



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Established 1864

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

City Vol. 20 Issue 52
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.



Launching of Sports Infrastructure worth Rs 660 crores

by

Sj. Naveen Patnaik

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

23 February, 2024

Bhubaneswar



SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- 48 Indoor stadiums across the state
- 12 Hockey Training Centers
- Cuttack Table Tennis Academy and Rourkela Gymnastics Academy
- Foundation stone laying for Football Training Center in Cuttack, Women Football Training center in Aul in Kendrapara and Hockey Training Center in Deogarh etc.

*“Sports for Youth
Youth for Future”*



Transforming the Sports Landscape | Empowering Athletes



Inauguration



12 Hockey Training Centres



48 Multipurpose Indoor Stadiums



Table Tennis Academy
Cuttack



Gymnastics Academy,
Rourkela



Multipurpose Indoor Hall,
Bhawanipatna



Foundation Stone Laying



Hockey Training Centre
Deogarh



Women Football Training
Centre, Aul, Kendrapara



Multipurpose Indoor Stadiums
Remuna, Baliguda, Karanjia,
Titilagarh



Indoor Swimming Pool,
Bhadrak



Football Training Centre
Cuttack



OIPR-15001/13/0408/2324



ବରିଷ୍ଠଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମାନ

ଫିଲ୍ଡରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ବୃଦ୍ଧ-ବୃଦ୍ଧା ଓ ବିଧବାଙ୍କୁ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଘେନସନ୍



Pandian reviews projects in Ganjam

Inform people about welfare schemes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As per direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, ST and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian visited Ganjam district on Thursday.

He reviewed the progress of Pipalpanka Dam Project in Sorada block, Janivilly Barrage Project in Dharakote block and Cheligada Irrigation Project in Digapahandi block (total cost Rs 1,300 crore) which would provide irrigation to a total ayacut area of 1,84,000 acres.

Pandian also participated in public grievance meetings at Bellaguntha, Dharakote, Kukudakhandi and Patrapur.

He informed about the major decisions taken by the Chief Minister like increase in social security pensions across all categories by Rs 500 each that would benefit around 58 lakh people.

He also told that pensions under Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana and Mukhyamantri Bunakar



o Karigara Sahayata Yojana have been increased from Rs 1,200 to Rs 2,000 by the Chief Minister

He also informed that financial assistance under MAMATA Yojana has been increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 and

Nua-O Scholarships for students.

Pandian also informed about the new scheme SWAYAM to boost self-employment and entrepreneurship among the youths in the age group of 18 to 35 years.

He informed about the rolling out of bus service under LAccMI scheme in every gram panchayat of Ganjam in which the bus fare for women passengers and students would be Rs 5 only.

Govt extends KALIA scheme till 2026-27

Onetime aid of Rs 2K to beneficiaries

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Government has allocated Rs 6,029.70 crore for implementation of the KALIA scheme for three more years till 2026-27 fiscal.

The State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday approved a proposal in this regard.

The Cabinet approved an estimated budget of Rs 6,029.70 crore for three years (2024-25 fiscal to 2026-27 fiscal) for the implementation of Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme, said Chief Secretary PK Jena

The government had introduced the KALIA scheme in 2018-19 to provide financial assistance to farmers for development of the farm sector in the State.

The government is now providing financial aid of Rs 12,500 in three instalments to the eligible farmers in a year. The Cabinet approved a proposal to provide Rs 2,000 as onetime additional support/assistance to the farmers, said the Chief Secretary.

BJP to form government in Odisha: Rajnath

Addresses party workers in Nabarangpur, Ganjam

PNS ■ NABARANGPUR/ BRAHMAPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would form the government in Odisha, said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was on a visit to the State on Thursday.

"Odisha also needs a double-engine government. According to political analysts, we will form the government in Odisha this time," he said while addressing BJP party workers at two conferences in Nabarangpur and Ganjam districts.

Singh said the Congress might have laid several foundation-stones in Odisha during its tenure. However, the BJP Government led by Prime Minister Narendra



Modi lays the foundation-stones and inaugurates the projects as well. "The number of medical colleges and engineering institutions has increased in Odisha during our government at the Centre," he said.

Singh said, "I share a very emotional bonding with Odisha as I had started Bharat Suraksha Yatra from the land

of Lord Jagannath when I was the BJP's national president in 2006."

He said, "We do what we say. We had said that Article 370 will be abolished in Jammu and Kashmir. We did it. We have abolished the evil practice of triple talaq. We had said that we will build a grand temple in Ayodhya. Today a grand temple has been built in

Ayodhya." Modi lifted 25 crore people from the BPL list in past nine years. "For us, people are God. But for Congress, one family is God," he said.

Singh exhorted the party workers to dedicate 12 hours of a day to party and nation building. "Do visit houses, meet the beneficiaries to make them aware about the government schemes," he said.



ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

ହାତପାଆନ୍ତାରେ 'ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ' ସେବା

ପ୍ରଥମ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ୭୫୦ଟି ପଞ୍ଚାୟତକୁ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ସେବା

୨୦୨୪ ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ୪,୩୦୦ରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ

ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ହେବ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷମ

DSPL-697



ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସଶକ୍ତିକରଣରେ 'ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ'



ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ



ଗ୍ରାମାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ସହଜ ହେବ
ଆର୍ଥିକ କାରବାର



ଏବେ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କିଙ୍ଗ ସୁବିଧା ପାଇଁ
ଯିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବନି ଗାଁରୁ ଦୂର



ବରିଷ୍ଠ ନାଗରିକ, ଗର୍ଭବତୀ ଓ
ଦିବ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗମାନେ ହେବେ ଉପକୃତ



Baby boy dies after vaccination in Ganjam

Irate locals ransack CHC properties

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A five-month-old baby boy died hours after being vaccinated at the Buguda Community Health Centre (CHC) in Ganjam district on Wednesday.

Sai Nayak, son of Magi Nayak of Khadala Sahi in Buguda area, had been administered routine vaccines at the CHC at about 11 am. The concerned ASHA Worker gave paracetamol syrup to the baby's parents and advised them to give the medicine to the infant in the case of fever after vaccination.

At around 4 pm, the baby developed fever, following which his parents gave him the syrup. Though there was a slight drop in body temperature, the infant's body became cold at around 7.30 pm. He

was rushed to the CHC, where the doctor declared him dead.

Tension ran high in the hospital premises as irate locals ransacked the properties of the CHC. The baby's family members alleged that his condition deteriorated after the vaccination, which later led to the death.

However, the concerned doctor said children usually have mild fever after taking the vaccines. The baby might have died due to other reason.

Pandian visits R'kela Gymnastics Academy

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chairman 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian visited various sports facilities in Rourkela on Thursday. He visited the upcoming Rourkela Gymnastics Academy near the Birs Munda Hockey Stadium. This facility will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik shortly.

There are a lot of sports talents in Sundargarh district. To further realise the potential, the State Government has been creating good-quality sports infrastructure. Rourkela has the world's best and largest hockey stadium and also an Athletic



Stadium.

Pandian interacted with the coaches at the Rourkela Gymnastics Academy. He said the best imported gymnastics equipments have been installed and asked them to aim

to produce international-class gymnasts from Rourkela.

Later, he visited the Panposh Sports Hostel and interacted with the coaches and players. He had breakfast with players in the dining hall.

In Sundargarh Engineer molests woman at govt quarters

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

An engineer allegedly molested a woman at his government quarters in the Tangarpali area of Sundargarh district on Wednesday evening.

The woman has lodged a complaint at the Lephripara police station against the accused, identified as Umesh Nayak, Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE), Tangarpali block.

Nayak asked the woman to cook at his residence. As she entered the kitchen, he groped her and tried to rape her. She further alleged that the accused tore her clothes.

The woman shouted and left the spot after pushing away Nayak. Hearing her scream, locals gathered at the place and asked the AEE to come out of the house. However, Nayak locked the doors from inside and stayed indoors.

Police have started investigation into the matter.

CPM rally in M'giri ends; memo presented

PNS ■ MALKANGIRI

The CPI(M) ended its padayatra at Malkangiri on Wednesday which commenced from Jantapai in Chittrakonda block on February 12.

The yatra, which saw the participation of workers, culminated in a demonstration in front of the Collectorate. Led by State secretary Ali Kishore Patnaik and district secretary Braja Majhi, the procession of workers marched through various blocks and areas, including



Kudumulgumana, Khairput, Mudulipada, Mathili and Pandripani, before arriving at the Bhairavi Temple in Malkangiri.

During the demonstration, the participants held party flags and shouted slogans, besides presenting a

demand letter to the Chief Minister, outlining their grievances and demands. These included issues related to tribal rights, such as forest land record, 200 days of guaranteed work and a daily labour charge of Rs 600. Additionally, the letter called for the establishment of district-level employment initiatives and emphasized the protection of tribal lands from being sold to non-tribals.

Furthermore, the demands encompassed welfare measures aimed at improving the livelihoods of the marginalised groups, including an increase in allowances for widows and elderly women. The party leaders reiterated their commitment to fighting for the rights of the marginalised and promised to continue their efforts until their demands are met by the authorities.

Miscreants attack petrol pump staff

Loot Rs 2 lakh in Sundargarh

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

A staff of a petrol pump was attacked by unidentified miscreants at Jamapali under the Raigangpur police limits in Sundargarh district on Thursday morning. The looters snatched away cash of around Rs 2 lakh from the victim. The victim employee was identified as Anil Kumar Tiwari.

According to police sources, three masked and bike-borne miscreants intercepted Anil on

the road when he was on his way to a nearby bank to deposit the cash. Near the bypass road, Anil was attacked with a knife and he sustained injuries and fell from his motorcycle. The miscreants snatched away a bag in which the cash was kept.

Being informed, police reached the spot and launched a probe into the loot.

"I could not see their faces as the miscreants were wearing masks. I shouted for help, but no one came to my rescue," Anil stated.

In Jajpur

Sale staffer scripts loot drama, arrested

PNS ■ JAJPUR

A sale staff of an electrical cable distributor, who allegedly cooked up a loot story to pay off his financial dues, was arrested by Panikoili police on Wednesday for breaching his employer's trust and duping him of over Rs 11 lakh in Jajpur district.

The accused Debendra Prusty of Bhatimunda village in Cuttack district, reportedly did away with the cash from the collection amount instead

of paying back to the distributor, police said.

According to reports, Basanta Sahu, a resident of Patharapada, has an electrical shop in Panikoili bazaar which deals in electrical cable business of a reputed company. Prusty was working as a salesman at Sahu's shop for a couple of years. Prusty used to take cables from Sahu's shop to sell in Tangi and Cuttack areas and pay him back. On Tuesday noon, Prusty called up Sahu to inform that while he was

on way to the shop in Panikoili to pay him Rs 11.19 lakh, two unidentified motorcycle-borne miscreants snatched the cash he had collected near Tikara bridge on NH-16 after attacking him. He also said that he has been admitted to a private hospital for treatment, police said.

Sahu rushed to the hospital and found Prusty undergoing treatment with multiple injuries. On getting to know the details, Sahu approached Panikoili police. However, during

investigation the treating doctor revealed to the police that the injuries on Prusty's body were blade cuts. "We brought Prusty to the police station to question him and he broke down. He confessed to have scripted a fake loot drama. We arrested the accused under relevant sections of IPC for breaching trust and criminal conspiracy," said IIC of Panikoili police station Lizarani Biswal. The accused was produced in court on Wednesday.

In Gajapati BCJD leader arrested in murder case

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

Gajapati district Biju Chhatra Janata Dal (BCJD) leader, Amit Kumar Patnaik was suspended from the BJD following his arrest in a murder case.

Amit is a resident of Karanasahi in Paralakhemundi and was appointed as vice-president of the BCJD in Gajapati. According to police, Amit was the mastermind behind the murder of 72-year-

old Sarojini Patnaik at her residence in Karanasahi in Paralakhemundi.

Two other accused were identified as Pradeep Patnaik from Karanasahi and Dauda Jena from Kashinagar.

Amit and his associated allegedly looted cash and gold jewellery from Sarojini's house and murdered her while decamping with the jewellery. They also put chilli powder at the crime scene to mislead the police investigation.

Police have arrested all three accused. Twenty-four grams of gold, four mobile phones, and the vehicle used in the crime were also seized from the accused.

Gajapati SP Swati S Kumar said, "We were assuming from the beginning that this murder is an activity of a hardened criminal. But we continued our probe. After a month-long investigation and detailed analysis, we have finally arrested three accused."

OES hails SC directive on forests safety

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A recent order by the Supreme Court directing the Government to adhere to the "broad and all-encompassing" meaning of forest and to include under its ambit the 1.97 lakh sqkm of undeclared forest lands of the nation is highly appreciated, said the Orissa Environmental Society (OES).

Dr Sundara Narayan Patro and Dr Jaya Krushna Panigrahi, president and secretary respectively of OES said

the definition of forest in the Supreme Court decision of 1996 in the TN Godavarman Thirumulpad case was in fact best suited for the protection of forests of the country.

