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WORLD LEADERS STAND IN
SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

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SEBI USING AI FOR
INVESTIGATIONS: OFFICIAL

SPORT 8
INDIA ON BACKFOOT AFTER
JAISWAL GRITTY FIFTY

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Draw 100 days action plan: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a strategic move ahead of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has instructed his Council of Ministers to draft an “actionable, measurable, and clearly defined” plan to be presented at the meeting on March 3. During the last Cabinet meeting on February 21, Modi directed his ministerial colleagues to prepare an action plan for the next 100 days. With the Lok Sabha polls expected to be announced after March 13, he has urged them to engage in extensive consultations, including with experienced individuals such as senior bureaucrats, grassroots workers, and domain experts, before finalising their action plans, according to sources. During the meeting, Modi tasked his ministers with outlining key initiatives and deliverables for the next 100 days, along with a comprehensive five-year roadmap. These documents, focusing on the Government’s priorities and strategies, are to be submitted to the Cabinet Secretariat. Sources said Modi has instructed them and their ministries to brainstorm over the agenda for the period, which is also the likely duration before a new government takes office



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the foundation stone laying ceremony of multiple key initiatives for cooperative sector in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

following the Lok Sabha elections expected in April-May. The Prime Minister told the Cabinet that they should draw up these plans without considering who gets what ministerial positions post-elections. Sources said the prime minister wants to ensure that the government’s work continues amid the poll cycle, and his call for preparing the agenda for the next 100 days is part of such an effort.

He has also repeatedly expressed confidence in the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance retaining power at the Centre. He recently asserted that he has already begun preparing a roadmap for his third term and has received suggestions from over 15 lakh people.

During a cabinet meeting held in the first week of February, PM Modi cautioned his Cabinet Ministers against complacency, urging them to work diligently for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Despite the favorable momentum from the



consecration of the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, Modi emphasised that the BJP should not underestimate the challenge. He referred to the BJP’s casual approach in the 2004 elections, highlighting the need to avoid complacency. Earlier, at the party’s national convention at Bharat Mandapam, Modi urged party workers to dedicate themselves to engaging with new voters over the next 100 days.

BJP nixes Congress Temple tax Bill

PTI ■ BENGALURU

In a setback to the ruling Congress in Karnataka, a Bill that sought to collect funds from temples with over ₹10 lakh annual income was defeated by the Opposition BJP-JD(S) combine in the Legislative Council. The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was passed by the Legislative Assembly earlier this week. It was defeated by a voice vote in the Upper House, where the Opposition has a majority, on Friday. The Bill among other things, proposes to collect five per cent from temples whose gross income is between ₹10 lakh and less than ₹1 crore and 10 per cent from temples whose income is above ₹1 crore, to be put into a Common Pool Fund, administered by Rajya Dharmika Parishath, which is proposed to be used for Archakas’ (priests) welfare and upkeep of ‘C’ category temples (State controlled) whose annual income is less than ₹5 lakh. The act that was earlier amended in 2011 had made way for five per cent of the net income of temples with annual income between ₹5



lakh and ₹10 lakh and 10 per cent of the net income of temples with annual income of over ₹10 lakh would come to the fund. The amendment Bill had created a huge controversy, as it angered the Opposition, especially the BJP, which charged the ruling Congress with trying to fill its “empty coffers” with temple money, while, the Congress had sought to turn the tables saying the saffron party had effected an amendment in 2011 to seek funds from high-income Hindu shrines. Leader of the Opposition in Council Kota Srinivas Poojary, who was the Muzrai Minister during the BJP government, while welcoming the move to

provide social security to Archakas, opposed diversion of the revenue earned by temples. He questioned why the government can’t provide funds in the budget for their welfare. The Opposition also opposed the proposal in the Bill for nomination of the temple committee president by the government. Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy, trying to convince the Opposition, assured the House that the government would not interfere in the nomination of the temple committee president and also to reduce the amount proposed to be diverted from the temples to the common pool.

New criminal justice laws from July 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The newly enacted laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act — to completely overhaul the criminal justice system in the country will come into effect from July 1. However, the provision related to cases of hit and run by vehicle drivers will not be implemented immediately. The three laws got Parliament’s approval on December 21 and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on December 25. According to three identical notifications issued by the Union Home Ministry, provisions of the new laws will come into force from July 1. The laws will replace the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian

Evidence Act of 1872 respectively. The three legislations aim at completely overhauling the criminal justice system in the country by giving definitions of various offences and their punishments. The Government, however, has decided not to implement the provision related to cases of hit and run by a vehicle driver as promised to truckers who had protested against it. “In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (45 of 2023), the Central Government hereby appoints the 1st day of July, 2024 as the date on which the provisions of the said Sanhita, except the provision of sub-section (2) of section 106, shall come into force,” one of the notifications said.

EC plugs transfer, posting loopholes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Noting violations of transfer and posting instructions for officers ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission has instructed States to ensure that officers transferred out of a district are not posted in any district within the same parliamentary constituency. By adjusting its policy on officer transfers before the elections, the EC aims to close loopholes exploited by State governments. This action follows the Election Commission’s serious concern over instances where officers were transferred to

adjacent districts within the same parliamentary constituency by State governments. In a related development, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced on Saturday that most political parties in Tamil Nadu have urged the EC to conduct the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in a single phase in the State. Following his two-day visit to Tamil Nadu to assess elections preparedness, The CEC emphasised that the Election Commission (EC) would take strict action against officials who fail to ensure a level playing field for all parties, saying that “in a democracy, officials should be absolutely impartial.”



AAP, Congress ink seat sharing ties, but both to go solo in Punjab

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

At a time of challenges within the INDIA bloc, the Congress and the AAP have resolved their differences to finalise a seat-sharing agreement in Delhi, Haryana, Gujarat, Chandigarh, and Goa for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. But both the parties will go solo in Punjab. This marks the second seat-sharing deal within the INDIA bloc, following a similar agreement between the SP and Congress in Uttar Pradesh recently. In Delhi, the AAP will contest four seats — West Delhi, South Delhi, East Delhi, and New Delhi. The remaining three — North East Delhi, North West Delhi, and Chandni Chowk — will be contested by the Congress. In the 2019 election, the BJP won all seven seats. The announcement came during a joint press conference of the AAP and the Congress.

INDIA Bloc in tatters in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As the TMC has reiterated to go it alone in the Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, the State Congress said it is in talks with the CPI(M) for seat sharing in the State. The Congress, the TMC and the CPI(M) are constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc. Reacting to a statement by TMC leader Derek O’Brien, who claimed that the TMC’s stance towards the Congress in Bengal remained unchanged, Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury on Saturday said, “I had no information about who said what... I only know that they have decided to go it alone in Bengal... But one thing is for sure: we are proceeding with our talks with the CPI(M).” On Friday, O’Brien had reiterated that his party had not deviated from what the Chief Minister had said a month ago regarding the

alliance talks. “A few weeks ago... Mamata said the TMC is contesting all 42 seats in Bengal. We are also contesting a few seats in Assam and the Tura Lok Sabha seat in Meghalaya. There is no change in this position,” he had said. In Bengal, the Congress has been requesting 6-8 seats, while the TMC has offered only two seats, Behrampore and Malda South, currently held by Adhir Chowdhury and AH Khan Chowdhury. In a sharp attack on the TMC, the PCC president highlighted how Mamata’s party was caught between losing minority votes on one side and facing ED and CBI raids on the other. “Mamata had made it clear that her party will contest the elections alone,” he said, adding, “They (TMC) are in a dilemma because if they leave the INDIA alliance they will lose the minority votes... whereas if they don’t do so

and go ahead with the alliance then the Narendra Modi Government will send ED and CBI to their houses ... this is the reason why the TMC is vertically divided in two groups... while one section wants the alliance to continue, the other is in a dilemma.” Reminding how Mamata had declared that she would go it alone in Bengal, Chowdhury said, “Irrespective of who says what we are going ahead with our talks with the CPI(M) and I am already in the midst of seat-sharing talks with their State secretary Md Salim.” Meanwhile the Congress national leadership, however, continued to go soft on the TMC saying their doors were still open to her. “Our doors are always open for the TMC. Mamata and the TMC have said they want to strengthen INDIA Alliance and the biggest motive is to defeat the BJP... Heated discussions keep taking place between the two parties but we respect Mamata,” senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said.



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Mountains witness fresh snowfall, more forecast today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN/JOSHIMATH

High altitude regions in the mountainous districts witnessed fresh snowfall on Saturday. The State meteorological centre has forecast that very light to light rain/ thunderstorms are likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh districts and very

State on Sunday. The provincial State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a mainly to partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 24 degrees Celsius and eight degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. Meanwhile, various high alti-

fall. The lack of snowfall during the month of January had caused anxiety among the local farmers and those in the tourism related businesses. However, the snowfall experienced during February has brought some relief to the farmers. The maximum and minimum temperatures



light to light snowfall is likely in places situated at altitudes of 3,000 metres and above in these districts. The meteorological centre has also issued a yellow warning (Watch) regarding the possibility of ground frost likely to occur at isolated places in the mountains. Apart from this, dry weather is likely to prevail in the remaining districts of the

tude regions witnessed light snowfall on Saturday. In the Chamoli district there was snowfall in Badrinath, Hemkund-Lokpal, Valley of Flowers, Auli and Niti valley. Snowfall in the winter sports destination of Auli has enthused those involved in tourism related businesses with tourists expected to arrive here following the snow-

recorded in various parts of the State on Saturday were 22.6 degrees Celsius and 6.5 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 24.5 degrees Celsius and 4.9 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 9.8 degrees Celsius and -0.7 degree Celsius in Mukteshwar and 13.1 degrees Celsius and 0.3 degree Celsius in New Tehri.

Hempur military station hosts ESM rally

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

An ex-servicemen (ESM) rally was organised by the Station Headquarters, Hempur on Saturday which was attended by about 400 ex-servicemen, Veer Naris and widows. The rally was organised to assist the veterans, Veer Naris and widows in redressal of their grievances by providing them opportunity to interact with the representatives of record offices of Bengal Engi-



neers Group, Garhwal Rifles and Kumaon Regiment. Besides, free medical and dental

check-up was also organised for those in need of medical care. On behalf of the Major General R Prem Raj, GOC, Uttarakhand Sub-Area, the Station Commander, Hempur Military Station, Brigadier Devender Kumar conveyed his gratitude to all Veer Naris and veterans for their service to the nation.

Businesses suffering losses due to tourism slump in Nainital: Tandon

PNS ■ NAINITAL

Tourism activity is witnessing a slump in Nainital. The Ma Naina Devi Vyapar Mandal head Puneet Tandon said that the arrival of tourists has witnessed a consistent drop since New Year's celebrations which has negatively affected business in Nainital. Factors like the lack of proper snowfall, the recent Vanbhulpura riot in Haldwani and the farmer agitation have

here.

Tandon said that tourism is a major source of sustenance for businesses in Nainital city. However, the businesses are facing considerable losses due to the consistent drop in tourist numbers after the New Year celebrations. The administration and Tourism department can help in boosting tourist numbers through positive and attractive publicity.

He said that businesses are suffering loss but taxes have to be paid on time. They will have to bear an additional burden of 10 per cent if they are unable to pay the taxes on time. However, payment of tax on time may not be possible due to the losses being suffered. He said that the time limit should be discontinued for businessmen in the mountainous regions because there is limited production in mountainous areas. Tandon said that he has been communicating such issues to the government consistently.



affected the tourism business here. He has requested the authorities to step up publicity efforts in order to raise the number of tourists arriving

2.5 kg tumour removed from woman's ovaries in Subharti Hospital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A team of surgeons of Dr AKKBM Subharti Hospital, Jhajhra in Dehradun claimed to have successfully removed a tumour weighing about 2.5 kg from the body of a woman patient. They further claimed she is now completely healthy with no post-surgery complications.

