and Serious Diseases Grant was raised to ₹1.50 lakh from 1.25 lakh, which is a continuous process. During the Financial Year 2022-23, a grant of approximately ₹250 crore was distributed to more than 99,000 beneficiaries. Apart from this, institutional grants have also been given to Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre, Kirkee and Mohali, Cheshire Home, Dehradun, Lucknow and Delhi and 36 War Memorial Hostels across the country.

ITBP chief given charge of CRPF also

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Director General (DG) Anish Dayal Singh has been given the "additional charge" of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) after the retirement of incumbent S L Thaoson on November 30, an official order said Wednesday. A Union Home Ministry order said Singh, an IPS officer of 1988-batch from Manipur cadre, will hold the CRPF DG charge "till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier." Thaoson, also from the 1988-batch of the IPS from Madhya Pradesh cadre, was appointed as CRPF chief in October last year. Singh was appointed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) DG at the same time. The CRPF is the country's largest central armed police force (CAPF) with about 3.25 lakh personnel and it is deployed for rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country, including conducting anti-Naxal operations.

Technology solution for Geospatial domain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India will soon have a Centre of Excellence to foster the Geospatial Innovation & Research and to cater to emerging technology solution requirements of the Geospatial domain in the country. A tripartite MoU was signed in this regard between National Geospatial Programme-DST, National Institute of Geo-informatics Science & Technology (NIGST), Survey of India, and IIT Tirupati Navishkr I-Hub Foundation on Wednesday to establish this Centre of Excellence-a Pilot. The Geospatial Innovation & Research Centre of Excellence (CoE) as a pilot aims to cater for the emerging technology solution requirements of the Geospatial domain in

the country. The Centre would support and encourage innovative geospatial technology-based startups, industries, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) that have an application and impact in the core sectors of the economy. Professor Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, DST highlighted that this is perhaps the first step in the direction of implementing some aspects of the National Geospatial Policy. "After liberalising the Geospatial Guidelines and bringing in the Policy, we are in the process of reforming the Survey of India. There is a plan to set up a geospatial data exchange. Incubators will also be set up to work both on developing the geospatial technology as well as support startups that can focus on applications," he added. Professor Karandikar pointed out



that geospatial data science is an emerging interdisciplinary field which includes geospatial engineering, computer science and information technology. He also added that setting up focused incubators and carrying out capacity building through dedicated CoE will

translate to implementation of the recommendations of the geospatial data policy. "Using data science and AI model, this whole concept of World Wide Web (WWW) may change in next 10 years and may centre around the geospatial platform, through which we can get both contextual and location-based information by combining AI and machine learning in linear fashion for future searches," Prof Karandikar said. Dr KN Satyanarayana, Director, IIT Tirupathi, briefed about the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) developed under NM-ICPS and said that the TIH has four major activities — technology development, capacity building, creating startup ecosystem and international cooperation, focusing on these new areas.

Silkyara tunnel project to continue after safety audit: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 4.5 kilometres long Silkyara tunnel project in Uttarakhand, which is part of the Central Government's strategic 900-km 'Char Dham Yatra All Weather Road', will continue after the necessary safety audit and repair of the broken structure, a senior road ministry official said on Wednesday.

The ambitious Rs 12,000-crore project aims to provide all-weather connectivity to four holy towns of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath in Uttarakhand. A rescue team on Tuesday pulled out all 41 workers trapped under the collapsed portion of the under-construction Silkyara tunnel in a multi-agency operation that hovered between hope and despair for almost 17 days.

"In fact, the safety audit of the Silkyara tunnel will be conducted. Meanwhile, efforts will be made to repair and rectify the broken structure. "The necessary precautions will be taken and the 4.5 km long tunnel project will continue," the official who was part of the rescue team told PTI.

Another senior official of the Road Transport and Highways Ministry (MoRTH) on the condition of anonymity said, "We will have a thorough review of Silkyara tunnel project and we will improvise some systems also."

The official also said that the Silkyara tunnel collapse was an 'accident'. He said the Uttarakhand government has formed a six-member expert committee to study the causes of collapse. The MoRTH will decide later



if a committee be formed to investigate the cause of the collapse, the official added. Speaking with PTI, Zojila

Tunnel Project Head Harpal Singh said there could be several possible reasons for the collapse of the Silkyara tunnel.

"These could be poor geological investigation, under-designed ground support systems, mistakes during con-

struction, poor data monitoring and mitigation measures during construction or poor supervision control," he explained.

Singh was of the view that "all highway and rail tunnels should be planned with an escape tunnel parallel to the main tunnel".

The strategic Zojila tunnel - an all-weather link between the Kashmir valley and the Ladakh region -- is being constructed by Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd (MELI).

In 2021, in an interview with PTI, Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari had termed allegations that the Char Dham road project triggered landslides in Uttarakhand as 'misinformation' and asserted that the government is sensitive about ecology and environ-

ment while carrying out development projects.

Gadkari pointed out that now, the hilly terrains have been secured with the construction of a tunnel (beneath Chamba town).

A 2019 report headed by veteran environmentalist Ravi Chopra described the Char Dham project -- an ongoing road project that will connect the four important pilgrim towns of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri -- as "an assault on the Himalayas".

The committee recommended limiting the width of the road to 5.5 metres on the Char Dham project. However, in December 2021, the Supreme Court in its order allowed the road width to 10 metres.

The Supreme Court allowed double-lane widening of the Char Dham highway project

in Uttarakhand, observing that the country's security concerns may change over time and the recent past has thrown serious national security challenges.

The judgment clearing the way for a double-lane paved shoulder (DL-PS) configuration for the project had come in the backdrop of the standoff between Indian and Chinese militaries in several areas along the LAC (line of actual control) in Ladakh. "The considerations for development of national highways in plains and in hilly and mountainous regions are not identical," it had noted.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the 'Char Dham Yatra All Weather Road Project' on December 27, 2016. The original deadline for the project was March 2020.



Licked water dripping from rocks, recounts Uttarkashi tunnel survivor

PTI ■ RANCHI

Anil Bediya, one of the 41 labourers who were rescued from a collapsed Uttarakhand tunnel after 17 days, survived the ordeal by eating "muri" (puffed rice) and licking water dripping from rocks.

The 22-year-old worker hailing from Jharkhand had a close brush with death after a portion of the Silkyara tunnel on the Brahmakhal-Yamunotri national highway in Uttarakhand collapsed early on November 12.

"Loud shrieks punctuated the air...We all thought we would be buried inside the tunnel and had lost all hope during the first couple of days," Bediya told PTI over the phone from Uttarakhand on Wednesday morning while narrating their harrowing tale.

"It was a nightmarish ordeal...We licked water dripping from rocks to quench our thirst and survived on muri for the first 10 days," Bediya, who is now recuperating at a Uttarakhand hospital, said. Bediya hails from Kharabeda, a village on the outskirts of Ranchi which saw a total of 13 people going to Uttarkashi on November 1 in search of greener pastures. Little did they know what fate had in store for them.

Luckily, only three of the 13 from Kharabeda were inside the tunnel when the disaster struck. Fifteen of the 41 workers hail from Ranchi, Giridih, Khunti and West Singhbhum, where people have erupted in joy after the trapped workers

were rescued on Tuesday evening.

"Our first hope of survival kindled when the authorities established contact with us after nearly 70 hours," Bediya recounted.

According to him, two of their supervisors asked them to drink water dripping through the rocks.

"We had no other option but to relieve ourselves inside the tunnel. Finally, when we heard voices of people communicating with us from outside, a firm belief and hope of survival replaced our desperation," Bediya said.

After the first 10 days of grueling anxiety, supplies, including fruits like bananas, apples and oranges, besides hot meals like rice, dal and chapatis became regular along with water bottles, he said.

"Huddled together, we used to pray desperately for early rescue...Finally God heard us," he said.

His anxiety-stricken mother had not cooked food for the last two weeks, and the family survived on whatever their neighbours provided them with, a resident of the village said.

In Kharabeda, a paralysed Shrawan Bediya, 55, whose only son Rajendra was trapped in the Uttarakhand tunnel, was seen celebrating in a wheelchair after the workers were rescued on Tuesday evening. Besides 22-year-old Rajendra, two others from the village -- Sukhrum and Anil, both in their early 20s -- were trapped inside the tunnel for 17 days.

Mumbai former mayor held for abusing CM

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that raised eyebrows in State political circles, the Mumbai Police on Wednesday arrested a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former mayor Datta Dalvi for allegedly using abusive language against Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Acting on a complaint lodged by a ruling Shiv Sena activist Bhushan Palande, a team of police officials from the Bhandup police station arrested Dalvi from his Vikhroli residence in north-east Mumbai.

Dalvi was later in the afternoon produced before a local Magistrate's court which remanded in judicial custody for 14 days.

Immediately after that, Dalvi's legal team moved a bail application before the same court which was not allowed.

Police said after a mandatory medical check up, Dalvi would be lodged at the Thane Central Jail.

Dalvi, who was Mumbai's Mayor from 2005 to 2007, has been booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for allegedly making derogatory references to the chief minister.

The Bhandup police have sought to make out a case against Dalvi over the abusive remarks that the latter made against Shinde at a recent public meeting.

Slamming the Eknath Shinde government over Dalvi's arrest, Shiv Sena MP and Chief

spokesperson Sanjay Raut said: "It is shocking that the Bhandup police have arrested Dalvi over a flimsy offence of using derogatory remarks against the Chief Minister. "The police forcefully entered Dalvi's home, arrested him and brought him to the police station. "This kind of arrest happens only when the accused is booked for either murder or attempt to murder. The police should realise that Dalvi is not going to run away somewhere to evade the offence registered against him".

"What wrong Dalvi has committed? Given that Shinde betrayed the parent party leadership, revolted against and walked out of the party to become a chief minister, Dalvi

—speaking at a public meeting — expressed the sentiments of the people against the chief minister and called 'Gadar Hindufriday Samrat'. This is because Shinde calls him Hindufriday Samrat (a sobriquet given to late Balasaheb Thackeray)," Raut said.

Defending the police action, chief minister Eknath Shinde said, "As a Chief Minister, I am doing my work. As the Government, we take several decisions in the public interest. Looks like he (Dalvi) has forgotten the culture propagated by late Balasaheb Thackeray among his party men. That's why Dalvi-like people have made it a one-point agenda to use abusive language against me. But that not our culture"

Salman Khan gets another death threat

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai Police has reviewed the security provided to Bollywood super star Salman Khan after he allegedly received yet another threat from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

Confirming the development, a senior police officer said here on Wednesday: "Yes. We have reviewed the security provided to the actor to check if there are any loopholes. We did this after he received yet another threat from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi".

The decision to review Salman's security came after Bishnoi — in a Facebook post put out on

Sunday — claimed responsibility for the gunshots fired outside Punjabi singer-actor Gippy Grewal's residence in Canada. In that post, Bishnoi had written, "You consider Salman Khan a brother, but now it's time for your 'brother' to come and save you. This message is also for Salman Khan — don't be under the illusion that Dawood will save you; no one can save you. Your dramatic response to Sidhu Moose Wala's death did not go unnoticed. We all know the kind of person he was and the criminal associations he had... You're now on our radar. Consider this a trailer; the full film will be released soon."

Yoga an invaluable gift of India to world: President

PTI ■ PUNE

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said yoga is an invaluable gift of India to the world community and noted that regular practice of the ancient system of postures helps in overall development of an individual.

She pointed out that in the National Education Policy 2020, Indian knowledge tradition has been given a significant place with an aim to help yoga benefits reach children and young generation. The President was speaking after inaugurating a national conference on 'Integration of Yoga in

School Education System - Manifesting the Thought', organized by Kaivalyadhama as part of its centenary year celebrations at Lonavala, a hill station in Pune district. Kaivalyadhama is a well-known institute that encourages and facilitates the effective practice of traditional yoga for physical, emotional and spiritual well-being and healing.

Murmu said yoga is an invaluable gift of India to the world community and since 2015, International Yoga Day is celebrated every year (on June 21) in most of the countries. The President highlighted that in its resolution, the United



Nations General Assembly had observed that the practice of yogic postures provides a holistic approach to health and physical well-being and is beneficial for the entire global community. Yoga is path to overall development of an indi-

vidual and is considered an effective means of physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual progress, she noted. "After extensive research and testing, our ancient sages established that the discipline of yoga is helpful in attaining

liberation," Murmu observed. In the 20th century, great personalities like Swami Kavalayananda, who founded Kaivalyadhama in 1924, publicized the scientific approach and utility of the yoga system, she said.

"Swami Kavalayanand ji used to give great importance to the spread of yoga education in schools," Murmu noted. She expressed confidence that Kaivalya Vidya Niketan, a school run by the Kaivalyadhama Sansthan, will provide inspiration to other schools. The President hoped Kaivalyadhama will continue to serve as an effective confluence

of yoga tradition and science, and keep the world community, especially the youth, moving forward on the path of holistic development. Murmu, who is on a four-day visit to Maharashtra, will on Thursday review the Passing Out Parade (POP) of the 145th course of the National Defence Academy at Khadakwasla near Pune city. The next day, she will award President's Colour to the Pune-based Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC). On Saturday, the President will grace the 111th convocation of the Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University at Nagpur.

Woman who went to Pak to marry FB friend returns

PTI ■ AMRITSAR (PUNJAB)

Anju, an Indian mother of two children who travelled to Pakistan to marry her Facebook friend, returned to India through the Wagah-Attari border on Wednesday, officials said.

Anju alias Fatima, 34, had travelled to a remote village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan to marry her Facebook friend Nasrullah,

leaving her children in India. Her 29-year-old Pakistani husband accompanied her up to the Wagah border. On reaching India, she was not allowed to interact with the media and straightway went to the airport to catch a flight to Delhi. At the Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport here, Anju was spotted wearing a burqa.

She told the media there, "I am here in India to meet my Indian family. I came back to India of

my own volition..."

Anju had travelled to Pakistan via the Wagah-Attari border in July with a visa, converted to Islam, changed her name to Fatima after getting married to Nasrullah, whom she had befriended on Facebook four years ago.

Anju's Indian husband Arvind had said that she left home on the pretext of going to Jaipur but later the family came to know that she was in Pakistan.

Anju, along with her Indian husband, used to live in the Bhiwadi area of Rajasthan. She hails from Kailor village in Uttar Pradesh.

On Wednesday, Bhiwadi's Additional Superintendent of Police Dilip Saini said they had no information about the return of Anju.

Police sources said that Arvind no longer resides in Bhiwadi and has relocated to somewhere with their children.

Afghan Embassy to resume op in next few days: Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Afghan embassy in New Delhi will resume operations in the next few days, Deputy Foreign Minister in the Taliban set up, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, has said. Stanikzai told Afghan broadcaster RTA that officials at the Afghan consulates in Hyderabad and Mumbai have visited the embassy following instruction from Kabul.