The 2023 amendments introduced in the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 need not dilute the objective of protection of forests and their conversion for various ever-expanding developmental activities. The forests/trees have always been the casualties when developmental projects are being implemented. Thus, the need of the present juncture is to officially record all the unrecorded deemed to be forests for the greater interests of the humanity as well as the planet and stringent measures need to be formulated against diversion of forests, they stressed, adding that the Central, State and Union Territory Governments need to reassure their commitments to the protection of forests by adhering to the court's directive and making necessary course corrections.

mented. Thus, the need of the present juncture is to officially record all the unrecorded deemed to be forests for the greater interests of the humanity as well as the planet and stringent measures need to be formulated against diversion of forests, they stressed, adding that the Central, State and Union Territory Governments need to reassure their commitments to the protection of forests by adhering to the court's directive and making necessary course corrections.

INBRIEF

GOVT APPOINTS 576 HINDI, SANSKRIT TEACHERS

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Government has appointed 576 Hindi and Sanskrit teachers for various State-run high schools. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik welcomed the teachers at a



programme held at the Lok Seva Bhawan here on Thursday. He advised them to create role models for the students with their knowledge and values. The State Government has appointed 4,742 teachers at the secondary education level in the current academic season.

U SAMMILANI'S FIRST PRESIDENT REMEMBERED

Bhubaneswar: The Utkal Sammilani on Thursday paid tributes to the statue of the organisation's first president Maharaja Shriram Chandra Bhanjdeo. In the function, Utkal Sammilani general secretary and Mancheswar branch president Dillip Dashsharma presided. Guests Sita Ballabh Mahapatra and Ramakanta Mishra recalled the contributions of the Maharaja. Among others, Subrat Mahapatra, Siddhatharth Shankar Gadnayak, Akshay Kumar Jethi, Basanti Tripathy and Pramod Deb were present, Sammilani vice-president Surendra Mohan Mishra offered a vote of thanks.



STONE LAID FOR SIBIDA- KHADAKA ROAD

Pallahara: Steel and Mines and Works Minister Prafulla Mallick on Wednesday laid the foundation stone of Sibida to Khadaka road at Baradihi gram panchayat. Besides, he inaugurated a new building of Baradihi GP along with MLA Mukesh Pal. The tender worth Rs 43 crore for the road has been issued by the PWD. Among others, BDO Dillip Bara, Chairman Reenarani Naik, ZP member Sabitree Majhi and BJD Block president Gangadhar Jit were present, apart from 5000 people of Nagira and Baradihi GPs.

UDRA Charitable Trust holds annual fest



Voluntary organisations, distinguished persons feted

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Udra Charitable Trust on Monday celebrated its 7th annual function at Guru Kelucharana Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre here.

Several social voluntary associations of the State were felicitated with 'Udra Gourav' award on the occasion, including Pradeep Seva Trust, Smile Foundation, Club of the Youth Mass, Ame Bipada ra Sathi and Ame Apananka Helping Group. Likewise, people who have excelled in various fields were also awarded, including Swagatika

Acharya, Anil Pradhan, Hariprasad Pattnaik, Samir Kumar Nayak, Dhirendranath Thakur, Romi Das, Jayashree Dhal, Narayan Sahoo, Pradeep Prusty, Rajesh Mohapatra, Dr Sushant Kumar Das, Purabi Patra and Golakh Parida.

The event was inaugurated by SSEPD Minister Ashok Panda, where Sushmita Bagchi (Chairperson, Mo School Abhijan) graced as chief guest and SSEPD Principal Secretary Bispunada Sethi joined as chief speaker. Besides, trade union leader and author Mayadhar Nayak, chief advisor of 'Udra', Akash Dasnayak (Chairperson, Mo College Abhijan) and Subhrajyoti Dasnayak (secretary, Udra) were present.

Nariman's legacy is to make India truly secular, multi-cultural

My abiding memory of Fali Nariman, who passed away on February 21, is standing on one side of Nani Palkiwala and with Soli Saurabjee on the other side, arguing against the Government's unlimited power to amend the constitution in the Keshvanand Bharati case (1973). Both Nariman and Soli were like legal twins, born the same year, who provided symphony to the ultimate legal maestro of India, Nani Palkiwala, who inked the indelible concept of "Basic Structure", which no majoritarian Government can deface, obliterate or amend.

Nariman would be remembered for his iconic book, "Before the memory fades", where he wrote, "the judiciary is like oxen in the air. It is not enough for the judiciary to be independent of the executives. They must be seen to have noble quality of mind and heart and above all courage". CJI DY Chandrachud paying a homage



SN MISRA

called Nariman, 'a father figure and a towering intellectual.'

By annulling the electoral bond scheme in the ADR verses Union of India, a few days ago, the Supreme Court has in a sense lived up to the two attributes that Nariman flagged-- courage and independence

Nariman was born in Burma in 1930, the same year when the family had to trek from Burma after

Parl Harbour bombing by the Japanese and was nearly trampled by an elephant. Nariman became a senior advocate in the Supreme Court in 1971 and was possibly the longest serving advocate (63 years) in Supreme Court. He was appointed as Additional Solicitor General in 1972 from which he resigned in 1975 in protest against the Emergency. He consistently showed this courage in every case that he fought. In Menka Gandhi Case (1978), he argued that the procedure being followed by the Government in annulling the passport has to be fair and non-arbitrary. This was accepted by Justice PM Bhagwati. Freedom of movement abroad became a second generation right for the Indian citizens. In the SR Bommai case (1994) he argued against the Government for imposing president's rule arbitrarily under Article 356. This led to the famous floor test which insisted upon before the Governor decides whether the party in power had lost

its constitutional mandate or not to run the State. He also was a great advocate of minority rights. In the TMA Pai foundation case (2003), he strongly advocated that the minority rights under Article 30 for running the institution as per their discretion must not be circumscribed by the Government bringing in reservation of admission under Article 29 (2).

In the Narmada Rehabilitation case, when he was fighting for the Gujrat Government, he returned the brief as he found that the Christians were getting harassed and Bible has been burnt. The Government was not keeping its promise to protect the life and property of the minority community. In a recent interview with Karan Thapar, Nariman said that the situation in India today is like a veiled Emergency with the added mood of anti-Muslim and anti-minority sentiments. Coming from a towering intellectual who never took sides and fought against authoritarianism, his sane voice

must be respected by the powers that be.

Apart from his autobiography, 'Before memory Fades', Nariman has written recently another book, 'Know your Constitution', which couldn't have been more timely. Apart from elucidating the high watermarks of constitutional morality, Nariman is anguished that the voice of the opposition is not being cared for by the party in power. While Nehru, was always sensitive to the criticism of the opposition, Nariman writes that the tendency to turn a deaf ear to the opposition's view point started with Indira Gandhi and the sad legacy has been carried on by the present regime. Harold Laski said, "Responsible dissent is the essence of democracy." Nariman brings up this important facet of tolerance to a dissident opinion and respecting a contrarian voice as a life breath of democracy.

It was Martin Luther King Junior, who said "The arc of moral universe is long, but it bends towards

justice". Nariman firmly believed in it. Prashant Bhushan calls Nariman as Pitamah Bhishma of legal fraternity. However, unlike Bhishma who didn't protest when Draupdi was being disrobed, Nariman raised his voice when democracy had been in danger and the minority community was unfairly victimized by majority community. He spoke against the judgement in Article 370 as being constitutionally flawed. He also spoke against the NJAC judgement when the collegium system for selecting judges was considered offensive of basic structure. He believed that the structure could have been changed but not the concept of collegium to choose judges.

His legacy was carried forward by his son justice Rohinton Nariman who in the Shreya Singhal case (2015) struck down section 66(a) of IT Act 2000 which was leading to arrest for posting offensive message in the electronic media. This judgement is

considered a landmark judgement protecting freedom of speech and expression being trampled upon by arbitrary police action and a victory for the social media. Nariman was not only a great lawyer but also as Kapil Sibal brings out was one of the finest human beings. Hopefully the courage of conviction that he showed and the ethical principles that he constantly espoused would be a message for the present generation. As Joseph Story, the great jurist wrote, "it depends on the present age whether the national constitution shall descend on its children with its masculine majesty or shorn of its responsibility, it will become an ideal mockery." As India passes through an extremely turbulent period of religious fundamentalism and minority bashing, Nariman's legacy would hopefully permeate through the political landscape of India and make us a truly secular, multi-cultural and tolerant country.

(Dr Misra is a Professor Emeritus)



OPINION 6
INDIAN NATIONHOOD
THRIVES AMID DIVERSITY

NATION 8
BRAHMOS BOOST FOR NAVY
FIREPOWER OKAYED

MONEY 10
SENSEX SURGES OVER
500 POINTS

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.20 Issue 52
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



BHUBANESWAR, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4
Established 1864
the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



INDIA EYE 17TH
SERIES WIN ON
TROT AT HOME
12 SPORTS



OIPR-15001/13/0407/2324

ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା
ଜବାନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ସୁସ୍ଥ ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ସୁଖୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶା
ସର୍ବୋତ୍ତମ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟସେବା ସୁନିଶ୍ଚିତ କରିଛି BSKY
ବାର୍ଷିକ ୧୦ ଲକ୍ଷ ଟଙ୍କା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ସୁବିଧା

DSPL-699

Temple tax sparks outcry

BJP accuses Karnataka Government of trying to fill its empty coffers with temple money

PTI ■ BENGALURU
The Government's move to collect funds from temples in the form of tax has not gone down well with the Opposition BJP. Red-flagging the Bill on the issue of Hindu places of worship being a soft target for the Congress, the BJP charged the ruling party with trying to fill its "empty coffers" with temple money. A related Bill was passed on Wednesday. Taking exception to the move,

BJP State president BY Vijayendra said, "Corrupt, inept Loot Sarkaar with its penchant for anti-Hindu ideology in the guise of secularism, has cast its evil eyes on the temple revenues." "Through the Hindu Religious Endowments amendment act, it is trying to siphon-off donations as well as offerings from Hindu temples and religious institutions in order to fill its empty coffers," he said in a post on 'X'. The Shivamogga MLA said the government plans to "gobble

up 10 per cent of the temple revenue exceeding Rs 1 crore and 5 per cent of those below Rs 1 crore. "This not only reflects the deplorable condition of this government, but also shows its abject hate towards Hindu Dharma." Temple funds should be dedicatedly utilised for renovation of temples and to facilitate work beneficial to devotees, rather than diverting it for other purposes, which would be an injustice and betrayal of people's religious beliefs, the BJP State chief said.

Why only Hindu temples are targeted for revenue, leaving out other religions, is a question raised by millions of devotees, he said. "Instead of grabbing the devotees' money, government can install donation boxes so that the concerned citizens can help this penniless Govt boost its revenue as a gesture of goodwill," he stated. Defending the move as aimed at ensuring welfare of different sections, the Congress sought to turn the tables on its rival saying the saffron party had

effected an amendment in 2011 to seek funds from high-income Hindu shrines. The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill was passed in the State Assembly on February 21. Regarding the Bill, the Government said it was necessary to enhance the amount of common pool fund, include a person skilled in Vishwa Hindu Temple architecture and sculpture in the committee of management

of notified institutions and to form district and state-level committees to improve shrines and infrastructure for the safety of pilgrims. Transport and Hindu Religious Endowments Ramalinga Reddy told reporters that the provision was not new but has existed since 2003. He also said an amendment was brought by the then BJP Government in 2011 to collect funds from high income group temples. Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable

Endowments Act 1997 came into force on May 1, 2003 and provisions were made for Common Pool Fund under Section 17 of the said Act, he explained. Common Pool Fund was implemented in the year 2003 itself. Section 17 of the Act was amended in 2011 to collect funds from high income group temples so as to aid temples with lesser income under the said fund. The Rajya Dharmika Parishad, a committee to improve the temple management for the

benefit of pilgrims, is authorised to utilise Common Pool, he said. According to him, there were 3,000 C-Grade temples in Karnataka, which have an annual income of less than Rs 5 lakh from where the 'Dharmika Parishad' gets no money. Temples earning between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 25 lakh were classified as B-grade temples, from where 5 per cent of the gross income had been going to the committee since 2003.

ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା
ଜବାନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ପ୍ରା' ଓ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତମ ପୁଷ୍ଟି ସାଧନ ଓ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷାକୁ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ
'ମମତା ଯୋଜନା'ରେ ୫୫ ଲକ୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ମା'ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମିଳିଛି
₹୧୦,୦୦୦ର ଆର୍ଥିକ ସହାୟତା

DSPL-696

ମମତା

'ମମତା ଯୋଜନା'ର ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ

- ମମତା ଯୋଜନା ପାଇଁ ₹୫୨୧ କୋଟିର ବ୍ୟୟବରାଦ
- ମାତୃ ଓ ଶିଶୁ ମୃତ୍ୟୁହାର କମ୍ କରିବା ଦିଗରେ ଉଦାହରଣ ସାଜିଛି ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR-15001/13/0401/2324

ସୂଚନା ଓ ଲୋକସମ୍ପର୍କ ବିଭାଗ

KANISHKA
SRIVASTAVA

FIRST COLUMN

GREEK PM'S VISIT
BOLSTERS HISTORIC TIES

India and Greece are poised to deepen their ties across various sectors



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The visit of Greek (Hellenic Republic (Greece)) Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis this week marks an important chapter in Indo-Greek relations, an ancient bilateral relationship that often gets shadowed in the wider European context. Legend has it that the mighty Greek conqueror Alexander reached the northwestern frontier of the Indian sub-continent some 2500 years ago, fought two mighty kings, but didn't cross the Indus to enter India. However, a diplomatic relationship was established some years down the line, under the Mauryan rule (whose ruler Chandragupta Maurya had a Greek ambassador in his court named Meghashthanes). Cut to contemporary times, Greece established its embassy in India in 1950, however, India took 28 years to start an embassy in Athens. Now a European country, just two and half hours behind Indian standard time, during summer, often featured in many Bollywood films, wasn't still an important ally until last year. During a state visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023, the bilateral relationship was elevated to a strategic partnership. The joint statement released in August 2023 highlighted: "Appreciating the increase in bilateral trade and economic engagement in recent years, the leaders also directed that both sides work to double bilateral trade by 2030. Both leaders reiterated the need for further broadening and deepening bilateral engagements in the fields of defence, shipping, science and technology, cyberspace, education, culture, tourism and agriculture. They took note of the signing of the MOU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture... Both leaders directed their senior officials to ensure regular dialogue in the areas including political, economic, defence, security and public diplomacy. They also agreed to encourage direct flights between Greece and India."



