



**OPINION 6**  
INDIAN NATIONHOOD  
THRIVES AMID DIVERSITY

**WORLD 8**  
HOUSHI REBEL MISSILE SETS  
CARGO SHIP ABLAZE

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX SURGES OVER  
500 POINTS

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

## TEMPLE TAX SPARKS OUTCRY

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

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



File Photo

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.

## Bengal Fire Rages on

### Sheikh Shahjahan still missing

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Sandeshkhali erupted once again on Thursday amid the visit of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes team, which received a plethora of complaints of land grab and torture on Adivasi people, including trafficking of their women. Hundreds of women from Jhupkhali, a hamlet in the Bermajur area adjacent to Sandeshkhali, armed with bamboo sticks, attacked and torched the properties of Sheikh Siraj, the brother of Trinamool Congress strongman and one of the prime accused in a land-grab and molestation case Sheikh Shahjahan, alleging that thousands of bighas of their lands had been forcibly occupied, sold via impersonation, and converted into fisheries.

The incident took place hours after Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar left the riverine island at the mouth of the Sunderbans after an overnight stay in the area, during the visit of the NCST team led by its vice-chairperson, Ananta Nayak.

"Whatever I have seen and heard makes me feel like crying... it should not have taken place in a democratic country... I spoke to the villagers, and they (Sandeshkhali residents)



Security personnel outside TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan's home at Sandeshkhali

PTI

have mentioned the name of a political leader. We will include it in our report. We have received more than 23 complaints so far," Nayak said, adding that the findings of the team would be compared with the ground report before submitting it to President Droupadi Murmu.

A woman, while describing her woes to the members of the visiting team, narrated how "no complaints of my missing daughter have been registered till now... she went missing seven years ago... when we went to the Sandeshkhali Police Station, they asked us to get a written recommendation from Sheikh Shahjahan." Another woman said how her land was occupied and converted into a Trinamool Congress party office "just because I

am a CPI(M) worker," while most of the others said how their lands had been grabbed and sold via impersonation.

A large contingent of police force led by Barasat range DIG Bhashkar Mukherjee rushed to the area and held talks with the locals. "The police have controlled the situation and assured the local people that their issues will be addressed," he said.

This was the third team to visit the strife-torn region after the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Women. Sandeshkhali shot into national news on January 5 when Shahjahan's henchmen attacked and injured a team of Enforcement Directorate officials during a search operation at his house.



Zero Waste

52<sup>nd</sup>

Rose Festival

2024

23rd to 25th February, 2024

at ZAKIR ROSE GARDEN

Sector 16, Chandigarh





MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHANDIGARH

23rd FEBRUARY, 2024

Inauguration Ceremony

Brass & Pipe Band Show

Flower Arrangements & Flower Hat Show

Folk Dance Competition

Rajasthani Dance Performance

Kachi Ghodi Performance

LIVE BAND SHOW by Sagar Band

Sham-e-Ghazal by Renowned Singer Sunil Singh Dogra

Cultural Evening - 5:30 p.m. onwards

24th FEBRUARY, 2024

Rose Prince & Rose Princess Competition

Photography Competition

Traditional Folk Dance

Rose King & Rose Queen (Senior Citizen)

Rose Quiz Competition

Mr. & Miss. Rose Competition

SUFI NIGHT by Renowned Singer Kanwar Grewal

Cultural Evening - 5:30 p.m. onwards

25th FEBRUARY, 2024

On the Spot Painting Competition

Antakshari

Traditional Folk Dance

Closing Ceremony & Prize Distribution

OLD IS GOLD (Old Songs)

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE by Renowned Singer Abhilipsa Panda

Cultural Evening - 5:30 p.m. onwards

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED - Timings 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.



# Classifieds

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**We Manbhavati Devi** W/o Krishna Baitha & Krishna Baitha S/o Sulakhi Baitha permanent R/o House No. 22, Village Bantel, Kuchayakot, Gopalganj, Bihar R/o 337, Village Raila, Panchkula, Haryana our son Ravi and daughter-in-law Sajia Qureshi are out of control, so we evict them from all our movable/immovable property. Anybody dealing with them at own risk.

**I, Surjeet Kumar** S/o Late Sh. Nathu Ram R/o H.No 843, Sector- 45A, Burali, Chandigarh declare that I have four brother who is son of my uncle Santosh Kumar 1. Ranjit Kumar 2. Manjit Kumar and his wife Pooja Rani 3. Harjit Kumar and his wife Priya 4. Mandeep Kumar and his wife Anju Bala, I have no more relation with them, Anybody deal with them at his own risk I will not responsible for them.

**I, Ravinder Kaur** w/o Bachitar Singh r/o Vill Lehal PO Dharival Dist Gurdaspur declare that in my Passport No. R3445897, name of my husband wrongly written as Bachiter Singh. His correct name is Bachitar Singh. Concerned note.

**I, Suresh Kumar** S/o Mihan Singh R/o Amar Colony, Pipli, Kurukshetra, our son Shubham Kumar his wife aarti is out of our control, We disown them all our movable /Immovable properties. We are not responsible for there further dealings.

**I Mamraj** S/o Munna Ram, House No. 510, Janta Colony Ward No 16, Nayagaon, Distt. Mohali Punjab informs that my son Ved Prakash and daughter Naina are out of my control. I disown them from my all moveable and Immovable Properties. Anybody deals with them at their own Risk.

**I Kamlesh** W/o Naresh R/o House No 229, Sector 25-D, Chandigarh inform that Now my son Maninder and his wife Babel are under my control. So I cancel their disown. In the future they have full rights in my all moveable and Immovable Properties.

**I Pardeep Singh** S/O Gurmukh Singh Singh R/O #186 Basant Vihar Gali No.4 Rajpura Tehsil Rajpura Distt Patiala Declare That In My Army Record My Son Name Is Wrongly Recorded As Harsdeep Singh. Where As His Correct Name Is Harshdeep Singh. Please Correct It.

**I Pardeep Singh** S/O Gurmukh Singh Singh R/O #186 Basant Vihar Gali No.4 Rajpura Tehsil Rajpura Distt Patiala Declare That In My Army Record My Wife Name Is Wrongly Recorded As Kamaljit Kaur . Where As Her Correct Name Is Kamaljeet Kaur. Please Correct It.

**We Ramesh Kumar** S/O Late Garib Dass, & Kamla Devi W/O Ramesh Kumar R/O #1505 Old Nac Road, Manimajra, Chandigarh Declare That We Disowned Our Son Gautam Kumar And His Wife Priya From Our Moveable And Immovable Properties On Dated 6.02.2024 . Now Both Are Under Our Control. So We Canceled Above Disown Notice

**I Ram Bai** (Adhar No) (43724028895) W/O Late Ratti Ram R/O Goniana Road, Gali No. 9, Sri Muktar Sahib Have Declare That My Son Tarseam Kumarj (450492312112) Is Out Of My Control . So, I Disown Him From All My Moveable And Immmoveable Properties. If Any Body Deal With Him Own Risk And Responsibility. He Will Be Himself Responsible For Him Good/ Bad And Legal / Ililige Activities, I And My Whole Family Will Not Have Any Concern / Relation With Him

**I, Sushila Devi** Dob 37 Year Age (Existing Name And Age In The Service Documents) Wife Of N 13838994-X Ex Hav Sarjit Singh Dahiya Resident Of Village Nahri Tehsil And District Sonipat (Haryana)131103 Have Changed My Name From Sushila Devi Dob 37 Year Age To Sheela Devi Dob 01-01-1956 (Existing Name And Dob In My Civil Documents) Vide Affidavit Dated 15-02-2024 At District Court Sonipat (Haryana)

**I, Ishwanti** Wife Of Jagdish Resident Of Village Wazirpura Tehsil Gohana District Sonipat (Haryana) Declare That My Son Sandeep And His Wife Pooja Are Out Of My Control.So I Disown Both Of Them From My Moveable / Immovable Properties.If Anybody Deals With Them At Their Risk.

**I No. Jc-524374x**, Rank Nb/Sub, Naresh Kumar Of 18 Dogra R/O Village Palasi, P.O. Rangas, Tehsil Nadaun, Distt. Hamirpur (Hp) Declare That In My Army Service Record My Daughter's Name Mentioned Incorrect As Deep Shikha Thakur. Her Correct Name Is Deepshikha Thakur. Concern Please Note

**I, NO 2500231L**, L/Naik Sunil Kumar (Retd), Resident Of Vill Uplani, Po- Chor Karsa, Tehsil Assandh, Distt Karnal (Haryana) 132039 Have Changed Name Of My Daughter From Anika To Anika Choudhary Vide Affidavit Dated 2 Feb 2024 Sworn In Before Notary, Karnal.

**I Shakeel Ahmad** S/O Abdul Jaleel R/O #200, Anand Vihar, Baltana, Zirakpur, Sas Nagar, Punjab Declare That In My Some Document My Father's Name Mentioned Incorrect As Abdul Jalil, His Correct Name Is Abdul Jaleel.

**I, Gurmukh Singh** s/o Shingara Singh R/o #863, Village Ranwar, Distt. Karnal declare that my son Lovepreet Singh & his wife Lovepreet Kaur are out of control. I disown them from my moveable and immovable properties. In future the person having dealings and relations with them will himself be responsible.

**I, Rani W/o** Sant Kumar R/o Balmiki Basti. Pehowa. Kurukshetra My Son Mohit and His Wife Pooja and my granddaughter Rohini are out of my control, I disown them from all My moveable and immoveable properties. If Anybody deals with him at Their Own risk.

**I Jasvir Kaur** W/o 1519639 Ex Sapper Late Rashpal Singh R/o Vill & PO Narru Teh Rajpura Distt Patiala in my army record my Name wrongly entered Jasbir Kaur but my correct name is Jasvir Kaur.