The Taliban leader said Afghanistan wants good relations with the neighbouring countries.

His comments about resuming operations at the Afghan embassy came days after the mission under the control of Ambassador Farid Mamundzay announced its permanent closure, citing "persistent challenges from the Indian government".

Mamundzay, appointed by the previous Ashraf Ghani government in Kabul, has been out of India for the last few months. On Friday, the embassy announced its permanent closure. The diplomats at the embassy

appointed by the previous government had announced on September 30 too that the mission is ceasing its operations from October 1, alleging a "lack of support from the host government".

In April-May, the Afghan embassy was rocked by a power struggle in the wake of reports of the Taliban-appointed charge d'affaires to head the mission replacing Mamundzay. Following the episode, the embassy came out with a statement that there was no change in its leadership.

The tussle for power had erupted after Qadir Shah, who was working as the trade councillor at the embassy since 2020, wrote to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in late April claiming that he had been appointed as the charge d'affaires at the embassy by the Taliban.

India has not yet recognised the Taliban set up and has been pitching for the formation of a truly inclusive government in Kabul besides insisting that Afghan soil must not be used for any terrorist activities against any country.

Heavy rain lashes Chennai

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Heavy rain pounded Chennai and other northern coastal regions of Tamil Nadu on Wednesday as a low pressure area developed into a well marked low pressure area. Chief Minister M K Stalin directed ministers, legislators and representatives of local bodies to provide all necessary support to the people in rain affected areas.

A Meteorological department official said Chennai and nearby regions in northern coastal Tamil Nadu experienced heavy

rainfall on Wednesday, which was in the range of 5 cm-6 cm and even above. Rainfall was very heavy in some areas. Authorities declared a holiday for schools in Chennai and nearby districts.

Besides heavy traffic congestion, the intermittent heavy rains led to inundation in several parts of the city and neighbouring districts of Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Chengelpet. Vehicular movement was affected in several areas including Sholinganallur in the IT corridor, besides many arterial roads. Railway sources said 'there is

delay in operation' in suburban services in view of water logging over railway tracks in the Ambattur-Avadi-Arakkonam sections.

In both arrival and departure of flights, some delay was experienced due to showers, airport sources said.

All arrangements are in place to prevent inundation of runways, they added.

A Regional Meteorological Centre bulletin here said Tuesday's Low Pressure Area developed into a Well Marked Low Pressure Area on November 29.

Shah to attend BSF Raising Day function on Dec 1

PTI ■ HAZARIBAG (JHARKHAND)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend the 59th Raising Day programme to be held in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh on December 1, an official said on Wednesday.

The oldest training centre of the border force is located at Meru in Hazaribagh where the function will be held for the first time.

"Shah will be the Chief Guest of the occasion. He will take salute at the ceremonial parade," KS Baniyal, the Inspector General of BSF Training Center and School at Meru. The parade will



be organised at the Rani Laxmi Bai Parade Ground located in the Meru Campus, which has been decorated for the mega event.

Horses, sniffer dogs and camels associated with the force will be part of the programme, said Baniyal.

Shah will reach Hazaribagh on Thursday evening and will interact with top BSF officials. The next morning, after participating in the main Raising Day function, he will go to Ranchi and subsequently fly to New Delhi, the officer said.

After the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965, the government felt that a strong central para-military organisation should be raised as frontline warriors on the borders and the BSF came into existence December 1, 1965.

Its first training centre was set up at Hazaribagh, which was shifted to Meru on March 25, 1967.

AI-based system on railway tracks to prevent elephant deaths

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An AI-based surveillance system to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks will be installed on 700 kilometres of route passing through forest areas, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Wednesday.

"We have identified forest areas in Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Kerala, Jharkhand and some parts of Chhattisgarh and Tamil

Nadu which are home to elephants.

"This AI-based surveillance system will be implemented in these areas which can alert loco pilots well in time about the presence of elephants on tracks," the minister said.

According to him, the technology, developed by the railways in collaboration with some start-ups, was introduced on a 150-km stretch in Assam last year and has turned out to be

quite useful.

"We made some improvements in the system based on our field experience and now it detects the presence of elephants on tracks with 99.5 per cent accuracy," Vaishnaw said, adding that many elephants have been saved with the help of this technology till now.

The total cost of the project implementation on the 700-km tracks will be Rs 181 crore. Vaishnaw also stated that his

officials are in touch with the forest departments to identify more such areas to expand the scope of the project.

Asked if the railways has officially named the system, the minister said, "You can call it 'Gajraj System'".

In September 2023, the Northeast Frontier Railway hailed the system and said its introduction in 11 elephant corridors in the Northeast helped eliminate elephant

deaths due to train collisions. The minister, during his interaction with reporters, referred to the introduction of the system in the NFR.

The Intrusion Detection System (IDS) was introduced by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) in December 2022 in 11 elephant corridors — five in Alipurduar division and six in Lumding division. According to the NFR, in the eight months between its

launch in December 2022 and July this year, the system sounded 9,768 alerts, or an average 41 alerts daily.

It added that since the launch of the system, these 11 corridors have not reported any train-elephant collision.

Every time an elephant steps on to the track, the system generates an alert to the train controller, station master, train drivers and other stakeholders who take precautionary mea-

sures to avoid the imminent danger. Government data shows that on an average 20 elephants die due to train collisions in the country every year and a majority of these incidents take place in the Northeast Frontier Railway.

The success of the IDS holds out hope that such accidents will be a thing of the past, officials said. They said the optical fiber cable (OFC) that the railways has laid beneath the

tracks for tele-communication and signalling purposes comes in handy for the installation of IDS.

The device, fitted in the OFC network, captures the vibration when an elephant comes on the track and sends out a real-time alert to the division control room and a mobile application. The system is able to detect and locate moving elephants up to 5 metres from the fibre optical cable.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Out, with lessons

The evacuation of 41 workers tells us a few things about what went right and what we must set right

Life be frail and ephemeral but it is the human grit, determination, resilience and collaborative spirit that makes it explore space, navigate seas, move earth, climb mountains and challenge the mighty Nature. On the same theme, the Silkyara tunnel rescue operation in Uttarkashi stands out as a shining example of effective crisis management. After 400 hours of intense effort, the trapped workers can see the sun again. It was arguably the nation's biggest rescue operation – international experts, local authorities, Army and big machines all worked in tandem to pull off this feat. And the rat miners, part of the Army operations, deserve a special mention as finally they managed to reach the miners after digging continuously for 24 hours. Rat mining is now banned in India, yet their skills did the trick. Celebrations apart, this is also the time to ponder over the lessons learned from the oversights and mistakes made during the mission. For 17 days, the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel became a site of frenzy after 41 workers were trapped



in the tunnel. The rugged terrain and inclement weather compounded the challenges; the remote location added a degree of difficulty to the mission, necessitating a swift and coordinated response.

While the rescue operation ultimately succeeded, it is important to examine our shortcomings to improve future crisis responses. One notable oversight was the initial delay in deploying specialised equipment to the site. This lapse, attributed to logistical challenges and communication gaps, underscored the importance of a rapid and efficient response in emergencies. Another lesson learned was the need for enhanced coordination among the agencies involved in the rescue.

Effective communication channels and seamless collaboration are essential for streamlining efforts and ensuring a cohesive response. It would have been better had the Army been called in earlier, given its expertise in such operations. Initially, delays and confusion arose due to inadequate coordination, highlighting the need for improved inter-agency cooperation which was, however, made good after it became a national top story. While the operation showcased the prowess of specialised units in handling complex crises, it also emphasised the importance of addressing logistical challenges and improving coordination among agencies. It also highlighted how protocols and standard working procedures are flouted by the companies involved. There must be a Government agency to ensure that safety procedures are followed. The life of every individual matters but the companies often cut corners when it comes to worker safety. Even the multinational companies operating in India do not follow the same safety protocols they follow in Europe and America, as was amply proved by the Bhopal gas disaster. They know safety at the workplace is not a priority. In Silkyara, there was no plan in place to evacuate workers in case of an emergency. By continuously refining our emergency response strategies, we can better prepare for challenges.

PICTALK



Girls wearing traditional Punjabi dress perform 'giddha', in 11th Amritsar International Folk Festival

Tunnel between science and spirituality



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The successful rescue mission in the Silkyara, shows how coordinated efforts and a compassionate approach can achieve the impossible

The march of science, the heart of man must beat in unison with the heart of God. The future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics. These profound words of Swami Vivekananda gripped my attention after a friend of mine shared it on my WhatsApp with a photograph of tunnelling expert Arnold Dix bowing down before God (read Almighty) outside the Silkyara tunnel.

The successful completion of the rescue mission to extricate 41 workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel on Uttarakhand's Char Dham route was achieved on Tuesday evening of November 28, 2023. Rat-hole mining experts employed manual drilling techniques to navigate through the final 10-12-meter stretch of debris from the collapsed section of the under-construction tunnel. It was on the morning of Diwali, November 12, that a landslide occurred at approximately 5:30 AM, causing a section of the Silkyara-Dandlgaon tunnel under construction on the Brahmalak-Yamunotri highway at Uttarkashi to collapse.

The tunnel, a critical part of the Char Dham all-weather road project led to the trapping of 41 workers inside the tunnel, specifically at the Silkyara Bend – Barkot tunnel, situated about 200 meters from its entrance, which triggered a challenging rescue operation, as the entire nation joined in unison praying for the safe exit of the trapped workers. Action by officials and district administration began immediately and meticulously to bring out the trapped workers unhurt. Twelve skilled rat-hole mining experts played a crucial role in this intricate operation.

The successful rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel – after the 17-day ordeal of life and death – involved a collaborative effort from various entities, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at the national level, state rescue agencies, international drilling experts, and even local rat-mining labourers – whose crucial contribution had often been overlooked by many. The district administration swift-



ly initiated rescue operations with approximately 200 disaster relief personnel employing drilling equipment and excavators. Simultaneously, oxygen, electricity, and food were provided to the trapped labourers through air-compressed pipes. Other than NDRF, the other agencies included SDRF, BRO, NHIDCL, and ITBB, who collaborated in the rescue efforts. In the Odisha train disaster, the NDRF played a crucial role in rescue operations. During the Sudan crisis, India launched 'Operation Kaveri' facilitating the safe evacuation of 3,000 stranded Indians. Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar engaged with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while the Indian Air Force and Navy conducted flights and sorties, evacuating nearly 3,900 Indians. After the release of the 41 trapped workers, in a message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that their "courage and patience" was inspiring. In a post on 'X', he wrote, "I want to say to the friends who were trapped in the tunnel that your courage and patience is inspiring for everyone. I wish you all well and good health. It is a matter of great satisfaction that, after a long wait, our friends will now meet their loved ones."

Coming back to the profound words of Swami Vivekananda, as mentioned at the beginning, it emphasises the harmony between the march of science



AFTER THE EVACUATION OF THE 41 TRAPPED WORKERS, IN A MESSAGE, PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI SAID THAT THEIR "COURAGE AND PATIENCE" WAS INSPIRING

and the spiritual essence of humanity. The idea that "the future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics" suggests a balance between the material and the spiritual dimensions of human existence.

In the context of the successful rescue mission in the Silkyara tunnel and other instances mentioned, this balance is evident in the coordinated efforts and compassionate approach adopted by various entities involved.

The challenging rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel serves as a practical manifestation of this balance. One could say that the use of manual drilling techniques, led by skilled rat-hole mining experts, symbolises the human touch, perseverance, and skill beyond mechanised technology. The collaboration of different entities, from local rat-mining labourers to international drilling experts, reflects a holistic approach.

Arnold Dix, bowing down, serves as a poignant reminder of the humility required in the face of the unknown. Tunnelling through the Earth, Dix, a master of physical engineering, found himself compelled to bow before a force greater than himself – a force that perhaps transcended the limits of his scientific understanding. This gesture encapsulates the essence of surrendering to the supreme,

acknowledging that there are realms beyond the grasp of human intellect.

Amidst the grandeur of our discoveries, there exists a yearning for meaning and purpose that science alone cannot satiate. This is where spirituality steps in, offering solace to the searching soul and providing a framework for understanding the metaphysical aspects of our existence.

However, the act of surrendering to the supreme does not imply abandoning reason or forsaking scientific inquiry. Instead, it encourages a harmonious coexistence where the intellect bows to the infinite wisdom that transcends empirical understanding. Moreover, surrendering to the supreme allows us to navigate the uncertainties of life with grace and resilience.

In moments of adversity, the recognition of a higher power provides a source of strength and comfort, where one understands a sense of purpose. The integration of spirituality and science may find a deeper understanding of our existence and our place in this grand arena of the cosmos, where our greed and wants need to be self-checked and demand self-restraint.

(The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Snruti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HC REJECTS PIL ON LOUDSPEAKERS

Sir—Dubbing it a "wholly misconceived PIL," a Division Bench of the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday rejected a public interest litigation (PIL) that had sought a ban on the use of loudspeakers in mosques during azaan. It's a good decision that came from HC. India is a democratic country where people follow different religions; that's called "unity in diversity." Different kinds of flowers beautify a bouquet of flowers; in the same way, having various religions prettifies India.

All citizens should live together, loving and supporting each other. With everyone's support, our country will develop; otherwise, our country will be scattered, society will be destroyed, and evils and devils will flourish. United we stand, divided we fall.

Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

BRUTAL MURDERS CREE PANIC IN UP

Sir—As per the report, the murders of eight women in the past few months, in a similar pattern, have created panic among people and anxiety for police in the BJP-ruled state of Uttar Pradesh. All the victims were aged between 35 and 60 years and were strangled to death with a saree or chunari, said officials. Seven of these murders were reported from different villages within Shahi police station limits. The most recent one was reported from Sheeshgarh police station on November 26.

Bareilly ADG PC Meena, along with IG (Range) Rakesh Singh, visited the crime spot and directed officials to work out the cases at the earliest. He asked them to do the crime mapping of incidents and analyse the crime pattern to nab the assailants. "It is still not clear whether these murders are interconnected or not. I am also not sure whether it is the work of one person or different people. But residents suspect the involvement of a psychopath in the region," said ASP (crime) Mukesh Pratap Singh. ASP Mukesh Pratap Singh issued an advisory to villagers to not allow women to go out of their homes alone and

Mission impossible!



The seventeen-day ordeal is finally over after rescuing 41 workers trapped in the Uttarkashi tunnel. The impossible is made possible. Man succeeded where foreign machines failed. The auger drilling machine was broken many times and could not complete the work. Removing its broken blades from the rescue pipe was a great technological achievement. The 'Rat Miners', who emerged as heroes in this great escape, gave the required breakthrough

to insert the pipe in the final stages through which all the trapped workers were pulled out. India has now developed a 'Desi Technology' to rescue workers trapped in tunnels. Providing food and oxygen to keep them alive for more than two weeks was unbelievable.