Sharing details, a doctor of the medical facility said that a 30-year-old woman, resident of Kalsi, had come with complaints of pain, swelling and heaviness in the stomach. "She said she was not getting relief anywhere. So the doctors here

admitted her and conducted multiple examinations. The investigations revealed a large tumour having grown in her ovaries.

The doctors felt an immediate surgery was the only option to give her relief from the pain and swelling. On obtaining her consent, the team of experienced surgeons conducted the surgery which took several hours and the tumour was finally removed," said the doctor, adding that post-surgery, the patient is now quite fine.

PM to virtually lay foundation stone of new railway station at Kotdwar on Feb 26

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set to virtually lay the foundation stone of the Kotdwar railway station to be revamped under the ambitious Amrit Bharat Station Yojana on February 26. All the ministers and MLAs from Pauri district besides the Lok Sabha member from Garhwal constituency are expected to be present at the virtual foundation laying ceremony in Kotdwar.

Notably, the old Kotdwar station, built way back in 1885, would be demolished for the new station to come up, said the railway officials and added that the new station building would have enhanced infrastructure and upgraded facilities for the passengers. The new station building as envisaged in

the scheme would have two gates, new platforms, lifts, executive lounge, wash-rooms for the specially abled people, AC waiting room, free Wi Fi, foot over bridge, parking space and stalls to display local products for sale among others.

Railway sources further said that the PM would lay the foundation stones of 537 railway stations spread across the country, including Kotdwar station, simultaneously through virtual means on February 26. Kotdwar is one of the seven stations that come under the Moradabad railway division. However, it is the first station in Uttarakhand to be redeveloped under the Central government's station redevelopment scheme. A senior officer of the Morad-

Jakson Solar holds EPC meet to boost U'khand's green energy capacity

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Jakson Solar, a subsidiary of the energy and infrastructure solutions company Jakson Group headquartered in Noida, hosted a meet for EPC players in Dehradun recently. This event spotlighted the company's role for adoption of renewable energy in Uttarakhand, leveraging the benefits of the Mukhaya-mantri Saur Swarojgar

hand and they evinced interest to collaborate with Jakson Group to amplify the State's renewable energy capacity. The projects, ranging from the 500 KWp solar initiative at Dhari village to the four MW hillside installation, mark strides in conserving the local ecology, the release stated and added that another standout effort



Yojna, a Jakson Group release said. The event was attended by government officers and over 40 EPC companies based in Uttarak-

is the dedicated solar power plant at Jolly Grant airport in Dehradun. Highlighting Jakson's contributions to the renewable sector, head-key accounts sales at Jakson Solar Mradul Gupta said that their initiatives in Uttarakhand were meant to maintain the State's natural splendour as a clean and green State.

Gardens to be developed as horti tourism pilot projects

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State's Agriculture minister Ganesh Joshi has directed officials to develop one government garden each in Garhwal and Kumaon as pilot

ture, ropeway, free distribution of fruit saplings and expenses related to NABARD schemes, among other tasks. It was stated that under the tra-

items. Agriculture secretary Vinod Suman, director general Ranveer Singh Chauhan, additional secretary Anand Swaroop and director KC



projects for encouraging horticulture tourism. Chairing a review meeting with officials on Saturday, the minister said that the government gardens are not in a good condition. The condition of such gardens should be improved and they should be linked to tourism activity to be developed as destinations for horticulture tourism, he said. The minister directed the officials to prepare a concrete plan for this purpose.

Officials informed the minister in the meeting that out of the Rs 201 crore approved budget for agriculture, a sum of Rs 154 crore has been spent so far and that the remaining budget will also be spent on time. Out of the Horticulture department's approved budget of Rs 369.75 crore, a sum of Rs 274.04 crore had been spent till January while the remaining budget will also be spent soon. The officials further informed that under the Horticulture department, 50 per cent of the approved budget had been spent till January this year on capital expendi-

ditional agriculture development scheme, 300 out of the target 400 stores have been opened. Similarly, seven out of the target 13 outlets have been opened so far under the PFME scheme. Against the demand of eight lakh winter season saplings, 7.55 lakh saplings have been allocated. These include saplings of apple, pear, plum, walnut and apricot, among others. Among these, 4.62 lakh saplings of apple have been allocated against the demand for 5.06 lakh saplings. The minister also issued instructions to the officials to ensure that the benefit of the Central and State government schemes reaches the farmers as intended. He also directed the officials to step up publicity at the block level so that the farmers receive important information along with seeds on time, fruits, saplings and manure, among other

Pathak were among those present in the meeting.

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No. 75-W/2/3/WA/Publication
DEN/II/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tender bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

DATED: 24.02.2024

Tender No. Date 300-DRM-MB-23-24 Date : 24.02.2024

Name of work Miscellaneous track work in the section of SSE/Pway/MINJ under ADEN/II/HRI

Tender Closing Date Time 22.03.2024 16:00

Advertised Value (Rs.) 65,99,147.79

Earnest Money (Rs.) 1,32,000.00

Bidding Start Date 08.03.2024

Validity of Offer (Days) 60 Days

Period of Completion 12 Months

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

612/24

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Dt. 21.02.2024

Tender No. Date 297-DRM-MB-23-24 Dt. 21.02.2024

Name of work Construction of boundary wall near various stations and its approaches as measure to safeguard track and establishment avoiding encroachment in the section of ADEN/RK

Tender Closing Date Time 19.03.2024 16:00

Advertised Value Rs.3,39,26,519.34

Earnest Money Rs.3,19,000.00

Bidding Start Date 05.03.2024


Validity of Offer (Days) 60 Days

Period of Completion 09 Months

No. 74-W/2/3/WA/Publication Dated: 23.02.2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

608/24

**उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड**
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)
कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण खण्ड (केन्द्रीय), 18 ईंफोसी रोड, देहरादून
कॉरपोरेट आईडी-नंटी संख्या: U40109UR2001SGC025867

निविदा सूचना

एतद्वारा विद्युत वितरण खण्ड(केन्द्रीय), देहरादून के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु उत्तराखण्ड शासन द्वारा प्रदत्त विद्युत कार्यों के लिए 'क' श्रेणी के लाइसेन्स धारक एवं अनुभवी निविदादाताओं जो कि ई0पी0एफ0/ई0एस0आई0 कार्यालय में पंजीकृत हों तथा आयकर, जी0एस0टी0 में पंजीकृत हो से मुहरबन्द निविदायें दो भागों में, प्रथम भाग निर्धारित धरोहर राशि जो किसी भी राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंक/डाकघर की सी0डी0आर0/एफ0डी0आर0/एन0एस0सी0 के रूप में अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण खण्ड(केन्द्रीय), देहरादून के नाम बन्धक हो एवं जी0एस0टी0/ई0पी0एफ0/ई0एस0आई0 पंजीकरण प्रमाण पत्र, नियम शर्तें व अनुभव प्रमाण पत्र की एक प्रति भी देनी होगी तथा द्वितीय भाग में दर्े जो कि छः माह के लिए वैध हों, आमंत्रित की जाती है। जोकि उपस्थित निविदादाताओं के समुख खोली जायेगी। बिना धरोहर राशि के द्वितीय भाग नहीं खोला जायेगा। किसी एक अथवा समस्त निविदाओं को स्वीकार अथवा अस्वीकार करने का सम्पूर्ण अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता को होगा। निविदा खुलने की तिथि को यदि अवकाश होता है तो निविदायें अगले कार्य दिवस में विक्रय तथा खोली जायेंगी।

निविदा संख्या	कार्य का विवरण	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य (रु०)	निविदा प्रपत्र खरीदने की अन्तिम तिथि	निविदा जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	धरोहर राशि (रु०)
EDD(C)-31/23-24	Replacement of ACSR Weasel Conductor by AB Cable at Shanti Vihar under EDSD Araghar	500+ GST	11.03.2024	12.03.2024 15:30 बजे	12.03.2024 16:00 बजे	18000.00
EDD(C)-32/23-24	Increasing capacity of 10 MVA T/F to 12.5 MVA at 33/11 KV S/S Bindal	250+ GST	11.03.2024	12.03.2024 15:30 बजे	12.03.2024 16:00 बजे	12000.00

पत्रांक: 910/वि0वि0ख0(के०)/दे०दून/Advt.

दिनांक: 24/02/2024

अधिशासी अभियन्ता

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(For Immovable Property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Punjab National Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice/s on the dates mentioned against each account calling upon the respective Borrowers/Guarantors (Enforcers) to repay the amount as mentioned against each account within 60 days from the date of notice(s)/ date of receipt of the said notice(s).The Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned against each account. The Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Punjab National Bank for the amounts and interest thereon. The Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name of the Branch/ Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice	Date of possession	Amount outstanding as on the date
1.	Branch: Kanwali Road, Dehradun Borrower: Sh Mahander Singh S/o Sh Ganga Ram Singh. Co-Borrower: Smt. Doli Singh W/o Sh. Mahander Singh.	All that land & superstructure thereon bearing khasra no. 697 min. area 66.04 sq. mtrs. situated at mauza Kanwali, Pargana Central doon, dist. Dehradun. Bounded and butted as under: North: Property of Sh. Bhupendra Singh, side measuring 58 ft, South: Property of Sh. Dinesh Chawla, side measuring 58 ft, East: 30 ft. (9 meter) wide road, side measuring 12 ft. West: land of others, side measuring 12 ft.6 inches. Registered in the office of sub registrar, Dehradun vide bahi no.1, zild no. 1763, page 275 to 298 at sr. 3908 dated 31st July 2017. Ownership: Sh. Mahander Singh S/o Sh. Ganga Ram Singh.	01.12.2023	21.02.2024	Rs. 27,78,407.74 as on 30.11.2023 with future interest and incidental charges w.e.f. 01.12.2023

Date: 24.02.2024

Place: Dehradun

Authorised Officer, Punjab National Bank

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Modi to inaugurate health infra projects today

1 CHC and BPHUs in 5 districts to be inaugurated by PM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate nine health services for Uttarakhand on Sunday. The health secretary R Rajesh Kumar said that the PM will inaugurate a community health centre (CHC) in Haridwar and block public health

sit hostel in the sub district hospital of Srinagar.

He said that programmes will be organised in all the districts on Sunday, February 25 and a state level programme will be organised in Dehradun which will be presided over by

from Rajkot in Gujarat. The Block Public Health Units (BPHU) will be inaugurated in Purola of Uttarkashi, Bhowali of Nainital, Jakholi of Rudraprayag, Kapkot of Bageshwar and Barakot of Champawat.

The health secretary further informed that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has provided two mobile testing labs with a cost of Rs 87.40 lakh. These labs will help in ensuring availability of safe, nutritious and quality food to the general public. These labs will test the food items at the spots and the results will be displayed on the screen. They will also be equipped with a public address system. The department will make use of these mobile labs to create awareness in the public and on the Char Dham Yatra routes, tourist spots and Kanwad route.



units in five districts of the State. He said the PM will lay the foundation stones for a critical care block in district hospital Rudrapur and a tran-

sit hostel in the sub district hospital of Srinagar. He said that programmes will be organised in all the districts on Sunday, February 25 and a state level programme will be organised in Dehradun which will be presided over by

Police arrest Haldwani riot main accused Abdul Malik

PNS ■ HALDWANI

The police have arrested the main accused in the Haldwani riots, Abdul Malik and three other accused men. According to the police, Malik was arrested from Delhi. The police have so far arrested 82 accused in this case.

Following the violence in Haldwani on February 8 which resulted in at least seven deaths and injuries to more than a 100 persons along with damage to property due to arson, the Nainital senior superintendent of police Prahlad Narayan Meena had formed six teams to search for and arrest the main accused Malik and his son Abdul Moed. These police teams were searching for the prime accused and his son in different parts of the country including Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, among other locations. One of the police teams were succeeded in arresting Malik from Delhi. The district police have also arrested two other accused men Mohammed Furkan and Salim. Earlier, another accused Raees was arrested by the police on Friday and presented in the court.