This week's visit by the Greek PM has put the relationship under ample spotlight it deserves. When some of Greece's neighbours in Europe had made not-so-friendly statements on some of the most recent policy developments in India such as the "Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)/National Register of Citizenship (NRC), Abrogation of Article 370, Reorganisation of the new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, and Judgement on Ram Janam Bhoomi, etc. Greece had officially stated that it is an internal affairs matter of India. Greece and India have reciprocally supported each other for a reformed UN reflecting the current realities with a permanent seat for each other in the UN security council. As per a Ministry of External Affairs booklet released in 2023, just ahead of the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Athens, Greece, "voted for India's candidature to UNSC for 2021-22. It supported India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008, and 2016, MTCR, WASSENAAR arrangements, and Australia Group. Greece supported India's candidature for ICJ, ITLOS, IMO, Postal Operations Council (POC), World Heritage Committee and the position of External Auditor of the IAEA for the term 2022-27 and various other international bodies." Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, internal security concerns particularly arising out of state-funded terrorist activities, Greece has been on India's side. Greece supports many of India's concerns in the larger European Union bilateral. India interestingly has held several rounds of discussions with the EU trade representatives, to hammer out a free trade agreement. Although with elections in India around the corner, a complicated, trade agreement with the EU with several moving parts looks difficult. However, to have preferential voices in the EU, with member nations like France and Greece, Italy, looking at India favourably, is always welcome. Some of the unfavourable comments India received from EU member countries, post former, not taking a Western approach towards long-standing ally Russia, are likely to fade away with India developing closer bilateral partnerships in the region. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

Upholding the essence of agriculture amidst market pressures

The ongoing farmers' protest underscores the clash between economic and social objectives, particularly regarding the legal guarantee of minimum support prices

The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways, said John F. Kennedy. Agriculture is the mother of all human cultures and all modes of man-made production. Agricultural production and its consumption are primarily guided by values of human existence, health and welfare; the values of the market are superimposed on it. Agriculture, thus, is not only a source of income and livelihood for many farmers but also a way of life and identity. Agriculture is a springboard to food security, rural development, cultural heritage and landscape preservation and, thus, requires mechanisms to



SUKHDEV SINGH

safeguard it from the post-industrial market economy founded on the principles of profit rather than the exchange of goodwill and well-being. The market creates a conflict between the economic and social objectives of agriculture. It is for the social objective of 'food security' and the livelihood of farmers that justify the Indian farmers' protest for a legal guarantee on minimum sup-

port price. The system of minimum support price introduced in 1966 to help India fight the food deficit has been a productive driver for development and food safety for the Indian population; a system to determine minimum support price has evolved through the years which yet needs improvement and support. At present, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), Government of India calculates the paid-out costs on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired human and machine labour, and leased-in land rent etc (A2) and the imputed value of unpaid family labour (FL), and adds 50% of its total to recommend minimum support price (MSP) for Cereals (Paddy,

Wheat, Barley, Jowar, Bajra, Maize and Ragi), pulses (Gram, Arhar/Tur, Moong, Urad and Lentil), oilseeds (Groundnut, Rapeseed/Mustard, Toria, Soybean, Sunflower Seed, Sesamum, Safflower Seed and Nigarseed), Copra, De-Husked Coconut, Raw Cotton, Raw Jute and Sugarcane every year. Then, keeping in view the production costs, fair remuneration for farmers affordability for consumers and the market conditions, the CACP recommendation is approved by the parliament of India to notify the MSP before the sowing season. In its recommendation, the CACP does not consider the 'Swaminathan National Commission for Farmers' rec-

ommendation fully to include capital assets and the rentals and interest forgone on owned land which the protesting farmers demand. Another cause for farmers' protest is the demand for legislation providing farmers 'the Right to Sell at MSP' which the CACP itself had suggested in its price policy report 2018-19. The farmers are demanding the same legal entitlement for their produce insulating it against the market pressures of 'demand and supply' as the markets can be subject to manipulation by the private traders and corporations, a concern shared by the CACP in its 2018-19 report. The crops are unlike industrial production that can be controlled with resilience to

market pressures; the cropping patterns are not so easy to shift. The biological nature of agricultural produce makes it vulnerable to unpredictable and uncontrollable weather conditions, pests and diseases on the one hand, and its 'all at once' yield makes it vulnerable to the market players if left for itself to guard. To enhance its resilience to the negative market pressures, a legal guarantee for MSP is required. Unlike the corporate, the small farmers can not store and service 'value addition'; they have to sell the entire yield immediately. So, it is reasonable for the farmers to expect a guaranteed MSP announced by the government. The legal guarantee for MSP is not about the procurement

of the entire crop by the government but about its purchase at a price not less than the minimum remunerative price declared by the government itself. In the absence of a legal guarantee, the traders purchase the agricultural produce at prices lower than the MSP, yet they sell it to the consumers at prices much higher than the MSP without passing on the benefit to the consumers. Agriculture produce is for survival while all other industrial or service products are for additional comfort. To keep the farmers growing sufficient for the people to survive, it is well within the reasonable sense for the government to compensate the gaps in case 'demand and supply' forces the sale of crops at

prices lower than the MSP following the principle it employs in its intervention to support the corporate failures. The legal guarantee for all crops in all states can act as an instrument for organic farming and diversification, as the farmers will have no insecurity about price fluctuations. If left unguarded and subject to the 'demand-supply' principle, it may lead to food insecurity and compromise social values inherent in agriculture. Leaving agriculture on the market is neither desirable nor pro-national; it is only pro-corporate and anti-national. *(The writer is a retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and a member of the governing council of INTACH, New Delhi; views are personal)*

A saga of resilience
and adaptation

Trees, nature's silent guardians, witness the ebb and flow of civilisations, endure natural calamities and adapt to the relentless march of time



THE SAGA OF
TREE ENDURANCE
IS MORE THAN A
MERE
SHOWDOWN WITH
THE WEATHER;
IT'S A BATTLE
AGAINST
ENVIRONMENTAL
CHALLENGES AND
HUMAN-INDUCED
SCARS. WHILE
SOME SPECIES
MAY SUCCUMB TO
RESILIENT
WARRIORS,
PIONEER SPECIES
EMERGE

Under their bark, Conifers harbour a complex network of tissues, including the xylem and phloem, which transport water, nutrients, and sugars throughout the tree. However, during harsh winters, the sap, a life-sustaining fluid, faces the threat of freezing, which could severely damage the cell walls. But nature, in its infinite wisdom, has equipped these trees with a remarkable defence mechanism. Both deciduous and evergreen trees can osmotically move water out of their living cells into their intercellular (non-living) spaces. This strategic relocation of water confines the freezing process to these non-living zones. Also, the sap due to its higher sugar concentration transforms into a thick syrup that acts as an antifreeze. This transformation reduces the internal freezing point of each cell and enhances its resistance to freezing. Thus, by employing these strategies, Conifers protect their living cells from ice rupture, ensuring the tree's survival through the harshest winters. Conifers, particularly those in the Pinaceae family, are in a constant battle against formidable adversaries like bark beetles and their symbiotic microorganisms. Their defence mechanism is a sticky resin that seeps from their bark, serving both as a shield and a sword in their fight for survival. This resin forms a barrier that slows the movement of freezing air molecules, a feature that is especially beneficial in dry climates or during droughts as it helps preserve the tree's vital moisture. Moreover, the stickiness of the resin traps infiltrating insects, while its chemical composition deters or even exterminates these invaders, thereby ensuring the tree's continued growth and survival. However, climate change and invasive species are disrupting this balance, posing new challenges for these tenacious trees. Unlike broadleaf trees with large

vascular conduits that foster high growth rates and rapid leaf turnover, conifers possess narrow tracheids in their vascular system. The slender shape of these tracheids only allows tiny bubbles to form, which quickly dissolve back into solution, effectively averting freeze-thaw embolisms. Such embolisms occur after a long, cold winter when the vascular system thaws and air bubbles form. In broadleaf trees, these bubbles can grow large and struggle to dissolve back into solution, leading to an embolism. However, Conifers' narrow tracheids prevent this from happening, making them mountain marvels. As we descend from the high altitudes towards the equator, we witness a captivating shift in the botanical world. The reign of conifers gracefully passes the baton to the broadleaf trees. These trees, preferring warm and moist climates, become the stars of tropical and subtropical regions, thriving in valleys blessed with fertile and humid soils. Broadleaf trees, unlike conifers with exposed seeds on cone-like structures, protect their seeds within fruits. This strategy shields the seeds from harsh weather and predators, thereby improving the likelihood of successful germination and ensuring the continuation of the broadleaf lineage. During the dry season, these trees shed their leaves to conserve water and energy, a survival strategy akin to an investor offloading costly assets in times of scarcity. This process, known as abscission, involves specialised cells at the stem base acting like microscopic scissors, severing the leaf connection. However, before the leaves fall, the tree reclaims vital nutrients, storing them in the branches. When spring arrives, these stored nutrients fuel new leaf growth, transforming the landscape into a vibrant green canvas. While the botanical narrative often portrays conifers as inhab-

itants of frigid heights, they also demonstrate resilience in unexpected environments. Consider regions with high rainfall and poor water retention due to sandy or rocky soils. These challenging environments might seem inhospitable for most vegetation. Yet, in these very landscapes, Conifers, equipped with needle-like foliage and a waxy coating, defy expectations and adapt to thrive in water-deficient soils. Their presence attests to life's remarkable adaptability, reminding us that nature's stories are often far more surprising and nuanced than we initially imagined. The saga of tree endurance is more than a mere showdown with the weather; it's a battle against environmental challenges and human-induced scars. While some species may succumb, resilient warriors, the pioneer species emerge. These trail-blazers, including Albizia, Dalbergia, and the hardy duo of Willows and Birches in temperate climes, act as nature's first responder. They rejuvenate once the chaos subsides, splashing vibrant hues onto landscapes left barren and desolate. However, as the environment stabilises and resources become abundant, climax vegetation, the slower-growing, shade-tolerant species, begins their steady march. Their endurance enables them to replace the swift pioneers, asserting their dominance in the landscape. This transition paints a dynamic picture of movement, upheaval, and significant transformation in the landscape, illustrating the timeless wisdom of the tortoise and the hare: it's not always about the speed, but the resilience and persistence that truly counts in the race for survival. This is nature's beautiful way of reminding us that every player, swift or steady, has a crucial role in the intricate tapestry of life. *(The writer is a former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP; views are personal)*

Brahmos boost for Navy firepower okayed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With the objective of further bolstering the Navy's firepower, the Government has given the nod for a Rs 20,000 crore deal to procure 200 Brahmos supersonic missiles. The contract is likely to be firmed up in next few days. The nod for the mega deal was given by Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Wednesday, sources said here on Thursday. Brahmos is joint venture between India and Russia and the supersonic missiles are manufactured within India. The induction of Brahmos missiles will shore up Indian Navy's arsenal. The missiles

deployed on warships are used for anti-ship and attack operations. This highly sophisticated missile can be launched from ships, submarines, fighter jets and from land. Indian Army and Navy have already inducted the Brahmos missiles over the last few years. Given its proven capabilities, the Philippines has inked a deal for procuring Brahmos missiles from India in a deal worth 375 million dollars. The first set of these missiles will reach the Philippines in March, it was learnt. The Brahmos missile can accurately strike a target at sea and land at a range of more than 300 kms. Specifically designed for naval



deployment, this weapon can be launched in a vertical or inclined mode from a stationary or moving maritime platform, engaging targets at stand-off ranges on sea or land. In 2016, as India became a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), India and Russia are now planning to jointly develop a new generation of BrahMos missiles with 800 km range and an ability to hit protected targets with pinpoint accuracy. Plans are to eventually upgrade all missiles to a range of 1,500 km. Meanwhile, the CCS approval for Brahmos missile acquisition comes days after the defence ministry approved

a proposal to procure nine maritime surveillance aircraft for the Indian Navy and six maritime patrol aircraft for the Indian Coast Guard. The proposed acquisition involves the construction of 15 maritime patrol planes, which will be based on C-295 transport aircraft that are being manufactured in India in a joint venture between Tata Advanced Systems and Airbus. The estimated value of these projects stands at Rs 29,000 crore. The transport aircraft would be equipped with the required radars and sensors and turned into a maritime patrol plane by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS).