The patience, courage, and confidence of trapped workers and their family members, as well as the efforts put in by all the rescuers from different organisations, are beyond appreciation. The personal interest taken by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister was exceptional. The government needs to investigate thoroughly the reasons for the mishap, and the lessons learned can be useful for safety in the number of tunnels under construction and proposed in the Himalayas. It is not advisable to stop construction activities in the Himalayan region because of this mishap.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

step out in groups of three-four, if necessary. This advisory also stands for daytime, as all these murders happened between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. with women working in the field or at deserted places. The murder of a woman in the same pattern was reported from a village under adjoining Sheeshgarh police station limits on Sunday. Urmila, 55, wife of one Ved Prakash of Jagdishpur village in Sheeshgarh, had gone out to collect fodder for cattle around noon and did not return home. The woman's body was later found lying near the field of one Dori Lal, around 500 metres from the village.

Earlier last year, three women aged between 60 and 64 years were killed in December in Barabanki district. With this, women are living under the fear of getting targeted and are not going out.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

MEMORABLE TALES OF 'THE GABBA'

Sir—The iconic Australian cricket stadium, 'The Gabba' in Brisbane, is said to be demolished and rebuilt for the 2032 Olympics. Renowned for hosting one of

the fastest tracks in world cricket, the Gabba became a household name in India and across the world after India breached what was Australia's fortress until 2021. For good measure, Gabba, the bastion of the Australian cricket team, is bordered by 'Vulture Street', which cricket aficionados will famously know as one of the two ends of the ground.

Gabba may not stir emotions and enthuse romantics like the storied Australian cricket grounds of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, but its very mention would strike fear in the minds of visiting teams. For the Indian fans, starting the day by listening to former Australian great Bill Lawry's cheerful voice early in the morning was music to the ears when he would start with, "very good morning to all our viewers wherever you are." Again, when action gets tense on the field, one will find Lawry saying, "It is all happening here at the Gabba."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Democracy: Restoring the dignity in public life

Poll campaigns are becoming toxic with unrestrained campaigns; no one is sacrosanct, and all political parties must shoulder the blame for it

The campaign for the last phase of the election to the Telangana assembly has come to an end with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mega Road Show" at Hyderabad on Monday evening. It is once again silence in the state. But this is a temporary silence and a prelude to the much bigger cacophony that is all set to unfold in days to come. Poll pundits describe the election to the five State assemblies as the semi-final. While elegance and aristocracy were the catchwords of speeches made inside and outside the parliament, of late the quality of the language used by our lawmakers has degenerated to a level lower than the Bharani Pattu sung by a section of pilgrims at the Devi Temple in Kerala's Kodungallur. For those who are not familiar with the Bharani Pattu ritual, Bharani is one of the 27 stars used by astrologers for scientific calculations while Pattu means song/hymn. The self-styled Dravidians pay their obeisance to Bhagawathy (Devi/Goddess, the presiding deity of Kodungallur)



by singing obscene hymns on Bharani day in the Malayalam month of Chingam. It is a tradition whereby the farmers of yore days complain to the Goddess about their hardships in the typical Dravidian style. The elections that were held after India became an independent country stand out for its methodical and systematic campaign. The enthusiasm and fervour seen in the people from metropolises to villages elevated the democratic process into a festival—a festival of democracy.

The campaign speeches delivered by the leaders were a learning process as they were packed with information, wisdom and knowledge. There are no records of leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,

Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Balraj Madhok, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Morarji Desai crossing the Lakshman Rekha and verbally assaulting their rivals. The political discourse took a nasty turn with Indira Gandhi attacking the Opposition parties alleging them of trying to finish her off in their bid to capture power. All her speeches were centred around this one-point agenda and were seen by political pundits as an attempt to divert the attention of the electorate from real issues. She belittled the corruption charges against her party colleagues and ministers by stating that "corruption was a global phenomenon".

The stand-off between the then Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi and the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi made it to the global news headlines. Sonia Gandhi began addressing Modi as 'Maut Ka Saudagar' (the wholesale merchant of death), Fascist, Dictator and whatnot! Modi retorted by calling her Antonio Maino (her Italian

name) and 'Congress widow' to which the Congress and the Communists cried foul. The name-calling continued unabated as Rahul Gandhi opened a new battle front in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. 'Chaukidar Chor Hai' was the new war cry of the Congress scion. Though Modi kept silent for a while, he was forced to retaliate which was not music to the ears of Congress leaders. This is one of the main reasons for having a One Nation, One Poll system. With the One Nation, One Poll system, we need to bear with this abnormal situation only once every five years and not every alternate month.

The silent campaign has its virtues and elegance. Election Campaigns should not upset the rhythm of one's daily life. The dignity and harmony of democracy could be sustained by a silent campaign and not by discordant notes.

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



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN



FIRST COLUMN

THE ANCIENT ART OF MUDRAS

Yogic hand gestures channel energy and help connect to higher spiritual realms



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

Mudras, a Sanskrit word that translates to "gesture," are ancient hand positions that have been practised for thousands of years in various cultures, particularly in the realms of yoga, meditation, and traditional dance. These symbolic gestures are believed to channel energy within the body and connect the practitioner to higher spiritual realms. The philosophy behind mudras lies in the idea that different parts of the hands represent different elements and energies, and by bringing them together in specific ways, one can harmonise and channel these energies for various purposes.

Major Mudras and Their Significance:

Anjali Mudra (Prayer Gesture):

How to perform: Bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest, fingers pointing upward.

Anjali Mudra is a gesture of reverence and gratitude. It is commonly used as a greeting and is often performed at the beginning and end of yoga classes. This mudra symbolises the connection between the individual self and the universal consciousness.

Gyan Mudra (Knowledge Gesture):

How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, while keeping the other fingers extended.

Gyan Mudra is associated with knowledge, wisdom, and concentration. It is believed to enhance memory and improve concentration during meditation. This mudra is commonly used in various meditation practices to quiet the mind and promote inner peace.

Chin Mudra (Consciousness Gesture):

How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, and let the other three fingers remain extended.

Chin Mudra is a gesture of consciousness and is often used during meditation.

Prana Mudra (Life Force Gesture):

How to perform: Join the tips of the ring finger and the little finger to the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.

Prana Mudra is believed to increase the vital life force energy within the body. It is associated with improving vitality, reducing fatigue, and boosting the immune system.



Apana Mudra (Digestive Gesture):

How to perform: Touch the tips of the thumb, middle finger, and ring finger together, while keeping the index finger and little finger extended.

Apana Mudra is said to balance the Apana Vayu, one of the five vital forces in the body related to elimination and downward movement. This mudra is believed to support digestive health, assist in detoxification, and promote a sense of groundedness.

Huni Mudra (Seal of Patience):

How to perform: Join the tip of the middle finger with the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.

Shuni Mudra is associated with patience, discernment, and discipline. It is believed to help cultivate a sense of patience and focus. Practising this mudra is thought to bring balance to the air element within the body and mind, promoting a calm and reflective state. Shuni Mudra is often used to enhance one's ability to make wise decisions.

Incorporating mudras into your meditation or yoga routine can provide a deeper dimension to your spiritual journey, promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Mudras are powerful tools that bridge the physical and spiritual aspects of our being. Incorporating these symbolic hand gestures into your daily life or meditation practise can deepen your connection with yourself and the universe. As with any ancient practice, it's essential to approach mudras with respect and an open mind, allowing yourself to explore their potential benefits on a personal level. *(The writer is a spiritual guide, views are personal)*



BHARATI DEVI

both animal husbandry and agriculture. Consequently, Mangnad not only meets the local demand but also supplies milk and vegetables to the broader Poonch region. Every morning, vehicles laden with litres of milk make their way to the city, with city-dwellers acknowledging the village as a vital source for their daily dairy needs. This tradition has been sustained for years, but in the last 8-10 years, Mangnad has also emerged as a significant player in vegetable production, adding another layer to its unique identity. Today, the village engages in diverse occupations, from private businesses to government employment, but one common thread binds them



all—cultivating vegetables. Observing the burgeoning interest in agriculture, the local agriculture department has stepped in to support the villagers. This collective effort has equipped the village with essential resources, including

small tractors, quality seeds, agricultural camps, and water tanks, transforming Mangnad into a beacon of self-sufficiency. Considering the hilly terrain of Jammu and Kashmir, this transformation is a testament to the resilience and determination

of its people. Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes. The villagers have not only embraced agriculture but have also diversified into vegetable production, a feat worth celebrating. 54-year-old Murti Devi, a resident of the village, shares that their approach to vegetable cultivation has evolved. Initially, they planted a single type of vegetable for six months and then another for the next six months. However, with experience, they have streamlined their efforts, categorising vegetables into four distinct seasons. They now synchronise their

planting with the weather, ensuring a continuous supply of diverse vegetables throughout the year. Sushil Kumar, 40, asserts that apart from vegetable production, they have no other business. With some patches of land, they ventured into vegetable farming, selling produce worth lakhs every season. This entrepreneurial spirit extends to several farmers in the village, illustrating how Mangnad has become an agricultural powerhouse. Harish Kumar, 29, emphasises the enduring interest in animal husbandry among the villagers. While some are dedicated to daily milk supplies to the city, others have expanded their focus to vegetable cultivation. The

villagers are not just cultivating vegetables; they are champions of organic farming, ensuring not only flavorful produce but also contributing to the nutritional well-being of consumers. This border village's success story is not just about agriculture; it's about community resilience, innovation, and a collaborative effort with the agriculture department. The department's support, including providing specialised sheets for transforming cow dung into fertilizer, has not only improved lives but has also bestowed a distinctive identity upon Mangnad. *(The writer is Charkha's volunteer trainer from Poonch, J&K. Views are personal. Charkha Features)*

India's G20 Presidency: Towards a better future



NARENDRA MODI

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. Let us reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'



As we undertook the responsibility of G20 Presidency last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress. Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve - the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it. Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive—these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles. Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80% of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities. The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit', convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative. Inclusivity also infused India's domestic

INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY USHERED IN A DAWN OF NEW MULTILATERALISM; A BEGINNING OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democracy. Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader developmental aims, aligning with G20's mandate. At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability. A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth. For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and

protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complimentary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly. In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LIFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions. Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030. Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasised the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order. Gender equality took centre stage in the Declaration, culminating in

the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development. The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past. During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war. I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalised multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere. As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come. *(This is an exclusive writeup by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi)*

Cultivating a unique economic identity in the border areas

Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes

In India's diverse landscapes, every village contributes a distinctive thread to the larger narrative of our country. Nestled approximately 6 km from the Poonch district in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Mangnad stands out as a border village that is slowly etching its identity in the realms of agriculture and animal husbandry. Over the years, Mangnad has earned a reputation for its unique approach to animal husbandry. It's a village where livestock is not just a part of the scenery; it's a way of life. Yet, it's not a place where dependence solely rests on animal husbandry. Even government employees here take a keen interest in

Mediators look to extend truce in Gaza on its final day

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

International mediators worked on Wednesday to extend the truce in Gaza, hoping the territory's Hamas rulers will keep freeing hostages in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners and further respite from Israel's air and ground offensive. It will otherwise expire within a day. Israel has welcomed the release of dozens of hostages in recent days and says it will maintain the truce if Hamas keeps freeing captives. But its other major goal — the annihilation of the armed group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years — could be slipping out of reach.

Weeks of heavy aerial bombardment and a ground invasion have demolished vast swathes of northern Gaza and killed thousands of Palestinians. But it seems to have had little effect on Hamas' rule, evidenced by its ability to conduct complex negotiations, enforce the cease-fire among other armed groups, and orchestrate the smooth release of hostages.

Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar, and other commanders have likely relocated to the south, along with hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians who have packed into overflowing shelters.

An Israeli ground invasion of the south could eventually ferret out Hamas' leaders and demolish the rest of its militant infrastructure, including kilometres of tunnels, but at a cost in Palestinian lives and destruction that the United States, Israel's main ally, seems unwilling to bear.

The Biden administration has told Israel that if it resumes the offensive it must operate

with far greater precision, especially in the south. That approach is unlikely to bring Hamas to its knees any time soon, and international pressure for a lasting cease-fire is already mounting.

"How far both sides will be prepared to go in trading hostages and prisoners for the pause is about to be tested, but the pressures and incentives for both to stick with it are at the moment stronger than the incentives to go back to war," Martin Indyk, a former US ambassador to Israel, wrote on X.

DIPLOMACY RAMPS UP

CIA director William Burns and David Barnea, who heads Israel's Mossad spy agency, were in Qatar on Tuesday to discuss extending the cease-fire and releasing more hostages. Qatar has played a key role in mediating with Hamas, hosted the talks, which also included Egyptian mediators.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to visit the region this week, and was also expected to push for a longer truce.

A joint statement from foreign ministers of the G7 group of wealthy democracies, which includes close allies of Israel, called for the "further extension of the pause" and for "protecting civilians and compliance with international law."

The war began with Hamas' October 7 attack into southern Israel, in which it killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians. The militants dragged some 240 people back into Gaza, including babies, children, women, soldiers, older adults and Thai farm labourers. Israel responded with a devastating air campaign



Palestinians cook bread by their destroyed homes in Kuza' a Gaza Strip during the temporary ceasefire between Hamas and Israel on Wednesday.

across Gaza and a ground invasion in the north. More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive, and it claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

The plight of the captives, and the lingering shock from the October 7 attack, has galvanised Israeli support for the war. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also under intense pressure to bring the hostages home, and could

find it difficult to resume the offensive if there's a prospect for more releases.

Hamas is still believed to be holding around 150 hostages — enough to extend the cease-fire for another two weeks under the current arrangement of releasing 10 each day. But it is expected to drive a harder bargain for the release of Israeli soldiers, likely demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners convicted of deadly attacks.

could be seen walking alongside Hamas militants to a waiting Red Cross Jeep with her small, white-haired dog named Bella. Soon after, Israel released 30 Palestinian prisoners.

After being extended by one day, the truce is due to end after one more exchange on Wednesday night.

A total of 60 Israelis have been freed as part of the truce, most of whom appear physically well but shaken. Another 21 hostages — 19 Thai, one Filipino and one Russian-Israeli — have been released in separate negotiations since the truce began. Before the truce, Hamas released four hostages, and the Israeli army rescued one. Two other hostages were found dead in Gaza. The latest swap

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TENSE CALM IN GAZA

The cease-fire has brought calm to Gaza and increased deliveries of humanitarian aid, allowing people to stock up on food, water and fuel after weeks of severe shortages. Some have been able to sift through the rubble of their homes and bury relatives, but Israel has barred people from returning to the north.