**I, Manisha Devi** Is Legally Wedded Spouse Of Service No-6498234W Rank- Hav Santosh Kumar Yadav Presently Residing At Unit: Hq Coy, 603 Asc Bn (Am) N Area Pin-905603, Chandigarh C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Date Of Birth From 07/07/1988 To 01/07/1993 Due To My Date Of Birth Erroneously Mentioned In Service Document Of My Husband No 6498234W Rank-Hav Santosh Kumar Yadav. That My Date Of Birth Is 01/07/1993.Vide Affidavit No-Rd 0021296693,Dated-22-2-24

**I, Mirdula Kumari** Is Legally Wedded Spouse Of Service No-649884K Rank- L/Nk Rajesh Kumar Presently Residing At Unit: Hq Coy, 603 Asc Bn (Am) 'N' Area, Chandigarh Pin-905603, C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Date Of Birth From 10/08/1987 To 01/01/1985 Due To My Date Of Birth Erroneously Mentioned In Service Document Of My Husband No 649884K Rank-L/Nk Rajesh Kumar. That My Date Of Birth Is 01/01/1985. Videaffidavit No-Rd 0021296691,Dated- 22-2-24

**I, Mridula Devi** Is Legally Wedded Spouse Of Service No-649884K Rank- L/Nk Rajesh Kumar Presently Residing At Unit: Hq Coy, 603 Asc Bn (Am) 'N' Area, Chandigarh Pin-905603, C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Name From Mridula Devi To Mirdula Kumari Due To My Name Erroneously Mentioned In Service Document Of My Husband Name No 649884K Rank-L/Nk Rajesh Kumar. Videaffidavit. No-Rd 0021296689, Dated-22-2-24

**I, Kumari Savita** W/O Sh. Vinod Sharma R/O H.No.136, Chandi Enclave (Chandikotla) Chandimandir, Distt- Panchkula Haryana-134107 Hereby Declare That In The School Records Of My Son, Apurav Sharma My Name Has Been Wrongly Mentioned As Savita Sharma While My Correct Name Is Kumari Savita.

It is for general information that I, Savita Devi W/o Jinder Pal R/o H.No. 62/2, Bhargav Nagar, Jalandhar-1, Jalandhar City, Punjab 144001 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Savita in my minor daughter Kanak aged 15 years in his educational documents. The actual name of mine is Savita Devi respectively which may be amended accordingly.

It is for general information that I Sandeep Kumar S/O Pala Ram Bagrah R/O Jassra Wala Talab, Bhalath Road, Jalandhar, Punjab-144801 declare that name of my father and my mother has been wrongly written as Pala Ram And Deesho in my Passport No-V0913593. The actual name of my father and my mother are Pala Ram Bagrah and Dishan Kaur Bagrah respectively which may be amended accordingly.

**मैं, मीरा पूवी** स्त्र. प्रेम चन्द निवासी #2, बालाजी मन्दिर रोड, ग्राम भरो की सेर, तहसील-कोल्हा, जिला-पंचकुला घोषणा करती हूं मेरा पुत्र कुलदीप बेदी व उसकी पत्नी आंसी मेरी कहने-सुनने से बाहर है। मैं इनकी अपनी चल्-चरल् सम्पत्ति से बंदखल् करती हूं। भविष्य में इनके लेन-देन करने व सम्बंध रखने वाला स्वयं जिम्मेवार होंगा।

## CHANGE OF NAME

**मैं सुखबीर दास** पुत्र प्रेमदास निवासी गाँव खरकरामजी तहसील व जिला जींद बयान करता हूँ कि मैं सन्यासी हूँ। सन्यास देने से पूर्व मेरा नाम सुधीर पुत्र बालकिशन निवासी पट्टी मुंडाला गाँव खैरडा, जिला भागपत, उत्तर प्रदेश था। सन्यास के बाद मेरे पुत्र प्रेमदास ने मेरा नाम सुखबीर दास पुत्र प्रेमदास रख दिया। सुधीर पुत्र बालकिशन तथा सुखबीर दास पुत्र प्रेमदास दोनों मेरे ही नाम हैं।

**I Sumit Verma** S/O Kanwar Singh Verma R/O Street-No.8 Hira Singhnagar Kotkapura Faridkot Punjab-151204 Have Changed My Name To Wiwian Kanwar Singh.

**I, Rukmini Yashwant** Bait Mother of Army no. 15573781W Hav Bait Ganesh Yashwant R/o Gangavali Kharabachiwadi, Palasgaon Khurd, Palasgaon Khurd Manganoo Raigad (Maharashtra)- 402104 have changed my name date of birth from 08.07.1938 to 01.01.1947 vide affidavit dated 21.02.2024 before Session Court, Distt. Hissar.

**I, Surinder Kumar** S/o Sh. Ram Rattan Sharma R/O 44, Village Khuda Jassu, Chandigarh have changed my name from Surinder Kumar To Surinder Kumar Sharma.

**I, Ranjit Kumar** S/o Sh. Brij Raj Lal R/O Flat No 1588, Progressive Society, Sector 50-B, Chandigarh have changed my minor daughter name from Ananya to Ananya Srivastava.

**I, Rajesh Ratra** s/o late Sh. Manohar Lal #417/4, Prem Nagar, Ambala City Haryana declared that I have changed my name from Rajesh Kumar to Rajesh Ratra. Please Note.

**I, Nooka Ratnam** Akula Mother of Siva Rama Krishna Akula R/o #2757/2, Sector 47-D, Chandigarh have changed my name from Nooka Ratnam Akula to Akula Nooka Ratnam vide Affidavit Dated 21-02-2024 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

**I, Syam Singh** Sihotra s/o Shri Sewa Singh Sihotra R/O#1419, First Floor, Sector 22-B Chandigarh have changed my name from Shyam Singh Sihotra to Shyam Sihotra.

**I, Harish Kumar** S/o, Ratan Singh, Father Of Divya, Resident Of Village Dhanger, Post Office Badopall Tehsil & District Fatehabad Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name From Divya To Divya Rani.

**I, Chetan Kumar** S/o Jagdish Raj R/o 221, Hari Nagar Colony, Near Bye Pass Chowk, Jagadhri, Distt Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Chetan Kumar to Chetan Bawa.

**I, Dayawanti** W/o Rajinder Paul Mittal R/o #982-A, Guru Nanak Colony, Dhakoli, Zirakpur, Distt.SAS Nagar, Punjab have changed my name from Dayawanti to Daya Rani Mittal.

**I, Gita Rani** W/o Charanjit @Charanjit Singh R/o #521, Rampur Seuri, BCW Surajpur Pinjore, Tehsil-Kalka, Distt. Panchkula (Haryana) want to change her husband name to Charanjit Singh to Charanjit in my passport.

**I, Suhana** D/O Sanjeev Kumar, 1096, Murghikhana Road, New Partap Nagar, Amritsar have changed my name from Suhana to Suhana Atwal. Concerned please note.

**I, Hardip Singh** S/o Resham Singh R/o Village Ahana Khurd PO Ahraana Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Hardip Singh to Hardip Singh Badwal. Concerned note.

**I, Himani** W/o Honey Kumar Nakra R/o H.No. B-15/149, New Hari Nagar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Himani to Himani Nakra. Concerned note.

**I, Honey Kumar** Nakra S/O Ashok Kumar R/o H.No. B-15/149, New Hari Nagar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my daughter from Akansha to Akansha Nakra. Concerned note.

**I, Sahnaj** W/o Ahsan Ali R/o H.No. B-2/39/14, Mohalla Civil Line Extension Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Sahnaz to Sahnaj. Concerned note.

**I, Smt. Sukhpal Kaur** W/o No. 14337001P Ex Hav Avtar Singh R/o Vill. Abawal PO Bhunga Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Sukhpal Kaur to Sakhpal Kaur.

**I, Nermaljit Kaur** w/o Surjan Singh r/o H.No. 23 Wadala Granthian Tehsil Batala Distt Gurdaspur (Punjab) have changed my name from Nermaljit Kaur to Nirmaljit Kaur. Concerned note.

**I Sikander Singh** S/o Baghel Singh R/o VPO Khojala, Teh. Batala, Distt. Gurdaspur declare that in my indian passport my name has been wrongly written as Sikandar Singh instead of Sikander Singh. Please Correct it as Sikander Singh.

**I, Rachpal Singh** s/o Bhan Singh, VPO Zaffarwal, Distt Gurdaspur, have changed my name from Rachpal Singh to Rashpal Singh. Concerned note.

**I Ravinder Kaur** w/o Malkit Singh Dhillon r/o VPO Seena, Distt. Hoshiarpur has changed my name to Harjinder Kaur Dhillon.

**I, Pinky Devi** W/o Pawan Kumar R/O Daulatpur Chowk, Una, Himachal Pardesh. I have changed My name from Pinky to Pinky Devi. Both are one and the same person.

**I Harish Kumar** S/o Kuldeep Singh R/o # 947 Mohalla bhara Mal Kua Manimajra, Chandigarh declare that I have changed my minor daughter's name from Rohine to Rohine Kumar.

**I Harish Kumar** S/O Kuldeep Singh R/o # 947 Mohalla Bhara Mal Kua Manimajra, Chandigarh declare that I have changed my minor Son's name from Vivek to Vivek Kumar.

**I, Ajay Bansal** S/o Om Prakash Bansal R/o #1261, Sector 18-C, Chandigarh have changed my name from Ajay Bansal to Ajai Bansal.

**I Ranveer** Singh son of Service No. 25242 (L) Late Wg. Cdr. Jagjit Singh resident of House No. 1917, Sector 34-D, Chandigarh have changed my name from Ranveer Singh to Ranveer Sidhu vide affidavit dated dated 22.02.2024

**I Army No 3201014Y** Havdlr Kuldeep S/O Sube Singh R/O Village Achina Tehsil Bond Kalan Distt Charkhi Dadri Haryana inform that in my army record my son name wrongly recorded Lakshya Yadav. My son correct name is Lakshya.

I hitherto known as Goldy Anand alias Ginni Chopra D/o Rakesh Kumar Anand and W/o Gaurav Chopra R/o H.No. 5R Near Mittal Nursing Home Model Town Sonipat Haryana-131001 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Goldy Chopra.

**I, Usha Rani** ( Aadhaar No 9010 3751 1407) W/o Shamsher Singh, R/o Village Jewra Teh. Barwala Distt. Hissar ((Haryana) declare that in the Army Service Record of My Husband Army No 3204153 N Rank Hawaldar Shamsher Singh My Name is Usha, Which is incorrect. But in My Aadhaar Card, Family ID & Pan Card My Name is Usha Rani, Which is Correct. In future, if anyone has any objection due to My Name in fixed time can complained. In the Army Service Record of My Husband Hawaldar Shamsher Singh My Name should be Corrected.

**I, Santosh** (Aadhaar No. 9353 9222 5326) Mother of Shamsher Singh, R/o Village Jewra Teh. Barwala Distt. Hissar (Haryana) declare that in the Army Service Record of My Son Army No. 3204153 N Rank Hawaldar Shamsher Singh My Name is Santosh Devi and Date of Birth is 02-08-1971, Which is incorrect. But in My Aadhaar Card, Family ID and Pan Card My Name is Santosh and Date of Birth is 01-01-1962, Which is Correct. In future, if anyone has any objection due to My Name and Date of Birth in fixed time can complained. In the Army Service Record of My Son Hawaldar Shamsher Singh My Name and Date of Birth should be Corrected.

**I, Swati Kumari** is legally Wedded Spouse No.14681172A Rank HAV Name Pushkar Kumar R/o Village Gangapur, PO-Waini, Tehsil Samastipur, District Samastipur Bihar Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Swati Rai To Swati Kumari.