Following the arrest of the main accused, the officiating director general of police Abhinav Kumar has announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000, the Kumaon deputy inspector general of police has announced a reward of Rs 5,000 and the Nainital SSP has announced a reward of Rs 2,500 for the police team. Malik had leased the land on which the illegal Madarsa and namaz site were constructed. He is accused of having played a role in instigating the violence during the demolition of the illegal structures.

It will be recalled that violence had broken out in the Vanbhulpura area of Hald-

wani during the demolition of an illegally constructed Madarsa and a namaz site. The resulting violence led to the death of seven persons, caused injuries to hundreds of personnel of the police, administration and the municipal corporation along with media persons. A number of buildings and vehicles were also damaged by the rioters committing arson during the riot. The police registered three FIRs and formed various teams to nab the guilty. The police checked footage from CCTV cameras and used other evidence to nab the accused. A number of illegal firearms have also been seized from the accused in the area.

Allegations of police mistreating women baseless, says IG

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police have rejected allegations of women in Vanbhulpura being mistreated by the police. Inspector general and police headquarter spokesman Nilesh Anand Bharne informed the media here on Saturday that content on social media about the police misbehaving with women in Vanbhulpura area is totally baseless. He said that no such mistreatment of women occurred in the area at the hands

especially women and children with decorum, affection and respect. There is zero tolerance in Uttarakhand police for any type of misbehaviour with women.

If there is any reliable evidence, it can be presented to the Kumaon commissioner who is conducting a magisterial probe into the Haldwani violence or the Nainital senior superintendent of police. We will take swift action as re-



of the police. He said, "The Uttarakhand police takes pride in being 'Mitra police'. While the police are discharging their duty our personnel treat all law abiding citizens

quipped as per the law on such evidence. The Uttarakhand police is committed to work for protecting the honour and interests of the public," Bharne stressed.

More than 5 lakh patients have availed benefit of Ayushman scheme in Uttarakhand: CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that Atal Ayushman Yojana is proving effective in providing free and cashless treatment to everyone in the State. He said that a total of 55 lakh people have been provided Ayushman cards and more than five lakh patients have availed treatment under the scheme.

The CM was addressing the 43 National Medicos Organisation (NMOCON) 2024 at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh on Saturday.

Welcoming the delegates, the CM said that the NMOCON follows Swami Vivekanand as its ideal and is providing health services to the people.

He said that unprecedented work in the health sector has been done under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last 10 years. The government is providing free treatment, medicines, providing modern facilities at village level and is developing health services by use of technology. The CM averred that both the Central and the State governments are working with the principle of Antyodaya (welfare of



the last person standing on the social ladder) in the health sector. He said that more than 200 new medical colleges were constructed in the last 10 years and at present 22 AIIMS are serving the people.

The CM said that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Jal Jivan Mission have helped in preventing many diseases and the country has succeeded in controlling malnutrition. The telemedicine service and e- sanjivini have

made the use of communication technology for diagnosis, treatment and management of the patients in remote areas. The government has initiated Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission to strengthen the health infrastructure.

Dhami said that the State government has initiated many schemes for the safety of mothers and new born children. The government has started Janani Suraksha Yojana to reduce the mother and child mortality rate.

Under mission Indradhanush free immunisation of the children is being done.

Under the national TB eradication programme the State government has taken a target to make the State free from TB by the year 2024.

Cabinet ministers Prem Chand Agarwal, Dhan Singh Rawat, AIIMS director Dr Meenu Singh, Sar Karyavah of RSS Krishna Gopal, Swami Chidananda and others were present on the occasion.

Saint Ravidas, a champion of social equality & values: Dhami

Double-engine Govt committed to welfare of downtrodden

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited the temple of Saint Ravidas in BHEL Haridwar on Saturday and offered prayers. He inaugurated a pavilion in the temple on the occasion.

Paying rich tributes to the saint, the CM said that Ravidas was a pioneer of social equality and human values and he played a key role in removing social evils from the society. He said that the day of Ravidas Jayanti is the occasion to take a pledge against untouchability and discrimination in the society. Dhami said that it is a proven fact that great saints have taken birth in our country whenever their presence is needed the most. Saint Ravidas was a great saint of the Bhakti movement who had given a new energy to the downtrodden sections of the society.

The CM said that India and Uttarakhand are making rapid strides on the path of development by following the teachings of saint Ravidas. The double

engine government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed for the welfare of dalits and downtrodden. The government is following the principle

The CM added that under the leadership of PM Modi, the pucca houses have been given to the poor and they have been freed from the



of Antyodaya in which work for welfare of the person standing last on the social ladder is being done.

scourge of defecating in the open. The poor are receiving free treatment and pure drinking water is

being given from the Har Ghar Nal campaign. Dhami said that the government is giving priority to the poor and making policies while keeping their interests in the centre.

The CM averred that the government is moving ahead on the path shown by saint Ravidas. He said that the State government has enacted an anti conversion law and to give equal rights to everyone the government has brought a bill on Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Lok Sabha MP Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said that the life of saint Ravidas gives an inspiration for the welfare of mankind. He said that the teachings of Ravidas are still relevant.

MLA Adesh Chauhan, former MLA Deshraj Karnwal and Jaipal of the temple committee also addressed the public.

MLA Madan Kaushik, Swami Yatishwaranand and others were present on the occasion.

BJP will welcome opposition MLAs who believe in Modi's vision for development: Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State president Mahendra Bhatt has said that the BJP will welcome the opposition MLAs who are impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for development and want to take the development policy forward. The BJP will field such MLAs in the election, he said while interacting with media persons at his official residence here on Saturday.

Targetting the Congress, the BJP State president said that the BJP is sure to win in the coming Lok Sabha elections. This is the reason why the sensible Congress leaders are reluctant to enter into the electoral contest. Referring to the notice sent by the Enforcement Directorate to former minister and Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat and his daughter in-law, Bhatt said that this is part of the usual procedure. The ED has followed this procedure irrespective of which party is in power at the Centre, he

said, while adding that Rawat should cooperate in the investigation.

Bhatt said that the nation and Uttarakhand are achieving unprecedented development under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami. This is the reason why there is an overwhelming support for the BJP. It is due to this that whoever stands against Modi's development policy will be rejected by the public. He further said that the public representatives of the opposition are also facing strong pressure from the public to contribute in efforts aimed at making Uttarakhand a model State. Talk of opposition MLAs considering joining the BJP are also a result of this pressure from the public. Bhatt clarified that any Congress or opposition MLA who wants to join the BJP to further strengthen the policy of development will be welcomed into the party. He as-

sured that the BJP will field them in the Vidhan Sabha elections. Reacting to factionalism in the Congress, he said that leaders and workers of the Congress which lacks ideology and issues, lack the courage to face the public. "The Congress indulges in power politics so it cannot accept defeat under any circumstances. After a decade of facing defeats in parliamentary, Vidhan Sabha, local body and Panchayat elections, it doesn't seem sensible now for its senior leaders to enter the electoral contest only to suffer defeat. The Congress party workers are not participating even in the party's agitations because like the general public, they too are becoming part of the developmental journey of the nation and the State. This is the reason why the general public and party workers are missing from agitations of the Congress. The senior party leaders vent the resulting frustration on the people of Uttarakhand," Bhatt said.

20-point programme implementation committee marks indicators for ranking blocks

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State level 20-point programme implementation committee has earmarked 110 indicators for ranking of the developmental blocks on different parameters in the State. The deputy chairman of the committee Jyoti Prasad Gairola chaired a meeting of all the heads of departments of the State on Saturday. In the meeting Gairola said that the ranks should be given to the development blocks by monitoring the twenty-point programmes at the block level.

He said that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of flag bearer sustainable development and aspirational development blocks have been added in the development block level framework.

In the meeting Gairola expressed concern over the D category received by all the districts in the

Pradhan Mantri Awas (urban) and Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana. Presentation of the newly created web application of the twenty-point programme developed in collaboration with the NIC state unit was made in the meeting.

The application will help in direct submission of the monthly progress reports by the nodal officers of various departments of the districts and the work of data authentication of each indicator will be done from the head of the department level. For this, separate IDs and passwords will be set for the officers of all the districts and the state headquarters. Through the dashboard, district economics and statistics officers will be able to monitor the progress of data entry and validation of the twenty-point programme.

The research officer, Twenty Point Programme JC Chandola said that based on the progress of the previous month, the lists of 33 indicators/schemes will also be fed online, in which filters of district, development block and Panchayat level have been applied. The app will help the officers and task force officers of the Twenty Point Programme implementation committee to get the list of schemes directly and conduct on-site verification.

Joint director TS Anna said that in the twenty-point frame, 11 schemes are to be added to the ranking as per the instructions of the government, the data obtained from which will be used in making the index of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ravidas worked for removing stigma of untouchability : Dhasmana

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The vice president of Uttarakhand Congress Suryakant Dhasmana has said that saint Ravidas was the most prominent social reformer of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. He was ad-

Ravidas was born in a family of poor blacksmiths and his guru was Saint Kabir. Dhasmana said that the Vani of Ravidas find a place in the sacred book of Sikhism. He said that it is unfortunate that the



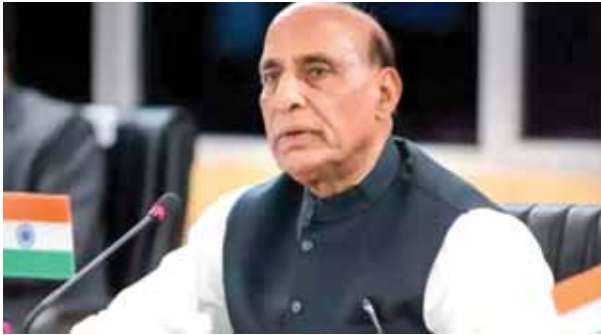
ressing a programme organised to commemorate Ravidas Jayanti at Shastrinagar, Kanwali here on Saturday. Dhasmana said that Ravidas conducted a strike on untouchability and superstitions at the time when the Indian society was under firm grip of these social ills. He said that

people leading the society are still engaged in divisive politics in the name of caste and religion in the 21st century. The president of Ambedkar Mahasangh Avdesh Katharia, general secretary of SC ST employees' federation Rajendra Raj and others were present on the occasion.

Defence exports have touched ₹16,000 crore, says Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Saturday the Government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focusing on long-term gains and not short-term outcomes to make India a developed nation by 2047. Making this assertion here at a defence summit organised by a private media organisation, he also said defence exports have touched ₹16,000 crore. By 2028-29, annual defence production is expected to touch ₹three lakh crore and defence exports ₹50,000 crore, Rajnath added. He said unlike in the past, the current Government has formulated and implemented policies which not only provide short-term gains for just five years. Rajnath enumerated the



reforms undertaken in the defence sector for long-term gains in the last few years, including creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff and setting up of the Department of Military Affairs which has enhanced jointness, synergy and smooth coordination among the three Services. Rajnath pointed out that the Government has been focusing

on the integration of the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force, which will ensure enhanced coordination among them in times of crisis. On the major steps taken in the field of defence manufacturing, the Defence Minister said the Defence Ministry notified five positive indigenisation lists of the Services, comprising over 500 items, and four other lists,

with over 4,600 items for DPSUs, to ensure that the soldiers use made in India weapons and platforms. He also referred to the decision to earmark 75 per cent of the capital acquisition budget for procurement from local companies. He said some people were of the view that indigenous weapons will not be world class, however, the government believes in the capabilities of the domestic industry and that they can consistently improve and deliver state-of-the-art products. Rajnath was of the view that through initiatives like setting up defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the Government is making sure that modern military hardware is not only manufactured in India, but also exported to friendly countries.