On Tuesday, Israel and Hamas blamed each other for a brief exchange of fire in northern Gaza, but it did not appear to endanger the truce. Palestinian militants have halted rocket fire into Israel, as has Lebanon's Hezbollah, which had repeatedly traded fire with Israeli forces along the northern border since the start of the war. Israel's bombardment and ground offensive have displaced more than 1.8 million people inside Gaza, nearly 80 per cent of the territory's population, and most have sought refuge in the south, according to the UN. The cease-fire has allowed increased aid delivered by 160 to 200 trucks a day into Gaza, but that is less than half what Gaza was importing before the fighting, even as needs have soared.

brought to 180 the number of Palestinian women and teenagers freed from Israeli prisons.

Most have been teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces.

Several were women convicted by Israeli military courts of attempting deadly attacks. Palestinians have celebrated the release of people they see as having resisted Israel's decades-long military occupation of lands they want for a future state.

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Blinken heads again to Middle East

Brussels: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the Biden administration would like to see a new extension of the cease-fire agreement in Israel's war with Hamas after the current one expires to secure the release of additional hostages held by the militant group and to ramp up humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza.

As he prepared to make his third visit to the Middle East since the war began with Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks in Israel, Blinken said Wednesday that in addition to discussing short-term logistical and operational planning, the Biden administration believes it is imperative to discuss ideas about the future governance of Gaza if Israel achieves its stated goal of eradicating Hamas.

Israel and Arab nations have resisted such discussions about future governance, with Israeli officials concentrating on the war and Arab leaders insisting the immediate priority must be ending the fighting that has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians.

The extension of the current deal expires later Wednesday.

"Looking at the next couple of days, we'll be focused on doing what we can to extend the pause so we can continue to get more hostages out and more humanitarian assistance in," Blinken told reporters in Brussels, where he was attending a NATO foreign ministers meeting. "And we'll discuss with Israel how it can achieve its objective of ensuring that the terrorist attacks of Oct. 7 never happen again, while sustaining and increasing human-

itarian assistance and minimizing further suffering of Palestinian civilians."

He added before leaving Brussels for Israel and the West Bank: "Everyone's focused on the day of, on what's happening in Gaza right now, but we also need to be focused at the same time — and we are in conversations with many other countries — on what I call the day after' and the day after the day after': I mean, what happens in Gaza once the campaign is over?"

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made clear that Israeli forces will eventually restart military operations after the conclusion of the current, temporary cease-fire that has allowed for an exchange of hostages taken by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

US President Joe Biden has said he would like to see the pause continue for as long as feasible. Biden and Blinken have also stressed the importance of planning for post-conflict Gaza as well as the need to resume negotiations for the eventual creation of an independent Palestinian state. Netanyahu is opposed to a Palestinian state and has said he is the only Israeli leader who can prevent one from being formed.

"We believe that that is the only path to enduring peace, to enduring security, to the preservation of Israel as a strong secure, democratic Jewish state and Palestinians having their legitimate aspirations for a state and self-determination," Blinken said. AP

US military aircraft with 6 aboard crashes off southern Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

A crew member who was recovered from the ocean after a US military Osprey aircraft carrying six people crashed on Wednesday off southern Japan has been pronounced dead, coast guard officials said. The cause of the crash and the status of the five others on board were not immediately known, coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said. Initial reports said the aircraft was carrying eight people, but the US military later revised the number to six, he said. The coast guard received an emergency call from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of

Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu, he said.

Coast guard aircraft and patrol boats found one person, who was later pronounced dead at a nearby hospital, and gray-colored debris believed to be from the aircraft, Ogawa said. The victim was only identified as a male. They were found about 1 kilometer (0.6 mile) off the eastern coast of Yakushima. An empty inflatable life raft was also found in the area.

The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane.

Versions of the aircraft are flown by the US Marine Corps,

Navy and Air Force.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Osprey disappeared from radar at midafternoon, a few minutes before the coast guard received the emergency call.

The aircraft requested an emergency landing at the Yakushima airport about five minutes before it was lost from radar, NHK public television and other media reported.

NHK quoted a Yakushima resident as saying he saw the aircraft turned upside down, with fire coming from one of its engines, and then an explosion before it fell to the sea.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he planned to seek a further explanation from

the US military, but declined to say whether he would seek a temporary suspension of Osprey operations in Japan.

Ospreys have had a number of accidents in the past, including in Japan, where they are deployed at both US and Japanese military bases.

In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops in Japan are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters Wednesday that he will ask the US military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan.

Ogawa said the aircraft had departed from the US Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

COP28 leader denies report that UAE wanted to seek oil deals in summit

AP ■ DUBAI

The Emirati president-designate for the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate talks forcefully denied Wednesday a report alleging his nation planned to use the summit to strike oil and gas deals, a day before the summit was due to begin.

Sultan al-Jaber, who also leads the massive state-run Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., called the allegations from a BBC report "an attempt to undermine the work of the COP28 presidency" before the talks begin Thursday. The report cited what it described as "leaked briefing documents" the broadcaster said showed the Emirates planned to discuss fossil fuel deals with 15 nations. "These allegations are false, not true, incorrect and not

accurate," al-Jaber told a small group of journalists gathered for a news conference that also was aired live. "I promise you never ever did I see these talking points that they refer to or that I ever even used such talking points in my discussions."

He added: "So please for once, respect who we are, respect what we have achieved over the years and respect the fact that we have been clear open and clean and honest and transparent on how we want to conduct this COP process."

The BBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Adnan Amin, the conference's chief executive and a top lieutenant of al-Jaber, said he wasn't concerned about the possible fallout of the report and said he believed Emirati officials

were determined to make progress toward limiting climate change.

"I think they're focused on delivering a transformational COP... They're focused on creating a platform for everybody to have the ability to discuss ambitious climate action," Amin, a veteran U.N. official and long-time proponent of renewable energy, told The Associated Press after hosting a pre-conference meeting with delegation chiefs. Immediately after al-Jaber's remarks, a faked news release sent to The Associated Press described al-Jaber as having agreed to resign as CEO of ADNOC. COP28 organizers with the UAE delegation later confirmed it was false and al-Jaber would continue in his role.

Nepal first country in South Asia to register same-sex marriage officially

Kathmandu (PTI): Five months after the Supreme Court legalised it, Nepal on Wednesday formally registered the first case of same-sex marriage, making it the first South Asian country to do so.

Trans-woman Maya Gurung, 35 and Surendra Pandey, 27, a gay, got legally married and their marriage was registered at Dordi Rural Municipality of Lamjung district in Western Nepal, according to Sanjib Gurung (Pinky), president of Blue Diamond Society, an organization working for the rights and welfare of the sexual minorities in Nepal.

Way back in 2007, Nepal's Supreme Court had allowed same-sex marriage. Even the Constitution of Nepal, adopted in 2015, explicitly states that there can be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

On June 27, 2023, the Supreme Court issued an interim order to legalise same-sex marriage in Nepal in a writ petition filed by multiple people, including Gurung. But despite the historic order to temporarily register same-sex marriage, Kathmandu District Court four months ago rejected the move citing a lack of necessary laws.

Surendra Pandey and Maya's marriage application was rejected at that time.

"It's a great pleasure to learn about this, it is a great achievement for us, the third gender community of Nepal," Pinky told PTI. "This is the first case not only in Nepal but also in the whole of South Asia, and we welcome the decision."

Trump embraces Jan 6 rioters

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has embraced the rioters who attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 as patriots, vowed to pardon a large portion of them if he wins a second term and even collaborated on a song with a group of jailed defendants.

In his election interference case in Washington, his lawyers are taking a different tack. Despite losing a bid to strike from the indictment references to that day's violence, defence attorneys have made clear their strategy involves distancing the former president from the horde of rioters, whom they describe as "independent actors at the Capitol." At the same time, special counsel Jack Smith's team has

signalled it will make the case that Trump is responsible for the chaos that unfolded, and point to Trump's continued support of the January 6 defendants to help establish his criminal intent.

The competing arguments highlight the extent to which the riot serves as an inescapable backdrop in a landmark trial set to begin on March 4 in a courthouse just blocks away from the Capitol. It also reflects a point of separation between Trump and his legal team in the case accusing the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination of conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss. While Trump's glorification of January 6 defendants may boost him politically as he vies to retake the White House in 2024, his lawyers'

approach lays bare a concern that arguments linking him to the rioters could harm him in front of a jury. Though Trump is not charged with inciting the riot, any success he hopes to have at trial may turn in part on his defence team's ability to neutralise, or at least minimise, the ghoulish images of the violence that prosecutors cite as a natural extension of the former president's repeated lies about a stolen election.

Much may depend as well on the evidence permitted by US District Judge Tanya Chutkan. Trump's lawyers have signalled they will try to block prosecutors from presenting at trial evidence related to the actions of the rioters, who sent lawmakers running into hiding.

'US work visa renewal programme launch in December, Indians to benefit most'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a move that will benefit a significantly large number of Indian technology professionals, the US is set to begin a pilot programme for domestic renewal of certain categories of H-1B visas in December.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and

China. The pilot programme which will be limited to 20,000 participants initially comes months after the White House announced the plan during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June.

In an interview with PTI, Julie Stuft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services, said, "In India, the demand (for US visas) is still very high. The wait time of six, eight and 12 months is not what we need and (it is) not indicative of how we view India." "We want to make sure that Indian travellers can get appointments as quickly as possible. One way we are doing that

is through the domestic visa renewal programme, which is focused very much on India. We are piloting that," she said.

Over a period of three months, beginning in December, the State Department will be issuing 20,000 visas to foreign nationals who are already inside the country. "We will do 20,000 in the first group. The vast majority of those will be Indian nationals living in the US and we will expand as it goes on."

"Because Indians are the largest skilled group of workers in the United States, we hope that India will benefit quite a bit from this programme and it will

prevent people from having to travel back to India or anywhere for a visa appointment to get their visa renewed. It will allow our missions in India to concentrate on new applicants," Stuft said. While the State Department has been working on launching such a programme on a pilot basis for quite some time now, it was formally announced during Modi's visit.

The plan, which was mentioned in the joint statement and announced by Modi during his address to the Indian diaspora at the Ronald Reagan Centre, has been cheered and welcomed by the Indian community in the US.

Ailing Pope Francis says, he's not well

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis presided at his weekly audience with the public at the Vatican, but he said that he's still unwell and asked an aide to read his remarks for him on Wednesday, a day after cancelling an overseas trip. Francis, who will turn 87 on December 17 and had part of one lung removed as a young man, coughed near the end of the hourlong audience in a Vatican auditorium as he made some final comments, then stood up from his chair on the stage to give his blessing. With a soft voice, barely above a whisper, Francis told the public that "since I am not well," his reading of his speech wouldn't sound "pretty." He then hand-



ed the printed speech to the aide.

But Francis did speak at the end of the audience, voicing his contentment over the truce in fighting between Israel and Hamas, and saying he hopes it continues "so that all the hostages are released and access necessary to permit humanitarian aid" to reach Gaza is provided. "They lack bread, water,

the people are suffering," Francis said. On Tuesday, the Vatican announced that doctors had asked the pope, who has a lung inflammation causing breathing problems, to skip a three-day trip to a UN climate conference, known as COP28, in Dubai.

The trip would have begun on Friday and have seen the pontiff return to Rome on Sunday. The Holy See's announcement of the cancelled trip also said that his medical condition had improved, but noted that the pope had the flu and "inflammation of the respiratory airways."

The pontiff, who has made caring for the environment a priority of his papacy, wants in some way to participate in the discussions in the United Arab

Emirates, according to the Holy See. It was unclear if Francis might read his address to the climate conference by videoconference or take part in some other form.

The Vatican said the pope had acquiesced to the doctors' request "with great regret."

Toward the end of Wednesday's audience, circus performers came on stage to entertain the pope with an acrobatic act. Francis looked amused as he watched the performers, including acrobats and a juggler.

He posed with the group for a photo. "I want to say thanks for this moment of joy," Francis said, adding that the circus expresses the human dimension of "simple joy," and asking the audience to applaud.

Jetliner, without fossil fuel, makes trans-Atlantic crossing

AP ■ LONDON

The first commercial airliner to cross the Atlantic on a purely high-fat, low-emissions fuel flew on Tuesday from London to New York in a step toward achieving what supporters called "jet zero."

The Virgin Atlantic Boeing 787 flight was powered without using fossil fuels, relying on so-called sustainable aviation fuel made up largely of tallow and other waste fats. "The world will always assume something can't be done, until you do it," said Virgin founder Richard Branson, who was aboard the flight with others including corporate and government officials, engineers and journalists. The UK Transport Department, which provided 1



million pounds (USD 1.27 million) to plan and operate the flight, called the test a "huge step towards jet zero" to make air travel more environmentally friendly, though large hurdles remain in making the fuel widely available.

While governments have

long talked about decarbonizing air travel, the transition has been moving at the pace of a dirigible.

Sustainable aviation fuel, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by about 70 per cent, is the best near-term way for the international aviation

industry to achieve its net zero target by 2050, the US Energy Department said, though it called the goal aspirational.

The US Government Accountability Office said that while domestic production of the fuel had jumped from about 2 million gallons in 2016 to 15.8 million gallons in 2022, it accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of the jet fuel used by major US airlines. It was also a drop in the bucket compared to the goal of producing 1 billion gallons a year set in 2018 by the Federal Aviation Administration. The White House, meanwhile, set a goal two years ago to produce 3 billion gallons of sustainable aviation fuel per year by 2030 and 100 per cent of domestic commercial jet fuel by 2050.

Imran not to contest for PTI chairman's post

Nominates close aide to lead party

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan will not contest the organisational polls of his party and has instead nominated his close aide Gohar Khan for the post of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman to lead the party in the upcoming general elections, a top leader said on Wednesday.



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Barrister Ali Zafar said that Chairman Imran Khan would not be contesting intra-party polls scheduled for December 2 due to his legal problems, hence Barrister Gohar Khan had been nominated for the slot of the party chairmanship in a temporary arrangement. Imran Khan had been convicted in the Toshakhana case.

after a conviction in the Toshakhana case. He was also disqualified by the ECP in the same case for failing to disclose the proceeds from the sale of gifts he got from the state repository.

His statement comes a day after confusion erupted within Imran Khan's party after it dismissed a statement by one of its own senior leaders, who claimed that the jailed leader would not contest for the chairman's post in the upcoming intra-party polls.

The party's Core Committee on Monday gave formal approval to hold the intra-party polls within the time frame of 20 days given by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). If the party does not follow the orders, it will lose its bat symbol.

"Imran Khan was, and is and will continue to be the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf... I will carry out my responsibility till Khan returns," said Gohar Khan, a member of PTI chairman's legal team.