**I, Ashok Bhalla** S/o Sh. Parkash Chand R/o H.No. 89-W, Near Sanatan Dharam Mandir, Model Town, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Ashok Bhalla to Ashok Kumar Bhalla for all future purpose.

**I, Ramesh Kumar** Bhalla S/o Sh. Narain Dass R/o H. No. 89-W, Model Town, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Ramesh Kumar Bhalla to Ramesh Kumar for all future purpose.

**I, Kavita Devi** W/o Sh. Sunil Kumar R/o House No. 222, New Jawahar Nagar, Teh. & Distt. Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Kavita Devi to Kavita Sharma for all future purpose.

**I, Usha Rani** Jain W/o Sh Nitin Garg R/o Sector 14, 1456, 3rd Floor, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Usha Rani Jain to Usha Garg for all future purpose.

**I, Sunder** S/o Sh. Ujala R/o H. No. 1614, Anand Colony, VPO Satrod Khns, Tehsil & Distt. Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Sunder to Surender Saini for all future purpose.

**I, Gurjit Singh** S/o Amrik Singh R/o VPO Ghanie Ke Bangar, Tehsil Batala, Distt. Gurdaspur, Punjab 143513 have changed my name from Gurjit Singh to Singh is my surname and Gurjit is my given name.

**I, Diksha Khullar** W/o Raghav Aggarwal R/o H.No. 746/3, Taylor Road, Opp. Gandhi Ground, Friends Colony, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name after marriage from Diksha Khullar to Diksha Aggarwal.

**I, Sunil Kumar** S/o Bhagirthi Singh R/o H.No. 85, Lane No. 9, NRI Colony, Loharka Road, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Sunil Kumar to Sunil Arora.

**I, Manisha Dadwal** D/o Roshan Lal W/o Gaurav Dhawan R/o H.No.1954/8, Khoo Suniyanjan, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name after marriage from Manisha Dadwal to Manisha Dhawan.

**I, Narendra Singh** S/o Jarnail Singh R/o VPO Bhattike, Tehsil Baba Bakala, Distt. Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Narendra Singh to Narinder Singh.

**I, Tanish** S/o Rajesh Aggarwal R/o H.No. 13 B, Dayanand Nagar, Gali No. 1 A, Lawrence Road, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Tanish to Tanish Aggarwal.

**I, Rama Roa** Batakala presently residing at 16 Engr Br Regt (PMS), Chandimandir Cantt, Panchkula, Haryana I have changed my Name from Rama Roa Batakala date of birth 21 MAY 1982 (Name as per as per in Army Record) to Batakala Ramarao (Proposed New name).

**I Nitin** S/O Late Sh. Basheshar Nath, R/o H.no- 425 Lohar Mohlla Babyal Ambala Cantt, Haryana have changed my name from Nitin to Nitin Pillania.

**I Jai Kumar** S/O Kanwar pal R/o Village Baba Hedi (165) Ambala City have changed my name from Jai Kumar Sharma to Jai Kumar. In future I will be known as Jai Kumar.

**I, No.17003126K**, Rank Hav Narender S/o Mahender unit 14 Engr Regt. C/O 99 APO R/o VPO Kalwa, Tehsil District Jind State Haryana declare that my mother's name & Date of Birth wrongly recorded in my service record as Roshni & 01.01.1967. But His Correct name Roshani & Date of birth is 11.03.1967. All concerned note.

**I, No.17003126K**, Rank Hav Narender S/o Mahender unit 14 Engr Regt. C/O 99 APO R/o VPO Kalwa, Tehsil District Jind State Haryana declare that my mother's name & Date of Birth wrongly recorded in my service record as Roshni & 01.01.1967. But His Correct name Roshani & Date of birth is 11.03.1967. All concerned note.

**I, No.2496771k** Hav Kulwinder Singh Unit 15 Punjab (Patiala) R/O VPO Chabal Tehsil And District Tarn Taran Have changed My Son's Name From Aravdeep Singh To Aaravdeep Singh Vide Affidavit Dated.13.02.2024 Before Executive Magistrate Jhabal Kalan

**I, No.2496771k** Hav Kulwinder Singh Unit 15 Punjab (Patiala) R/O VPO Chabal Tehsil And District Tarn Taran Have Changed My Son's Name From Abhijot Singh To Abhijot Singh Dhillon Vide Affidavit Dated.13.02.2024 Before Executive Magistrate Jhabal Kalan

**I, Amritpal Singh** S/O, Kashmir Singh R/o Ibban Kalan, Chashmir Road Amritsar have changed my name to Amritpal Singh Thind. Please note the relevance.

**I, Sudesh** W/o Jasbir R/o H.No.53c, gali no.7, azad nagar, Panipat declare that I have changed my name from Sudesh to Sudesh Devi in future I should be known as Sudesh Devi.

**I, Jasbir Singh** S/o Joginder Singh R/o H.No.53 c, galli 7, azad nagar, Panipat declare that I have changed my name from Jasbir Singh to Jasbir in future I should be known as Jasbir.

**I, Sudesh** W/o Balraj Singh R/o H.No.201, near four temple village Dahar, Panipat declare that I have changed my name from Sudesh to Sudesh Rani in future I should be known as Sudesh Rani.

**I, Balraj** S/o Maha Singh R/o H.No.201, Ward no.10, near four temple village and post office Dahar, Panipat declare that I have changed my name from Balraj to Balraj Singh in future I should be known as Balraj Singh.

**I, Balraj Singh** S/o Maha Singh R/o H.No.201, Ward no.10, near four temple village and post office Dahar, Panipat declare that Jovial is my son name and changed his name Jovial to Jovial Singh in future he should be known as Jovial Singh.

**I, Swati Kumari** is legally Wedded Spouse No.14681172A Rank HAV Name Pushkar Kumar R/o Village Gangapur, PO-Waini, Tehsil Samastipur, District Samastipur Bihar Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Swati Rai To Swati Kumari.

**I, Ashok Bhalla** S/o Sh. Parkash Chand R/o H.No. 89-W, Near Sanatan Dharam Mandir, Model Town, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Ashok Bhalla to Ashok Kumar Bhalla for all future purpose.

**I, Ramesh Kumar** Bhalla S/o Sh. Narain Dass R/o H. No. 89-W, Model Town, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Ramesh Kumar Bhalla to Ramesh Kumar for all future purpose.

**I, Kavita Devi** W/o Sh. Sunil Kumar R/o House No. 222, New Jawahar Nagar, Teh. & Distt. Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Kavita Devi to Kavita Sharma for all future purpose.

**I, Usha Rani** Jain W/o Sh Nitin Garg R/o Sector 14, 1456, 3rd Floor, Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Usha Rani Jain to Usha Garg for all future purpose.

**I, Sunder** S/o Sh. Ujala R/o H. No. 1614, Anand Colony, VPO Satrod Khns, Tehsil & Distt. Hissar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Sunder to Surender Saini for all future purpose.

**I, Gurjit Singh** S/o Amrik Singh R/o VPO Ghanie Ke Bangar, Tehsil Batala, Distt. Gurdaspur, Punjab 143513 have changed my name from Gurjit Singh to Singh is my surname and Gurjit is my given name.

**I, Diksha Khullar** W/o Raghav Aggarwal R/o H.No. 746/3, Taylor Road, Opp. Gandhi Ground, Friends Colony, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name after marriage from Diksha Khullar to Diksha Aggarwal.

**I, Sunil Kumar** S/o Bhagirthi Singh R/o H.No. 85, Lane No. 9, NRI Colony, Loharka Road, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Sunil Kumar to Sunil Arora.

**I, Manisha Dadwal** D/o Roshan Lal W/o Gaurav Dhawan R/o H.No.1954/8, Khoo Suniyanjan, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name after marriage from Manisha Dadwal to Manisha Dhawan.

**I, Narendra Singh** S/o Jarnail Singh R/o VPO Bhattike, Tehsil Baba Bakala, Distt. Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Narendra Singh to Narinder Singh.

**I, Tanish** S/o Rajesh Aggarwal R/o H.No. 13 B, Dayanand Nagar, Gali No. 1 A, Lawrence Road, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Tanish to Tanish Aggarwal.

**I, Rama Roa** Batakala presently residing at 16 Engr Br Regt (PMS), Chandimandir Cantt, Panchkula, Haryana I have changed my Name from Rama Roa Batakala date of birth 21 MAY 1982 (Name as per as per in Army Record) to Batakala Ramarao (Proposed New name).

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**I, Aseem Kamra** S/o Raj Kumar Kamra R/o H. No. 204, Jhule Lal Colony, Opposite Recreation, Club, Fazilka, Tehsil and District Fazilka (Punjab), have changed my name from Bobby Alias Aseem to Aseem Kamra.

**I Priya Bhat** W/o Rohin Koul R/O Hosue No C-901, Green Lotus Avenue, Singhpura Chowk, Zirakpur, Zirakpur S.A.S. Nagar Mohali Punjab 140603. declare that I have changed after marriage my name from Priya Bhat to Priya Bhat Koul.

**I, Manjeet Kaur** alias Manjit Kaur W/o Kuldeep Singh, Vill Patti,Tehsil Nangal (Runagar) declare that Manjeet Kaur & Manjit Kaur both are name of same person.

**I, Uma Lata** alias Uma Devi W/o Kushal Singh, Vill Taraf Majora, Tehsil Nangal (Rupnagar) have changed my name from Uma Lata alias Uma Devi to Uma devi

**I Parmila Kumari** w/o Sh. Puneet Kaushik R/o H.No. 726/1, Hissar Road, Bhagwan Service Station, Shastri Nagar Rohtak declare that I want to change my name from Parmila Kumari to Promila Devi for future all purposes

**I, Deepali Goel** w/o Vikas Kumar R/o Flat No. 602, GHS-82, Sector-20, Sector 20 Town, PO Sector -20, Panchkula, Tehsil & District Panchkula, Haryana 134117 have changed my name from Deepali Goel to Deepali Gupta for all future purposes.

**I, Manav Kumar** S/O Ashok Kumar R/o Jandi Mohalla, ward 4 Fatehabad, Tehsil & District Fatehabad present living in Delhi declares that in my Aadhar card & Pan card my name is Manav Kumar but in my Passport my name mention is Manav. Both names are mine.

**I, Ritu** W/o No 50, Near 50 foot Road, 7B, Amolk Ram Colony, Thanesar, Kurukshetra, have changed my name from Ritu Setia to Ritu. Concern Noted.

I, Hitherto Known As Gurdish Kaur Wife Of Malkiat Singh Residing At Gajju Gazi Po Jaura Singha District Gurdaspur-143505 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Harjit Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Balraj Kaur Wife Of Ghaniya Singh Residing At Near Purana Shiv Mandir, Purani Awadi, Awankha Tehsil And District Gurdaspur-143531 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Harvinder Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Kushal Son Of Rahda Raman Residing At H.No.845/4, Gali Gossain Beri Gate District Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Kushal Radha Raman.