Indian warship assists merchant vessel after suspected drone attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

An Indian warship provided critical assistance to a merchant vessel after it caught fire following a suspected drone or missile attack in the Gulf of Aden, the latest in a series of such support missions in the region, navy officials said here on Saturday. In the past few weeks, Indian Navy ships have come to the rescue some merchant vessels hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden and drone attacks in the Red Sea. The Navy has already enhanced deployment of its frontline ships and surveillance aircraft for maritime security operations in view of the maritime environment in the critical sea lanes, including in the north and central Arabian Sea. In the latest incident, Palau-flagged vessel MV Islander came under attack on Thursday and a crew member of the ship



sustained injuries. An explosive ordnance disposal team of the Navy embarked the vessel and sanitised it for any residual risk following which the vessel was cleared for onward transit, they said. The fresh incident comes amid growing global concerns over attacks on various commercial vessels in the Red Sea by Houthi militants. A medical team of the Indian Navy also embarked MV Islander and provided medical

assistance to the injured crew member, they said. In a swift response to a distress call from the vessel, the Indian warship arrived in the vicinity of the cargo ship within a few hours to provide critical support, an official said. "Relentless efforts by Indian Naval ships reaffirms the Indian Navy's steadfast commitment towards safety and security of merchant shipping and seafarers," Indian Navy spokesperson Commander

Vivek Madhwal said. In the last few weeks, the Indian Navy extended assistance to a number of merchant vessels in the Western Indian Ocean following attacks on them. The Indian Navy, earlier this month, foiled a piracy attempt on an Iranian-flagged fishing vessel with a crew of 11 Iranian and eight Pakistani nationals along the east coast of Somalia. In January, an Indian warship rescued 19 Pakistani crew members of an Iranian-flagged fishing vessel after it was attacked by pirates in the east coast of Somalia. The Navy on January 5 thwarted an attempted hijacking of Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk in the North Arabian Sea and rescued all its crew members. Liberian-flagged vessel MV Chem Pluto, with 21 Indian crew members, was the target of a drone attack off India's west coast on December 23.

Quad reflects growth of multipolar global order: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

As China is asserting itself in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Saturday the Quad is a statement that others cannot have a "veto" on choices of like-minded nations and the coalition is here to stay, grow and contribute to global prosperity. In an address at a think-tank forum, Jaishankar described the coalition of India, the US, Japan and Australia as an "overhead light" that is a "creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded" enterprise. The Quad has largely been focusing on bolstering cooperation to ensure a free and an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific in the face of Chinese belligerence. The external affairs minister said the Quad reflects the growth of a multipolar global order and its central approach is collaborative, and not uni-



lateral. "All four governments have behaved differently from how they normally do. The Quad is an overhead light -- creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded enterprise. These are not adjectives we normally associate with the bureaucracy," he said explaining the principles that the grouping stands for. Jaishankar also said that the Quad has five messages, "One -- it reflects the growth of a multipolar order; two -- it is post-alliance and post-Cold War thinking; three -- it is against spheres of influence;

four -- it expresses the democratising of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral approach and five -- it is a statement that in this day and age, others cannot have a veto on our choices," he said. He noted that the Quad is facilitated by the emergence of the Indo Pacific, adding it is propelled by a change in the global order that requires "more" and "not less collaboration". The external affairs minister asserted that the Quad "is here to stay, the quad is here to grow and the quad is here to contribute," calling for making it more contemporary, relevant

and more impactful. Joining through virtual mode, Australia Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Quad stands for a region that is free from intimidation and coercion, where competition is managed responsibly and disputes are settled in accordance with international law. Japanese foreign minister Yoko Kamikawa, in a brief video message, said the world is facing deep divisions and it is necessary to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. "For this reason, Japan with its allies and like-minded countries is working to further develop a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law," she said. "Quad is one of the most important initiatives to this end, has steadily implemented initiatives in maritime critical and emerging technologies, cyber and counter-terrorism, initiatives must continue to move forward," she added. US deputy secretary of state

Kurt Campbell said the Indo-Pacific remains the world's most dynamic and rapidly evolving region and that the strength of the Quad is its ability to harness the capabilities and resources of the four nations together to deliver concrete outcomes that benefit all. Campbell spoke virtually on behalf of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "I want to emphasise the defining feature of our partnership -- the Quad stands for an affirmative vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific in which we collectively build the capacity of our allies and partners," he said. "Quad not about forcing the region to choose between strategic competitors, it is about preserving and creating options so that communities, institutions and countries can make decisions to benefit their people," he said. In his remarks, Jaishankar also asserted that there should be no doubt about ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) centrality in the Indo-Pacific.

Modi to launch ₹52,250 crore health, road projects in Gujarat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Gujarat on February 24 and 25 and will launch a slew of development projects worth over Rs 52,250 crore related to health, road, rail, energy and tourism across the country. In a significant step towards strengthening tertiary healthcare in the country, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said, Modi will inaugurate five All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rajkot (Gujarat), Bathinda (Punjab), Raebareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Kalyani (West Bengal) and Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh). He will inaugurate these facilities at a public function in Rajkot. At a function in Dwarka, the prime minister will inaugurate the 'Sudarshan Setu' connecting the Okha mainland and the Beyt Dwarka island built at a cost of around Rs 980 crore. The 2.32 km-long cable-

stayed bridge is the longest of its kind in the country, the PMO said in a statement. Sudarshan Setu boasts a unique design, featuring a footpath adorned with verses from the Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on both sides, it said. It also has solar panels installed on the upper portions of the footpath, generating one megawatt of electricity, the statement said. Before the construction of the bridge, pilgrims had to rely on boat transport to reach Beyt Dwarka. Among other projects, Modi will inaugurate a pipeline project at Vadinar involving the replacement of existing offshore lines, abandoning the existing pipeline end manifold (PLEM), and relocating the entire system to a nearby new location. During the visit to his home state, Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 200 healthcare infrastructure projects worth over Rs 11,500 crore across 23 states and Union territories.

He will inaugurate a medical college of JIPMER at Karaikal, Puducherry, and a 300-bed satellite centre of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical and Educational Research (PGIMER) in Sangrur, Punjab, among many other health projects spread across the country, the statement said. The 250-bed National Institute of Naturopathy named 'Nisarg Gram' in Pune will also be inaugurated. In a step to boost the production of renewable energy in the region, the prime minister will lay the foundation stone of various renewable energy projects, including the 300 MW Bhuj-II solar power project, grid-connected 600 MW solar PV power project, Khavda solar power project and the 200 MW Dayapur-II wind energy project among others. He will lay the foundation stone of the new Mundra-Panipat pipeline project worth over Rs 9,000 crore as well, according to the statement.

Pilot project of world largest grain storage plan launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the pilot project of what is poised to become the 'world's largest grain storage plan' over the next five years ensuring creation of storage facilities across the country capable of accommodating more than 700 lakh metric tonnes of food grains. The aim is to mitigate post-harvest losses and ensure a reliable supply of grains, even during periods of scarcity. By fortifying the nation's food storage infrastructure, India is better equipped to address the nutritional needs of its growing population, said the Prime Minister after inaugurating the pilot projects under the mega storage plan being carried out in 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in as many States. To build this mega infrastructure, over Rs 1.25 lakh crore will be spent in the coming years, Modi said, who also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple key initiatives for the Cooperative sector here at an event. The project is being executed with a collaborative effort supported by NABARD and spearheaded by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), an autonomous body providing financial and technical support to cooperative institutions of farmers and other weaker sections across the country. The Prime Minister said that the storage facilities at various locations across the country would enable farmers to store their produce and sell it at the right time according to their own needs while also helping to avail loans from banks. Laying the foundation stone for an additional 500 PACS across the country for the construction of godowns and other agricultural infrastructure, he said the initiative aims to seamlessly integrate PACS godowns



with the food grain supply chain, fortifying food security and fostering economic development in the country. On the occasion, Modi also inaugurated the project for computerization in 18,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across the country aimed to empower the small and marginal farmers. Giving the example of Farmers Producers Organisation (FPOs), the Prime Minister noted the growing entrepreneurship among the small farmers in villages. He said due to having a separate Ministry, 8000 FPOs out of a target of 10,000 FPOs are already functional in the country. The benefits of cooperatives are now reaching fishermen and pushpals also. More than 25,000 cooperative units are functional in the fishery sector. The Prime Minister reiterated the government's goal of establishing 200,000 cooperative societies in the coming years. He said that PACS are functioning as Jan Aushadhi Kendras while thousands of PM Kisan Samruddhi Kendras are also being operated. He also mentioned cooperative committees operating in the areas of petrol, diesel, and LPG cylinders while PACS also plays the role of water committees in several villages. This, the Prime Minister said, has increased the productivity of loan committees and also created new sources of income.

Snail borne pathogen threat to life of children: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Five-year-old Rahul's (name changed) symptoms with complaints of persistent headache, fever, and irritability initially seemed innocuous, akin to common childhood ailments. However, upon examination, doctors diagnosed him with a life-threatening eosinophilic meningoenzephalitis (EM), a snail-borne pathogen. A study spanning 14 years by doctors from Kochi-based Amrita Hospital doctors reveals that more than half of the examined children with EM reporting from South India had a history of direct contact with snails. The study findings underscore the urgency for healthcare professionals, parents, and policymakers to

address this emerging threat. "We are now picking up a higher number of EM among children in this region especially since the last decade. Most of these children were initially treated as bacterial, viral, or tuberculous meningitis sometimes for several weeks. A high index of clinical suspicion with appropriate investigations will be the key for early identification, especially in endemic areas," said Prof KP Vinayan, Head of the Department of Paediatric Neurology at Amrita Hospital. "These infections, potentially serious and capable of causing death or permanent brain and nerve damage, are more prevalent among children playing in dirt and soil in snail-infested areas. Ensuring cleanliness and hygiene in residential premises and properly cleaning veg-



etables consumed raw, such as in salads, are essential preventive measures," said Dr Vinayan hospital in the paper published in the journal Pediatric Neurology. According to the health experts, humans are incidental hosts of the worms, getting infected through direct consumption or contaminated

water and vegetables. Children become vulnerable to this infection by coming into direct contact with snails or by consuming contaminated food or playing with toys that carry infective larvae. The larvae can then travel from the gut to the brain, causing EM. Another route of transmission is by consuming salads containing uncleaned raw vegetables and by eating the raw flesh of monitor lizards, crabs, frogs, and shrimps as part of socio-cultural practices or particular culinary habits, said the experts

from the hospital. "In a paradigm shift, our study reveals that EM is not as rare as previously thought, particularly in Kerala during post-monsoon months. The increase aligns with the surge in giant African Snail (Achatina fulica) population over the past 1-2 decades, highlighting the heightened risk for children living in regions abundant with these snails," added Dr Vaishakh Anand, Department of Paediatric Neurology, Amrita Hospital. Further, the study found that the affected children, with a median age of 3.9 years (ranging from 0.8 to 17 years), commonly showed symptoms such as fever, headache, irritability, squint, and early papilledema. These symptoms appeared 3 to 42 days before admission. Peripheral eosinophilia, rang-

ing from 9 per cent to 41 per cent, was observed. "These infections, potentially serious and capable of causing death or permanent brain and nerve damage, are more prevalent among children playing in dirt and soil in snail-infested areas. Ensuring cleanliness and hygiene in residential premises and properly cleaning vegetables consumed raw, such as in salads, are essential preventive measures," Dr Vinayan added. All children recovered without neurological deficits, following a standard treatment regimen of albendazole and oral steroids. The follow-up period ranged from one month to five years, with no reported recurrences, showing that timely identification and proper management might result in really good outcomes.