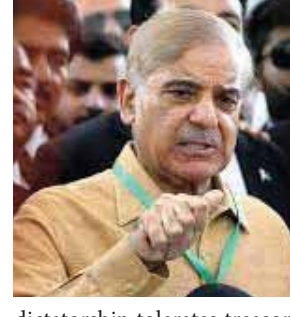
Khan, being a former iconic international cricketer, is considered synonymous with the (cricket) bat.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is set to conduct intra-party elections within the 20-day time frame set by the election commission to retain the 'bat' as its electoral symbol, ahead of general elections scheduled to be held on February 8. The party was asked by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) last week to hold polls within 20 days or it would be deprived of its election symbol of cricket bat. Zafar said that the party discussed the issue of election with Imran Khan who said that he did not want to give the ECP any "excuse" for not giv-

ing the party the bat symbol in the upcoming general elections. "The public is with us. We will win the elections when they happen. I want to take part in the general election. Intra-party polls hold no meaning for me. I want the Toshakhana case to be decided as soon as possible. When it is decided, I will contest intra-party polls as chairman," Zafar quoted Imran Khan as saying. The ex-premier also directed the party to hold intra-party polls while making it clear that he would not contest intra-party polls until the Toshakhana case was decided.

May 9 violence was an attempt to topple Army Chief : Ex-Pak PM

PTI ■ LAHORE



Gen Asim Munir, former Army Chief, said that the May 9 violence was an attempt to topple him.

Pakistan's former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the unprecedented violence, including the attacks on key military installations, following ex-premier Imran Khan's arrest in May was an attempt to topple Army Chief Gen Asim Munir. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party President made the remarks while addressing reporters after his appearance in the accountability court here in a corruption case.

Taking an indirect dig at the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief Khan, who is in jail in the cipher case, for trying to topple the incumbent army chief through a planned conspiracy on May 9, Sharif said the facilitators of the unprecedented attacks are the "state enemies". "On May 9, an attempt was made to topple the army chief. No one...be it (a) democracy or

action against more than a dozen high-ranking officers for being part of the conspiracy to oust Gen Munir. "Three officers, including a lieutenant-general, have been removed from their jobs. Strict disciplinary proceedings against officers, including three major generals and seven brigadiers, have been completed in connection with the May 9 incidents," the military had said earlier. The PML-N party has declared Khan the mastermind of the attacks on military installations and demanded that the "PTI leadership involved in this crime should not be allowed to contest upcoming general elections on February 8, 2024."

General elections in cash-strapped Pakistan general elections are scheduled to be held on February 8. The military establishment has already carved out two parties — Istekham-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) and PTI-Parliamentarian — from the PTI. It is also not allowing Khan's party to participate in any political activity. In a fresh round of action against the PTI party, police in Punjab alone arrested over 500 of its workers in connection with attacks on state buildings.

The PTI Core Committee has strongly condemned the state's coercive tactics and reprisal actions against the party workers and leaders that continued even after the announcement of the poll date. "The nation will not accept rigged polls held in such an uneven electoral field and with state interference," it said. Khan is currently detained at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi in the cipher case in which he is accused of making public the content of a diplomatic cable from Pakistan's embassy in Washington in March, 2022. The former-cricketer-turned-politician was ousted through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. More than 150 cases have been registered against him since his ouster from power.

Pak court acquits Nawaz Sharif in Avenfield case

Islamabad (PTI) In a major relief to Nawaz Sharif ahead of elections, a top Pakistani court on Wednesday acquitted the former prime minister in the Avenfield corruption case while his acquittal in another case was maintained after an appeal by the anti-graft body challenging it was withdrawn.

A two-member Islamabad High Court bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict after hearing the appeal filed by Sharif against his conviction in the Avenfield corruption case in which he was sentenced to 10 years in jail in 2018. In the same year, the 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme was acquitted by a trial court in the Flagship corruption case but the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the anti-corruption watchdog, had challenged his acquittal in the IHC.

Xi goes on inspection tour of Shanghai

PTI ■ BEIJING/SHANGHAI

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday inspected key commercial establishments in Shanghai, home to some of the biggest foreign firms, as he attempted to shore up business confidence in China amid dwindling inflow of foreign investment and the movement of supply chains out of the country. This is his first visit to Shanghai since the city was hit hard by COVID-19 leading to the harsh two-month-long lockdown in 2022 during which its 25 million population was confined to their dwellings under Xi's 'zero COVID' policy. He visited the gleaming eastern Chinese city last in 2021. Xi, 70, in the last two days, inspected the Shanghai Futures Exchange, an exhibition on Shanghai's sci-tech innovations, and a government-subsidised

rental housing community, learning about the city's efforts in strengthening its competitiveness as an international financial centre, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. His visit was aimed at building the city into an international sci-tech innovation centre, and constructing government-subsidised rental housing projects, it said. Shanghai is the home for top foreign firms like Tesla, General Motors, Walt Disney and the 10-year-old Shanghai Free-Trade Zone (FTZ), a testing ground for China's economic reforms. Since, 2021, the world's second-largest economy has been hit hard by recurring and prolonged lockdowns of various cities which exacerbated China's economic woes, denting the business confidence including its once-booming property sector. Xi's first visit came close on his successful visit to the US this

month where he had a "strategic and historic" summit with US President Joe Biden during which the two leaders agreed to tone down their harsh policies and rhetoric against each other. While their summit sparked speculation of a subtle shift in US-China power dynamics, Xi in his address to the APEC CEO summit in San Francisco pledged to tear down foreign investment barriers and promised to invite foreign capital with "heart-warming" measures. "We will strive to tear down the barriers to the flow of innovation factors, deepen reform of the digital economy, and promote free and orderly flow of data in compliance with the law," he said in his speech aimed at raising sagging business confidence in China leading to shifting of supply chains. Ahead of his inspections in

Shanghai, Xi ordered greater protection for international firms' rights and intellectual property in a bid to address concerns of foreign companies over crackdowns and raids on multinationals and favourable treatment for domestic competitors. On Tuesday official media quoted him telling a high-powered political bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China that id China must ensure "comprehensive, open and transparent" legal treatment of foreign entities. The country's legal system should "strengthen protection of intellectual property rights," he said, as well as "safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of foreign enterprises." China must "create a market-oriented, legal and international first-class business environment", Xi said. "It is important to raise the awareness of legal compliance,

including guiding Chinese citizens and enterprises to abide by local laws and regulations and customs when going abroad, and that they should apply laws and rules to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests" official media quoted Xi as saying. Observers say China's current economic woes were largely attributed to Xi's emphasis more on security issues denting business confidence. "In the past five years, however, security concerns have taken top priority," Post columnist Wang Xiangwei said. Last year, in his keynote speech at the 20th Communist Party national congress, Xi spoke of pursuing development as the government's central task but devoted far more time to national security and social stability, Wang wrote in his column in the Post on Monday.

Russian court extends detention of Wall Street Journal reporter

AP ■ MOSCOW

A court in Moscow has extended the detention of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, arrested on espionage charges, until January 30, Russian news agencies reported. The hearing took place behind closed doors on Tuesday because authorities say details of the criminal case against the American journalist are classified.

Gershkovich, 32, was detained in March while on a reporting trip to the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, about 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) east of Moscow. Russia's Federal Security Service alleged that the reporter, "acting on the instructions of the American side, collected information constituting a state secret about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex."

Gershkovich and the Journal deny the allegations, and the US government has declared him to be wrongfully detained. Russian authorities haven't detailed any evidence to support the espionage charges. Gershkovich is the first American reporter to be charged with espionage in Russia since 1986, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for US News and World Report, was arrested at Moscow's Lefortovo prison, notorious for its harsh conditions.

Analysts have pointed out that Moscow may be using jailed Americans as bargaining chips after US-Russian tensions soared when Russia sent troops into Ukraine. At least 20 US citizens arrested in Russia in recent years — including WNBA star Brittney Griner — have been exchanged for Russians jailed in the US. The Russian Foreign Ministry has said it will consider a swap for Gershkovich only after a verdict in his trial. In Russia, espionage trials can last for more than a year.



From third left, Latvia's Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pose during a meeting of the NATO Ukraine Council in NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday. NATO foreign ministers conclude a two-day meeting on Wednesday, in which they discussed Ukraine, tensions in the Western Balkans and preparations for NATO's 75th anniversary next year.

'At least 40 civilians killed by al-Qaida-linked rebels'

Abuja (AP) At least 40 civilians were killed last weekend by al-Qaida-linked rebels trying to take control of a besieged town in Burkina Faso's hard-hit northern region, the United Nations' rights office said, calling the attack a war crime. In one of the largest clashes in recent years in the West African nation under threat from fighters linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, a large number of fighters tried to take control of Djibo near Mali's border.

The town, located 210 kilometres (130 miles) from the capital, Ouagadougou, has been under blockade by rebels for more than a year, often struggling to provide essential services. The militants in the latest attack, which happened on Sunday, also wounded 42 people and set fire to three camps for internally displaced people, U.N. Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango said in a statement on Tuesday that blamed the attack on JNIM, an umbrella coalition of armed groups aligned with al-Qaida. "Deliberately targeting civilians

Kuwait's ruling emir, 86, facing health issues

Dubai (AP) The ruling emir of oil-rich Kuwait was hospitalised on Wednesday "due to an emergency health problem" but later reported to be in stable condition, renewing the longstanding concerns over his health since he became ruler in 2020. The report by the state-run KUNA news agency did not elaborate on the problem faced by 86-year-old Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah. However, Sheikh Nawaf has handed over power several times during his rule to his deputy while facing medical checks and other issues. Given Sheikh Nawaf's age, the emergency renews concerns about his health. State-run news previously reported that he travelled to the United States for unspecified medical checks in March 2021. The health of Kuwait's leaders remains a sensitive matter in the tiny Mideast nation bordering Iraq and Saudi Arabia which has seen internal power struggles behind palace doors.

NZ leader plans to ban cellphone use in schools

Wellington (AP) New Zealand's new prime minister plans to ban cellphone use in schools and repeal tobacco controls in the ambitious agenda he released on Wednesday for his first 100 days in office. Christopher Luxon outlined 49 actions he said his conservative government intended to take over the next three months. The first new law he planned to pass would narrow the central bank's mandate to focus purely on keeping inflation in check, he said. That would change the Reserve Bank's current dual focus on low inflation and high employment. Many of the actions in the 100-day plan involve repealing initiatives from the previous liberal government, which had been in office for six years. The new efforts include a plan to double renewable energy production. Luxon said many of the measures were aimed at improving the economy. Many of the plans are proving contentious, including the one to repeal tobacco restrictions approved last year by the previous government. Those included requirements for low nicotine levels in cigarettes, fewer retailers and a lifetime ban for youth. Luxon's government has said that ending the tobacco restrictions — which were not due to take effect until next year — would bring in more tax dollars, although Luxon said Wednesday it wasn't a case of trading health for money. "We are sticking with the status quo," Luxon said. "We are going to continue to drive smoking rates down across New Zealand under our government." Critics say the plan is a setback for public health and a win for the tobacco industry. Two education initiatives — one requiring schools to teach an hour of reading, writing and math each day, and another banning cellphone use — reflect a sentiment among some voters that schools have strayed from their primary mission.

Myanmar, China conduct naval drills together

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar and China are conducting naval drills together as the military government in the Southeast Asian nation borders ground in its northeast border region to a coalition of militias that also has strong ties to Beijing. State-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper said Wednesday that three Chinese vessels were anchored in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, and that officials from both nations met Tuesday to discuss the maritime security exercises. The Chinese vessels — the destroyer Zibo, frigate Jing Zhou and supply ship Qian Dao Hu — carry about 700 sailors and arrived at the Myanmar port Monday. The report didn't give more details on the drills. Myanmar's military seized power

from an elected government in 2021 and since has been in armed conflict with pro-democracy forces and ethnic militias. The visit of the Chinese vessels comes during an upsurge in violence on Myanmar's border with China by the Three Brotherhood Alliance, a group of militias that launched a coordinated offensive against the ruling military on Oct. 27. China is Myanmar's biggest trading partner and maintains good relations with the ruling generals. The groups in the alliance also have good relations with China and have vowed to protect foreign investments such as Chinese-backed projects in territory they control. The alliance has claimed widespread victories including four border crossings in the northern part of Shan state, and the military gov-

ernment acknowledged soon after fighting began that it had lost three towns. The alliance's offensive has energized the nationwide armed struggle to overthrow the military regime that was installed after the army seized power, and fighting has spread to many parts of the country. On Wednesday, the resistance forces in the northwestern Chin state seized a small town in Matupi township bordering India, according to Salai Danny, a spokesperson of the Chinland Defense Force-Zotung militia group. Beijing has called for a cease-fire and has said the warring parties should try and resolve their differences through dialogue. It has not, however, used its influence with the militia groups to pressure them to put an end to the fighting.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Devender Sharma is in process to purchase the Freehold Industrial Back side portion of Plot no. 10/3 area measuring 200 sq. yds. in Block 6 out of total area measuring 438 sq. yds. Situated at industrial area Lawrence Road Delhi (prevailing from Pramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd.) from Anil Kumar Gupta, who inherited the same vide Will dated 03.05.2011 executed by Sh. Prem Chand (Doc. no. 2138) read with MCO Mutation dated 21.03.2013. All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, purchase, mortgage (equitable/legal or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise whatsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. (Kamal Kant Gupta, Advocate) Unit No. FF-2, First Floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vileshahi, Gazi., U.P., Mob. 9810063531

Baba Farid University of Health
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203
Ph.01639-256232, 256236
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items/services upto 21.12.2023
1) External painting including preparation of concrete surface (North face) of GGS Hospital, Faridkot 2) Special Repair of Outer face of Academic Block (Center of Excellence) Building of BFUHS, Faridkot 3) Replacement of Fallen puff sheets and false ceiling of Auditorium of SINPMS, Badal 4) Construction of waiting shed for patients in open area between OPD Block & X-Ray Block at GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot 5) Up gradation of cooling of AC system of Lecture Theater No.3 (by providing 22 ton ductable AC with plenum) of GGS Medical College, Faridkot 6) Operation & Maintenance (O & M) of 22 KLD Capacity E.T.P installed at Nursing College & Civil Hospital at Jalalabad for two years 7) Repair & overhauling of 12 person (MGs ECE) lift with AMC of 4 years after one year guarantee period installed at GGS Medical College, Faridkot.
E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 27.12.2023
1) Supply and installation of Green Laser Machine 2) Procurement of Leadfree Coat Aprons with attached Thyroid Shield for GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot 3) Procurement of UTM (Freehold) 4) smart 85/86" Projector and IT equipments 4) Procurement of UTM (Freehold) 5) Procurement of Comestible Cartidges 6) Supply of Printer, Scanner and MFP 7) Disposal of E-Waste (Electronic Waste) 8) Hiring Agency to provide Services to conduct Computer Based Tests (CBT)
Terms and conditions can be downloaded from <http://proc.punjab.gov.in>. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e. www.bfhuhs.ac.in
Registrar
00/12/148/2023/30148 Dated CHD :- 11/29/2023