Jaishankar to begin South Korea, Japan visit from March 5

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will embark on a four-day visit to South Korea and Japan beginning March 5 to hold talks with his interlocutors on key bilateral, regional and global issues, including the challenges in the Indo-Pacific. Jaishankar's visit to the Republic of Korea and Japan, two of India's major partners, will impart further momentum to bilateral exchanges and set the agenda for future cooperation, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. The external affairs minister will first travel to Seoul on a two-day visit where he will co-chair the 10th India-South Korea Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) along with his Korean counterpart Cho Tae-yul.



Jaishankar is expected to meet with Korean dignitaries, heads of think tanks and Indian community, the MEA said, announcing the visit. India's Special Strategic Partnership with South Korea has expanded to diverse areas of cooperation, which include trade, investments, defence, education and technology among others. "The JCM is expected to comprehensively review the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation and explore

avenues for further strengthening it," the MEA said in a statement. "It will also provide an opportunity for the two sides to exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," it said. In the second leg of his trip, Jaishankar will visit Japan from March 6 to 8. In Tokyo, Jaishankar will attend the 16th India-Japan Foreign Ministers Strategic Dialogue along with his Japanese counterpart Yoko Kamikawa.

"The two ministers are expected to discuss issues of bilateral, regional and global importance, and exchange views on cooperation for a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific," the MEA said. "India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership has further deepened in the last decade in areas such as defence and digital technologies, semiconductor supply chains, clean energy, high speed rail, industrial competitiveness and connectivity," it said. The MEA said Jaishankar's visit and meetings in Tokyo will provide strategic guidance to the "functional cooperation" between the two countries in these areas. He is expected to interact with business leaders, think tanks and academia, building upon strong cultural and people-to-people ties.

Centre to continue scheme for women safety

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided to continue its flagship scheme for women safety with an approval of Rs 1,179.72 crore till 2025-26. The Union Cabinet took the decision on Wednesday night in an effort to check incidents of crime against women in the country. According to the latest record of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a total of 4,45,256 cases of crime against women were registered across India in 2022 — almost 51 FIRs every hour on an average. The figure was 4,28,278 in 2021 and 3,71,503 in 2020. A meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi,



approved the proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs for the continuation of the umbrella scheme on "Safety of Women" at a total cost of Rs 1,179.72 crore from 2021-22 to 2025-26, an official release said. Of the total project outlay of Rs 1,179.72 crore, an amount of Rs 885.49 crore will be provided by the MHA from

its own budget and Rs 294.23 crore will be channelised from the Nirbhaya Fund. The safety of women in a country is an outcome of several factors, such as stringent deterrence through strict laws, effective delivery of justice, redressal of complaints in a timely manner and easily accessible institutional support structures to the victims, the release said. Stringent deterrence in matters related to offences against women has been provided through amendments in the IPC, the CrPC and the Indian Evidence Act. In its efforts towards women safety, the Centre, in collaboration with the states and Union territories, has launched

several projects. The objectives of these projects include strengthening mechanisms in the states for ensuring timely intervention and investigation in the cases of crime against women and higher efficiency in the investigation and crime prevention in such matters. The Centre has proposed to continue a number of projects under the umbrella scheme for "Safety of Women". These are Emergency Response Support System 2.0, upgradation of the central forensic sciences laboratories, including the setting up of the National Forensic Data Centre, strengthening DNA analysis and cyber-forensic capacities in the state forensic sciences laboratories (FSLs).



Ghazwa-e-Hind fatwa puts Darul Uloom in a spot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The apex child rights body National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has issued directive to the Uttar Pradesh government to register an FIR and take legal action against Darul Uloom Deoband, a renowned Islamic educational institution, following the discovery of alleged objectionable content on its website. In a letter addressed to the senior superintendent of police (SSP) of the Saharanpur District, NCPCR Chairperson Priyank Kanoongo highlighted the commission's concern regarding a fatwa published on the Deoband's website. The commission requested an action taken report to be submitted within three days. The fatwa in question reportedly discusses the concept of 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' and allegedly glorifies "martyrdom in the context of India's invasion". "This fatwa is exposing children to hatred against one's own country and eventually causing them unnecessary mental or physical suffering," said

Kanoongo in the letter, emphasising the alleged violation of Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. The NCPCR, invoking Section 13(1) of the CPR Act, 2005, emphasised the potential for such content to incite hatred against the nation. Referring to legal precedents, including the case of Kanhaiya Kumar vs the State of NCT of Delhi, the commission underlined the gravity of expressions that could be construed as an offense against the state. Furthermore, the letter noted the commission's previous attempts to address similar concerns with the district administration in January 2022 and July 2023. Despite these efforts, no action has been taken thus far, the NCPCR said and asserted that the district administration could be held responsible for any adverse consequences resulting from the dissemination of such content. In light of these developments, the NCPCR directed the initiation of legal proceedings against Darul Uloom Deoband under the Indian Penal Code and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

Normalisation of scores in CUET UG likely to be done away with

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Normalisation of scores for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG is likely to be done away with this year, with the National Testing Agency (NTA) planning a rejig of the crucial examination for its third edition, according to top officials. The examination, which is spread over a month, is likely to be conducted in a shorter duration as the agency is contemplating a hybrid mode, including OMR sheets and a computer-based test. The move will also ensure that most of the students get a chance to take the examination in a city of their

choice. "The NTA is working on the possibility of conducting papers with a large registration in the OMR mode. This will help us choose a large number of schools as test centres. This will ensure that the students will get a centre within their town or city and do not have to travel to faraway places," University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar said. "Adopting the pen-and-paper mode for subjects with a large registration and a computer-based test for papers with a smaller registration will ensure that the CUET-UG can be conducted in a shorter duration unlike in the last two years. The hybrid mode promotes equal

opportunities for all, ensuring that geographical constraints do not hinder the students' educational aspirations in rural and remote areas," Kumar said. He said conducting the exam for a subject on a single day will eliminate the need for normalisation of scores. "For the last two years, we had to conduct the test for the same paper over a period of two or three days in our endeavour to provide the first-choice centre to the students as much as possible. But this year, by adopting the OMR mode, a large number of centres will be available at schools and colleges, enabling us to conduct the test across the country on the same day.

Media should not be crushed in Bengal, Thakur appeals to Mamata

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday took serious exception to the arrest of a TV journalist in West Bengal and appealed to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to ensure the media is not crushed in the state. Addressing a press conference here, Thakur called the journalist's arrest unfortunate. "It is my request to Mamata Banerjee that such thing should not happen again," Thakur told reporters. "Freedom of press is the right of media and it should not be crushed. This is my appeal to Mamata

Banerjee," he added. Santu Pan, a journalist with Republic Bangla, was arrested from Sandeshkhali late on Monday evening. Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24-Parganas district has been tense with a large number of women in the locality accusing Trinamool Congress strongman Shajahan Sheikh and his supporters of "land-grab and sexually assaulting" them under coercion. Sheikh has been absconding since January 5 when a mob attacked Enforcement Directorate (ED) officers during a raid at his residence in connection with an alleged ration scam. Two of Sheikh's aides, who along with others were booked under charges of gang rape and attempt to murder, have been arrested.

PARAKH to adopt global standards for national assessment survey



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Conducting the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and the Foundational Learning Study (FLS), aiming to adopt international standards to further refine assessment methods and expanding stakeholder capacity building are among the plans of national assessment regulator PARAKH for 2024. Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH), which completed its first year this month, is tasked with framing assessment guidelines for all boards to help remove disparities in the scores of the students enrolled with different state boards. "As it moves into its second year, PARAKH is focused on preparing for the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and the Foundational Learning Study (FLS) in 2024, aiming to adopt international standards to further refine the assessment methods and expand stakeholder capacity building," said Amit Sevak, CEO of the US-based Educational Testing Service (ETS). ETS, which conducts key tests such as TOEFL and GRE, is the technical partner of the National Council for Education Research (NCERT). It was chosen for setting up the regulatory platform and assisting PARAKH in achieving the goals. "The initiative's roadmap promises continuous improvement of educational assessments, aiming to inspire the evolution of India's education system to meet global standards," Sevak said. The last year saw PARAKH establishing a comprehensive framework for student assessment across India's school boards, conducting the First State Educational Achievement Survey (SEAS) that involved more than 84 lakh students in literacy and numeracy assessments across

19 languages, thus setting a new precedent for educational surveys in India. The NAS, which assesses the competencies developed by students at the grade levels of third, fifth and eighth, is conducted every three years. The FLS is a school-based performance-assessment module. Selected samples of children from a chosen grade are assessed by a test administrator in a one-on-one setting where each child responds to a set of questions administered orally. Several foundational literacy skills, including oral-language comprehension, phonological awareness, decoding, reading comprehension and oral-reading fluency with comprehension, are assessed as part of the exercise. For foundational numeracy, number identification and comparison, number operations, multiplication and division facts, measurement, fractions, patterns and data handling are included. "Earlier this month, PARAKH made a presentation showcasing the roadmap for improvement in the learning outcomes, based on competency-based assessment envisaged in the NEP-2020. It includes creating an equivalence amongst all state school boards and for this, an interface has been created with the boards and respective state governments and SCERTs," said Sanjay Kumar, School Education Secretary. "The successful conduct of the state achievement survey in 2023 was discussed and its preliminary results were shared. I am sure that transformation in assessment processes, along with equivalence in state school boards, would manifest itself in the NAS learning outcome scores," he added. The report of the state achievement survey is yet to be released. Indrani Bhaduri, who heads PARAKH, said, "Learning assessments need to be made meaningful and relevant for the students and this can happen only through a participatory approach."

Thakur launches portals to revolutionise media landscape

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur here on Thursday launched four transformatory portals that promise to revolutionize the media landscape in India. They include Press Sewa Portal, Transparent Empanelment Media Planning and e-Billing System, Navigate

Bharat Portal and National Register for Local Cable Operators (LCOs). These initiative are aimed at ensuring ease of doing business by fostering a more conducive business environment for Newspaper publishers and TV channels, enhance transparency and efficiency in government communication, provide easy access to authentic Government videos and create

a comprehensive database of LCOs enabling the Government to streamline regulatory processes in the cable television sector in future. Addressing the audience present on the occasion, Thakur remarked today, India is viewed as an attractive destination for investment, with global companies eager to establish businesses there. He recalled Prime Minister



Narendra Modi's emphasis on transformative governance and economic reforms has greatly improved the ease of doing business in India and added that this has led to increased investment from both existing businesses and new entrepreneurs. The startup ecosystem, in particular, has flourished, with a significant increase in the number of startups and unicorns, he stated.

Elaborating on recognition of government's achievements towards improving ease of doing business, the minister said these have been recognized globally, as evidenced by its improved rankings in international indices like the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index and the Logistic Performance Index. He further said the success of platforms like the Government

e-Marketplace (GeM) reflect the government's efforts to create a level playing field for MSMEs and small businesses. He added that Prime Minister Modi's leadership has not only focused on economic reforms but also on fostering a mindset transformation, recognizing entrepreneurs as partners in national development. This approach has led to increased wealth creation, job opportunities, and higher

incomes, benefiting the country's overall welfare and development. Earlier, Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Sanjay Jaju during his remarks said these initiatives will help us streamline and increase our engagement with the media. These will foster not just transparency and innovation and help improve the functioning of the departments.

Will urge IMF to stop support to Pak over ‘rigged’ polls: Imran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Thursday announced that he will write to the IMF, demanding the global lender to stop its support to cash-strapped Pakistan until it seeks an “audit” of the elections mired in controversies, including vote rigging.

Khan’s message from jail was conveyed through Barrister Ali Zafar, who met him in the Adiala Jail Rawalpindi where the former cricketer-turned-politician has been incarcerated since last year.

“A letter will be written to the International Monetary Fund that it should first seek an audit of elections and then decide about any loan to Pakistan,” Zafar said, adding that any loan to Pakistan without an audit of votes would be harmful to the country facing financial woes. Zafar, who has also been nominated by Khan to contest intra-party election for the chairman’s post, also said that the IMF has laws which bar aid to countries not having democratic governments. He said a democratic government was only possible after having fair and free elections. He rejected the impression that the letter would further jeopardise Pakistan’s fragile economy which, without assistance from the donors, may default on external liabilities.

Pakistan is heavily dependent on the IMF and currently implementing a short-term USD 3 billion agreement. The global lender has already provided two tranches of loan and the last tranche of USD 1.2 is expected by the end of March or early April.

According to experts, the new government after taking office would have to enter into fresh talks with the IMF to get a new loan. The statement by Khan drew criticism from his opponents, who said that the former prime minister was bent on damaging the country.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Atta

PTI’s organisational elections on March 3

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan’s beleaguered party will conduct fresh organisational elections on March 3, a senior leader announced on Thursday, months after the election commission annulled a previous intra-party poll.

Earlier this month, intra-party polls of the 71-year-old former-cricketer-turned-politician’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were postponed after top party leadership asserted that it could “divert” attention from the February 8 general elections.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan said that the decision to conduct fresh intra-party polls had been made in the light of instructions from the party founder Imran Khan.