36 per cent Rajya Sabha candidates declare criminal cases against themselves: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Almost 36 per cent of Rajya Sabha candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves while the average assets of candidates analysed stood at ₹127.81 crore. According to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) latest report, the analysis found that 36 per cent of the scrutinised candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves. Additionally, 17 per cent of these individuals face serious criminal charges with one candidate having cases related to attempted murder. According to the analysis, eight (27 per cent) out of 30 BJP candidates, six (67 per cent) out of nine Congress candidates, one (25 per cent) out of four TMC candidates, two (67 per cent) out of three SP candidates, one (33 per cent) out of three YSRCP candidates, one (50 per cent)



out of two RJD nominees, one (50 per cent) out of two BJD candidates, and one (100 per cent) BRS candidate have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits. Moreover, the analysis delved into the financial backgrounds of the candidates. Approximately 21 per cent of the candidates are billion-

aires, boasting of assets exceeding Rs 100 crore. The average assets of Rajya Sabha candidates stand at Rs 127.81 crore. Congress nominee from Himachal Pradesh Abhishek Manu Singhvi with total assets worth Rs 1,872 crore, Samajwadi Party nominee from Uttar Pradesh Jaya Amitabh Bachchan with

assets worth Rs 1,578 crore and JD(S) nominee from Karnataka Kupendra Reddy with assets amounting to Rs 871 crore are among the top three wealthiest candidates, according to the analysis. Among the poorest candidates are BJP's Madhya Pradesh candidate Balyogi Umesh Nath with assets worth over Rs 47 lakh, BJP's West Bengal candidate Samik Bhattacharya with assets worth Rs 1 crore and BJP's Uttar Pradesh candidate Sangita with assets worth Rs 1 crore. While 17 per cent of the candidates have educational qualifications ranging from 5th pass to 12th pass, a significant 79 per cent hold graduate or higher degrees. A majority (76 per cent) of the candidates fall in the 51-70 age group with a smaller proportion (16 per cent) in the 31-50 age group. Only 19 per cent of the candidates are women, according to the analysis.

Cash rewards for Asian Games medallists from Armed forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved a financial incentive for the Armed Forces personnel who bagged medals in the 19th Asian Games and 4th Asian Para Games held in Hangzhou, China in September-October 2023, Defence Ministry said here on Saturday. Giving details, officials said for both Asian Games as well as Asian Para Games, Gold medal winners will receive a cash reward of ₹25 lakh each, Silver medal winners ₹15 lakh each and Bronze medal winners Rs 10 lakh each. Several Services athletes had made the nation proud in the Games, with the defence minister felicitating them on their return and commending them



for their outstanding performance. He had also approved cash rewards to 45 medal winners, including seven Para athletes. These 45 athletes won 09 Gold, 18 Silver and 17 Bronze medals in the Asian Games and 01 Gold, 04 Silver and 02 Bronze medals in Asian Para Games. This financial incentive, announced by the Ministry of Defence for the Armed Forces personnel for the first time, will further motivate these athletes to exhibit an even better performance at qualifying events of the Paris Olympics Games 2024 for which they are currently preparing.

World leaders stand in solidarity with Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Western leaders descended on Kyiv on Saturday to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen travelled overnight to Kyiv by train along with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

They arrived shortly after a Russian drone attack struck a residential building in the southern city of Odesa, killing at least one person.

Three women also sustained severe burns in the attack Friday evening on a residential building, regional Governor Oleh Kiper said on his social media account. Rescue services are still combing rubble looking for survivors. The foreign leaders are

TWO YEARS SINCE RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION

in Ukraine to express solidarity as Ukrainian forces run low on ammunition and weaponry and Western aid hangs in the balance.

“More than ever we stand firmly by Ukraine. Financially, economically, militarily, morally. Until the country is finally free,” von der Leyen said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, after she arrived in Kyiv.

But, at the front line in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian soldiers pleaded for ammunition.

“When the enemy comes in, a lot of our guys die. ... We are sitting here with nothing, said Volodymyr, 27, a senior officer in an artillery battery.

“In order to protect our infantry ... we need a high number of shells, which we do not have now,” said Oleksandr, 45, commander of artillery unit.

The war has also come to Russia. Drones hit a steel plant in the Lipetsk region in southern Russia Saturday, causing a large fire, regional governor Igor Artamonov said, adding there are no casualties. Independent Russian media said the Novolipetsk Metallurgical Plant is the largest steel plant in Russia. Videos shared on Russian social media showed several fires burning at the plant, and an explosion could be heard.

Independent Russian news outlet Mediazona said Saturday that around 75,000 Russian men died in 2022 and 2023 fighting in the war.

Working with journalists from other outlets, it said the rate of Russia's losses in Ukraine is not slowing and that Moscow is losing around 120 men a day. Based on a statistical analysis of the recorded deaths of soldiers

compared with a Russian inheritance database, the journalists said around 83,000 soldiers are likely to have died by Saturday, the second anniversary of the full scale invasion.

According to Mediazona's analysis, regular Russian troops sustained the heaviest losses in the first months of the war.

But, after prisoners were offered their freedom in exchange for fighting and after President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial mobilization, those groups started to sustain more casualties, particularly in the early months of 2023.

A somber mood hangs over Ukraine as the war against Russia enters its third year and Kyiv's troops face mounting challenges on the front line amid dwindling ammunition supplies and personnel challenges. Its troops recently withdrew from the strategic eastern

city of Avdiivka, handing Moscow one of its biggest victories.

Earlier this month, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired top military commander Valerii Zaluzhnyi, replacing him with Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyy, marking the most significant shakeup of top brass since the full-scale invasion.

Russia still controls roughly a quarter of the country after Ukraine failed to make any major breakthroughs with its summertime counteroffensive. Meanwhile, millions of Ukrainians continue to live in precarious circumstances in the crossfire of battles, and many others face constant struggles under Russian occupation. Most are waiting for a Ukrainian liberation that hasn't come.

Olena Zelenska, wife of President Volodymyr

Zelenskyy, said Saturday that more than 2 million Ukrainian children have left the country since the war began and that at least 528 have been killed.

“The war started by Russia deliberately targets children,” she said.

In the US Congress, Republicans have stalled \$60 billion in military aid for Kyiv, desperately needed in the short term. The EU recently approved a 50 billion-euro (about USD 54 billion) aid package for Ukraine meant to support Ukraine's economy, despite resistance from Hungary.

US President Joe Biden tied the loss of the defensive stronghold of Avdiivka in the Donetsk region after months of grueling battles to the stalled US aid. Fears have since spiked that Ukrainian forces will face similar difficulties across other parts of the 1000-kilometer (620-mile) front line as they come under mounting pressure from Russian assaults.

Putin mocking Christianity, charges Yulia

AP ■ MOSCOW

The widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny accused President Vladimir Putin of mocking Christianity by trying to force his mother to agree to a secret funeral after his death in a penal colony.

Yulia Navalnaya said in a video released Saturday that Navalny's mother, who wants her son's body returned to her, is being “literally tortured” by authorities who had threatened to bury Navalny in the Arctic prison. They suggested to his mother that she does not have much time to make a decision because the body is decomposing, Navalnaya said. “Give us the body of my husband,” Navalnaya said. “You tortured him alive, and now you keep torturing him dead. You mock the remains of the dead.”

Navalny, 47, Russia's most well-known opposition politician, unexpectedly died on February 16 in the penal colony, prompting hundreds of Russians across the country to stream to impromptu memorials with flowers and candles.

Authorities have detained scores of people as they seek to suppress any major outpouring of sympathy for Putin's fiercest foe before the presidential election he is almost certain to win. Russians on social media say officials do not want to return Navalny's body to his family because they fear a public show of support for him.

Navalnaya accused Putin, an Orthodox Christian, of killing Navalny.

“No true Christian could ever do what Putin is now doing with the body of Alexei,” she said, asking, “What will you do with his corpse? How low will you sink to mock the man



you murdered?”

Putin is often pictured at church, dunking himself in ice water to celebrate the Epiphany and visiting holy sites in Russia. He has promoted what he has called “traditional values” without which, he once said, “society degenerates.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected allegations that Putin was involved in Navalny's death, calling them “absolutely unfounded, insolent accusations about the head of the Russian state.”

Musician Nadya Tolokonnikova, who became widely known after spending nearly two years in prison for taking part in a 2012 protest with her band Pussy Riot inside Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, released a video in which she also accused Putin of hypocrisy.

“We were imprisoned for allegedly trampling on traditional values. But no one tramples on traditional Russian values more than you, Putin, your officials and your priests who pray for all the murder that you do, year after year, day after day,” Tolokonnikova, who lives abroad, said. “Putin, have a conscience, give his mother the body of her son.”

WWII-era bomb safely detonated

AP ■ LONDON

A World War II-era bomb whose discovery prompted one of the largest peacetime evacuations in British history has been detonated at sea, the Ministry of Defense said on Saturday.

The 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) explosive was discovered Tuesday in the backyard of a home in Plymouth, a port city on the southwestern coast of Britain.

More than 10,000 residents were evacuated to ensure their safety as a military convoy transported the unexploded bomb through a densely populated residential area to a ferry slipway, from which it was taken out to sea.

“I think it is fair to say that the last few days will go down in history for Plymouth,” said Tudor Evans, the leader of Plymouth City Council.

Indian mission raises Jaahnavi case with Seattle officials

Family shocked and disappointed over decision of authorities

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

India's consulate in Seattle has raised with authorities the case of Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula after the prosecution attorney said an overspeeding Seattle police officer who struck and killed her while responding to a drug overdose call will not face any criminal charges citing lack of “sufficient” evidence.

Kandula, 23, from Andhra Pradesh, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle on January 23 last year. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 km/h) 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.

On Wednesday, the King County Prosecutor's Office said they would not move forward with criminal charges against Dave due to a lack of evidence to prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt.

India's consulate in Seattle also said it was monitoring the progress in the case and will extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Kandula and her family.

“On the recently released investigation report of the King County Prosecution Attorney on the unfortunate death of Jaahnavi Kandula, the Consulate has been in regular touch with the designated family representatives and will continue to extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Jaahnavi and her family,” the mission said in a post on X.

“We have also raised the matter strongly with local authorities, including Seattle Police for appropriate redress. The case has now been referred to the Seattle City Attorney's office for review,” the post said on Friday.



It also said the mission was waiting for the completion of Seattle Police's administrative investigation and will continue monitoring the progress in the case.

Kandula's family in a statement following the announcement said: “We are shocked and disappointed that the King County Prosecutor's office has failed to criminally charge the Seattle police officer whose reckless behaviour killed Jaahnavi Kandula.”

“We are pursuing our legal rights to obtain justice for Jaahnavi even though the City of Seattle has failed to do so,” the statement added.

E-chips mandatory for Everest climbers

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal will soon be making it mandatory for all climbers headed to Mount Everest to carry an electronic chip that would be helpful in rescue in case of any emergency at the world's highest peak.

The government will soon be formulating a rule for making such a chip mandatory starting from Spring this year when the climbing season starts for Mt. Everest with the opening of the narrow window available to climb extremely high altitudes.

Thousands of climbers from all over the world, including India and Nepal, are attracted to the 8,849 metres (29,032 feet) high Mt Everest, a.k.a. Sagarmatha in Nepali. While scores of them do reach the summit, some either lose their lives or are seriously injured during the ascent or descent.

Since 1953, 300 persons have lost their lives, according to Nepal government data. In the 2023 Spring season, till May 22, Nepali officials said, as many as 12 climbers, including four Nepalese, one Indian, and one Chinese, died during their respective expeditions to Mt Everest.

The Everest base camp is situated at an altitude of 18,000 feet. Any search and rescue operation from the base camp onwards to the Summit becomes a tedious job because of the snow storms, avalanches, and other extreme weather events.

“All the climbers to Everest would be provided the electronic chip by the government after paying a certain amount. It will be fitted in the climber's jacket,” Rakesh Gurung, Director at the Department of Tourism told PTI.

US senator calls on Pak authorities to probe allegations of poll fraud

PTI ■ WASHINGTON / ISLAM-ABAD

A US Senator has urged the Pakistani authorities to fully investigate the claims of vote rigging in the country's elections, emphasising that without a credible investigation, a new government will struggle to bring the Pakistani people together.