Sensex jumps 727 pts on foreign fund inflows

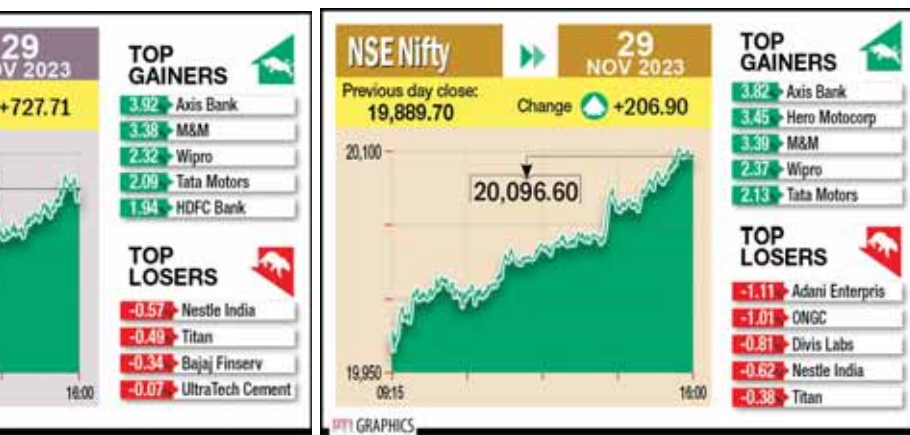
McCap of BSE listed firms hits \$4-trn milestone

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rallied 727 points and Nifty closed above the 20,000 mark on Wednesday driven by buying in heavyweight HDFC Bank, Axis Bank ICICI and TCS on expectations of more foreign fund inflows. In a remarkable day for Indian equities, the combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone for the first time on Wednesday. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 727.71 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 66,901.91 with 26 of its components ending in the green and four in the red. The index started the day on a positive note and later zoomed 772.08 points or



1.16 per cent to a high of 66,946.28. The broader Nifty climbed 206.90 points or 1.04 per cent to reclaim the 20,000- mark after a gap of over two months. It ended at 20,096.60. Among the Sensex firms, Axis Bank rose the most by 3.92 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra surged by 3.38 per cent, Wipro by 2.32 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.09 per cent, HDFC Bank by 1.94 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 1.51 per cent.



ICICI Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Bharti Airtel were also among major gainers. Nestle, Titan, Bajaj Finserv and UltraTech Cement were the laggards. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone, mirroring an optimistic trend in equities. It took just 2.5 years to hit the USD 4-trillion landmark after

the market capitalisation of BSE listed companies touched the USD 3-trillion mark on May 24, 2021. "The market saw incredible upward momentum today, Nifty surpassing the 20,000 mark, driven by strong listing gains of ongoing IPOs and dovish statements from US Fed officials, intensifying expectations for early rate cuts. This was demonstrated by the rise in mid & small caps and drop in US bond yields

and dollar index. "Ease in yield is attracting foreign funds to emerging markets," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.78 per cent and the smallcap index climbed 0.40 per cent. Among the indices, bankex jumped 1.67 per cent, auto rallied 1.57 per cent, IT (1.33 per cent), financial services (1.28 per cent), teck (1.20 per cent),

oil & gas (0.99 per cent) and capital goods (0.89 per cent). Consumer durables and realty were the laggards. Raising hopes of more foreign fund inflows, market reports stated that the US-based Federal Reserve Thrift Investment Board has announced plans to transition to a new MSCI Index which could lead to more than USD 3 billion of inflows into Indian equities. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading mostly with gains. The US markets ended marginally up on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 783.82 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.54 per cent to USD 82.12 a barrel. The BSE benchmark climbed 204.16 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 66,174.20 on Tuesday. The Nifty gained 95 points or 0.48 per cent to 19,889.70.

Second quarter GDP numbers likely to be good: Eco Affairs Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is showing momentum and the growth rate in the second quarter (July-September) is likely to be good, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said on Wednesday. The GDP numbers for the second quarter are scheduled to be released on Thursday. The economy grew at 7.8 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year. "India economy showed good momentum in the second quarter. The second quarter numbers should be good," Seth told reporters on the sidelines of a national workshop on 'Leveraging private finance for urban infrastructure developments -- Learnings from G20 Infrastructure Working Group'. He further said that the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent for the current financial year was feasible despite additional



outgo towards food subsidy. "We are confident of meeting fiscal deficit target this year despite the government raising food subsidy for the next five years," Seth said. The Budget 2023-24 proposes to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the GDP from 6.4 per cent in the previous financial year. The government proposes to further bring down the fiscal deficit to less than 4.5 per cent of the GDP by 2025-26.

Birla Sun Life collects ₹800 cr from transport & logistics fund NFO



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd on Wednesday said it has collected nearly Rs 800 crore through its transport and logistics scheme during the new fund offering (NFO) period. The asset management company mobilised the amount from its thematic fund -- Aditya Birla Sun Life Transport and Logistics Fund -- during the NFO period from October 27 to November 10. The fund reopened for subscription on November 21. The open-ended equity oriented thematic fund received a huge response from 53,777 investors and has garnered a total of Rs 798.89 crore, the company said in a statement. "This fund is a unique offering that captures the growth potential of the transportation and

logistics sector, which is a key driver of the Indian economy. The fund aims to provide long-term capital appreciation by investing in companies that are well-positioned to benefit from the structural changes and emerging trends in the sector," A Balasubramanian, Managing Director and CEO at Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, said. The company said that the transportation and logistics theme is vibrant and fast-growing and the theme has robust growth drivers on both the demand and supply side. The transportation theme includes sectors such as automobiles and auto ancillary, while the logistics theme includes sectors like ports, warehousing/supply chain, e-commerce and allied sectors. These sectors common to both themes would be shipping, railways, infrastructure and airlines.

UltraTech Cement acquires cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement for ₹169.79 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement Ltd on Wednesday said it has acquired the cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd in Jharkhand for Rs 169.79 crore. The company has acquired

0.54 mtpa cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd, located at Patrattu in Jharkhand, UltraTech Cement said in a regulatory filing. "The acquisition has been carried out at a consideration of Rs 169.79 crore in terms of the provisions of the Securitisation and



Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002," it added. This investment marks the company's entry in Jharkhand, the filing said, adding the company's capacity in India

now stands at 133 mtpa. Last year state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) had put up for sale the account of loss-making Burnpur Cement and invited bids from Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to recover loans outstanding of over Rs 50 crore.

Hiranandani says no IPO plans in 2024

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Hiranandani Group does not have any plans for an Initial Public Offering in 2024, and may look at hitting the capital markets in 2025, a top company official said on Wednesday. Niranjan Hiranandani, the Founder and Managing Director of the city-based group, said internal accruals are sufficient to take care of business requirements at present and all projects being undertaken do not require any funding support. "I have no plans at present... (there is) no need for capital today. But let us see. I haven't decided anything in that direction, but never (say) no. Not (in) 2024, may be 2025," Hiranandani told PTI, replying to a specific query on the company's IPO plans. A slew of its peers from the city, including Rustomjee and Lodha Group (Macrotech Developers), have listed over the last few years. The group announced an expansion into the consul-

tancy services space on Wednesday, wherein it will offer a slew of services, including liasoning, design and marketing, which spread out over the entire lifespan of a realty project, to clients. Hiranandani said the idea is to offer the services on an "à la carte" basis, wherein the client can choose the kind of help the entity needs. The group will charge 12-20 per cent of the cost as its fees, depending on the complexity of work it does, he said. The newly launched service christened 'Eleva' will work across new developments, brownfield expansions, slum rehabilitation and building redevelopment, Hiranandani said, adding that 85 per cent of the people working in the vertical will be its existing staff, while the rest will be junior-level staff who will be hired. He exuded confidence of breaking even in the new business in a year. He said poor execution of projects in Mumbai is a real issue, and pointed out that over 500 projects are stuck



due to some shortcoming or the other. The group will be selective in the project it chooses to work with, Hiranandani said, adding that it will not work

with large-scale projects like the Adani Group's Dharavi project and restrict itself to smaller projects. He said Dharavi accounts for only 10 per cent of the slums

in the city, while the 90 per cent will continue to exist even if the Adani-led projects fructify. It is possible to do away with all the slum structures in the city in 5-6 years, Hiranandani said, adding that he is preparing a plan on the same, which will be submitted to the PM under the aegis of an industry lobby grouping. Asked about his son Darshan virtually admitting to bribing lawmaker Mohua Moitra to ask Parliamentary questions, Hiranandani refused to comment. Hiranandani said interest rate cut and a new version of Prime Minister's Awas Yojana, which does away with the Rs 45 lakh ceiling for a property to classify as affordable, can help prop-up sagging sales of affordable housing. Hiranandani said in his career spanning over four decades, he has never seen a decline in sales of low-cost housing. However, he added that mid-range, premium, and luxury segments have seen impressive growth in the recent past.

India, S Korea in Asia Pacific to see heightened real estate investment activities: Colliers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and South Korea in the Asia Pacific region are expected to witness heightened investment activities across various real estate asset classes as global investors look to tap the growth potential in these two key markets, according to Colliers India. Real estate consultant Colliers released its 2024 Global Investor Outlook on Wednesday along with Asia Pacific highlights. The consultant expects "high activity in more growth-oriented destinations such as India and South Korea, given the return of investor confidence and the opportunities they offer." The report highlighted that India is expected to remain one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, led by private consumption and capital formation. Institutional investment in real estate soared 27 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of 2023, with a noticeable surge in deals targeting industrial and residential, both sectors closely connected to the country's robust growth trajectory. Institutional investors are specifically capitalising on India's data centre growth story, sparked by the stable Govt clears Terms of Reference of



16th Finance Commission New Delhi, Nov 29 (PTI) The government has cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for devolution of taxes between the Centre and states and also review financing disaster management initiatives, for five years beginning April 1, 2026. The commission would submit its report for the five-year period (2026-27 to 2030-31) to the President by October 31, 2025, an official statement said. Besides tax devolution and states' revenue augmentation

measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. "The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover a period of five years commencing April 1, 2026," the statement said.

REL board has no power to reject open offer, says Burman family

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Burman family, which is blocked in a battle with the management of Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL) for takeover of the company said that the board of the NBFC does not have the "power or authority" to reject their open offer to pick up controlling stake. "It only has the power to recommend the Open Offer to the shareholders," the Burman family spokesperson said in a statement. It is a separate matter, that the shareholders have already seen the governance lapses in REL and whether the directors can be said to be discharging their duties correctly, it said, adding, it is for the shareholders to decide whether to tender the shares in the open offer, or stay invested. "In fact, the board issued a press release dated September 25, 2023 welcoming our investment in REL. The Open Offer price is calculated as per the formula provided in the SEBI Takeover Regulations. As per this formula, the calculation comes to around Rs 221," it said. The open offer price of Rs 235, is at a premium to that price. "Keeping the overall share-

holder interest in mind, we will move towards closing the transaction expeditiously working with all the regulators. Given our credentials, an overwhelming majority of the shareholders are supportive of the proposed transaction and we remain confident that under our guidance, REL's performance would see significant uptrends," it said. The statement comes after Hamid Ahmed, an independent director at Religare Enterprises and CEO of Hamdard Laboratories, has criticised the timing of the Burman family's open offer to acquire more shares in the financial services company. Ahmed emphasised that the board has unanimously rejected the offer, citing its inferior merits and a proposal to replace both board members and management. Entities controlled by the Burman family -- promoters of FMCG major Dabur -- have written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and stock exchanges that REL Chairperson Rashmi Saluja sold a portion of her personal holdings in Religare Enterprises Ltd a day after meeting a representative of the Burmans on September 20.

Govt clears terms of reference of 16th Finance Commission

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover a period of five years commencing April 1, 2026," the statement said. The Cabinet meeting was held on Tuesday. Names of the chairperson and members of 16th Finance Commission would be finalised soon, an official said. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for 16th Finance Commission will be notified in due course.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NFL LEADS AGRI DRONE DEMONSTRATIONS DURING VIKSIT BHARAT YATRA
Punjab: NFL is undertaking number of agriculture drone demonstrations of Nano and Water Soluble Fertilizers in Punjab for farmers during the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. Recently, Secretary (Fertilizers) Rajat Kumar Mishra participated in one of the Drone Demonstrations of Nano Urea Spray on crops in Village Manakpur Kallar in presence of CMD NFL, U Saravanan.

ECOZEN HELPS FARMERS WITH SMART SOLAR PUMP CONTROLLERS
Haryana: Farmers in Haryana now getting India's first 4G-enabled smart solar-powered pump controller, known as the Ecotron, available through Ecozen Solutions under PM KUSUM Yojana with a 75 per cent subsidy. A key player in cleantech, Ecozen specialises in developing climate-smart technology solutions that help farmers improve in farm yield, reduce waste and increase farm earnings.

Malabar Gold launches 335th global store

New Delhi: Malabar Gold & Diamonds has made history as the first Indian jewellery retailer to open in Canada with their new store in Mississauga, at Heartland Town Centre within the Greater Toronto Area. With this, the brand marks its extensive brand presence, with 335 stores spread across the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman,

KSA, Bahrain, Singapore, Malaysia, the USA, the UK, Canada, and India. "The opening of our first store in Canada brings me immense pride and joy, marking a significant milestone for us as the first Indian international jewellery brand to begin operations in Canada," said Malabar Group Chairman MP Ahammed.