# Opposition’s no confidence motion against Khattar govt defeated

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The no-confidence motion against the Haryana Cabinet, brought by the main opposition Congress, was defeated by a voice vote after the Opposition party’s MLAs walked out from the Assembly. At the end of a four-hour-long discussion on the motion, Congress members walked out expressing dissatisfaction with the chief minister’s reply. The motion was then defeated through voice vote. Speaker Gian Chand Gupta said the motion had been defeated.

Earlier, Speaker Gupta had admitted the notice of no-confidence motion against the Council of Ministers headed by Chief Minister Khattar.

Speaking in the House during the third day of the Budget session, the Chief Minister said that the Congress had previously brought no-confidence motion in 2021 as well. At that time, there were about 3 and a half years were left in the government’s tenure, and Congress dreamt that if the government falls, they would come to power. But the Congress members again failed to seriously discuss any issue on no-confidence motion and purposely walked out from the House.

Khattar said that the Opposition must bring no-confidence motion before the assembly election, so that Congress MLAs could once again pay attention to the development works done by the present state government,



otherwise, Congress is habitual of leaving the House after expressing their views. He said that the Congress has a culture of showing distrust to everything. Whenever anything happens in the national interest, Congress never shows any confidence.

Referring to government recruitments, the Chief Minister said that during Congress’s tenure, from 2005 to 2014, the Haryana Public Service Commission made

recruitments for 3593 positions, the average of which is 360 vacancies annually. Whereas, during the present government’s tenure until January 31, 2024, recruitment on 6808 posts was done, the average of which comes around 680 recruitment per year.

Khattar further explained that during Congress’s 10-year tenure, 88,000 jobs were given through the Haryana Staff Selection Commission, while the present state government

have provided merit based jobs to 1.30 lakh youths. The results for nearly 30,000 positions are about to be declared.

The Chief Minister said that Congress has never been concerned about the welfare of the poor; they have only given slogans of ‘Gareebi Hatao’. He said that during the Emergency, when oppression occurred, a movement arose in the country, and in 1977, people understood the power of their votes. With the strength of their votes, the people rejected the Congress government.

He said that the Congress never believed that old-age pensions could be made online. Through the PPP data, automated pensions have been created for 1.25 lakh people who have completed the age of 60, all from the comfort of their homes.

While targeting the Congress, the Chief Minister said that during Congress rule, there was BBC (Badli Bharti aur CLU) industry in the state. Congress never thought that transfers could be done online. The introduction of online transfers has brought satisfaction to people today. Improving the system is the government’s responsibility, and we have made improvements in the system, said the Chief Minister.

**Opposition targets BJP-JJP Govt on unemployment, scams, farmers’ agitation on Punjab-Haryana borders**

Speaking in the House after the motion was taken up

for discussion, Congress legislator Shamsher Singh Gogi raised the protesting farmers’ issue. Gogi said a farmer who died on Wednesday at Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border was among the protesting farmers who are seeking a legal guarantee to minimum support price for crops. “The border has been made like India-Pakistan border...the government should resolve the issue,” said Gogi. Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the situation is serious and government should resolve the issue through talks.

**Slapping UAPA on MLA should be reconsidered: Congress**

During the discussion, Congress members also brought up the issue of charges under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) slapped against party MLA Mamman Khan in Haryana in connection with a Nuh violence case. Hooda said when the MLA had secured bail in a FIR, why UAPA charge had been added six months later. “Don’t treat MLAs like this. UAPA is slapped against terrorists,” he said. Hooda and another Congress leader Kiran Choudhary said that slapping UAPA on the MLA should be reconsidered. However, Chief Minister Khattar said the government does not interfere in a issue in which investigation is going on. If a new charge has been added, the government has no role in that, he said.

SKM announces nationwide protests, ‘Mahapanchayat’ in Delhi Ramlila maidan on Mar 14



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

## Decisions by SKM

- ✓ Resignation of Union Home Minister Shah, Haryana CM Khattar, and state Home Minister Anil Vij, lodging of FIR under section 302 of IPC against them
- ✓ Judicial Enquiry into the murder of farmers brutal repression and damage to tractors
- ✓ Black Day or Aakrosh Day on Friday (February 23) with effigy burning, torch light procession
- ✓ Six member panel formed for coordination with former SKM member organizations
- ✓ Panel to also develop issue based unity to intensify farmers struggle
- ✓ Massive Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat at Ramlila Ground, New Delhi, on March 14
- ✓ Tractor parade on February 26 to demand ‘QUIT WTO’

Haryana’s Home Minister Anil Vij will be burnt as a symbolic gesture to condemn recent police actions and express solidarity with the aggrieved farmers.

Tikait further elaborated on the planned tractor marches scheduled to take place on February 26, wherein farmers will mobilize along highways across the country, reiterating their longstanding demand for a guarantee law on minimum support price (MSP). “These are long fights,” Tikait emphasized,

adding, “Not by one ‘morchha’, we will need to surround Delhi (Delhi ‘gherao’) from all four directions, as we did earlier”

The SKM’s demands also include immediate registration of a murder case against the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, and Haryana’s Home Minister Anil Vij, as well as a judicial probe into the circumstances surrounding the death of the deceased protester. Tikait asserted that accountability must be established for the tragic loss of life and the injuries sustained by numerous farmers during recent clashes. In a bid to foster unity and solidarity among farmer organizations, the SKM announced the formation of a six-member committee tasked with coordinating with former SKM member organizations. This committee aims to develop issue-based unity and formulate a unified action plan to bolster the farmers’ struggle. The members of the committee include prominent leaders such as Hannan Mollah, Joginder Singh Ugrahan, Balbir Singh Rajewal, Yudhavir Singh, Darshan Pal, and Raminder Patiala.

The SKM’s nationwide protests, slated to commence from Friday, will feature a range of demonstrations aimed at highlighting the repression and injustices faced by farmers. These actions are aligned with the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and independent federations’ call for a Black Day on February 23. Farmers across the country are expected to participate in torchlight processions and effigy burnings as part of the protest activities.

Furthermore, the SKM has designated February 26 as ‘Quit WTO Day’, urging farmers to mobilize on national and state highways to protest against government policies detrimental to farmers’ interests and food security. The SKM contended that the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) policies have adversely impacted farmers and have led to the erosion of food security safeguards.

## International Online Job Fraud Ring busted; 4 Fraudsters Arrested from Assam

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In a significant breakthrough against cyber-crime, Punjab Police’s Cyber Crime Division has dismantled an international online job fraud racket, culminating in the arrest of four cyber fraudsters from various districts of Assam.

Sharing information, the state Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav on Thursday announced the successful operation highlighting the state’s commitment to ensure safety and security.

The cybercriminals operated by enticing unsuspecting individuals with lucrative ‘Work from Home’ opportunities via a Telegram mobile app group. “To gain trust, fraudsters would initially give small tasks to the victim, in return, paying a small amount of money in lieu of accomplishing the task. Later, the victim was asked to deposit money on different pretexts in lure of a bigger return,” said the DGP, adding that with these arrests, the Punjab Police has dug up another trail, leading to deep-rooted cyber fraud nexus spread across the country.

The arrested individuals have been identified as

Jahirul Islam, Rafiual Islam, Mehabub Alam, and Azizur Rehman. Police seized a cache of incriminating evidence, including two swipe machines, two biometric scanners, one eye scanner, one fingerprint scanner, 38 pan cards, 32 debit or credit cards, 16 sim cards, 10 voter cards, nine Aadhar cards, 10 bank account passbooks or chequebooks, five official Government stamps, five mobile phones, one laptop, two pen drives and one SBI ID card from their possession.

Assistant Director General of Police (ADGP), Cyber Crime, V Neeraja disclosed that the investigation stemmed from a complaint lodged by a defrauded woman—who was duped of Rs 25 lakhs by the fraudsters, leading to the apprehension of the fraudsters in Assam.

The cybercriminals operated a Customer Services Point (CSP) in Nagaon district, where they produced counterfeit identity documents using Adobe Photoshop. “He informed that they were running a CSP for providing online services; and to make quick bucks, they misused the documents of general public for making duplicate PAN cards, Voter

## Beware of Fraudulent Activities on Social Media Platforms

- ❑ Avoid Telegram groups luring into easy money like ‘Work from Home’
- ❑ Never make online payment to anyone in lure of bigger return
- ❑ Avoid clicking on links or downloading files from unknown sources
- ❑ Never share Debit/Credit Card or Bank details on any application
- ❑ Never click on links offering discounts and prizes
- ❑ Use unique password for each account and change it frequently

Cards, Aadhaar Cards using Adobe Photoshop software, which they further used for opening bank accounts and obtain SIM Cards on the directions of another accused Mehabub Alam,” added the ADGP.

The ADGP said that thereafter, Mehabub Alam was arrested from Guwahati district, who revealed that he came into contact with Azizur Rehman, who asked him to provide bank accounts on a commission basis. Police teams have also arrested accused Azizur Rehman from Morigaon district of Assam.

Further revelations from Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Cyber Crime,

Nilambari Jagadale disclosed that the fraudsters targeted 160 victims across 23 states, with ongoing investigations expected to unveil additional victims. Preliminary findings indicate that masterminds operating from abroad received proceeds in cryptocurrency. The investigation, spearheaded by DSP Cybercrime Prabhjot Kaur, is ongoing, with more arrests anticipated.

A case has been registered under sections 420 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at the State Cyber Crime unit in SAS Nagar, marking a decisive step in Punjab’s fight against cyber fraud.

## Punjab Govt to set up MSME Wing, doubles honorarium for war heroes’ widows

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Cabinet on Thursday undertook several crucial decisions on Thursday aimed at bolstering various sectors across the State, including establishment of a new MSME wing, amending teachers’ transfer policy to alleviate harassment concerns, doubling monthly honorarium for widows of war heroes to Rs 20,000, among others.

Embarking on a groundbreaking initiative to invigorate the Medium and Small Scale Industries (MSMEs) sector, the Cabinet gave not to set up a dedicated wing — MSME Punjab — within the Department of Industries and Commerce. With this, all small enterprises will get aid from this wing. “Punjab has the highest number of MSMEs, and they stand to benefit from this decision,” said the Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, while briefing the media after the Cabinet meeting.

The core mission of MSME wing is to bolster the competitiveness of MSMEs by facilitating a conducive

environment for growth and innovation. With a focus on fostering financial sustainability, the wing will ensure a seamless flow of credit from financial institutions and banks to MSMEs, empowering them to fuel their expansion endeavours. Moreover, it will extend crucial support to MSMEs in embracing cutting-edge technologies and modernizing their operational frameworks to stay abreast of global market trends.