Taking to X on Friday, Senator Chris Van Hollen shared photos of a letter he wrote to Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Masood Khan on February 21 in which he praised the millions of Pakistanis who voted on February 8 in the country's elections.

The significant turnout of Pakistani people from around the country and every walk of life speaks to the fundamental role elections play in democracies around the world, he said.

“Unfortunately, these elections were marred by political violence, allegations of unfair restrictions on political expression, and accusations of vote rigging,” the Democrat Senator wrote.

The junior senator from Maryland, who was incidentally born in Karachi, further said,

“The State Department agreed with international and local election observers' assessment that ‘these elections included undue restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.’”

The letter also said Pakistani authorities shut down mobile telecommunications ostensibly as a security measure and the allegations made by a senior administrative official of Punjab province that he participated in fraud “converting losers into winners” and changing the results for 13 national parliament seats. Van Hollen urged Pakistan to “fully investigate the allegations of fraud and electoral interference.” “Without a credible investigation, a new government will struggle to bring the Pakistani people together,” he said.

Meanwhile, a high-level inquiry committee constituted by Pakistan's top electoral body on Friday said the explosive allegations of election rigging levelled by the former senior bureaucrat were “false and based on lies”.

The report of the probe committee came a day after Rawalpindi's former

Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha on Thursday took a U-turn and withdrew his allegations, saying he had made the rigging charges at the behest of former prime minister Imran Khan's party which offered him a “lucrative position”.

Khan's Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party on Friday approached the Supreme Court challenging the outcome of the elections alleging widespread rigging.

Khan has already declared the entire process as the ‘Mother of All Rigging’ and has been insisting that his party's mandate was stolen because of the rigging.

The party has claimed that it won 180 seats in the National Assembly by way of independent candidates backed by the party, however, the rigging ensured that the number was reduced to 92 seats only, thus robbing its chance of coming back to power.

The petition comes two days after the top court disposed of a petition seeking to annul the elections and imposed a fine on a petitioner, a former Army officer, for failing to appear in court after filing the petition.

Iran-Pak gas pipeline gets govt approval

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government has finally approved the commencement of the much-delayed construction work on its segment of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline which will help address the increasing energy needs of the cash-strapped country.

The approval, which came after a delay of several years, for the first phase of the 80-km segment inside Pakistan was given by the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) of the interim government just days before the new government takes office after the February 8 elections.

“The Pakistan government has approved the start of construction work on its segment of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline,” said an official statement.

To escape conscription, many in Myanmar flee to Thailand

AP ■ BANGKOK

Thwel, a 25-year-old schoolteacher, saw very few options left to her after Myanmar's military announced it is implementing conscription to fill its ranks.

“As a person living in this country, I only have two options: to go abroad illegally or die here,” Thwel told The Associated Press by phone while travelling to a border area to try crossing into Thailand with a small group of like-minded people.

Some observers believe a mass exodus of young talent is taking place and could become a social problem, with their exit heightening the instability that followed the military takeover that now amounts to a civil war.

Thwel, whose home in Myanmar's southern Mon state is the scene of occasional com-

bat between the army and resistance forces, spoke on condition she be called by only one name as protection from the military authorities. Like many professionals, she joined the Civil Disobedience Movement that was formed to oppose military rule after the army's 2021 seizure of power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Since then, the army's manpower has been stretched thin by increasing pressure from surprisingly durable pro-democracy resistance forces and ethnic minority armed organisations.

Over the past four months, opposition groups scored significant victories and seized strategically important territory in northern Shan state where Myanmar borders China, and in Rakhine state in the west.

On February 10, Senior

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, chair of Myanmar's ruling military council, ordered the 2010 conscription law be activated to replenish the ranks that have been depleted by the struggle to quash a nationwide pro-democracy insurgency. All healthy men ages 18-35 and women 18-27 are required to register for two years of military service.

Evading conscription is punishable by three to five years in prison and a fine.

Of Myanmar's 56 million people, about 14 million — 6.3 million men and 7.7 million women — are eligible for military service, according to Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson for the military government. The government will draft 60,000 people a year, with an initial batch of 5,000 to be called up soon after the traditional Thingyan New Year



celebration in mid-April, he said.

After an uproar over the initial announcement, Zaw Min Tun said there is no plan to call women into military service yet — meaning schoolteacher Thwel might actually be in the clear for the time being.

But many people are actively looking for ways to escape.

The street in front of Thailand's embassy in Yangon has been filled with visa applicants queued up to get numbered appointment tickets. Overwhelmed, the embassy announced it would accept

only 400 visa appointments per day, and they must be made online. According to the Thai Foreign Ministry, some 7,000 Myanmar nationals have applied for visas, Thailand's Bangkok Post newspaper reported Thursday.

Each day at the state passport office in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, 4,000-5000 people were lining up to get one of the 200-250 daily appointment tickets. Two women died and one was injured after they fell into a ditch in a pre-dawn rush to get a coveted early place in line.

A 32-year-old news translator from Yangon said he made a snap decision to leave the country after the conscription announcement, and flew to Thailand a few days later. Like almost all persons willing to discuss their plans, he spoke on condition of anonymity for

fear of the legal consequences.

He said he was very concerned because serving in the military is like entering a labyrinth with no way back out, giving the example of his uncle, who joined the army for a five-year enlistment but was not allowed to leave for more than 40 years.

A 26-year-old journalist who has been working covertly in Mandalay, said the conscription law made his situation untenable. He also spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of the legal consequences; more than 150 journalists were arrested after the army sized power, and more than one-third remain locked up, according to the Paris-based press freedom group Reporters Without Borders.

“I tried my best to stay inside the country in the past few years while other journal-

ists were fleeing abroad or to areas controlled by ethnic minority armed groups,” he said. “But, this time, we can't hide anywhere. We can't stay out of sight. There is no choice.”

He is also planning to flee to Thailand.

The Institute for Strategy and Policy, an independent think tank, said conscription could trigger a mass exodus, more widespread violations of human rights and increase corruption and extortion at all levels. It anticipates that young people close to areas where armed conflict is active could join the ethnic minority armed forces and pro-democracy resistance groups.

There were around 160,000 soldiers before the army takeover, the institute said, and there are now fewer than 100,000 due to casualties, desertions and defection.

Sebi using AI for probe: Official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi is using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for investigations, its Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney said on Saturday and emphasised that entities should keep track of technological developments. Against the backdrop of instances of manipulations in the stock market, he said the message is that abiding with the law will be more beneficial and violations will cause problems. In response to a question by



PTI on whether Sebi is using AI, Varshney said, "we are using AI for investigations... And also using for a lot of things".

He was speaking on the sidelines of the 13th international convention of the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) in the national capital. As long as the market is transparent and no manipulation is happening, that is fine with the regulator, he noted. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has been taking action against violators as well as measures to enhance transparency and curb misdoings.

Road safety body calls for making seat belts must in passenger buses, heavy vehicles

PTI ■ JAMMU

New Delhi, Feb 24 (PTI) International Road Federation (IRF) -- a global road safety body -- has urged the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to make the use of seat belts mandatory in all heavy vehicles, including passenger buses and school buses, to minimise casualties and injuries in road accidents. IRF President Emeritus K K Kapila in a letter to MoRTH said there is an urgent need to provide seats belts in buses, which need to be made mandatory. "There have been heart-wrenching passenger bus accidents resulting in loss of innocent lives. Many of them



would have been saved, had they been wearing seat belts," he said. Kapila pointed out that according to the National

Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2021 data, only 14 individuals lost their lives in bus accidents in the USA. Similarly, based on the analysis of the accident propensity of Chinese bus drivers in 2022, China reported 215 fatalities. He pointed out that both developing and developed countries have achieved remarkable outcomes due to stringent safety standards for public transport like buses. "The contrasting and alarming data in India suggests a lacuna in mandating safety standards in buses, jeopardising the lives of school children, the poor, and the low income strata of the society," Kapila added.



Brazil eyes deeper economic ties with India

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Ambassador of Brazil to India, Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega on Saturday said energy, defence and agro-processing are the three key pillars for strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries. Speaking at a session on 'India-Brazil Fostering Trade Partnership - Focus West Bengal' organised by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce here, the diplomat emphasised on business-to-business collaborations in iron and steel, milk production, leather, biofuels, and aquaculture. He also expressed optimism about the evolving defence sector alliance between the two countries. Ambassador Nóbrega said the first Brazil-India Defence Dialogue is expected to begin next week, focusing on strategic partnerships and technological cooperation. The interactive session



explored avenues to deepen economic ties and leverage West Bengal's potential in various sectors. The diplomat expressed interest in exploring partnerships and technological exchange in food processing and aquaculture sectors, highlighting West Bengal's potential in these areas. The two countries have been strategic partners since 2006. In 2022, the bilateral trade between the two countries expanded by 32 per cent to USD 15.2 billion.

Sitharaman inaugurates new campus of BITS Pilani

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday inaugurated the fifth campus of the Birla group-run engineering institute BITS Pilani, with which the national institute of eminence also diversifies into law, management and design. Located in the nearby Kalayan area of the megapolis, the Rs

1,600-crore campus spread across 60 acres will accommodate 5,000 students at full capacity, said Kumar Mangalam Birla, the group chairman and the chancellor of the institute. Began in 1964 in Pilani, the native village of the Birlas in the Marwar region of Rajasthan, the institute, which was one of the six private institutes elevated as



an institute of eminence and houses 80,000 students across its five campuses in Pilani, Goa, Hyderabad, Dubai and Kalyan. The new campus moves away from its core focus of engineering to law, management and design. The design school was started just last week while law and management schools were functional from last year

from the temporary campus in Powai. Declaring the new campus open, Sitharaman said over the years, the institute has produced as many as 7,300 Fortune 500 CEOs, 300 academics of global repute and 600 civil servants. It has also produced 6,200 startups while its incubation centre has spawned 170 startups of which 30 have become unicorns.

Under employment is problem for India, says Panagariya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Pitching for labour reforms, the chairman of the 16th Finance Commission and former NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya on Saturday said that "unemployment," is not a problem for India but "under-employment" is. Speaking at a session 'The Economic Whisper: how to fuel growth with jobs' at the concluding day of the two-day ABP Network's 'Ideas of India Summit 3.0' here, he also sounded optimistic that the jobs problem in the country will be solved over the next 10 years. "Unemployment is really not India's problem in my view. Our problem is underemployment, so productivity is low. So the job that can be done by one person often gets done by two people or maybe three people. And that is where I think, the real challenge of jobs is creating well-paid high-productivity jobs," he said. Stating that in the economy's jargon, India is a labour-abundant and capital-scarce country, he said, "What we have done is to put much of the capital in very selective sectors which are in any case very capital intensive". "We got the situation where much of the capital is working with very few workers. And then you have a host of workers in agriculture in micro and small enterprises where the capital is hardly present. So then you got a lot of workers working with very little capital. And when that is the case, it translates into low productivity," Panagariya said. The country still needs to fix labour and trade laws, he said, adding that, "compared to other countries, protection level is higher that needs to come down." "In India, building consensus is a part of the democratic reform process, which makes passing laws a slower process," he said.



"During (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee's Prime Ministership labour laws were tabled. Subsequently, no government showed the courage. With the Modi Government, the laws have been passed. It is now the states that have to write the rules and regulations to implement the laws," he stated. Talking about reforms, he said, "Implementation of labour laws, privatization of public sector enterprises and banks are some of the important reforms that need to be brought about." "Nevertheless, on the whole, we are in a fantastic sweet spot. These are problems. I think we'll get sorted out over the next 10 years. I am very optimistic that the jobs problem will be solved as well," Panagariya said. He said that since 1991 economic reforms "we have had upside down but the trend has been towards liberalization. If we take away COVID years, we have grown about 8.8 per cent in real dollars for the past 20 years, which we could not imagine in the 1980s." "The conditions are perfectly there for India to take the world by storm. India is now the only economy, which is growing strongly," he added. On the country's demographic dividend, Panagariya said, "The population is large and the population is young. The size of the population will help us. We don't have that kind of dependency ratio as China has."