“The intra-party elections will take place on March 3 and this time Ali Zafar will be our candidate for chairman,” he said while addressing a press conference along with Barrister Zafar and other party leaders. He reiterated that it was the decision of Imran Khan. Gohar, who was nominated by Khan to contest the intra-party elections as chairman last year and also won, said that Khan nominated Omar Ayub Khan to contest as secretary general of the party. The party members can submit nomination papers by Friday and Saturday. According to the poll schedule, the scrutiny of the

Tarar condemned the statement about writing a letter to the IMF and said that the PTI founder was trying to harm the country. “The party has always tried to damage the country to save its politics,” he said.

The development comes after the PML-N and the

nomination papers will be completed by February 25 and decisions on the nominations will be made by February 27.

The polling for the organisational elections would be held at the party’s central secretariat here and PTI offices in all four provinces of the country, the Dawn newspaper reported. The development came as the Express Tribune newspaper reported that the PTI is expected to hold its intra-party elections in the next 15 days. It had also reported that Gohar Khan has been nominated as the chairman and Raouf Hassan will be the Chief Election Commissioner for PTI’s intra-party polls.

It was not known why Imran Khan changed the candidate for the post of chairman. To a question, Gohar Khan rejected the impression that he had been demoted. Previously, a day after PTI announced the schedule for fresh intra-party polls, the party postponed them on February 2 until after the elections which were held on February 8.

The party cited commitments of members in their respective constituencies and PTI venues being “unlawfully blocked by the administration” as reasons for the delay.

The earlier round of the party’s intra-party polls was declared null and void by the Supreme Court before the general elections. The party also lost its iconic ‘bat’ electoral symbol.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) agreed on a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government led by former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif. No political party managed to secure enough seats in the National Assembly following the February 8 general elec-

tions, leading to a hung Parliament.

Both the PML-N and the PPP won fewer seats in Parliament than candidates backed by Imran Khan in an election mired in controversies, including vote rigging. Khan, who could not contest the February 8 elections due to his convictions in some cases including that of corruption, has been barred from holding any public office for 10 years. The PTI has said that the PML-N and PPP are trying to form a government with a stolen mandate and the nation would not accept the “PDM 2.0”.

It alleged the “regime change conspiracy” was backed by the chief election commissioner by making a mockery of the Constitution and law in the country. The IMF’s review mission might visit Islamabad by the end of this month or early next month, provided the government formation at the federal and provincial levels is complete. The mission will finalise the salient features of the anticipated medium-term bailout package to avert a default on repayment of foreign debts.

Earlier, the IMF’s review mission was scheduled to visit the country in the first week of February, but the delegation refused to visit on the eve of the general elections. After the general elections threw a fractured mandate, doubts have been raised about the fairness of the whole process, with the US, the European Union, and other countries demanding an investigation into the irregularities and fraud allegations.

Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves hovered around USD 8.04 billion during the week ending February 2, after witnessing a decline in reserves by USD 173 million due to external debt repayments. A Finance Division official last week said the IMF would only come to begin the second review talks once a new government was sworn in at the national level.

Maryam set to be first woman CM of Pakistan’s Punjab provincial assembly

Lahore (PTI): Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, is set to become the first woman chief minister of Pakistan’s Punjab province following the summoning of the inaugural session of the provincial legislature on Friday.

Out of five assemblies in Pakistan that went to the polls on February 8, the Punjab Assembly is the first house convening its opening session. “Punjab Governor Balighur Rahman has called the Punjab Assembly session for Friday, in which newly elected members of the assembly will swear in and formation of the new government will begin,” a spokesperson for the Governor’s House said on Thursday. Maryam, 50, is also senior vice president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party. She is considered to be the political heir of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, who surprisingly nominated his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif as his party’s prime ministerial candidate. The PML-N has nominated Maryam as the chief ministerial candidate of the party in Punjab, a province of over 120 million people. The PML-N won 137 seats while independents backed by former prime minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won 113 in the Punjab Assembly. Separately, 20-odd independents, not PTI-backed, have already joined the PML-N. The PTI-backed independent candidates have joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to get reserved seats for women and minorities besides saving their elected members from being forced to change their loyalty by the military establishment.

“Xiang Yang Hong 03 was moored close to Male City this morning. Around noon, the ship was shown to be near Thilafushi,” news portal Edition.mv reported, quoting the Marine Traffic website that tracks all ocean liners across the globe. “Xiang Yang Hong 03 began its journey on January 14, 24 hours after Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu concluded his state visit to China. It arrived near Male’ today after spending about a month near the Maldives’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ),” said Adhadhu.com, a news portal. It also claimed that the vessel was “not visible on common tracking sites starting from January 22. It is believed that the vessels tracking systems had been turned off when it was in the Java Sea off Indonesia then.”

An analysis by Adhadhu using satellite AIS tracking showed that the Chinese vessel was later at the EEZ of Maldives, the report said, adding, “The vessel had spent about a month near the EEZ.”

Ukraine’s fate hangs in balance, Polish prime minister says

Warsaw (AP): Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Thursday that the border crossings with Ukraine are being added to a list of critical infrastructure to ensure that all military and humanitarian aid can reach Ukraine without any delays.

“The fate of Ukraine is hanging in the balance and I don’t need to convince anyone that this means that our fate is also hanging in the balance,” said Tusk, whose country is located along NATO’s eastern flank and borders Ukraine.

Tusk spoke following protests by angry Polish farmers that have included border blockades and the spilling of Ukrainian grain from freight trains at a Polish border crossing. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Wednesday that the blockade was hampering the transport of military supplies to Ukrainian forces on the front line.

Poland is one of the main staging posts for Western military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Poland has donated many of its own weapons but transports from other NATO countries often pass through

Chinese ship moors near Maldives after a month in Indian Ocean

PTI ■ MALE

A high-tech Chinese marine research ship on Thursday arrived near the Maldives after spending about a month in the Indian Ocean near the island nation, media reports said here. The ship, ‘Xiang Yang Hong 03’ reached the Maldives on the same day when Indian and Sri Lankan coast guard ships reached the strategically located archipelago for a trilateral naval exercise.

India had already expressed concern about the movement of the Chinese research ship in the Indian Ocean and also prevailed on Sri Lanka to refuse permission for the ship to dock at the Colombo port.

“Chinese research vessel Xiang Yang Hong 03 was moored close to Male City this morning. Around noon, the ship was shown to be near Thilafushi,” news portal Edition.mv reported, quoting the Marine Traffic website that tracks all ocean liners across the globe. “Xiang Yang Hong 03 began its journey on January 14, 24 hours after Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu concluded his state visit to China. It arrived near Male’ today after spending about a month near the Maldives’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ),” said Adhadhu.com, a news portal. It also claimed that the vessel was “not visible on common tracking sites starting from January 22. It is believed that the vessels tracking systems had been turned off when it was in the Java Sea off Indonesia then.”

An analysis by Adhadhu using satellite AIS tracking showed that the Chinese vessel was later at the EEZ of Maldives, the report said, adding, “The vessel had spent about a month near the EEZ.”

Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, won last year’s presidential election on an ‘anti-India’ stance. He made Beijing his first port of call going against the tradition of visiting New Delhi first as the Maldivian President.

An American think-tank has alleged that a vast fleet of China’s “scientific research” ships is collecting data from the oceans, including in the Indian Ocean Region, for military purposes, especially for submarine operations, a charge denied by Beijing, which said the Chinese vessels operations are in line with the UN Convention on Law of the Seas (UNCLOS).

On January 23, the Maldives government permitted the research vessel. But while the Maldivian foreign ministry said the Chinese Research Vessel Xiang Yang Hong 3 will “not be conducting any research while in the Maldivian waters,” sources in the Indian defence establishment had indicated that New Delhi was keeping a close watch on the movement of the ship. In February, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, “China’s scientific research activities in relevant waters are for peaceful purposes and aimed at contributing to humanity’s scientific understanding of the ocean.”

Earlier on January 5, Sri Lanka, while denying entry to the Chinese ship, had said it had declared a moratorium on foreign research ships entering its waters for a year amid concerns from India over Chinese research vessels docking in its neighbourhood.

The Maldives’ proximity to India, barely 70 nautical miles from the island of Minicoy in Lakshadweep and 300 nautical miles from the mainland’s western coast, and

its location at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) gives it significant strategic importance. The Maldives is India’s key maritime neighbour in the IOR and occupies a special place in its initiatives like SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy of the Narendra Modi government.

Meanwhile, Thursday morning, Coast Guards of Maldives, India, and Sri Lanka, along with observers from Bangladesh, joined in at the Trilateral Joint Exercise ‘DOSTI-16’.

“MNDF welcomes participating ships from India and Sri Lanka for the Trilateral Joint Exercise ‘DOSTI-16’ from Feb 22-25. Coast Guards of Maldives, India, and Sri Lanka, along with observers from Bangladesh, join in this biennial event to enhance collaboration between the forces,” Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) said in a post on X along with the photos of the two vessels. “The purpose of the biennial exercise is to enhance military collaboration between the three nations and explore ways the nations can work together with respect to incidents unfolding at sea,” news portal Sun.mv reported.

DOSTI exercise had initially kicked off between Maldives and India in 1991. Sri Lanka first participated in the exercise in 2012. The exercise was last held in 2021, the portal said.

The visit of the Indian coastguard ship to the Maldives comes amidst President Muizzu’s demand for the withdrawal of 88 Indian military personnel manning three Indian aviation platforms in the island nation by March 15.

Russian war blogger dies after facing criticism for revealing Moscow’s losses

Moscow (AP): A Russian military blogger has died in an apparent suicide after facing a barrage of criticism for revealing heavy losses in Ukraine, and his supporters have blamed Kremlin propagandists for his death. Andrei Morozov, who also served as a soldier on the front line in Ukraine, said in his last post Wednesday that he decided to “execute” himself to help his comrades in arms avoid fall-out from his critical publications, which had angered the military command.

Maxim Pashkov, a lawyer who knew him, confirmed Morozov’s death in a messaging app statement, saying that he shot himself dead. Morozov was 44 years old. Morozov, who went by the nickname Murz, said in a recent post that about 16,000 Russian troops were killed and the military lost about 300 armored vehicles since October when the four-month battle for the eastern stronghold of Avdiivka began. Russian troops captured Avdiivka over the weekend after Ukrainian troops pulled back.

Morozov’s remarks drew angry comments from a top TV show host on Russian state TV and others who called for him to be prosecuted for “discrediting” the military. Several fellow bloggers blamed those

who attacked Morozov for his death. In his last post before killing himself that he posted on his channel in Telegram, Morozov said he was forced by military officials to remove his post about the Russian losses. He harshly criticised the military command for turning a blind eye to losses and ignoring troops’ needs. Alexander Kofman, head of the Public Chamber in the Moscow-controlled part of the Donetsk region, described Morozov’s suicide as a “huge mistake” in a statement on his messaging app channel. Morozov’s death came as Russian authorities have become increasingly intolerant ahead of March’s election in which President Vladimir Putin is all but certain to win another six-year term.

Imran’s party-backed winning independent candidates join Sunni Ittehad Council

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Amidst a flurry of post-election activities in Pakistan, jailed former prime minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party-backed winning independent candidates of national and provincial assemblies officially joined the Sunni Ittehad Council to claim the share in the quota of seats reserved for women and minorities.

The independents submitted affidavits to the Election Commission on Wednesday, vowing to become part of the right-wing party dominated by Sunni Muslims. As many as 89 Members of National Assembly (MNAs), 85 members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, 106 members of the Punjab Assembly and nine members of the Sindh Assembly have submitted their affidavits, the Dawn newspaper reported. However, PTI chief

Barrister Gohar Khan and candidate for Prime Minister post Omar Ayub Khan did not join the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The PTI candidate for CM Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur also stayed away from the SIC.

Earlier, it was reported by some media that Gohar Khan had also joined the SIC which would hamper his chances to contest the intra-party elections of the PTI which the party was planning to hold in the coming weeks. The PTI-backed independent candidates joined the SIC to claim a share of the reserved seats. The development comes after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) agreed on a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government led by former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Both the PML-N and the PPP won fewer seats in Parliament than candidates

backed by Imran Khan in an election mired in controversies, including vote rigging. Khan, who could not contest the February 8 elections due to his convictions in some cases including that of corruption has been barred from holding any public office for 10 years. The PTI has said that the PML-N and PPP are going to form the government with a stolen mandate and the nation would not accept the “PDM 2.0”.

It alleged the “regime change conspiracy” was backed by the chief election commissioner by making a mockery of the Constitution and law in the country. A party spokesperson said that a group “rejected by the nation” had gathered once again to stage a “drama” of PDM 2.0 in the country, which was unacceptable and intolerable. He claimed that the nation had given a clear mandate to the PTI to form its government in Centre, Punjab and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa provinces despite the incarceration of PTI founding chairman Imran Khan, the snatching of the party’s election symbol ‘bat’, and obstacles to carry out poll campaigns.

He claimed that as per Form-45s, the citizens had given the PTI an overwhelming majority of 180 seats in the 266-member National Assembly. “It is high time we learned a lesson from history and respected the public mandate, as Pakistan had to go through a tragedy like the fall of Dhaka as a result of daylight poll fraud,” the party’s spokesperson said. He alleged that the heirs of those who “dismembered Pakistan” were again active in facilitating the state’s efforts to trample on the public mandate. However, he made it clear that the people of Pakistan would not tolerate any attempt to make a mockery of the Constitution and democracy and the robbery of their votes.