A pivotal aspect of MSME wing’s mandate is the establishment of common facilities centers, particularly in the domains of modern testing facilities and quality certification. These centers will play a pivotal role in ensuring that products manufactured by MSMEs meet international standards, thus enhancing their marketability on a global scale.

To cater comprehensively to the diverse needs of MSMEs, the wing will comprise dedicated sub-divisions such as Access to Finance or Credit, Access to Technology, Access to Market, and Access to Skills. These subdivisions

will serve as pillars of support, addressing critical requirements and fostering an environment conducive to MSME growth and prosperity.

In its quest for efficacy and excellence, MSME Punjab will forge strategic collaborations with professional agencies, harnessing their specialized expertise to enrich the support services offered to stakeholders. It is estimated that approximately eight lakh existing MSMEs in Punjab, as well as newly established ventures, will reap the benefits of this visionary initiative by the government.

**Teacher Transfer Policy Amended**

In a significant move aimed at ensuring the teachers’ welfare in Punjab, the Cabinet has approved amendments to the transfer policy to prevent harassment faced by teachers in the state Education Department. Under the revised policy, amendments have been made to Para 9 of the Teachers Transfer Policy-2019 to cater to the needs of teachers falling in the exempted category.

### Other Decisions...

- ❑ AAP Ministers, MLAs and leaders, who are doctors by profession, will hold camps at the borders of the state, where farmers are protesting
- ❑ To fill 612 posts of college lecturers, relaxation in age limit for applying for the job has been allowed. Now candidates up to the age of 45 years can apply for the jobs.
- ❑ Water Resources Department’s Design Wing to offer design and consultancy services to private entities, mirroring the model of Government-Owned Aided colleges and staff of Engineering Colleges/Institutions; 40 per cent of revenue generated from these services will be directed to the State Treasury.

The amended policy stipulates that teachers who are cancer patients (self, spouse, or children), undergoing dialysis (self, spouse, or children), recipients of liver or kidney transplants, with disabilities of 40 per cent and above, suffering from hepatitis B, hepatitis C, sickle cell anemia, thalassemia (self or children), divorcees with differently-abled or intellectually disabled children, war widows, widows of Shaheeds, or those facing an immediate need to relocate due to the

death of their spouse, provided they have children below 18 years of age, will be eligible to submit transfer requests on a monthly basis through the designated portal.

These amendments aim to streamline the transfer process for teachers facing exceptional circumstances, ensuring timely consideration of their requests and providing them with necessary support during challenging times. Orders in such cases will be issued with the approval of the Education Minister, emphasizing the

### Punjab Budget Session from Mar 1 to 15

Punjab Cabinet, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, on Thursday greenlit the convening of the budget session of Vidhan Sabha from March 1 to 15, with the Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema set to present the budget proposals for the next fiscal on March 5.

A spokesperson from the Chief Minister’s Office said that the Cabinet has empowered the Governor to convene the sixth session of the 16th Punjab Vidhan Sabha in accordance with Article 174 of the Constitution of India.

The schedule for the budget session outlines that proceedings will kick off on March 1 with the Governor’s address, followed by obituary references. Subsequently, on March 5, the House will witness the presentation of budget estimates for the upcoming financial year (2024-25). The session will adjourn sine-die on March 15.

Cheema, in a media briefing after the Cabinet meeting, disclosed that the Punjab Vidhan Sabha’s budget session is slated to commence with an address by the Governor, marking the official initiation of deliberations on crucial financial matters.

He added that apart from presentation of budget proposals, several legislative work would also be carried out during the session.

### Monthly Honorarium of War Heroes’ Widows Doubled

To honour the sacrifices of war heroes and their families, the Cabinet approved a substantial increase in the

monthly honorarium for widows of war heroes — from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 — providing greater financial support to these brave women who have lost their spouses in service to the nation. Presently, there are 83 beneficiaries availing themselves of this scheme. The Cabinet has

consented to amend “The East Punjab War Awards Act 1948” by introducing an amendment bill in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha — seeking to double the War Jagir (financial assistance). Under this Act, the Government extends War Jagir to the parents whose only child or two to three children served in the Indian Army during significant conflicts such as the Second World War and National Emergencies of 1962 and 1971.

**Rs 1-cr Ex-Gratia for PHG Died in Gurdwara Clashes**

In a poignant acknowledgment of the exemplary service and ultimate sacrifice made by martyr Punjab Home Guard (PHG) Jaspal Singh, the Cabinet approved a special ex-gratia grant of Rs one crore to his bereaved family. Jaspal Singh, from Maniala village in Sultanpur Lodhi, Kapurthala district, tragically lost his life while upholding law and order in Sultanpur Lodhi on November 23, 2023, during violent clash between Nihang factions and police at Gurudwara Akal Bunga.











# Modi with a message

The PM’s planned visit to Sandeshkhali challenges Mamata, seeks to gain ground in Bengal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s planned visit to Sandeshkhali on March 7 holds significant implications not only for the BJP’s Lok Sabha poll strategy but also for the political fortunes of Mamata Banerjee, the TMC supremo and an important constituent of the INDIA bloc. Sandeshkhali, in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, has emerged as a focal point of political strife due to incidents of alleged sexual abuse and land grab by a TMC leader, Shahjahan Sheikh. Ahead of Modi’s visit, the BJP has unveiled a 20-minute documentary highlighting the TMC’s alleged atrocities in Sandeshkhali with the apparent aim of pushing Mamata on the defensive. The film features Sandeshkhali women’s testimony recounting alleged instances of land grab and sexual assault by Sheikh and his cohorts. The BJP’s decision to schedule Modi’s visit to North 24 Parganas signals its intent to bolster its support base and make inroads into areas traditionally dominated by the ruling TMC. The timing, just ahead of the elections, underscores the BJP’s concerted efforts to sway voters in its favour by exposing the TMC’s ‘wrongdoings’. Modi’s persona and oratory have often been instrumental in galvanising public support, and his presence in Sandeshkhali is likely to energise the BJP cadre and attract undecided voters. Besides, the symbolism associated with Modi’s visit cannot be overstated. By highlighting Sandeshkhali, which has witnessed political unrest and clashes, the BJP aims to convey a message of development and security to the residents.

This narrative directly attacks Mamata’s leadership, which has faced frequent criticism over law and order issues, and poses to her a formidable challenge. The BJP’s relentless campaign, coupled with Modi’s visit, threatens to erode TMC’s support base in key constituencies. As she seeks to counter the BJP narrative, Mamata’s response to Modi’s visit will be closely scrutinised. It seems quite likely that the coming weeks would see a surge in BJP attacks on the TMC Government. This is not the first time that the BJP has launched a concerted attack on Mamata but her hold over the State remains more or less unshaken. That said, electoral outcomes are influenced by a multitude of factors beyond high-profile visits and political rhetoric. While Modi’s visit may generate momentum for the BJP, the TMC’s grassroots outreach, welfare schemes and organisational strength cannot be discarded. Mamata remains a formidable leader with a dedicated support base, especially among certain demographics and rural communities. Moreover, the political landscape in West Bengal is characterised by complex socio-cultural dynamics, where regional identity and issues often play a significant role. The BJP’s attempts to make inroads into the State must navigate these intricacies sensitively to resonate with the diverse electorate. How the PM’s visit plays out remains to be seen but the attention Sandeshkhali is getting would indeed have one positive outcome: The victims of Sandeshkhali may get justice and Mamata may have to bite the bullet.

## PICTALK



Schoolchildren perform Surya Namaskar on the occasion of ‘Surya Saptami’, in Jaipur

# Indian nationhood thrives amid diversity

Despite regional differences and identity quests, the strength of Indian nationhood persists, supported by a dedication to constitutional values and productive conversations

There is much talk about the nature of change in all aspects of Indian life, as is natural in changes envisaged at such a large scale. There are bound to be differences of opinion, multiple articulations, and an attempt to project one’s point of view. This is how it should be. This is amplified by the Sanskrit dictum “Vade Vade Jayat Tatva Bodhah” (through discussion one arrives at the truth). However, discussion must follow a protocol. This protocol is often unwritten and is a bedrock of any civil society. It has some enduring principles. The first and foremost of which would be that it cannot be and must not be abusive.

The right to civil disagreement in a civil manner is the foundation of a civil society. Thus, it is that mutual respect and agreeing to disagree are required as essential to civil discourse.

One can add to it, for good measure, certain other attributes and certain attributes of the mind. These attributes recognise the need to not only listen but honestly weigh the merits of another person’s point of view and have a genuine openness to consider it.

Agreeing to another point of view or modifying one’s own in a civil society is not a hallmark of weakness but a source of genuine strength and maturity. Going by these principles, the Indian civil society has an interesting record with significant regional variations. The Dravid school of thought is an interesting example. They are saying in the twenties of this century, roughly the same things they were saying in the thirties of the last century.

The Dravidian leadership has in the last seventy-five years then been in power in that part of India for several decades, though not always continuously. Similarly, the exclusionist identity sought by some of the DMK ideologues has had on various occasions to be moderated because they have been in power. Notwithstanding long patches of time, not much significant progress has been made in the implementation of some of the

components of the DMK ideology, such as it may be. The ideological component itself has undergone a major split with an exclusivist ideology for DMK being considerably whittled down in the birth of All India Anna Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam (AIDMK). M.G. Ramachandran was the major proponent of the AIDMK version. Jayalithaa was a key supporter. They linked up with the Dravidian Movement with all Indian processes. How it panned out is another story and fit enough for another discussion.

More to the point, it is important to realise that similar identity quests or some version thereof have been witnessed in the North Eastern States, Jammu & Kashmir State, parts of Andhra Pradesh, and a few other pockets of the southern Indian peninsula. This is a very understandable process. By and large, it has been contained within the constitutional framework. At times the divergent point of view has been espoused by neighbouring states of the Deccan peninsula or between the

MORE TO THE CREDIT OF EVERYONE CONCERNED IS THE URGE ON THE PART OF MOST PEOPLE TO EVOKE THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION WHENEVER NEED BE AND NOT PRACTICE BRINKMANSHIP

Deccan States and the Central Government at New Delhi over many matters including the distribution of river waters. Notwithstanding these differences, Indian nationhood has endured and might even be seen as having gone from strength to strength. It is this resilience which is, also, the hallmark of Indian nationhood. This is not to deny the fact that once in a while, offensive or extreme statements are made, some of which are avoidable, though sometimes understandable. The long and short of it is the ability of people to work together despite differences and different articulations. More to the credit of everyone concerned is the urge on the part of most people to evoke the Indian Constitution whenever need be and not practice brinkmanship. The time is here to ensure that these practices of healthy debate and the setting of shared perspectives become a regular habit and a part of the national methodology of dialogue and discussion. Sometimes when extreme statements are made and

some new thinking seems to arise, there is nothing wrong with that either, only that the model of integrative thinking would have to show far more resilience than it is many times currently showing. This text has looked at the vantage point of collective cohesion. It is not as if there are no dangerous signs that need to be tackled, but that attempting to tackle them sensibly and systematically is necessary. It is this institutionalisation of handling dissent and allowing seemingly alternative perspectives to live peacefully with each other that will be the touchstone on which much of the future of Indian nationhood will continue to flourish.