Brokers need to be cautious against manipulations in stock market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney on Saturday cautioned against manipulations in the capital market and urged brokers to keep an eye and prevent such instances. Clamping down on misdoings, the markets watchdog has been taking action against various entities for manipulations, including front running activities. Emphasising the importance of investor trust, Varshney said that if there is no trust of investors, "everything will fail". Manipulations are going on and Sebi cannot intervene in all of them. Some brokers are involved and the broker community should keep an eye as "bad elements can come in the system", he said. He was speaking at the 13th international convention of the Association of National Exchanges Members of India (ANMI) in the national Capital.

Rumours of my firing inaccurate: Byju Raveendran to staff

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A troubled edtech firm Byju's voted for a leadership change, Byju Raveendran has penned a note to employees saying he continues to remain CEO and the management remains unchanged, as he dubbed Friday's EGM as a "farce". The note to employees assumes significance as it comes after Byju's shareholders (prominent investors) on Friday voted for removing Founder-CEO Raveendran and his family from the board over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, but the company dug in its heels, calling the voting done in absence of founders as invalid and ineffective. In a note to employees on Saturday, Raveendran alleged that a lot of essential rules were "violated" at Friday's Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). "This means that whatever was decided in that meeting does not count, because it didn't stick to the established



rules... It is crucial for everyone to understand the specific issues that make this EGM a farce," he wrote. PTI has seen a copy of the letter. Raveendran said he firmly believes that the truth will inevitably prevail, despite the

"relentless trial by the media". "I am writing this letter to you as the CEO of our company. Contrary to what you may have read in the media, I continue to remain CEO, the management remains unchanged, and the

board remains the same," he said, adding it is "business as usual" at BYJU'S. "To reemphasise, the rumours of my firing have been greatly exaggerated and highly inaccurate," Raveendran said. Outlining what he claimed were "key discrepancies" at the EGM, he said the meeting was convened without following the proper procedure set out by the law and the company's Articles of Association. "To pass any resolution the meeting needs to have a proper quorum, a set of people who are mandatory. Our articles are clear on the quorum requiring the presence of at least one founder director. Consequently, any resolutions taken at the meeting are not enforceable as per law," he said. He also stated, "The claims made by a small group of select minority shareholders that they have unanimously passed the resolution in the EGM is completely wrong. Only 35 out of 170 shareholders (representing around 45 per cent of

shareholding) voted in favour of the resolution. That in itself shows the very limited support that this irrelevant meeting received." BYJU'S Founder CEO Raveendran Byju, his wife and brother -- the only three members on the company board as of now -- stayed away from the EGM called by a group of six investors, who collectively hold more than 32 per cent in Think & Learn (T&L), the firm that operates online tuition platform Byju's. At the end, more than 60 per cent of the shareholders voted in favour of all the seven resolutions, which included removing the current management, reconfiguration of the board and a third party forensic investigation into acquisitions by the company, sources close to the investors said. However, sources close to Byju's put the number at 47 per cent on Friday. Prosus -- one of the six investors who had called the EGM -- in a statement on Friday said, "shareholders unanimously passed all resolutions put forward for vote".

Kerala leads India healthcare talent migration: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kerala leads India's healthcare talent migration to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, especially to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which witnessed a 3.3-fold increase in demand in 2023, said a report. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh emerged as the leading states contributing to the migration of healthcare workers, including nurses, doctors, and laboratory technicians, to MENA countries, according to data by blue-collar worker platform Huntr. Migration of healthcare workers from Kerala, in particular, witnessed a notable increase in migration to the

UAE, with a 3.3-fold rise in 2023, the report stated. The report is based on data on Huntr platform and employer organisations in the Middle East from 2022 and 2023. It further noted that the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are the most preferred destinations for Indian healthcare professionals seeking job opportunities. These countries offer attractive incentives, including extended residency visas, financial benefits, and state-of-the-art healthcare infrastructure, the report added. "The rapid globalisation has opened doors for extensive global mobility, and this report is a testament to the crucial role that India plays in meeting MENA countries' rising healthcare talent demands.



"The surge in migration from states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh reflects a significant shift in the region's healthcare landscape. With Huntr's innovative solutions and stakeholder collaboration, we're poised to drive further growth and development in the MENA healthcare sector," Huntr CEO Samuel Joy said.

The report further revealed that employers in MENA countries seek candidates with specific skills and qualifications, including experience in regional sales, distributor management, and project management. Additionally, there is also a high demand for healthcare professionals with qualifications ranging from diplomas to higher degrees in nursing and medicine. The healthcare workers migrating from India to the MENA region are predominantly within the early 30s age group, with a noticeable increase in the number of male nurses joining the workforce segment that is traditionally dominated by women, the report added.

Foundation stone for POL & LPG project of HPCL laid in Assam

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The foundation stone for a first-of-its-kind combined petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) & LPG facilities of Hindustan Petroleum was laid at Kamardanga in Assam's Chirang district, an official statement said.. Union Minister of State for

Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameswar Telati attended the programme.. "This visionary project, with an investment of Rs 540 crore and sprawling across an expanse of 78.68 acres, underscores Hindustan Petroleum's unwavering commitment to enhancing energy accessibility and fostering socio-economic



progress in the North East region," the statement said.. The LPG facility will boast 1500 MT mounded storage vessels, a cutting-edge 4 Bay tank truck Loading gantry, and tank wagon unloading capability, ensuring seamless operations and meeting the growing demand for LPG in the region. These facilities will ensure

energy sufficiency of a minimum of 15 days in Assam, the statement said.. The project will bolster the existing network of 332 retail outlets, with plans for future outlets slated for development.. The LPG installation will ensure continuous LPG availability to 78 distributorships and 9.2 lakh

customers.. This will also benefit around 7 lakh beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).. Furthermore, the project will facilitate direct product availability to satellite depots in the North Eastern states, ensuring enhanced energy accessibility across the region.

BUSINESS BRIEF

YASHODA HOSPITAL MEDICAL PARTNER OF MARATHON 2024
New Delhi: The 9th Edition of the New Delhi Marathon 2024, scheduled to take place on February 25 at the prestigious JLN Stadium in New Delhi, has been officially recognised by the Athletics Federation of India as the National Marathon, which will also be a qualifying event for the Paris Olympics. Yashoda Hospital is the official medical partner of this event at Yashoda Medical Base Camp, Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium.

POWERGRID SIGNS MOU FOR IMPARTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

New Delhi: POWERGRID, (Northern Region-I) a Maharana CPSE, Signed a MOU on February 22, 2024, with The Central Institute of Petrochemical Engineering & Technology (CIPET) (a premier National Institution under the aegis of the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilisers, Government of India) at RHQ, Faridabad Office for imparting skill development training programme for under privileged/unemployed youth of society, at CIPET, Murthal, Haryana under CSR initiatives of POWERGRID. The Estimated Project cost is approximately ₹1.5 crore. POWERGRID, CSR Department has always been working in line with the nation's plan for developing skills, opportunities, self-employment as well as development of entrepreneurs. To achieve this objective, POWERGRID has signed MOU with CIPET, Murthal for six months Skill Development Training Programme in the field of Plastic Engineering & Technology for the 160 underprivileged /unemployed youth on residential basis. Above tech skill development programme will have 40 students therein 10 per cent seats have been reserved for girl students.

SWIATEK STUNNED BY KALINSKAYA IN DUBAI SEMIFINALS

AP ■ DUBAI

World No. 1 Iga Swiatek was stunned by qualifier Anna Kalinskaya 6-4 6-4 in the semifinals of the Dubai Championships. Swiatek was up 4-2 on Friday when Kalinskaya broke straight back. Swiatek's consistency began to desert her and Kalinskaya rattled off four straight games to take the first set. Swiatek saved two match points to break for 5-3 in the second and had another chance to break for 5-5 but hit wide. Kalinskaya gave Swiatek her first straight-sets loss in almost a year. The first qualifier to reach the Dubai final has defeated three top-10 players in a row, starting with No. 9 Jelena Ostapenko, then No. 3 Coco Gauff for her first top-five win, then Swiatek in their first meeting. The 40th-ranked Kalinskaya will play 26th-ranked Jasmine Paolini of Italy in

Saturday's final. It's the first WTA final for Kalinskaya and Paolini's shot at a second title, easily her biggest. Kalinskaya said the key to beating Swiatek was to stay calm yet aggressive. "I know if I don't stay calm and I don't stay aggressive she is going to destroy me," Kalinskaya said in her on-court interview. "That was my plan, to stay aggressive and move her a lot. She's unbelievable. I'm happy I had the chance to play against her. "I feel physically much better than last year. That gives me a lot of confidence to play at such a high level." The last qualifier to beat two top 3 players in a tournament was Amelie Mauresmo in 1998 in in Berlin with wins over Lindsay Davenport and Jana Novotna. Paolini held off Sorana Cirstea 6-2 7-6 (6) in their semifinal. She has beaten three top-30 players in a row for the first time. Paolini saved six set points in the



second set. "I gave you a little bit of drama at the end of the match," she said on court. Paolini and Kalinskaya have one win against each other. Kalinskaya beat Paolini just a month ago in the Australian Open fourth round. "When I played against her in Australian Open, she was also returning really deep and I couldn't start the point well," Paolini said. "She was really also consistent, not many mistakes. "If you want to beat her, I guess you have to play deep and to try to do not too many mistakes, but also to try to hit winners, to hit the ball, to push her away from the court because if not, she's going to move you." Reaching the final has assured Paolini of a top 20 debut when the rankings are updated on Monday. Kalinskaya will rise into the top 30 for the first time and could crack the top 20 with the title.



Taha makes it to CCI Snooker Classic main draw

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Pune's Taha Khan recorded a 4-0 win against Siddharth Khemani in a best-of-7-frame final round qualifying match to make it to the main round of the CCI Snooker Classic here on Saturday. Khan raced past Khemani with a 54-43, 72-58, 58-34, 56-9 victory at CCI's Sir Wilson Jones billiards hall.

Earlier in the day, Aditya Agarwal fired two substantial breaks of 51 and 56 to beat Sameer Chabaria 3-0 (55-6, 74-16, 77-16) in the second round. In another second round contest, Vinay Swaminathan got the better of Anupama Ramchandran, charging to a 3-0 win. Chennai's Anupama, who won the U-21 title in the Women's

World Snooker Championship last year in Thailand, was beaten 91-0, 54-44, 54-30 by Swaminathan. **RESULTS:** **Final qualifying:** Suraj Veer bt Saad Sayed 4-2 (66-47, 22-81, 25-55, 58-32, 50-42, 80-42); Taha Khan bt Siddharth Khemani 4-0 (54-43, 72-58, 58-34, 56-9); **Round 2:** Aditya Agrawal bt Sameer Chabaria 3-0 (55-6,

74(51)-16, 77(56)-16); Shailendra Dungal bt Saqlain Mushtaq 3-2 (76-20, 30-55, 80-16, 23-59, 58-19); Rafat Habib bt Saifuddin 3-0 (73-34, 55-33, 68-54); Nalin Patel bt Rohan Pal 3-2 (22-63, 60-13 56-43, 70-87(49), 74-37); Mahesh Jagdale bt Adarsh Verma 3-0 (63-41, 66-14, 75-32); Vinay Swaminathan bt Anupama Ramchandran 3-0 (91(69)-0, 54-44, 54-30).