Ukraine weighs unpopular plan to expand draft

AP ■ LYMAN

When the Russian army mounted a full-scale invasion two years ago, Ukrainian men zealously rushed to recruitment centres across the country to enlist, ready to die in defence of their nation. Today, with Russia in control of roughly one-quarter of Ukraine and the two armies virtually deadlocked along a 1,000-kilometre front line, that spirit to enlist has faded: Few Ukrainian men are evading the draft by hiding at home or trying to bribe their way out of the battle.

Along the frigid and muddy front line, commanders say their army is too small and made up of too many exhausted and wounded soldiers. As the war enters its third year, the most urgent and politically sensitive challenge pressing on Ukraine is whether it can muster enough new soldiers to repel an enemy with far more fighters at its disposal. Russia’s population is more than three times as large as Ukraine’s, and President Vladimir Putin has shown a

willingness to force men to the front if not enough volunteer. The lack of soldiers isn’t Ukraine’s only predicament — it is also desperate for Western military aid, which has been harder to come by as the war drags on. But mobilizing enough soldiers is a problem only Ukraine can solve.

The parliament is considering legislation that would increase the potential pool of recruits by about 400,000, in part by lowering the enlistment age from 27 to 25. But the proposal is highly unpopular, forcing elected officials to grapple with questions that cut to the heart of nationhood: Can they convince enough citizens to sacrifice their lives? And, if not, are they willing to accept the alternative?

A Ukrainian soldier fighting near the city of Avdiivka — where soldiers retreated last week to save lives — said his unit was recently outnumbered by about 5 to 1 when dozens of Russian soldiers stormed their position, killing everyone but himself and two others. “We were almost completely defeat-

ed,” said Dima, who refused to provide his last name for security reasons. Roughly 800 kilometres away, a 42-year-old man afraid of being sent to the front hides at home outside of Kyiv, distressed. “I feel a sort of guilt for being a man ... I cannot feel myself free,” said Andrii, who insisted on using his first name only to speak about dodging the draft. Tens of thousands of other eligible Ukrainian men are estimated to be evading the draft, at home or abroad.

WHO WILL DIG THE TRENCHES?

Because there aren’t enough new recruits, soldiers on the front line aren’t getting enough rest in between rotations. Two years of gruelling battles have left men fatigued and more susceptible to injury. When there are new recruits, they are too few, too poorly trained and often too old, according to interviews with two dozen Ukrainian soldiers, including six commanders. Commanders say they don’t have enough soldiers to launch

offensives, and barely enough to hold positions amid intensifying Russian assaults.

Brigades of 3,000-5,000 soldiers are typically fighting with only 75 per cent of their full strength, according to Vadym Ivchenko, a lawmaker who is part of the parliament’s national security, defense and intelligence committee.

Igor Ivantsev, 31, was among a dozen men treated recently at a field hospital near the front. He has been wounded twice in the span of four months. His body aches when he carries his machine gun, but doctors deem him fit to serve. Ivantsev said that of the 17 men he enlisted with, most are dead; the rest are like him, wounded.

Ivantsev’s commander, who would only provide his first name, Dmytro, said his exhausted and depleted company is working overtime to dig deeper trenches and build better locations from which to counter constant Russian artillery. “We have no people, nowhere to get them from,” Dmytro said. At the start of the

war, soldiers were rotated every two weeks for one week of rest, he said. But now his soldiers fight for a month, then get four days of rest. “We are not made of steel,” said Ivantsev.

A PLAN TO DRAFT MORE MEN

The legislation being discussed in parliament would enable the military to draft more men so that those already enlisted can get more rest or even be relieved of duty. An estimated 300,000 Ukrainian soldiers are currently fighting along the front line, while others serve elsewhere, lawmakers said. Putin has said twice as many Russian troops are in Ukraine. The Ukrainian military seeks to mobilize up to 500,000 more men, but realizing how unpopular such a move would be, lawmakers are treading carefully. Over a thousand amendments have been attached to draft legislation that even President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has yet to publicly endorse. Under the draft legislation, any individual who fails

to respond to call up notices could potentially have their bank accounts frozen and their ability to travel outside the country restricted. Lawmakers critical of the legislation, including Ivchenko, say the military hasn’t adequately explained how a surge in conscription will meaningfully change the outcome of the war.

DRAFT DODGERS

The legislation’s toughest sell are men like a 35-year-old website creator who insisted on anonymity to discuss his decision to hide at home in a suburb of Kyiv rather than join the war effort. He refuses to fight, he said, because he doesn’t want to kill people; his plan is to raise enough money to escape Ukraine.

The legislation being considered in parliament would, in theory, leave less room for men like him to hide by requiring all draft-eligible citizens to check in with the government via an electronic-tracking system.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR

Ph.D. Admission- Feb-2024

Online applications are invited for admission to Ph.D. -Feb. 2024 for employees of State Govt., Govt. of India and employees working on posts aided by the Govt. of Punjab in various courses latest by 4-3-2024. For details consult University website www.gndu.ac.in.

Director of Research

NA/12/22261/2023/32768

Dated CHD : 2/22/2024

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar			
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/GEN/03-25/2024			
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:			
Sr. No.	Item	Quantity	
1	Allotment of Canteens	11	
2	Allotment of Shops	12	

Closing date & Time: 14/03/2024 at 5:00 PM

For details log onto: www.eproc.punjab.gov.in

Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only

Assistant Registrar (General)

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar

NA/12/22237/2023/32740 Dated CHD : 2/22/2024

NORTHERN RAILWAY

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Name of work and its location	30-Elect-50-T-2023-24-E3 Electrical work in connection with provision of VRF/ VRFV type air conditioning plant with other associated work in canteen at Baroda House, New Delhi.
Approx cost of the works in	Rs. 29.97 Lacs
Address of the office	Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi
Bid Security	Rs. 60000.00
Date & time of submission of tender	26.03.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender	26.03.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Website & Notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

575/24

Sensex surges over 500 points

Nifty scales new high on bullish sentiments

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Stocks staged a strong recovery on Thursday, with Nifty notching up a fresh all-time high and Sensex surging over 500 points as investors went on a buying spree in IT, technology and automobile stocks.

After volatility persisted for most part of the session, the benchmark indices rebounded in the last one hour of trading amid improving domestic macroeconomic indicators and positive global cues, including impressive earnings from the US technology space.

The 30-share benchmark Sensex soared 535.15 points or 0.74 per cent to close at 73,158.24 points. As many as 22 Sensex constituents closed in the positive territory and the index touched an intra-day high of 73,256.39 points.

The broader Nifty climbed 162.40 points or 0.74 per cent to hit its highest-ever closing level of 22,217.45 points.

During intraday trade, the index touched the peak of 22,252.50 points and 25 Nifty constituents ended the session with gains.

Nifty recorded its previous lifetime peak at 22,196.95 points on



February 20.

“The domestic market staged a recovery from the day’s low, buoyed by positive PMI data from the Eurozone and an impressive earnings report from US tech stocks.

“The broader market showed resilience as India’s economic activity continued to expand in February, with both service and manufacturing PMI improving. Consequently, it resulted in outperformance in discretionary stocks and capital goods,”

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

BSE midcap index gained 0.92 per cent, largecap index climbed 0.81 per cent and smallcap index rose 0.54 per cent.

In the Sensex pack, HCLTech rose the maximum by 3.12 per cent, followed by ITC which gained 2.73 per cent and M&M went up 2.61 per cent. TCS climbed 2.44 per cent. Bellwether auto stock Maruti gained 1.79 per cent, while Tata Motors rose

1.20 per cent.

Tech Mahindra, Wipro, L&T and Maruti were among the other major gainers.

“Nifty made a fresh record high on February 22 negating the bearish development of the previous session. It could now proceed towards 22,280 and later 22,810. On falls, it could take support at 22,011. Participants remain unsure about the direction of the market due to sharp intraday movements in the

markets on either side,” Deepak Jasani, Head Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Auto gained the maximum by 1.85 per cent, followed by IT which rose by 1.83 per cent and Capital Goods which went up by 1.80 per cent.

BSE Tech rose 1.59 per cent, while industrials climbed 1.50 per cent and power ended 1.38 per cent higher.

However, stocks of all major banks closed in the red with IndusInd

Bank falling 1.87 per cent, HDFC Bank dropped 1.28 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 1.11 per cent and SBI slipped 0.73 per cent. BSE Bankex was the only index that ended with a marginal loss of 0.04 per cent.

“We are witnessing the banks trading at higher valuations than their historical median barring two large banks; HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

“The sharp correction in these two banks led to valuation comfort and earning upgrades is likely to bring investor sentiment back. Hence, we are optimistic on HDFC Bank with a current valuation of around 2.7x Price to book,” Ajit Kabi, Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said.

In Asian markets, Japan’s Nikkei 225 surged more than 2 per cent to all-time high to hit its 1,989 level. Hang Seng of Hong Kong and China’s Shanghai Composite also ended with sharp gains.

European stocks were also mostly trading in the green.

On Wednesday, US stocks finished mostly higher after minutes of the US Federal Reserve’s January meeting showed most policymakers were concerned about the risks of cutting interest rates early.



Sugar firms stocks settle 3 per cent lower

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Sugar companies settled 3 per cent lower on Thursday after the government announced a hike in the minimum price that mills have to pay to sugarcane growers for the 2024-25 season starting October.

The scrip of Rana Sugars declined 2.86 per cent to close at Rs 25.44 apiece on the BSE, Mawana Sugars at Rs 102.07, Shree Renuka Sugars at Rs 48.96, Dalmia Bharat Sugar and Industries at Rs 402, EID Parry (India) at Rs 630.60.

Also, Triveni Engineering & Industries went lower by 0.73 per cent to settle at Rs 347.90 apiece, Dhampur Sugar Mills at Rs 248.95 and KCP Sugar & Industries Corp at Rs 41.75 per piece on the exchange.

On the other hand, shares of Rajshree Sugars & Chemicals rallied 8.22 per cent to end at Rs 80.60 apiece, and Balrampur Chini Mills gained 0.45 per cent to finish at Rs 382.45 each on the BSE.

The 30-share BSE Sensex index jumped 535.15 points or 0.74 per cent to close at 73,158.24.

On Wednesday, the government announced a hike in the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP), the minimum rate that mills need to pay to sugarcane growers. The FRP has been increased by Rs 25 to Rs 340 per quintal for the 2024-25 season starting October.

The decision to increase the FRP was taken at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This is the highest FRP for sugarcane announced by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government since coming to power in 2014.

Dismayed over the decision, Baghat District President of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) Pratap Singh Gurjar said the government has forgotten its own promise.



Vodafone Idea board to meet to consider fundraising proposal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Vodafone Idea (VIL) on Thursday said its board will meet on February 27 to consider fundraising proposals.

In a statutory filing, VIL said the board of directors will consider and evaluate all proposals for “raising of funds in one or more tranches by way of a rights issue, further public offer, private placement including preferential allotment, qualified institutions placement or through any other permissible mode and/or combination”.

The fundraising could be through equity or debt instruments, the BSE filing said.

The capital raise could be by way of issue of equity shares or by way of any instruments including “securities convertible into equity shares, Global Depository Receipts, American Depository Receipts or bonds including foreign currency convertible bonds, convertible debentures, warrants, and/or non-convertible debentures including non-convertible debentures along with warrants, which may or may not be listed”.

“... The Board of Directors of Vodafone Idea Limited will be held on Tuesday that is 27 February, 2024, to consider and evaluate any and all proposals for raising of funds in one or more tranches...,” it said.

Earlier today, Billionaire industrialist and Aditya

Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla had underlined the Group’s firm commitment to the cash-strapped telco and asserted that efforts are on to rope-in external investors.

On how soon such investors could be onboarded, Birla told PTI “we are making good progress but can’t put in a timeline.”

“We remain very committed to Vodafone Idea, and like we have said in public domain, efforts are on to get outside investors,” he had said speaking at a conference here to mark the launch of the Group’s decorative business.

Vodafone Idea saw its net loss narrow to Rs 6,986 crore for the December 2023 quarter, helped by Rs 755.5 crore one-time exceptional gain, while the average revenue per subscriber improved for the ailing telco.

VIL’s net loss stood at Rs 7,990 crore in the year-ago period.

For the debt-laden telco - which has been struggling to keep up with the larger rivals like Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel in the hugely competitive Indian telecom market - the revenue from operations remained nearly flat at Rs 10,673.1 crore year-on-year.

During the company’s Q3FY24 results, Vodafone Idea CEO Akshaya Moondra had said: “We remain engaged with various parties for fundraising to make required investments for network expansion, including 5G roll-out.”

Farm community gives mixed response to increase in sugarcane FRP

PTI ■ BAGHPAT/MEERUT (UP)

The farm community in western Uttar Pradesh has given a mixed response to the government’s decision to increase Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane to Rs 340 per quintal.

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to hike the minimum price that mills have to pay to sugarcane growers by Rs 25 to Rs 340 per quintal for the 2024-25 season starting October.

This is the highest FRP for sugarcane announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government since coming to power in 2014.