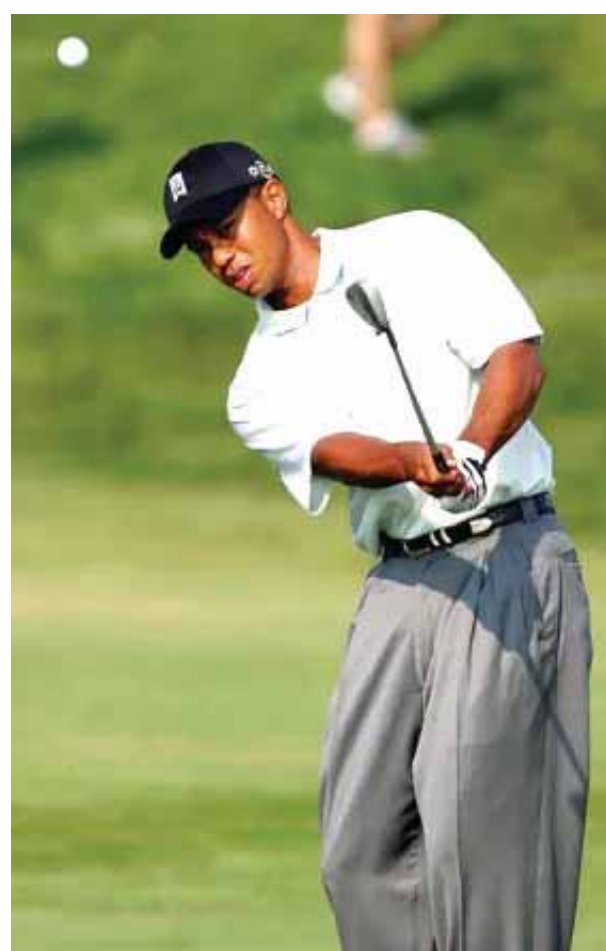
Hooda, Kiran win at Syed Modi International

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

India's Kidambi Srikanth bowed out with a straight-game loss in the opening round but young Unnati Hooda shocked compatriot Aakarshi Kashyap to make it to the second round of the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Wednesday. Former world no. 1 Srikanth, a 2021 World Championships silver medallist, lost 21-23 8-21 to Korea's Chia Hao Lee, continuing his dismal run in international circuit this season. The 16-year-old Unnati, who is touted as one of the finest talents in women's singles, rallied her way to a stunning 15-21 21-19 21-18 win over Kashyap in a 77-minute Round of 32 clash of the BWF Super 300 tournament. The young shuttler from Rohtak will next face Japan's former world champion Nozomi Okuhara, who prevailed 18-21 21-17 21-10 over another Indian Malvika Bansod in another match. Anupama Upadhyaya, Ashmita Chaliha also progressed in the women's singles.



While Anupama defeated Amalie Schulz of Denmark 14-21 21-15 21-9, Ashmita got rid of Polina Buhrova of Ukraine 21-15 21-15 in another match. In men's singles, Orleans Masters winner Priyanshu Rajawat, Denmark Masters winner Kiran George and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran entered the second round with fine victories in men's singles competition. Priyanshu beat Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Panarin 21-17 21-19, while Kiran saw off Chirag Sen -- Lakshya sen's brother -- 21-16 14-21 21-13 and Sathish got past Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu Kai. Priyanshu will face Sathish in an all-Indian clash, while Kiran meets Chia. Sameer Verma, however, went down fighting 9-21 21-17 17-21 to Wang Tzu Wei of Chinese Taipei. In doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto notched up a 21-8 21-9 win over compatriot Samridhi Singh and Sonali Singh in the first round. They will face another all-Indian pair -- Rutaparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda -- in the round of 16.



Tiger gets motivation from Nadal

PTI ■ NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

Golf great Tiger Woods is making a much-awaited comeback with the Hero World Challenge this week and he is both curious and excited to see how his ageing and injury battered body could tackle the task. The 15-time major winner will be teeing off for the first time since withdrawing from the Masters after the first two rounds in April. The American had a subtalar fusion surgery on his right ankle two weeks after his withdrawal to deal with the arthritis caused by injuries suffered in a major car accident in 2021. The 47-year-old, who has been playing professional golf for more than 25 years, still loves to compete and has arrived at Albany with an aim to win the tournament he hosts. "I love competing. I love playing. I miss being out here with the guys ... And the overall banter," Woods said at the media interaction while sitting alongside Hero MotoCorp executive chairman Pawan Munjal. "What drives me is that I love to compete. There will come a point in time, I haven't come around to it fully yet, where I won't be able to win again ... When it comes, I will walk away," he said. When asked if he can win again, Woods said: "absolutely." Woods has chosen this tournament as his comeback event for the third time, considering it acts as a springboard for the following PGA Tour season. He is targeting competing in one tournament a month. On walking the course over four days, Woods sounded confident of lasting the distance. "I feel it is a poor decision and it's hugely frustrating for us as you know how little time there is left in the game," Howe said. "There is nothing we can do about it now." Newcastle must now win its home game against last-place AC Milan on Dec. 13 and hope PSG fails to win at Dortmund. The second-place team advances to the Champions League round of 16 and the third-place team goes to the Europa League knockout playoffs.

I have not done this in a while," said the sporting royalty. Woods was also expectedly asked about the proposed merger between PGA Tour and Saudi-backed Liv Golf, the framework for which was announced in June. As a new member on the PGA Tour Policy Board, Woods' opinion on the subject is of even more significance. He is frustrated at the slowness of the process but was optimistic that the December 31 deadline could be met. "I'm pleased at the process and how it's evolved. I am also frustrated by some of the slowness and the governance change that we want to have happen. "And December 31st is coming up very quickly, so there's the timetable there that we would like to implement some of these changes that have not taken place. "The guys, all the player directors have spent so many hours and worked tirelessly hours to make sure that we have the best deal for all the players that are involved, the entire PGA Tour," said Woods, who was not pleased at all about the players not being consulted before the proposed merger announcement. Nadal is extraordinary. Tennis superstar and his friend Rafael Nadal has visited the Albany Golf Course in the past to watch Woods play. Nadal too is on a comeback trail and Woods can only get an extra dose of motivation seeing his friend's steely resolve. "Well, I think what Rafa, what he's done is extraordinary. I mean, he won the Australian Open on a broken foot. The guy's beyond tough and beyond competitive. "He knows that Father Time is here. Every athlete faces it. Although some sports it happens faster than others, and unfortunately just like every sport, you get aged out. "I don't want to see him go. I never wanted to see Federer go, but that's what happened. We should all enjoy watching him compete and watching him play and what he's meant to the game, what he's meant to all of us, just to see the passion of how he plays and why he plays."

Manish overcomes top seed Orlov



PTI ■ KALABURAGI (KARNATAKA)

Manish Sureshkumar scripted the first upset victory of the ITF Kalaburagi Open when he ousted the top seed Vladyslav Orlov in the first round of the USD 25,000 prize money event, here on Wednesday. The 24-year-old played amazing shots to take the first set 6-3 and was leading 2-0 before his Ukrainian rival threw in the towel citing a shoulder injury, which seemed more out of frustration than being in pain. Qualifier Rishi Reddy become the second player from Karnataka to enter the last 16 stage as he battled fatigue and won against Parth Aggarwal 6-4, 7-5. Meanwhile, the seeded players sailed into the pre-quarterfinals without breaking much sweat. The fourth seeded Siddharth Rawat - the highest ranked Indian left in the fray - overcame Taisei Ichikawa from Japan 6-3, 6-4 while fifth seed Ramkumar Ramanathan, who is just back from lifting the ITF 25K title in Mumbai for his second win in as many months, blanked qualifier Ajay Malik 6-0, 6-0 in just 40 minutes. Sixth seed Rishab Agarwal faced some resistance from wild card entrant Jagmeet Singh before overcoming 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. The top seeded pair of Purav Raja and Ramkumar were knocked out of the doubles competition by the duo of Sai Karteek Reddy Ganta and Kabir Hans, who won in straight sets 7-5, 6-3 to enter the quarterfinals. This was the fifth time that the 24-year-old Manish and Orlov were meeting, with each having won twice. The player from Chennai raced to a 4-0 lead courtesy two breaks in the second and fourth. However, the visitor, who was once ranked as low as 45th on the ITF rankings, showed signs of recovery by breaking Manish's serve in the fifth game and held his serve to reduce the margin. Both the players gave a fine example of themselves, especially Manish, who, on many occasions, foiled his opponent's attempt to attack the net which irritated Orlov, who lost his cool and his serve in the eighth game and eventually lost the first set 3-6. In the second set, the Indian broke his opponent's serve in very first game and pocketed the second after which Orlov quit the match. "It's a great start, beating the top seed. I knew his game as we have played before. I grew in confidence during the first few games. My aim was to keep the ball in the court and I managed to do it," said Manish.

Ganemat, Anantjeet win maiden national titles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ganemat Sekhon and Anantjeet Singh Naruka, arguably India's number one women's and men's skeet shooters at present, added another feather to their cap by winning maiden individual senior national titles here on Wednesday.

Competing at the 66th National Shooting Championship Competitions for shotgun shooters, Punjab's Ganemat and Rajasthan's Anantjeet took contrasting paths towards the same result. Ganemat shot a below-par 116

in qualification and had to come through a five-way shoot-off for four final qualifying places, before shooting down 56 targets to win the 60-shot final. Qualifiers leader Zahra Deesawala was second with 55 hits while Sanjana Sood was third with 44.

In men's skeet, Anantjeet shot at a different level, registering a pillar to post victory. He topped the qualifiers with a 123 out of 125. The next best in the field was 121. In the six-man final, he gunned down 58 out of 60 targets to leave silver-winning Muneek Battula

well behind on 55. Bhavtegh Gill won bronze hitting 45 out of the first 50 targets. Earlier this year, Ganemat won two medals including a gold and silver in ISSF World Cups while Anantjeet won an Asian Games silver in men's skeet at Hangzhou.

Guardiola walks off smiling as City stays perfect

AP ■ ROME

On a night of unconvincing performances from Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, Pep Guardiola walked off smiling following a comeback victory for Manchester City in the Champions League. Phil Foden inspired a second-half comeback as City beat Leipzig 3-2 on Tuesday to take first place in Group G and extend its perfect record to five wins in five matches. It's the seventh straight season that City has won its group. The defending champions trailed 2-0 at halftime but Foden scored one goal and helped to create two more to turn the match around and Guardiola had a smirk on his face when he shook hands with Leipzig counterpart Marco Rose after the final whistle. "We had to be relaxed as possible, and we reacted really well," Guardiola said. "We are first in the group and I am very satisfied for the reaction at the end. The team runs and fights and has spirit." Kylian Mbappé's penalty deep into stoppage time salvaged a point for PSG in a 1-1 draw with an injury-depleted but tenacious Newcastle team. In the tight Group F, Borussia Dortmund advanced with a 3-1 victory at Milan, a semifinalist last season. Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Lazio also advanced. Portuguese duo João Félix and João Cancelo each scored as Barcelona defeated Porto 2-1 to return to the knockout phase after consecutive group-stage eliminations. It will be the first time since Lionel Messi left the club that Barcelona will be playing in the round of 16.



on course to pull off another unlikely win to follow the 4-1 victory over the same opposition last month. That was until Ousmane Dembélé flicked the ball up in the fifth minute of stoppage time and it bounced off Tino Livramento's chest and onto his arm. Referee Szymon Marciniak gave a penalty after watching the incident on video review and Mbappé blasted the spot-kick past goalkeeper Nick Pope. At the San Siro, Marco Reus gave Dortmund an early lead from the spot after Olivier Giroud had a penalty of his own saved for Milan. Although Samuel Chukwueze leveled at the end of the first half, goals from Jamie Bynoe-Gittens and substitute Karim Adeyemi gave the visitors the win they needed to book their spot in the last 16. Dortmund leads with 10 points, followed by PSG (7), Newcastle (5) and Milan (5). PSG, Newcastle and Milan are all still in contention and Dortmund is still fighting to win the group ahead of the last round with Dortmund hosting PSG and Newcastle hosting Milan.

GROUP E Ciro Immobile scored twice in the final 10 minutes and Lazio beat Celtic 2-0. Atletico then defeated Feyenoord 3-1 with the help of two own-goals to seal its spot in the next round and also send Lazio through. Atletico leads with 11 points, followed by Lazio (10), Feyenoord (6) and Celtic (1). In the final group matches on Dec. 13, Lazio visits Atletico in a match that will determine which club wins the group.

GROUP F In Paris, Alexander Isak scored on a rebound for Newcastle early on after PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma pushed away a shot to Isak's feet for an easy finish. PSG wasted chance after chance and Newcastle seemed

VAR official removed from Champions League game

AP ■ GENEVA

A video review official has been removed from his Champions League game on Wednesday, one day after having a key role in a disputed decision to award Paris Saint-Germain a stoppage-time penalty for handball against Newcastle which contradicted UEFA's own advice to referees. The VAR specialist from Poland, Tomasz Kwiatkowski, is no longer listed to work at the Real Sociedad-Salzburg game and has been replaced by a German match official. In Paris on Tuesday, Kylian Mbappé scored in the eighth minute of stoppage time to salvage a 1-1 draw after a ball struck Newcastle defender Tino Livramento in the chest and then deflected off his arm, and a penalty was awarded by Polish referee Szymon Marciniak following a VAR review. Marciniak refereed the Champions League final last season and the 2022 World Cup final with Kwiatkowski in his team. Marciniak initially allowed play to continue Tuesday but awarded the penalty after he was advised by his video assistant to review the incident on the pitchside monitor. However, a UEFA panel of storied coaches and former players said in April that "no handball offense should be called on a player if the ball is previously deflected from his own body, and, in particular, when the ball does not go towards the goal." The advice to be given to match officials this season was detailed by the panel, chaired by UEFA Chief of Football Zvonimir Boban, in an April 25 statement headlined "UEFA Football Board urges more clarity on handball rule."



"The handball rule, for example, will always be disputed, but we can make it more consistent and aligned with the game's true nature," Boban, the former Croatia and AC Milan great, said in April. UEFA declined to comment Wednesday, in line with a policy not to discuss field of play decisions. The current laws of the game allow for handballs to be penalized even if the contact was not intentional and after a deflection if a defender's arm is judged to be in an unnatural position. "But his hand is not in an unnatural position," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said after the game, "(his hands) are down by his side, but he is in a running motion." The cross from Ousmane Dembélé that struck

Livramento was also going backward - and not towards goal. The penalty decision in the PSG game directly affected the standings in the tightly fought Group F, as it kept PSG two points clear of Newcastle in the second qualifying place for the round of 16 behind group leader Borussia Dortmund. "I feel it is a poor decision and it's hugely frustrating for us as you know how little time there is left in the game," Howe said. "There is nothing we can do about it now." Newcastle must now win its home game against last-place AC Milan on Dec. 13 and hope PSG fails to win at Dortmund. The second-place team advances to the Champions League round of 16 and the third-place team goes to the Europa League knockout playoffs.

Kalinga Super Cup to kick off on January 9

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Kalinga Super Cup, to be played at two venues in Odisha from January 9, will feature both the ISL and I-League teams with the winners being nominated to play in the AFC Champions League 2 Preliminary Stage. "The format of the tournament will consist of four groups of four teams each, who will play single-leg matches amongst themselves. The group winners will qualify for the semifinals followed



by the final to be played on January 28," said All India Football Federation in a statement on Wednesday. The I-League teams will play the qualifiers to get into the group stage of the Kalinga Super Cup where four slots have been reserved for them in the group stage. "The Champions of Kalinga Super Cup will be nominated to play in the ACL 2 Preliminary Stage of AFC 2023-24 season," said the AIFF. AIFF president Kalyan

Chaubey said, "As per the decision we took earlier, the annual Super Cup tournament will now be organised in a bigger and broader perspective. "The tournament will now be known as Kalinga Super Cup and will be played in Odisha in January 2024. "This is a positive development for Indian domestic football. I am confident the Kalinga Super Cup will be a huge hit both in terms of organisation and spectator interest," he added.