In an era where subtle dissent becomes a part of covert political strategy, much care needs to be exercised. The number game can have dangerous manifestations. There is no substitute for good sense and integrity of thought, deed, and follow-up.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PM PAYS TRIBUTE TO VIDYASAGAR JI

Sir — India is truly blessed with so many noble saints, intellectuals, and spiritual persons who have dedicated their entire lives to the welfare of mankind. Renowned Jain seer Acharya Vidyasagar Ji Maharaj was one of the greatest saints of our time who attained Samadhi “Sallekhana”, saddening us. He was the most renowned saint in the Digambar Jain community. He took sallekhana, a Jain religious practice involving voluntary fasting until death, for spiritual purification.

PM Narendra Modi is paying tribute to this great saint. He will be all the more remembered by the generations to come for his invaluable contributions to society, especially his efforts towards spiritual awakening among people. His notable work was towards poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, and more. His life exemplified the core principles of Jainism, embodying its ideals through his actions and teachings. Today, the world over, fundamental elements are fighting, but the teachings of Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj to mankind have become even more relevant; they should be followed by all of us to enrich the lives of human beings and promote peace and harmony. We should all strive to live coherently to shape a new era of national and social integration. Education was very close to his heart. He was a true tapas, whose life was dedicated to the ideals of Bhagwan Mahavir. He will always be remembered for his rich contribution to society.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

### DANGERS OF PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

Sir — The British Medical Journal has recently given information about the dangers of video games, especially in this research, in which scientists from the World Health Organisation were also involved. A total of 50,000 people were surveyed in video games using headphones, earbuds, and headphones. Also, the music venue has a definite effect on

## Sandeshkhali crisis



The recent upheaval in Sandeshkhali, West Bengal, marked by allegations of sexual assault, land grabs, and political clashes, demands immediate attention. The state government’s tendency to dismiss these accusations as political manoeuvres must give way to a genuine commitment to justice. While some

commendable arrests have been made, holding accountable those in power implicated in these crimes is essential. With the Supreme Court rejecting a CBI or SIT investigation, the onus now falls on Mamata Banerjee’s government to prioritise citizens’ well-being over political considerations, ensuring transparency and decisive action to restore trust.

Amidst the turmoil, concerns over authoritarianism arise with the arrest of a journalist, emphasising the need to safeguard the freedom of the press. The dismissal of widespread fear and systematic abuse by the government does not instil confidence in a thorough inquiry. Mamata Banerjee must demonstrate the same dedication to justice she exhibited in opposition, addressing these grave issues transparently. Acknowledging the plight of women prisoners and taking decisive action against sexual violence as a political tool is imperative for rebuilding trust and integrity in the government’s response to the Sandeshkhali crisis.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

the ear and reduces the ability to hear. An international research team reviewed 14 studies conducted by nine countries in this regard. North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Asia, Australia, etc. were included in these nine countries. It is necessary to discourage children from playing video games. If not, a generation of young children will go deaf. This is a very sensitive subject. Parents should pay proper attention to their children and ensure that they do not watch those video games. It is necessary to tell the children about the consequences of this in various schools.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

### NIFTY AT ALL-TIME HIGH

Sir — Indices moved up for a fifth consecutive session, with the Nifty hitting a fresh all-time high amid mixed global cues. Benchmark Sensex spurted by 349 points while Nifty scaled a fresh life-

time high on the sixth straight day of gains on February 20, driven by buying in banking and select FMCG shares. The broader market outperformed the front-line indices.

Everything looks favourable, be it the strong macroeconomic fundamentals or the robust retail inflows. Both upstream and downstream oil companies benefit from a robust up-cycle in oil and gas markets and stable crude prices, which have boosted volumes and marketing margins, said Siddhartha Khemka, head of retail research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services. Reflecting broader investor bullishness, the 50-share index surged to a record high of 21,654.75 on intense buying in the metal, commodity, auto and banking sectors.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

# Ayurveda: Seek balance of tridoshas for wellness

Ayurveda’s mantra for wellness is ‘seek balance.’ Its holistic approach offers a timeless roadmap to good health in today’s fast-paced world

In an era marked by fast-paced lifestyles, stress-induced ailments, and an increasing reliance on synthetic medication, the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda emerges as a beacon of holistic healing. Originating in the Indian subcontinent over 5,000 years ago, Ayurveda is not merely a system of medicine but a way of life deeply rooted in the balance between mind, body, and spirit. Its holistic approach offers a comprehensive framework for promoting well-being and preventing disease, making it highly relevant in today’s fast-changing world.

At the heart of Ayurveda lies the belief that health is a state of equilibrium between the three doshas - Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (earth and water). According to Ayurvedic principles, imbalances in these doshas lead to physical, mental, and emotional disturbances, paving the way for illness. By understanding an individual’s unique constitution, or Prakriti, Ayurveda seeks to restore harmony through personalised lifestyle modifications, dietary



changes, herbal remedies, yoga, and meditation. One of the key strengths of Ayurveda is its emphasis on prevention rather than cure. By addressing the root cause of disease rather than merely treating symptoms, Ayurveda empowers individuals to take charge of their health proactively. Through practices such as daily self-care routines (Dinacharya), seasonal detoxification (panchakarma), and mindful eating habits, Ayurveda cultivates resilience and strengthens the body’s natural defences, reducing the likelihood of illness. Moreover, Ayurveda recognises the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence - from the food we eat to the environment we inhabit. This holistic perspective underscores the importance of living in harmony with nature and aligning our lifestyle choices with its

rhythms. By promoting sustainable living practices and environmental awareness, Ayurveda not only fosters personal health but also contributes to the well-being of the planet as a whole.

Ayurveda expert Vicram Sharma, Director of Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Bhawan emphasises the importance of maintaining balance among the three elements—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—to ensure fitness. “Imbalances in these elements lead to diseases and advocated for Ayurveda’s ancient wellness system, particularly pertinent in today’s times when unhealthy dietary choices, lifestyle habits, and indulgence in alcohol and smoking disrupt this equilibrium.” He said this in his address at Gurugram’s Wellness Carnival. It was organised to create awareness about the importance of health and wellness. A wellness carnival was recently organised at Cybercity Gurugram. In the face of modern challenges such as chronic stress, pollution, and sedentary lifestyles, Ayurveda offers invaluable insights into

maintaining vitality and balance. Its integrative approach acknowledges the role of mental and emotional factors in health, emphasising practices that promote mental clarity, emotional resilience, and spiritual well-being. While Western medicine excels in acute care and crisis intervention, Ayurveda excels in promoting longevity, enhancing vitality, and restoring equilibrium. Integrating Ayurvedic principles into mainstream healthcare can lead to a more comprehensive and patient-centred approach, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and modern science.

By embracing its principles of balance, harmony, and interconnectedness, individuals can cultivate resilience, vitality, and well-being on all levels - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. As we strive to navigate the complexities of modern life, Ayurveda serves as a guiding light, reminding us of the profound wisdom inherent in nature.

(The writer is a business consultant; views are personal)



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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)*

# 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

Embark on a journey through a mystical forest, where trees, the ancient storytellers, whisper tales of survival against the backdrop of ever-evolving landscapes. These silent guardians of nature stand tall and firm, their leaves rustling with tales of time. They bear witness to the rise and fall of civilizations, endure natural calamities, and adapt to our planet's shifting climate. Indeed, trees are nature's superheroes, their power lies in their remarkable adaptability. Like shapeshifters, they ingeniously tweak their structure, physiology, and even their regeneration mechanisms to thrive in varied habitats. India, with its diverse climates and landscapes, is home to a spectacular array of tree species. Each species, intricately woven into its habitat, embodies a unique journey of evolution and survival. Among these, Conifers stand out, particularly in the cool, windswept mountain regions. Unlike their deciduous counterparts, who shed their leaves with the changing seasons, Conifers wear their emerald attire year-round. Their foliage retains vital nutrients, helping them thrive in nutrient-deficient mountains. As winter swathes the land in the snow, Conifers with their needle-like leaves stand poised to seize any fleeting warmth and bask in the sun's shy smile. Their ability to adjust their metabolism and lower their energy needs enables them to survive extended periods without photosynthesis. Conifers, with their evergreen nature, play a pivotal role in combating climate change. Even during the cold months when many trees stand bare, Conifers continue their silent vigil, actively absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Unfazed by winter's chill, they tirelessly continue to purify the air, showcasing their importance in our ecosystems. As spring arrives with its warmth, Conifers are ready to immediately kickstart photosynthesis, thereby facilitating their growth and in times of intense heat, they close their stomata, thereby preserving water and enduring severe droughts. In contrast, broadleaf trees require time to sprout leaves, which delays their photosynthetic activity. This gives conifers an edge in regions with cold winters and dry summers while posing challenges for leafless deciduous trees with limited water supply. Conifers, with their long, thin needles, have adapted remarkably to their often challenging habitats. The needles' minimised surface area, coupled with fewer stomata, smartly reduces water loss. Interestingly, the stomata located deep within the needle structure create air pockets, resulting in less transpiration compared to exposure to moving air. Their slender shape also prevents snow accumulation, protecting the branches from breakage. The needle's outermost layer, a thick, waxy cuticle, serves as nature's exquisite raincoat, masterfully locking in moisture to ensure the tree's hydration even in the icy grip of winter. This same layer, inclusive of the cuticle, epidermis, and occasionally the hypodermis, also shields the tree from harmful ultraviolet-B radiation. In foggy regions, these needles efficiently condense airborne moisture into droplets. These droplets then merge and fall onto the forest floor, hydrating the trees. Inversely, deciduous trees with their broad leaves hold tiny droplets that evaporate. This gives Conifers a distinct advantage in areas prone to advection fog, where rainfall is scarce.



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)*

# 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)*



# Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 48

## Fears mount over humanitarian crisis

AP ■ RAFAH

Israeli strikes killed at least 48 people in southern and central Gaza overnight, half of them women and children, health officials said Thursday, as European foreign ministers and UN agencies called for a cease-fire, with alarm rising over the worsening humanitarian crisis and potential starvation in the territory.

Tensions were also rising in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where three Palestinian gunmen on Thursday opened fire on morning traffic at a highway checkpoint, killing one person and wounding five others, Israeli police said. A member of Israel's War Cabinet said late Wednesday that new attempts are underway to reach a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas that could pause the war in Gaza and bring the release of around 130 Israeli hostages held by the militants since their Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. It was the first Israeli indication of new efforts since negotiations stalled a week ago.