Dismayed over the decision, Baghat District President of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Bhanu) Pratap Singh Gurjar said the government has forgotten its own promise.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi had himself promised to give MSP of Rs 450 per quintal to cane during a public rally in Meerut in 2014 elections,” he claimed.

“We (farmers) are also consumers. The government should also remember this. We also have to buy petrol, diesel, fertilizer, seeds etc. All these things are becoming expensive. MSP on sugarcane should be increased on the basis of farmers’ costs. If the allowance of government employees increases on the basis of inflation, then why is it not done for farmers? We urge the central government to reconsider its decision on the price for sugarcane,” Gurjar added.

Gurwant Singh, a sugarcane farmer of Shahjahanpur district, called the FRP rise “meagre.”

“The increase in FRP of sugarcane



by Rs 25 might look like a big decision but is very meagre to what actually is required. The cost of farming has almost doubled in the past few years. The government should at least increase the FRP by Rs 70 per

quintal so that farmers could recover their investment,” he said.

On the other hand, National Secretary of Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and senior farm leader of West UP, Raj Kumar Sangwan, while talking to PTI in Meerut, said the Centre has taken the decision keeping in mind the plight of the farmers. “This increase will provide relief to farmers.”

He also said that considering the way costs are increasing, the FRP could have been increased further.

Meerut District President of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Arajnaitik) Anurag Chaudhary also welcomed the move.

“The decision of Government of India to increase the FRP of sugarcane by Rs 25 is good. But the central government must ensure that farmers in UP get this benefit.”

Rupee rises 13 paise to close at 82.83 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 13 paise to close at 82.83 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market and positive domestic equities.

Forex traders said elevated crude oil prices weighed on the local unit and restricted a sharp uptick.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 82.94 against the greenback. It hit an intraday high of 82.83 during the day.

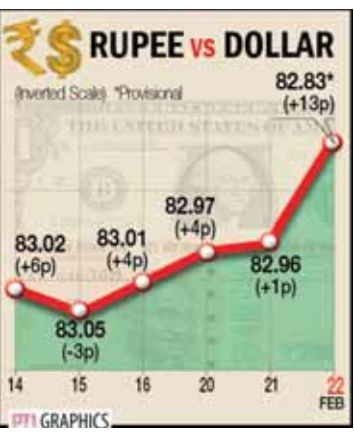
The domestic unit finally settled at 82.83 (provisional) against the dollar,

higher by 13 paise from its previous close of 82.96.

The Indian rupee appreciated on Thursday on weak US dollar and mixed-to-positive domestic markets, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, a surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains. The US dollar declined on rise in risk appetite in global markets and positive European markets ahead of PMI data from Eurozone and Germany.

Analysts attributed the retreating dollar index to the US Federal Reserve’s minutes that reflected policy makers’ cautious approach, ebbing the possibility of interest rate cuts in



the immediate future.

“The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) minutes released on Wednesday were slightly hawkish,” Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.31 per cent lower at 103.68.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.37 per cent to USD 83.34 per barrel.

“We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the weak tone in the US dollar and positive global markets. However, rising global crude oil prices and geopolitical tension in the Middle East may limit the gains

in the rupee. “Traders may watch out for manufacturing and services PMI, weekly unemployment claims and existing home sales data from the US.

USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.60 to Rs 83.10,” Choudhary added.

On the domestic equity market front, the Sensex advanced 535.15 points, or 0.74 per cent, to 73,158.24. The Nifty rose 162.40 points, or 0.74 per cent, to hit an all-time high of 22,217.45.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Wednesday as they purchased shares worth Rs 284.66 crore, according to exchange data.

Solar installations fall 44 per cent in 2023, says report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has reported a 44 per cent fall in solar installations at 7.5 gigawatt in 2023 due to land acquisition-related issues, research firm Mercom Capital said on Thursday.

According to the US-based research firm’s latest report, a total of 13.4 gigawatt (GW) solar capacity was installed in the country in 2022.

As of December 2023, the cumulative installed solar capacity stood at 72 GW. Of which utility-scale projects accounted for 85.4 per cent, and rooftop solar accounted for 14.6 per cent, the report said.

“In 2023, large-scale solar

installations fell 51 per cent to 5.8 GW from 11.7 GW in 2022. Extensions granted to several large-scale projects and delays primarily due to land (acquisition) and transmission (connectivity) issues impacted capacity additions during the year. Large-scale solar accounted for 77.2 per cent of annual solar capacity additions, and rooftop solar contributed 22.8 per cent,” it said.

Rajasthan followed by Karnataka, and Gujarat were the top three states for cumulative large-scale solar capacity, accounting for 54.8 per cent of installations in the country as of December 2023.

India’s large-scale solar project

pipeline stood at 105.3 GW, with another 70.6 GW of projects tendered and pending auction, the report said.

Country’s installed renewable energy capacity, including large hydropower projects, stood at 179.5 GW, accounting for 42 per cent of the overall power mix at the end of December 2023.

Solar energy projects accounted for 48.5 per cent of all new power capacity installed last year.

As of December 2023, solar energy accounted for 16.9 per cent of India’s total installed power capacity and almost 40.1 per cent of the total installed renewable energy capacity.

Bharat Highways InvIT to float ₹2,500 crore IPO on February 28

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Highways InvIT, an infrastructure investment trust, on Thursday said it will launch its Rs 2,500 crore Initial Public Offering (IPO) on February 28.

The InvIT’s maiden public issue will conclude on March 1 and the price band has been set at Rs 98-100 per unit for the issue, Bharat Highways InvIT said in a statement.

Proceeds from the issue will be utilised to provide loans to the Project SPVs (special purpose vehicles) for repayment of their outstanding loans.

Bharat Highways InvIT is an



infrastructure investment trust established to acquire, manage, and invest in a portfolio of infrastructure assets in India and to carry on the activities of an infrastructure investment trust under Sebi’s InvIT rule. Its initial portfolio consists of seven road assets, all operating on HAM (Hybrid Annuity Model) basis, in Punjab,

Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh consisting of about 497.292 km of constructed and operational roads.

Additionally, the InvIT has entered into an agreement with G R Infraprojects Ltd (GRIL) after which GRIL granted a right of first offer to the InvIT to acquire certain of its road assets.

About 75 per cent of the issue size has been reserved for Qualified Institutional Bidders (QIBs) and 25 per cent for Non-institutional Investors (NIIs). Investors can bid for a minimum of 150 units in one lot and in multiples of 150 units thereof.

Sebi orders attachment of bank, demat accounts of DHFL former promoters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has ordered the attachment of bank accounts as well as shares and mutual fund holdings of Dheeraj Wadhawan and Kapil Wadhawan, the former promoters of Dewan Housing Finance Corp Ltd (DHFL), to recover dues totalling over Rs 22 lakh.

This came after the brothers failed to pay the fine imposed on them by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in July last year in a case concerning the flouting of disclosure norms.

In two separate attachment notices issued on Tuesday, the markets watchdog has ordered the attachment of bank, demat accounts, and mutual fund

folios of the Wadhawans to recover the pending dues. The pending dues of Rs 10.6 lakh each from Wadhawans comprise the initial penalty amount, interest, and recovery cost, it added.

In July 2023, the regulator imposed a penalty of Rs 10 lakh each on Wadhawans, who were promoters of DHFL (now known as Piramal Finance), for



flouting disclosure norms.

Kapil Wadhawan was the Chairman and MD of DHFL, while Dheeraj Wadhawan was a non-executive director of the company. Both of them were on the board of DHFL.

The order came after Sebi conducted an investigation into the transfer of shares held by DHFL in DHFL Pramerica Life Insurance (erstwhile DLF

Pramerica Life Insurance) to its wholly owned subsidiary DHFL Investments and other related transactions.

The investigation period was from February-March 2017. Sebi observed that the brothers were responsible for providing inadequate information in the postal ballot notice by the firm.

As per the attachment notices,

Sebi said there is sufficient reason to believe that the defaulters may dispose of the amounts in the bank accounts and securities in the demat accounts and “realisation of the amount due under the certificate would, in consequence, be delayed or obstructed”.

Accordingly, the regulator asked all banks, depositories, and mutual funds not to allow

any debit from the account. However, credits have been permitted. In January, Sebi sent demand notices to Dheeraj and Kapil asking them to pay Rs 10.6 lakh each in the case. Also, the regulator warned them of arrest and attachment of assets as well as bank accounts if they fail to make the payment within 15 days.

Mbappé chasing milestones in French league before summer exit

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappé has 12 matches left to play in the French league. Twelve matches left to set new records in a league he has dominated for years.

The star striker is leaving Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season when his contract expires. He is widely expected to sign a lucrative deal with Real Madrid, the club he dreamt of playing for when he was a kid.

Since his debut with Monaco at age 16 in December 2015, Mbappé has scored 185 league goals, making him one of the top 10 marksmen in Ligue 1 history. It's impossible for the 2018 World Cup winner to catch Delio Onnis, the league's all-time leader with 299 during the 1970s-80s. But Mbappé, who has 21 goals this season, has a chance to reach 200. At 25, Mbappé is already PSG's all-time best scorer, with 244 in all competitions. He will set another record if he finishes as the league top scorer for a sixth consecutive time. He currently shares the record with Onnis, Carlos Bianchi and Jean-Pierre Papin.

PSG has dominated French football since Qatari owners took over in 2011, and is on track for a record-extending 12th league title. It hosts Rennes on Sunday with a 13-point lead over second-placed Brest.

MOUNIE SUSPENDED: Brest, the surprise of the season, will be without striker Steve Mounié for the next two games.

Mounié was suspended for his red card last week for elbowing a defender during a 1-0 win against



Marseille. He will miss facing Strasbourg on Saturday then Le Havre.

Since coming back from two goals down to stun last season's runner-up Lens on the opening day of the season, Brest has been living a fairy tale and has dreams of qualifying for the Champions League for the first time. Brest has a best league finish of eighth.

NURSING WOUNDS: With Gennaro Gattuso gone, Marseille takes on Montpellier under new coach Jean-Louis Gasset. Some might say it's good timing, since Gasset is a former Montpellier player and coach. He was born there and knows the club inside out.

Stuck in ninth place, Marseille needs to win to avoid getting distanced in the race for European spots. Gasset said his first task was to give players their confidence back to ensure the team stops conceding from individual errors.

"The mind is 80% of the performance," Gasset said. "They're professionals, they need to do a bit more. When you take goals like that, it's not because of the tactical systems. We have to reassure the players. That's how I started to work with them."

The 70-year-old Gasset was appointed less than a month after getting fired by Ivory Coast. He faced questions about his age during his inaugural news conference in Marseille this week. "Speaking of the greats," Gasset said, "do people ask the question about (Arsene) Wenger, (Alex) Ferguson, (Raymond) Goethals? I'm not comparing myself to them. But age is the age in your head."



Gauff beats Pliskova to reach Dubai quarterfinals

Swiatek, Rybakina also advance

AP ■ DUBAI

Coco Gauff rallied from a slow start and a second-set argument with the chair umpire to beat Karolina Pliskova 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 and reach the quarterfinals of the Dubai Championships.

The third-seeded Gauff ended Pliskova's 11-match winning streak.

The 19-year-old American built a 4-2 lead in the second set before a lengthy back-and-forth with chair umpire Pierre Bacchi. Gauff complained to Bacchi that he called her serve at deuce out only after Pliskova returned it into the net.

Gauff had to repeat her first serve and went on to hold for a 5-2 lead.

The U.S. Open champion said the argument "fueled" her.

"It's OK. It's just one point. That happens in tennis. Players make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes," Gauff said in

her on-court interview. "It kind of went upward from there for me."

Gauff will next face Anna Kalinskaya after the Russian beat ninth-seeded Jelena Ostapenko 6-4, 7-5.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek advanced to the last eight by beating two-time Dubai champion Elina Svitolina 6-1, 6-4.

Fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina had a tougher time reaching the quarterfinals. She outlasted Magdalena Frech 7-6 (5), 3-6, 6-4.

Swiatek will next play sixth-seeded Qinwen Zheng, who eliminated Anastasia Potapova 6-3, 6-2. Rybakina has a quarterfinal match against Jasmine Paolini. The Italian defeated eighth-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-2.

The other quarterfinal match is seventh-seeded Marketa Vondrousova against Sorana Cirstea.

Abhay, Ramit move up in style in premier PSA events



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rising Indian squash player Abhay Singh stormed into the quarterfinals of the Goodfellow Classic, a USD 9000 Challenger Tour event in Toronto.

The top-seeded Abhay, a former national champion and ranked No. 66. In the world, beat Canadian wild card Elliott Hunt 11-6, 11-3, 11-9 in the second round on Wednesday, following a bye in the first.

Elsewhere, India's top-ranked player Saurav Ghosal lost in the opening round of the World Tour Platinum Windy City Open in Chicago, going down to home favourite Timothy Brownell 11-13, 2-11, 11-3, 14-12.

However, Ramit Tandon carried forward the Indian challenge with a 11-7, 8-11, 11-1, 11-7 win over Hungarian Farkas Balazs in the first round.



Brazil's Fonseca becomes 1st player born in 2006 to win ATP tour match in Rio

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

João Fonseca became the first player born in 2006 to win an ATP tour-level match when the 17-year-old Brazilian beat seventh-seeded Arthur Fils 6-0, 6-4 at the Rio Open.