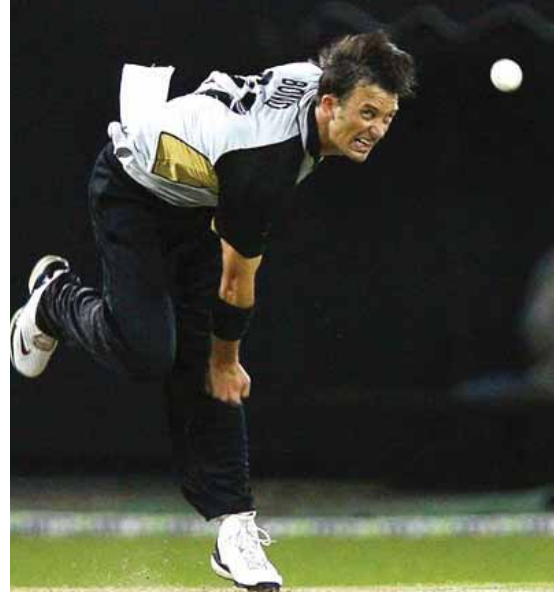
India Women's A pip England Women's A by 3 runs

PTI ■ MUMBAI
 India Women's A staged a late inspirational comeback to pip England Women's A side by a mere three runs in the first T20 game of their three-match series here on Wednesday.
 Chasing 135 for win, England looked in complete control riding on a brilliant 70-run stand for the fourth wicket between vice-captain Hollie Armitage (52) and wicket-keeper-batter Seren Smale (31), but India fought back with a cluster of wickets to clinch a narrow win.
 Kashvee Gautam (2/23) struck twice to dismiss Smale and Issy Wong (2) in the 18th over to open the door back for the Indians, who pulled off a thrilling win at the Wankhede Stadium.
 With 13 needed off the final over, Shreyanka Patil (2/26) gave away five extras (wide) on the first ball but India prevailed eventually by three runs. India Women's A were guilty of not putting up enough runs on the board and making plenty of mistakes in the field.



Armitage, who top-scored in the game with 52 off 41 balls (3x4s, 1x6s), made the most of a lifeline as Disha Kasat spilled a regulation catch at cover off Prakashika Naik (1/28).
 Another opportunity to break the stand was missed in the 14th over when Indian 'keeper Uma Chetry did not collect the ball to break the stumps, anticipating a direct hit. The two England batters unleashed powerful hits while constantly pressuring the Indian fielders with brisk running between the wickets. Patil got India A their first breakthrough when she cleaned up Grace Scrivens (7) in the second over.
 Mannat Kashyap (1/21) got rid of Mady Villiers (20; 17 balls, 4x4s) and Naik removed Freya Kemp (1) in the eighth over.
 Earlier, after electing to bat, India made 134/7 in 20 overs. Kasat batted well to make 25 from 32 balls, hitting three fours.
 On a slow deck, India Women's A could not really push on with their scoring rate, with England seamers doing well.
 Skipper Charlie Dean was the pick among the bowlers with 4-0-19-2 while Kemp finished with figures of 4-0-30-2. Wong (1/13), Lauren Filer (1/34) and Kirstie Gordon (1/26) chipped in with a wicket each.
 Player of the match Patil admitted India made errors in the field. "It is a big platform for all of us. It happens, (but) how we come back is what matters," Patil told the media after the match.
 Patil said India were confident that the bowlers would pull it off. "I would say maybe (India were) 10-15 runs short but then we were looking (at a total) around 130-140 because the wicket was slightly slower and we knew our bowlers could get the job done," she said.
 Brief scores: India Women's A 134/7 in 20 overs (Vrinda Dinesh 22, Disha Kasat 25, Gnanananda Divya 22; Charlie Dean 2/19) beat England Women's A 131/8 in 20 overs (Hollie Armitage 52, Seren Smale 31; Kashvee Gautam 2/23, Shreyanka Patil 2/26) by 3 runs.

Shane is Paarl Royals head coach for SA20



PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 SA20 franchise Paarl Royals on Wednesday announced the appointment of former New Zealand pacer Shane Bond as the new head coach for the 2024 season of the South African league.
 Bond replaces former South African all-rounder JP Duminy in the position, with the latter currently serving the national team.
 Bond, a former New Zealand fast bowling sensation, brings an impressive array of credentials and passion for the game.
 His illustrious career, both as a player and a coach across New Zealand's national team and multiple T20 franchises, has earned him the reputation of making the best players even better.
 His tactical acumen, knowledge of the game and his ability to inspire and nurture emerging talent have been widely recognized in the cricketing community which have also reflected in the Kiwi pacer helping the Mumbai Indians franchise lift four titles in nine seasons in the IPL.
 He was recently also roped in by Paarl Royals' sister franchise, Rajasthan Royals,

Playing under great leaders will help me: Gill

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
 India opener Shubman Gill feels the experience of playing under "great leaders" in the India setup will help him a lot when he leads Gujarat Titans in the upcoming season of the IPL.
 Gill has played under the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and played a vital role in India reaching the World Cup final at home recently.
 Gill was recently announced skipper of 2022 IPL champions Gujarat Titans after their captain for two seasons, Hardik Pandya, was traded back to five-time winners Mumbai Indians.
 It will be Gill's maiden outing as captain of an IPL side, having begun his journey in the competition in 2018 with Kolkata Knight Riders before heading to GT in 2022.
 "We all know captainship comes with a lot of things, and commitment is one of them. Discipline is one of them. Hard work is one of them. Loyalty is one of them," said Gill in a video posted by the franchise on social media.
 "And, because, I think I've played under great leaders and I've learned a lot from them, I think those learnings that I have had from their experience playing under them is gonna help me a lot in this IPL."
 Gill added that there was no dearth of experienced players in Gujarat Titans, and he would get to learn a lot from leaders such as New Zealand's Kane Williamson and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan.
 "We have great leaders in our team, be it Kane (Williamson) or be it Rashid (Khan) or be it (Mohammed) Shami, or even David (Miller), or even Wriddhi (Saha). So, I think it's gonna be great.
 "And obviously, there are



gonna be a lot of learnings along the way, which would be my experience as a captain. And I see a lot of people making great memories," he added.
 As far as playing the leadership role is concerned, Gill

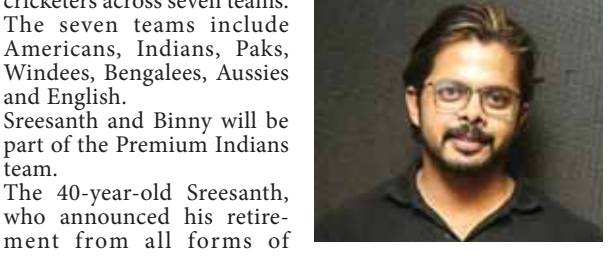
was the India U-19 vice-captain during the 2018 World Cup. He was also named skipper of India Blue during the 2019-20 Duleep Trophy, the India C captain in the Deodhar Trophy the same season, and the India-A leader during the New Zealand tour later in 2019.
 However, Gill feels it will take him some time for the feeling of being made GT skipper to sink in.
 "I think it's gonna take, like, probably till the time we don't play the first match. It's not gonna quite sink in. It's a great feeling.
 "I was about seven or eight years old when IPL started happening. Obviously, it's a dream for any kid who wants to be a cricketer and wants to play the IPL to be able to captain a team. Then, to be able to be that kind of binding factor in this team, it feels amazing," he concluded.

India to tour Lanka in July-August

PTI ■ COLOMBO
 The crisis-ridden Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and its host broadcaster will have something to cheer about during the middle of 2024 when the Indian team makes its annual ritual tour of the islands for a short six-match white-ball series, the board announced on Wednesday.
 SLC has been banned by the ICC for government interference and the global body has also shifted the U-19 World Cup to South Africa. However the national teams (men and women) will be allowed to fulfil their bilateral commitments.
 According to the 2024 calendar released by SLC, India is supposed to travel for three ODI and T20Is each during July-August, which is effectively country's cricket season.
 The men's national team is due to play 52 international games in 2024, which includes 10 Tests, 21 ODIs and 21 T20Is.
 The T20Is, however, doesn't factor in the additional games that they will play during the T20 World Cup.
 One of the major assignment will be the three-Test away series in England, which is a part of the current World Test Championship. The other tough assignment will be the two-Test series against South Africa in November.

Sreesanth, Binny to play in American Premier League

PTI ■ HOUSTON
 Former India pacer S Sreesanth and all-rounder Stuart Binny are set to take part in the second edition of American Premier League (APL) T20 scheduled in Houston from December 19 to 31.
 Both Sreesanth and Binny



have retired from active cricket in India and hence are allowed to play in overseas franchise leagues.
 All the matches will be played at the Moosa Cricket Stadium in Houston, Texas and the league had been sanctioned by the ICC, in May this year and the USA Cricket board has roped in 40 international

cricketers across seven teams. The seven teams include Americans, Indians, Paks, Windees, Bengalees, Aussies and English.
 Sreesanth and Binny will be part of the Premium Indians team.
 The 40-year-old Sreesanth, who announced his retirement from all forms of domestic cricket in India last year, said, "I am honoured to be picked by the Premium Indians. I am still very new to franchisee cricket eco-system outside of India so really excited about it.
 "It would be a great experience to play in front of the American crowd in a new territory for the first time."

BCCI extends Dravid's contract

But tenure yet to be decided, Laxman to remain at NCA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
 The BCCI on Wednesday extended the contract of Indian cricket team head coach Rahul Dravid in order to maintain continuity following the senior side's stupendous performance in the ODI World Cup where it won 10 games in a row before losing the final.
 However, there was no mention of how long his new tenure would be in the press release issued by the BCCI.
 "The Board of Control for Cricket in India announces the extension of contracts for head coach Rahul Dravid and the support staff of Team India (senior men)," the sport's apex body said in a statement.
 "The BCCI engaged in produc-



tive discussions with Dravid after the term of his contract ended following the recently concluded World Cup and unanimously agreed to further the tenure," it added.
 BCCI secretary Jay Shah said that Dravid will have "full backing" of the board, moving forward in his endeavour to win the ICC Trophy, which is missing from the cabinet for the last decade.
 "Having won 10 consecutive games before the final, our World Cup campaign was nothing short of extraordinary, and the head coach (Dravid) deserves appreciation for setting up the right platform for the team to flourish.
 "The head coach has our full backing, and we will provide

him with all the support needed for sustained success at the international level," the BCCI secretary said in a statement.
 "The last two years with Team India have been thoroughly memorable. Together, we have witnessed the highs and lows, and throughout this journey, the support and camaraderie within the group have been phenomenal," Dravid said.
 The PTI had on Tuesday reported that Dravid's contract would be renewed with the BCCI looking for continuity in the set-up helmed by the legendary cricketer over the last two years.
 Dravid had replaced Ravi Shastri after the T20 World Cup in 2021, getting appointed for a two-year term which ended with the ODI World Cup.
 Under Dravid, India also finished as runners-up in the last World Test Championship, losing to Australia in the final.
 Along with the 50-year-old Dravid, his support staff comprising batting coach Vikram Rathour, bowling coach Paras Mhambrey and fielding coach T Dilip have also got an extension.
 It is expected that his stint would be at least till the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA in June-July next year.
 The PTI had reported that Dravid had been offered an extension and asked to helm the affairs in South Africa as they work on the modalities.
 While VVS Laxman, the NCA head, who has often filled in for Dravid when the latter was taking short breaks, is believed to have informed the brass that he is more comfortable working with pathways teams such as India A and India U-19, apart from being actively involved in cricketing matters with regards to the new NCA set-up in Bengaluru.
 "The Board also appreciates VVS Laxman for his exemplary roles as Head of NCA and as the stand-in Head Coach. Similar to their legendary on-field partnerships, Dravid and Laxman have worked closely in driving Indian Cricket forward," the BCCI's release makes it clear that both for the time being will continue in their respective roles.
 BCCI president Roger Binny, who has been a bridge between the board and the head coach, also welcomed the decision.
 "The performances of the Indian Team are a testament to his strategic guidance. I am delighted that he accepted the offer to remain the head coach, and it speaks of the mutual respect and shared vision between him and the BCCI."

With so much dew even 14 runs per over would have been chased: Gaikwad

PTI ■ GUWAHATI
 The dew laden condition was the primary reason for Indian bowling attack's poor show in the third T20 International, where the home team failed to defend an imposing total of 222, vice-captain and opener Rituraj Gaikwad said after the defeat.
 Indian bowlers leaked 80 runs in the last 5 overs while defend-

ing 222 as Glenn Maxwell's 48-ball-104 not out, included 23 runs off the final over from Prasidh Krishna, who was smashed for four boundaries and a six.
 For the record, Krishna's 0/68 in 4 overs is the worst T20I figure by any Indian bowler.
 "I don't think so it's a concern because it's almost like you are bowling with a wet ball. And it's really tough on them," Gaikwad

told reporters during the post-match press conference.
 "In these kinds of conditions, 12 runs per over or even 13 or 14 runs per over is gettable, even while we are chasing. In the first game, how easily we managed to chase 210," he cited an example.
 "So I think, I don't think so definitely there's not a concern at all. It's just that the conditions are slightly tougher for them,

and we have to accept and move on."
 Gaikwad said Maxwell's brutal innings and heavy dew proved to be home team's undoing. Making his 100th T20I appearance, Maxwell slammed an unbeaten 104 off just 48 balls as Australia massed 45 runs in the last two overs to seal a last-ball thriller to make it 1-2 in the five-match series.
 "I think even Maxi batted real-

ly well. To win from a situation where they needed 100 from seven and a half hours and then 50 from 3 overs, I think it was critical innings for him," Gaikwad said.
 "And I think from our side, our bowlers tried executing whatever they had in their control. Also, there was a lot of dew around so ball was slipping a lot. So I think it was tough for the bowlers as well.

"Even though we scored 230, in the last game, it was still in between we felt the game might go till the last over, but this kind of dew it is these totals are bound to happen and bound to chase."
 On way to a 57-ball 123, the 26-year-old Gaikwad scored his first fifty in 32 balls before completing the hundred in just 52 balls to set up a more than par-score for India.
 "Initially, I felt pitch was slightly tacky, ball was stopping a little bit and there was some movement in the air and off the pitch as well. So first, I felt 2-3 overs, the wicket was like that, and we lost two wickets (Yashvini Jaiswal and Ishan Kishan) in a span of one over. So it was important that we stitched a partnership. And then after 7-8 overs, I think the wicket got slightly better."

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