But Benny Gantz, a former military chief and defense minister, repeated his pledge that unless Hamas agrees to release the remaining hostages,

Israel will launch a ground offensive into Gaza's southern-most town, Rafah, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins around March 10.

More than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million is crowded into Rafah after fleeing fighting and bombardment elsewhere in the territory. Israel has said it will evacuate them before attacking. But it is not clear where they would go, with much of the rest of the tiny Mediterranean enclave consumed in combat — raising fears civilian casualties could spiral in an Israeli assault that has already killed more than 29,400 people.

The heads of 13 UN agencies and five other aid groups issued a joint plea for a cease-fire late Wednesday, warning that an attack on Rafah will bring "mass casualties" and could "deal a death blow" to the humanitarian operation bringing aid to Palestinians, which "is already on its knees."

Earlier this week, the World Food Program had to halt food deliveries to northern Gaza because of increasing chaos. "Diseases are rampant. Famine is looming," they said, adding that aid workers are facing "shelling, death, movement restrictions and a break-

down of civil order." They called for the opening of more entry points for aid to Gaza — including in the north — security assurances of safe passage for distribution and a release of hostages.

The foreign ministers of 26 European countries on Thursday called for a pause in fighting leading to a longer cease-fire. They urged Israel not to take military action in Rafah "that would worsen an already catastrophic humanitarian situation."

Thursday's shooting came at a checkpoint on a West Bank highway where the gunmen opened fire on cars in the morning rush-hour traffic jam. An Israeli man in his 20s was killed and five others wounded, including a pregnant woman.

Security forces killed two of the gunmen and detained the third, police said.

Hamas in a statement Thursday praised the attack in Jerusalem and said it was a "natural response" to Israel's ongoing war in Gaza and raids in the West Bank, and called for more attacks until they can achieve a "fully sovereign" Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The militant group did not claim responsibility for the attack.

Tensions are rising in the West Bank ahead of Ramadan, which in the past has seen increased clashes, often in connection to restrictions imposed on Palestinian worshippers going to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City during the holy month.

Tempers are likely to be even more volatile this year over the Gaza war and spiraling violence in the West Bank.

Since the war began, the Israeli army has carried out near-nightly raids across the West Bank, arresting more than 3,200 Palestinians, including 1,350 it says are suspected Hamas members. Almost 400 Palestinians have been killed during the operations, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Israeli settlers have stepped up attacks on Palestinians, and there have been a number of militant shooting attacks against Israeli civilians. A flurry of seven Israeli strikes hit Rafah early Thursday, one of them flattening a large mosque and devastating much of the surrounding block.

Footage from the scene showed al-Farouq Mosque pancaked to the ground, with its concrete domes tumbled around it and nearby buildings shattered.

# Houthi missile attack sets ship ablaze in Gulf of Aden

AP ■ DUBAI

A suspected missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels set a ship ablaze in the Gulf of Aden on Thursday as Israel intercepted what appeared to be another Houthi attack near the port city of Eilat, authorities said. The attacks come as the rebels escalate their assaults over Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack on Thursday in the Gulf of Aden saw two missiles fired, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. It said the unnamed ship was ablaze, without elaborating.

Meanwhile, sirens sounded early on Thursday morning over Eilat, followed by videos posted online of what appeared to be an interception in the sky overhead.

The Israeli military later said the interception was carried out by its Arrow missile defense system.

Israel did not identify what the fire was, nor where it came from. However, the Arrow system intercepts long-range ballistic missiles with a warhead designed to destroy targets while they are in space.



The system "successfully intercepted a launch which was identified in the area of the Red Sea and was en route to Israel," the Israeli military said. "The target did not cross into Israeli territory and did not pose a threat to civilians."

The Houthis did not immediately claim either attack. They typically acknowledge assaults they conduct hours afterward.

Eilat, on the Red Sea, is a key port city of Israel. On October 31, Houthis first claimed a missile-and-drone barrage targeting the city. The rebels have claimed other attacks targeting Eilat, which have caused no damage in the

city.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea and surrounding waters over Israel's war against Hamas.

They have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe. Those vessels have included at least one with cargo for Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor.

Despite a month of US-led airstrikes, Houthi rebels remain capable of launching significant attacks. This week, they seriously damaged a ship in a crucial strait and downed

an American drone worth tens of millions of dollars. The Houthis insist their attacks will continue until Israel stops its combat operations in the Gaza Strip, which have enraged the wider Arab world and seen the Houthis gain international recognition.

On Wednesday, ships in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held port city of Hodeida in Yemen reported seeing an explosion, though all vessels in the area were said to be safe, the UKTMO said. The UKMTO earlier reported heavy drone activity in the area.

The US military's Central Command acknowledged shooting down a Houthi bomb-carrying drone during that time.

US airstrikes separately targeted seven mobile anti-ship cruise missiles and one mobile anti-ship ballistic missile prepared to target ships in the Red Sea, Central Command said.

The US State Department criticised "the reckless and indiscriminate attacks on civilian cargo ships by the Houthis" that have delayed humanitarian aid including food and medicine bound for Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen.

# France says, Russian forces threatened to shoot down aircraft patrolling Black Sea

AP ■ PARIS

Russian forces threatened to shoot down French pilots patrolling in international airspace over the Black Sea, signals of increasingly aggressive behaviour from Moscow as its invasion of Ukraine struggles to make headway, France's defense minister said Thursday. The minister, Sébastien Lecornu, didn't give specific details about the French flights or aircraft involved in the threatened shoot-down. But he said Russia is returning to a "particularly aggressive" posture reminiscent of the former Soviet Union's behaviour during the Cold War.

"A month ago, to give you a very concrete example, a Russian air traffic control system threatened to shoot down French aircraft in the Black Sea when we were in a free international zone where we patrol," he said on RTL radio.

"The behaviour of Russia in 2024 bears no relation to what we saw in 2022 and, obviously, before the aggression in Ukraine," the minister said. "It is explained by the fact that Russia is in difficulty on the battlefield in Ukraine."

A French military spokesman, Col. Pierre Gaudillière, said Lecornu was referring to an incident in mid-November that involved one of France's four giant Airborne Warning and Control System, or AWACS, surveillance aircraft. Gaudillière described the incident as unprecedented for a

French flight in that region.

"It was a French AWACS" flying over international waters in the Black Sea, Gaudillière said. "Through a radio it exchange, it was threatened by the Russians."

"It was a particularly aggressive radio exchange," he added. "It's a first."

French air force pilots regularly patrol on the eastern flank of NATO, part of efforts by the 31-nation military alliance to boost its defenses since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago come Saturday.

The French flights include long-range patrols by its AWACS surveillance aircraft. Flying high above the Black Sea coast, they use their powerful radar and other surveillance gear to peer across to the Crimean Peninsula that was seized from Ukraine by Russia and annexed in 2014. The surveillance flights can spot missile launches, airborne bombing runs and other military activity in the Ukraine conflict.

Russian pilots have at times made clear that they don't like being watched.

In 2022, a Russian fighter jet released a missile near a British air force RC-135 Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft that was flying in international airspace over the Black Sea, Britain's government said.

The United States government released video in March 2023 of a Russian fighter jet dumping fuel on a US Air Force surveillance drone. The drone crashed into the Black Sea.

# Biden calls Putin 'crazy SOB'

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

During a fundraiser for his reelection campaign Wednesday night, President Joe Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "crazy SOB" and took aim at former President Donald Trump's comments comparing himself to the Russian opposition leader who died last week in an Arctic prison.

Biden was talking about climate change when he said, "We have a crazy SOB like Putin and others, and we always have to worry about nuclear conflict, but the existential threat to humanity is climate."

Speaking to donors at a private San Francisco home Wednesday as part of a three-day California swing to raise money for his 2024 reelection campaign, Biden also said he

was astounded by recent comments made by his likely Republican challenger.

Trump compared the suspicious prison death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny to his own legal troubles in the U.S. Trump was fined \$350 million after a New York judge found he lied for years about his wealth on financial statements in his companies. Trump said the ruling was a form of "communism or fascism."

"Some of the things that this fellow's been saying, like he's comparing himself to Navalny and saying that — because our country's become a communist country, he was persecuted, just like Navalny was persecuted. I don't know where the hell this comes from," Biden said.

"I mean, if I stood here 10, 15 years ago and said any of

this, you'd all think I should be committed," he said. "It astounds me."

"I've been around a long time and I've never quite seen a crowd like this MAGA Republican crowd," Biden added, referring to Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan. "They seem to have very little moral compass on what is important to people."

During a campaign fundraiser in Beverly Hills on Tuesday night, Biden highlighted his efforts to help middle-class Americans and warned that a win in November for Trump could lead to a nationwide abortion ban, more Republican efforts to undo the health insurance program started during President Barack Obama's administration and more policies that would disproportionately help the wealthy.

# Knife attack at German school injures five, suspect arrested

AP ■ BERLIN

Five people were injured in an incident Thursday at a school in the western German city of Wuppertal and a suspect was arrested, police said. The incident took place at the Wilhelm Dörpfeld high school in the city's Elberfeld district. Police said there was no shooting in the incident, German news agency dpa reported, but gave no further information. The Bild newspaper, which didn't name sources, said it was a knife attack.

Police said they deployed large numbers of officers to the scene. They said the suspect was injured.

Wuppertal is a city of some 350,000 people near Duesseldorf and Cologne.



Police and ambulances at the scene of an attack, at the Wilhelm Dörpfeld school, in Wuppertal, Germany, Thursday.

# Farmers from EU countries join protest

AP ■ PRAGUE

Czech farmers were driving their tractors and other vehicles to several border crossings on Thursday to meet their colleagues from neighbouring countries and join forces in their protests against European Union agriculture policies, bureaucracy and overall conditions for their business.

Farmers complain that the 27-nation EU's environmental policies, such as the Green Deal, which calls for limits on the use of chemicals and on greenhouse gas emissions, limit their business and make their products more expensive than non-EU imports.

The farmers also complain about low prices for their products and say grain and other agriculture products coming from Ukraine and Latin America negatively affect the



market. The farmers met their colleagues from neighbouring Germany, Poland and Slovakia at a number of border crossings. Farmers from 10 EU countries, ranging from Central Europe to the Baltics and the Balkans, were participating in the protest, organisers said.

The farmers invited Czech Agriculture Minister Marek Vyborný, his Slovak counterpart Richard Takac, and the representatives of farmers from Poland and Hungary to rally at a Czech-Slovak border crossing known as Hodonin-Holic, which was blocked by hundreds of tractors. "We don't protest against the EU, we protest against the wrong decisions by the European Commission," said Andrej Gajdos from the Slovak Chamber of Agriculture and Food.