Fonseca defeated the No. 36-ranked Frenchman in front of raucous fans at the clay court tournament in Rio de Janeiro. He knelt on the court in tears to celebrate.

"This is where I belong. I want to be in these huge stadiums," said Fonseca, who won the U.S. Open boys singles title last year. "Now it is all about focusing on the process."

The Brazilian, currently ranked No. 655, is expected to jump about 200 positions after beating Fils. Fonseca said he is yet to decide whether he will play tennis for an American university later this year.

"For now I am very focused in the pro-tour, I want to get to the top," said Fonseca. "That is

going to be a personal decision with my family, I won't make it public now."

His opponent in the round of 16 will be Christian Garin of Chile. Fonseca's victory brought some new energy for local fans, who saw three of the title favorites crash out Tuesday.

Carlos Alcaraz abandoned his match against Brazil's Thiago Monteiro due to an ankle injury; three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka lost to Argentina's Facundo Diaz Acosta in straight sets; and Chile's Nicolás Jarry was knocked out by Germany's Yannick Hanfmann in three sets.

Fourth-seeded Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina advanced to the quarterfinals by beating Spain's Albert Ramos-Viñolas 6-2, 6-1. Rain later postponed to Thursday the match between second-seeded and defending champion Cameron Norrie against Chile's Tomás Barrios Vera for a place among the last eight.

Squad woes continue for Real Madrid

AP ■ MADRID

Coach Carlo Ancelotti has to deal with two more absences to an already depleted squad when Spanish league leader Real Madrid hosts Sevilla this weekend. Ancelotti won't be able to count on suspended midfielder Eduardo Camavinga and defender Dani Carvajal on Sunday.

Carvajal was sent off last Sunday

at the end of the team's 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano, while Camavinga received his fifth yellow card to prompt an automatic suspension. Madrid has a six-point lead over second-placed Girona, which hosts Rayo on Monday. Madrid is eight points ahead of third-placed Barcelona and 11 points ahead of fourth-placed Atlético Madrid.

Five Madrid players remain out injured, including Jude

Bellingham with a sprained ankle and defender Antonio Rüdiger because of a thigh injury. Nursing long-term knee ligament injuries are goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and central defenders David Alaba and Éder Militão.

Ancelotti has been improvising using midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni as a central defender in recent matches. Lucas Vazquez is expected to replace



Carvajal on Sunday, and Luka Modric will likely play in Camavinga's place in the midfield. Madrid chose not to add any defenders during the winter

transfer window. Ancelotti said the players he had were enough to make up for the absence of the injured players.

The good news for Ancelotti is left back Ferland Mendy will be back from suspension at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Sevilla, sitting in 15th place, drew at Valencia 0-0 in the previous round after two consecutive victories helped it move away from the relegation zone.

Porto beats Arsenal 1-0 with stoppage time goal

AP ■ PORTO

Wenderson Galeno came through for Porto with the final whistle about to blow. Now, Arsenal needs to rally to return to the Champions League quarterfinals for the first time since 2010.

Galeno scored deep into stoppage time to give Porto a 1-0 win in the first leg of the round of 16 on Wednesday. The English team will need a victory in the return leg in London on March 12 to make it back to the last eight of Europe's elite club competition.

Galeno broke the deadlock with a right-footed shot into the far corner four minutes into added time. His strike from outside the area came in what was supposed to be the final minute of stoppage time at the Estadio do Dragao.

"I think the credit for that goal goes to the whole team, for what they did in the 90 minutes," Galeno said. "We played well, we defended well, we left all our energy on the pitch. We



will try to replicate in London what we achieved here. We will try to stay solid and give our best, as we always do." The Brazilian forward, who had hit the post in the first half, was named the man of the match. "When it's 0-0, you look up at the clock and it's 93 minutes gone, if you aren't going to win the game then don't lose it," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice said. "Maybe have the bit of savviness about us to stay in and get a draw in a tough stadium against a tough oppo-

nent. They caught us on the counter and he's stuck one in the top corner which is really disappointing."

Porto was mostly in control and kept Arsenal from having any attempts on target. The English side was coming off five consecutive wins in which it scored 21 goals in total. "A lot to play for in the second leg," Rice said. "We're really positive as a group, we've had such a good start to 2024 that we're not going to let this get us down."



Grateful and proud, says Anush after claiming Olympic quota

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He moved to Germany as a 17-year-old to chase his Olympic dreams and equestrian Anush Agarwalla is filled with pride and gratitude after becoming the first ever Indian to fetch a dressage event quota place in this year's Paris Games.

The 24-year-old from Kolkata, who won an Asian Games bronze last year, was three years old when he started riding and at 17, he decided that equestrian would be his calling in life. He secured a Paris Olympic quota in dressage based on his good performance in four FEI event -- Wroclaw, Poland (73.485 per cent), Kronenberg, Netherlands (74.4 per cent), Frankfurt, Germany (72.9 per cent), and Mechelen, Belgium (74.2 per cent).

The quota belongs to country and a final decision on who will represent India will be taken after trials.

"I feel very grateful and proud of this achievement. Being the first Indian ever to secure an individual quota in dressage at the Olympic Games is very special," Agarwalla told PTI Video.

The celebrated Fouaad Mirza had represented India at the 2020 Tokyo Games and before him, Imtiaaz Anees (Sydney 2000), Indrajit Lamba (Atlanta 1996), Jitendrajit Singh Ahluwalia, Hussain Singh, Mohammed Khan and Darya Singh (all Moscow 1980) competed at the Summer Games.

However, they all participated in eventing and Agarwalla will compete in dressage, in which the horse and rider perform a series of movements in a bordered arena. The horse is required to remain within the enclosed area while performing.

Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council

(A Government of India Enterprise)



INVITES PROPOSALS

for establishing

मूलांकुर Bio-Enabler : Biomanufacturing Hubs

Enabling Access to Infrastructure and Resources [Bio-foundries] for Bio-manufacturing

Focussing on

- Functional foods and smart proteins
- Bio-based chemicals and enzymes
- Precision biotherapeutics
- Climate change and resilient agriculture
- Carbon capture and utilization
- Futuristic marine and space research

under following categories

Using existing facilities

Augmenting existing facilities

Setting up new facilities

Proposals can be submitted by

Companies /LLPs/ Academic Research Institutes/ Recognized Incubators

For online application and scheme details, please log on to BIRAC website (www.birac.nic.in)

Last date for submission of proposals

25th March, 2024 (till 5:30 pm)

For queries, please contact:

Dr. Prachi Kaushik, Senior Manager, BIRAC Email: pkaushik.birac@nic.in



Captaining a depleted batting line-up in the absence of Virat Kohli, KL Rahul and an out-of-form Shreyas Iyer, Rohit Sharma has found answers from the young guns, whose performance has been the biggest takeaway from the series so far.

On a docile Rajkot wicket too, Bumrah made in-roads giving India crucial breakthroughs. Keeping in mind the seaming conditions in Dharamsala for the fifth Test and the hectic IPL season ahead, Bumrah has been given a break, making Mohammed Siraj the sole experienced pacer in the line-up. It will be a toss-up between

Fresh from his career-best 10-wicket haul in Ranji Trophy, Mukesh is not only more experienced but also partnered Bumrah in the Vizag Test. He, however, bowled just 12 overs taking one wicket across both

innings. It remains to be seen whether the Indian think-tank will take the gamble of giving another debut cap or persist with Mukesh, who has been average at best. History suggests that the JSCA Stadium pitch will suit a plan featuring two seamers and three spinners. But England's assessment of

the conditions has been that four spinners and one seamer attack would be ideal. "It's an interesting pitch...There are a few cracks, very platy and looked a bit crusty, the top layer. One half is good, and the other has a lot of platy cracks," England vice-captain Ollie Pope had said after the team checked in here on Thursday.

That may bring Shoab Bashir into the picture to go alongside Tom Hartley, Rehan Ahmed and part-timer Joe Root. Root has more overs (107) under his belt than runs (77) in this series.

India, on the other hand, have preferred the conventional two-pacer-three-spinner combination and it's unlikely

The record 434-run thrashing in Rajkot has triggered criticism of England's so-called aggressive 'Bazball' approach. It seems to have found a match in India after tasting success against New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan and Australia to an extent.

ENGLAND: Ben Stokes (C), Rehan Ahmed, James Anderson, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ben Foakes, Tom Hartley, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Mark Wood.

PTI ■ RANCHI

Notic

**.D.O-cum-Executive Officer,
NAC, Balimela**

17	2024 Date and time for receipt of Bid in portal	1	2024 Date and time for receipt of Bid in portal
----	---	---	---

PTI ■ RANCHI

"His number one skill is how fast he bowls and the effort he's put in last week was monumental. You want to be able to keep players like that on the field operating at that level."

"We do like to look at the pitch two days out and one day out, because that's how we like to pick our XIs. You want to give yourself some idea or some indication about what XI you're



PITCH TOO MUCH: Stokes added spice to the talks on Ranchi pitch, saying he has not seen anything remotely like the 22-yard strip here in the past. But he also stated that it's not fair to have "preconceived ideas" about the pitch. "We get asked about the pitch and we give our opinion, but that doesn't mean we are going in with too many preconceived

England have retained old warhorse James Anderson who is seven shy of reaching the landmark 700 wickets and

"If you're a young fast bowler, Jimmy Anderson is the one person who you want as your role model. Not only the amount of wickets he's got but the fact that he can keep going at his age.



NOTICE INVITING TENDER
OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, RANPUR
 NAYAGARH(ODISHA),PIN-752026
 e-Mail : eoranpurnac.ranpur@gmail.com
 Tender Call Notice No. 359 dt. **12.02.2024**
E- Procurement Notice No. : RNP NAC-06 / 2023-24

1	Name of the Work	:	Individual Civil Construction as per DTCN
2	No. of Works	:	01 Nos.
3	Value of Work	:	68.65 Lakhs
4	Class of Contractor	:	'B'
5	Period of Completion	:	120 Days
6	Date of Publication	:	14.02.2024
7	Date and Time of availability of document in the portal	:	From Dt.14.02.2024 at 11 AM to Dt. 25.02.2024 up to 5 PM
8	Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in portal	:	Dt. 25.02.2024 up to 5 PM
9	Date and Time of opening of Technical Bid	:	Dt. 26.02.2024 at 11.00 AM
10	Date and Time of opening of Financial Bid	:	Intimation will be given through Email
	Name and address of the officer inviting bid	:	Sd/- Executive officer, NAC Ranpur

OIPR-13196/11/0013/2324

C-3123	OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL G.UDAYAGIRI	Date: 19.02.2024																																				
No. 516	"e" Tender Notice																																					
	BID Identification No. GUDGR-NAC-09/2023-24																																					
<p> Bid Documents consisting of work, Estimated Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, time of completion, Class of Contractors and set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in. </p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Name of the works</td> <td>:</td> <td>As per DTCN</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>No. of works</td> <td>:</td> <td>5 Nos</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Estimated Cost</td> <td>:</td> <td>Rs.7.60 Lakh to Rs. 67.44 Lakh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Period of Completion</td> <td>:</td> <td>2 Month to 4 Month</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal</td> <td>:</td> <td> Dt.20.02.2024 at 09.00 a.m. to Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>Last date & time for submitting online Bid</td> <td>:</td> <td> Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m. Dt.01.03.2024 at 10.00 a.m. </td> </tr> <tr> <td>7.</td> <td>Bids shall be opened on</td> <td>:</td> <td>Dt.01.03.2024 at 04.00 p.m.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8.</td> <td>Bidd shall be evaluated on</td> <td>:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>9.</td> <td>Name and address of the officer inviting Bid</td> <td>:</td> <td>Executive Officer, N.A.C. G.Udayagiri.</td> </tr> </table> <p> Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in </p>			1.	Name of the works	:	As per DTCN	2.	No. of works	:	5 Nos	3.	Estimated Cost	:	Rs.7.60 Lakh to Rs. 67.44 Lakh	4.	Period of Completion	:	2 Month to 4 Month	5.	Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	:	Dt.20.02.2024 at 09.00 a.m. to Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m.	6.	Last date & time for submitting online Bid	:	Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m. Dt.01.03.2024 at 10.00 a.m.	7.	Bids shall be opened on	:	Dt.01.03.2024 at 04.00 p.m.	8.	Bidd shall be evaluated on	:		9.	Name and address of the officer inviting Bid	:	Executive Officer, N.A.C. G.Udayagiri.
1.	Name of the works	:	As per DTCN																																			
2.	No. of works	:	5 Nos																																			
3.	Estimated Cost	:	Rs.7.60 Lakh to Rs. 67.44 Lakh																																			
4.	Period of Completion	:	2 Month to 4 Month																																			
5.	Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	:	Dt.20.02.2024 at 09.00 a.m. to Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m.																																			
6.	Last date & time for submitting online Bid	:	Dt.29.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m. Dt.01.03.2024 at 10.00 a.m.																																			
7.	Bids shall be opened on	:	Dt.01.03.2024 at 04.00 p.m.																																			
8.	Bidd shall be evaluated on	:																																				
9.	Name and address of the officer inviting Bid	:	Executive Officer, N.A.C. G.Udayagiri.																																			
OIPR-13202/11/0003/2324	Executive Officer N.A.C. G.Udayagiri																																					