# Albanian Parliament approves deal to hold migrants for Italy

**Tirana (AP):** Albania's Parliament on Thursday approved a deal for the country to hold thousands of asylum seekers rescued in international waters by Italy while their applications are processed, despite protests from opposition lawmakers and human rights groups.

Under the five-year deal, Albania would shelter up to 3,000 migrants at any one time. With asylum requests expected to take around a month to process, the number of asylum-seekers sent to Albania could reach up to 36,000 in a year.

The idea of sending asylum seekers outside the EU is controversial. The deal was endorsed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen but has been widely criticised by human rights groups. Albania is currently seeking EU membership.

The agreement, signed in November between Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, is part of Meloni's efforts to share the burden of addressing migration with other European countries.

The Parliament, dominated by Rama's left-wing Socialist Party, voted 77 to zero to approve the deal, with 63 members of parliament marked not present. Most of the conservative opposition, which refused to participate, sat in the hall and tried to disrupt the vote with whistles. The president will also issue a decree as the final step of approval. Rama himself was not present at the vote. A group of 30 lawmakers attempted to block ratification by appealing to the Constitutional Court, but in late January the court said a deal could go ahead. Conservative lawmakers have repeatedly disrupted voting since October to protest the Socialist govern-

# Jaahnavi's killers will not face criminal charges

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The Seattle police officer who struck and killed Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula while responding to an overdose call, will not face any criminal charges due to lack of "sufficient" evidence, authorities said.

On Wednesday, the King County Prosecutor's Office said they will not move forward with criminal charges against Seattle Police Officer Kevin Dave, FOX13 Seattle reported. In a statement released Wednesday, the King County Prosecuting Attorney said, "Kandula's death is heartbreaking and impacted communities in King County and across the world."

Kandula, 23, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle on January 23. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 kmh) on



the way to a report of a drug overdose call. Kandula was thrown 100 feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle.

In bodycam footage released by the Seattle Police Department, Officer Daniel Auderer laughed about the deadly crash and dismissed any implication Dave might be at fault or that a criminal investigation was necessary.

King County Prosecuting

Attorney Leesa Manion said that she believes they lack the evidence to prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt, the report added.

"It is the responsibility of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office to review all available evidence relating to the case involving Seattle Police Officer Kevin Dave and the January 2023 collision death of Jaahnavi Kandula. After staffing this case with senior deputy prosecuting attorneys and office leadership, I have determined that we lack sufficient evidence under Washington State law to prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt."

The statement also said that the prosecutor's office also finds the comments made by Seattle Police Officer Daniel Auderer, recorded on his body-worn video, "appalling and deeply troubling."

Auderer, who was not

involved in the January collision, was captured in the video saying, "But she is dead" and laughing while on the phone. She was 26 anyway," Auderer said in the video. "She had limited value."

"Officer Auderer's comments were also unprofessional and undermined the public's trust in the Seattle Police Department and law enforcement in general," said Manion.

"As egregious as Officer Auderer's comments are, they do not change the PAO's legal analysis into the conduct of Officer Dave. It is the Office of Police Accountability that bears the responsibility of disciplinary investigation and proceedings relating to Officer Auderer's comment, not the PAO."

Auderer was pulled from patrol in September 2023 and reassigned to a "non-operational position." Auderer could still be fired after the fallout of

his insensitive comments captured on bodycam.

Auderer's chain of command and the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) found he acted unprofessionally. For that, he faces the highest disciplinary range of nearly two weeks suspension up to termination, according to a disciplinary action report.

Before a final disciplinary decision, Auderer will have the chance to meet with Police Chief Adrian Diaz to disagree.

His disciplinary hearing is scheduled for March 4, K5 News reported.

Seattle local media reported that speed was the cause of the collision, as the speed at which Dave was travelling did "not allow (Kandula) or him sufficient time to detect, address and avoid a hazard that presented itself."

Dave was responding to a "priority one" call at the request of the Seattle Fire Department,

according to the Seattle Police Department. According to the police report, the officer was responding to a report of a drug overdose.

The officer did not have his siren activated continuously. Instead, the officer "chirped" his siren at the intersection. He did have his emergency lights on, according to a previous statement from the police department.

In a memo to Seattle police, prosecutors wrote there was not enough evidence to prove Dave showed "conscious disregard for others safety."

A drug recognition expert responded to the scene and found no impairment in the officer.

Kandula was a graduate student at Northeastern University at the Seattle campus. The university said in January 2023 that they would award her degree posthumously and present it to her family.



# 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

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 supreme 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.

## 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.

### 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](http://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](http://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

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/ VRF 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	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	
575/24	

## 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: Many 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 a 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



# 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.

Bharat 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.







# INDIA EYE 17TH SERIES WIN ON TROT AT HOME

**PTI ■ RANCHI**

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's absence is a concern but an assertive and adaptive India will have the edge against England's seemingly depth-less 'Bazball' approach when the two sides clash in the potentially series-deciding fourth Test beginning here on Friday.

From the dry heat of Rajkot to the much cooler confines of Ranchi, the temperature shift would be the only soothing factor for the Englishmen who have let it slip against the resilient hosts and are trailing 1-2.

Eyeing a 17th series win on the trot at home, India have been near invincible since the shock defeat to Alastair Cook's England in 2012. After that, India have won a staggering 38 out of 47 Tests, and have lost just thrice (two each versus Australia and England) when challenges on home turf.

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.

Whether it is Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has maintained an impressive average of 109 with a total of 545 runs, or Sarfaraz Khan, who ended his prolonged wait for a Test debut with a blazing 66-ball 62 in Rajkot, or Shubman Gill, gradually settling in at No.3, India's next generation of batters are showcasing how a seamless transition happens. As for replacing Bumrah, who has been the top wicket-taker (17) of the series which was expected to be dominated by spinners, it could well be India's Achilles' heel in Ranchi. Bumrah has been rested after bowling a little more than 80 overs in the three gone-by Tests. His reverse-swing mastery on day two of the Vizag Test during a six-wicket burst, was the biggest contributing factor in the 106-run win that levelled the series 1-1.

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

## ENGLAND AIM FOR REDEMPTION IN 4TH TEST



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 Bengal duo of Mukesh Kumar and an uncapped Akash Deep for the second pacer's slot in Ranchi.

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 plately and looked a bit crusty, the top layer, One half is good, and the other has a

lot of plately cracks," England vice-captain Ollie Pope had said after the team checked in here on Thursday. That may bring Shoaib 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 that Axar Patel would be recalled. The team is expected to stick to Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja. Historically, the Ranchi pitch has proven deceptive for the visiting teams. In the last Test here in 2019, South Africa were blown away by the duo of Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav, who shared 10 wickets between them, as against the eight by the spin trio of Ashwin, Jadeja and Shahbaz Nadeem. "It has never been a rank-turner. The pitch would be beautiful for batting for first two days and would assist spin from day three. History should repeat itself," the local groundsmen told PTI.

For the 'Bazball' inspired England, the win in Hyderabad has become a distant memory and a repeat of 2021 looks likely when India bounced back to win the four-Test series 3-1. 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.

The go-for-strokes style might have helped the likes of Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett, who swung his bat around for a stunning 153 in Rajkot, but it has also doomed the likes of Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow.

Root was seen as their main batter to cope with the spin challenge but the way he reverse scooped to Bumrah at Rajkot summed up the disarray he is in. The desperation to find a way out can be judged from skipper Ben Stokes expediting his rehab from a knee injury by opting to bowl at the nets ahead of the fourth Test.

## Holders CSK to take on RCB in IPL opener on March 22



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Defending champions Chennai Super Kings will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in the 2024 IPL season-opener in Chennai on March 22, the BCCI announced Thursday while unveiling the schedule for the first 17 days of the popular T20 league. The roster for the remaining matches will be announced once the dates for the upcoming general elections are announced early next month. During the period from March 22 to April 7, a total of 21 matches will be played across 10 cities, with each team playing a minimum of three matches and a maximum of five.

As in the past, the BCCI will work closely with government and security agencies, following all necessary protocols and advisories related to the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections in India, the apex cricket body said in a statement.

"Once the dates for the 18th Lok Sabha elections are announced, the Board will review and address any issues pertaining to the schedule of the first two weeks.

"Subsequently, the BCCI will work in tandem with local authorities to finalise the schedule for the remainder of the season, taking into account the polling dates," the

BCCI said.

The general elections are expected to be held in April-May.

Only in 2009, the IPL, in its entirety, was held overseas (South Africa) while the 2014 edition was partially held in the UAE due to the general elections.

However, in 2019, the tournament was held in India despite the elections.

The first weekend will feature two double headers, beginning with the Punjab Kings hosting the Delhi Capitals on March 23, followed by the Kolkata Knight Riders hosting the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the day's second game.

On March 24, the action will shift to Jaipur, where the home team Rajasthan Royals will face the Lucknow Super Giants. Sunday evening will witness the home team Gujarat Titans, the 2022 champions and finalists of the last season going head-to-head with five-time winners Mumbai Indians.

Having chosen to play their first two home matches in Visakhapatnam, the Delhi Capitals will host the Chennai Super Kings on March 31 in the port city and will then face the Kolkata Knight Riders at the same venue on April 3.

As per the format, 10 teams are divided into two groups of five.

In the group stage, each team plays 14 games facing the other four sides in their group two times each (home and away basis, four teams in the other group once, and the remaining team two times.



India has become a country that sets the agenda of the world: Birla

Said in the convocation ceremony of Tanta University, Sriganganagar, the society should get the benefit of the experience of the researchers. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, the chief guest at the second convocation of Tanta University, said that India has become a country that sets the agenda of the world, during the G-20 it has been proved that there is no one like us. MP Nihalchand, MLA Jaideep Bihani and Gurveer Singh Brar were the special guests. In the beginning, University Chairperson Mrs. Sunita Tanta, Dr. Vishu Tanta, Dr. Raghu Tanta, Vice Chairman Dr. Mohit Tanta, Executive Director KS Sukhdev, Vice Chancellor Prof. (Dr.) M.M. Saxena etc, welcomed the guests. 170 gold medals and 444 degrees were distributed in the ceremony.



Govt. of Haryana



SPORTS DEPARTMENT  
हरियाणा

“ देश में खेलों के लिए जरूरी है कि हमारे युवाओं में खेलों को लेकर विश्वास पैदा हो, खेल को अपना प्रॉफेशन बनाने का हौसला बढ़े। मैं चाहता हूँ कि जिस तरह दूसरे प्रॉफेशनस हैं, वैसे ही हमारे युवा स्पोर्ट्स को भी देखें। ”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी



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CM'S CUP  
2024

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BASKETBALL  
KHO-KHO  
KABADDI  
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