Norrie beats Wild to reach Rio Open semifinals

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Defending champion Cameron Norrie beat Brazil's Thiago Seyboth Wild 6-1 3-6 6-2 to reach the semifinals of the Rio Open. The second-seeded British player will take on either Brazil's teenage sensation João Fonseca or Argentina's Mariano Navone on Saturday. The 23rd-ranked Norrie became the favourite to win the clay court tournament again after Carlos Alcaraz retired with a right ankle injury and Stan Wawrinka and Nicolás Jarry were defeated. Earlier on Friday, two players from Argentina won their quarterfinal matches and will face off for a place in the final of the clay-court tournament. Fourth-seeded Francisco Cerúndolo beat Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 3-6 6-4 6-4. His semifinal rival will be Sebastián Báez, who beat Brazil's Thiago Monteiro 6-4 1-6 6-2.

Yathiraj, Pramod, Krishna in finals of Para Badminton World Championships

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

India's Suhas Yathiraj, Pramod Bhagat and Krishna Nagar progressed to the men's singles finals in various categories at the Para Badminton World Championship here on Saturday. World No. 3 Yathiraj, a Paralympic silver medalist, upset world no. 1 Lucas Mazur of France 21-16 21-19 in the men's singles SL4 semi-final to reach the finals for the first time in his career. Lucas is a reigning world champion and paralympic gold medalist. The 40-year-old Indian, who hails from Karnataka, is an IAS officer of the 2007 batch of Uttar Pradesh cadre. Yathiraj, who is currently the Secretary and Director General of Youth Welfare and Prantiya Rakshak Dal in the UP government, will square off

against Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan in the final. In another SL4 semifinal, Sukant Kadam lost 13-21 19-21 to Fredy Setiawan. In men's singles SL3 class, Paralympic gold medalist Pramod Bhagat outwitted fellow Indian Manoj Sarkar 23-21 20-22 21-18 and will face England's Daniel Bethell in the finals. Bethell beat India's Nitesh Kumar 21-18 20-22 21-14 in the other semifinal. In SH6 category, Krishna Nagar, a Paralympic gold medal winner, beat Vitor Tavares of Brazil 21-16 21-17 to set up a meeting with China's Lin Naili. In women's singles SU5, Manisha Ramadass beat France's Maud Lefort 19-21 21-21 21-14 in the semifinals to set up a summit clash against China's Yang Qiu Xia. In SH6 women's doubles,

Rachana Shaileshkumar and Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan also entered the finals with a 21-16 21-17 win over Indonesian pair of Daria Bujnicka and Oliwia Szmigiel. The men's doubles pair of Chirag baretha and Raj Kumar, and women's combination of Mandeep kaur and Manisha Ramadass, advanced to the semifinals of SU5 and SL3-SU5 class to assure medals for themselves in the tournament. Among others, Nithye Sre, Palak Kohli and Manisha Girishchandra lost their respective semifinals in SH6, SL4 and SL3 class in women's singles to sign off with bronze medals. Pramod and Sukant also settled for bronze in men's doubles SL3-SL4 after losing 16-21 16-21 to Thai pair of Mongkhon Bunsun and Siripong Teamarrom.

Diksha 4th, Pranavi 13th in Morocco after second round



PTI ■ RABAT (MOROCCO)

Diksha Dagar placed herself for a good finish as she moved into the tied fourth spot at the end of the second round of the Lalla Meryem Cup on the Ladies European Tour here on Saturday. Diksha, third on the LET Order of Merit in 2023, shot 2-under 73 and moved to 4-under 142 total. Fellow Indian Pranavi Urs, playing her first full season on the LET, seemed set for a high position after the second hole as she

was 3-under through the front nine and 5-under for the event at that stage. Pranavi then dropped a double bogey on the 14th and a bogey on the 17th to drop back to even par 73. At 2-under total, she was tied 13th at the Par-73 Royal Golf Dar Es Salam course. Mexico's Maria Fassi continued to dominate the event after producing a strong second round of 69 (-4). Fassi has held the lead since the start of the tournament carding a round of 65 (-8) on day one.

Diksha, who shot 2-under 71 in the first round, opened the second round with five pars before finding a birdie on the sixth. She gave that shot back on the ninth, but birdies on the 10th and the 18th saw her finish at 2-under. Pranavi, who had six birdies against two bogeys and a double bogey, birdied second, fourth and seventh. She dropped a double bogey on the 14th, and it was her second double, as she had one on the first day, too. She also had a bogey on the 17th on the second day. Despite a shaky start, a double bogey on hole two, Fassi, an LPGA player, dusted off her nerves to roll in three birdies on the front nine on holes five, six and eight. At the turn, Fassi continued her fine form by rolling in a further four birdies with only a bogey on the 17th to blemish her back nine scorecard. Home favourite Ines Laklalech sits in solo third after a round of 73 (par). The Moroccan got off to a strong start carding two birdies in her first four holes before dropping shots on holes nine and fifteen. Six players are tied for fourth on four-under-par; Czech Republic's Sara Kouckova and Klara Davidsson Spilkova, England's Bronte Law, Diksha, Norway's Madelene Stavnar and Spain's Fatima Fernandez Cano.



Nagal handed wildcard for Dubai Championship main draw

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian tennis star Sumit Nagal has received a wildcard for the main draw of the Dubai Championship, an ATP 500 event. While the qualifiers of the tournament began on Saturday, the main draw matches get underway on Monday. Nagal will be up against Lorenzo Sonego of Italy, currently world number 49, in the opening round. The 26-year-old Indian has had a remarkable run this year, qualifying for the main draw of the Australian Open last month, where he made it to Round 2 after beating Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan. He became the first Indian since 1989 to

knock off a seeded player in a Grand Slam. He attained his career-high ranking of 98 earlier this month, but dropped to 101st, despite having won the Chennai Open last week, an ATP Challenger event. As for the Dubai Championship, Daniil Medvedev of Russia is the top seed, followed by his fellow countryman Andrey Rublev, Hubert Hurkacz of Poland, Karen Khachanov of Russia, Ugo Humbert and Adrian Panatta of France, Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain. Other players who were handed wildcards include Gael Monfils of France and Abedallah Shelbayh of Jordan.

Leverkusen extends Bundesliga lead to 11 points

AP ■ BERLIN

Granit Xhaka scored his first goal for Bayer Leverkusen as the Bundesliga leader defeated Mainz 2-1 and set a German record of 33 games unbeaten across all competitions. Leverkusen, which hasn't lost a match since last season, stretched its lead to 11 points before 11-time defending champion Bayern Munich hosts Leipzig on Saturday. Eleven rounds remain after this weekend. "We deserve to be where we are," Xhaka said. "When you're eight points, now 11 points, ahead of second-place Bayern, there is a lot to lose. But we'll keep working day by day, game by game, stay positive, and I'm sure we'll be able to keep getting our wins." The buildup to Friday's match was dominated by speculation over the future of Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso, with his former clubs Bayern and Liverpool looking for new coaches for next season. Alonso has no lack of suitors after taking Leverkusen from the relegation zone when he took over in October 2022 to a genuine title candidate in his first senior management job. "It's all just speculation, my head is totally here," Alonso repeated on Friday. "We have so much to do, we're in such a super position. So enjoying it, preparing, and that's all that's going on in my head." Supporters celebrated the German soccer league's midweek decision to scrap its plan to bring in an outside investor for a share of media rights income by displaying a



banner saying "Football belongs to the fans." They didn't have to wait long to celebrate again when Xhaka fired Leverkusen into a third-minute lead. The Swiss midfielder let fly from outside the penalty area for his first goal on his 31st appearance for the club. But Dominik Kohr replied for the visitors with a header at the other end four minutes later. Leverkusen went on to dominate possession. The home team's urgency grew toward the end of the half, when Alex Grimaldo drew a good save from Robin Zentner with a free kick. Leverkusen's frustrations grew when

Jeremie Frimpong was booked for complaining after he'd been tripped by Mainz defender Philipp Mwene when he would have been through on goal. TV replays showed there was contact. Alonso was also booked for his complaints. The frustration remained after the break as Leverkusen failed to find a way through. Then the otherwise excellent Zentner failed to hold Robert Andrich's harmless-looking shot and the ball looped in over his head in the 68th. It proved enough for the win as Mainz's hopes were hit in the 80th when Jessic Ngankam was sent off after a VAR check for a dangerous tackle on Xhaka.

Odisha FC, Mohun Bagan Super Giant play out goalless draw

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha FC and Mohun Bagan Super Giant played out a goalless draw in the Indian Super League here on Saturday. With competitors elevating their performance levels lately, the pressure has been built on the juggernauts to not drop points in their pursuit of the top spot of the points table. Mumbai City FC equalled them in points last night with their win over Chennaiyin FC, as only a superior goal difference keeping the Sergio Lobera-coached side ahead in the race. However, they were unable to make the most of the opportunity at home against an upbeat Mohun Bagan Super Giant, who converted their unbeaten streak to five games under Antonio Lopez Habas in the ISL. Contrary to what the scoreline suggests, it was an end-to-end contest that produced umpteen opportunities for either sides to break the deadlock. A total of nine shots were taken out of which six were on target, combined for both teams, with Isak Vanlalruathela and Albanian striker Armando Sadiku leading the charge for their respective teams. Isak, in particular, was a menace for the Mariners, coming close to bagging the first goal of the night for Odisha FC multiple times in the opening half. He

forced a mistake off Anwar Ali around the 20th minute mark and targeted the top right corner but the shot failed to trouble Vishal Kaith. He had a duel with Kaith in the third minute too, making a dazzling run on the left flank before shooting his shot at the goalkeeper who held his composure to make a critical save by staying in his line. It was not as if he lacked support from his senior striking partners Roy Krishna and Diego Mauricio. Just as the half was drawing to an end, Krishna laid up a pass for an onrushing Mauricio on the right flank. The Brazilian collected the pass in his stride before unleashing a fierce shot that deflected off the crossbar. Sadiku will be regretting not converting the several chances that came his way from close quarters. The striker had Asish Rai and Sahal Abdul Samad setting up deliveries for him both when he was at the edge of the box as well as at the centre in the 26th and 34th minute respectively. But, his efforts couldn't make it past Amrinder Singh, and so couldn't the ones made by Dimitrios Petratos just as the second half began. Even the substitutions, featuring the likes of Jason Cummings and Cy Goddard couldn't influence the proceedings abundantly to change the eventual outcome of the game.

INDIA ON BACKFOOT AFTER JAISWAL GRITTY FIFTY

PTI ■ RANCHI

Young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir scythed through the Indian line-up with an impressive four-wicket haul that left the hosts stuttering at 219 for seven on day two of the fourth Test here on Saturday.

The 20-year-old Bashir, playing only his second Test, got rid of Shubman Gill (38), Rajat Patidar (17), Ravindra Jadeja (12) on a pitch that has uneven bounce and cracks to rattle the Indian top and middle order.

He returned after the tea break in his marathon 31-over spell across two sessions to clean up in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal (73) with a ball that skid through the defence of the left-hander.

With intermittent wickets pegging India back, they were forced to play a catch-up game and are still trailing by 134 runs.

If it was not for a combative partnership between Dhruv Jurel (30 batting) and Kuldeep Yadav (17), India would have struggled to cross even 200-run mark. They had joined forces when the scorecard read 177 for seven.

The two batters played late and

did not commit early into their shots, a ply that worked well in their unbeaten 42-run stand.

This was after England's first innings folded for 353 after starting the day at 302 for seven. The total could have been bigger if Ollie Robinson (58) had not attempted an audacious reverse sweep off Ravindra Jadeja.

The 22-year-old Jaiswal yet again produced a confident knock. He now has scored 618 runs with an average of 103 in this series. He looked for another big one before being done in by low bounce.

Left-arm spinner Tom Hartley returned with figures of 2/47 that included the crucial breakthrough of Sarfaraz Khan (14) who had a frustrating stay. He also survived a run-out.

India lost Rohit Sharma (2) cheaply when old warhorse James Anderson induced a faint-edge from the skipper in the third over of their innings.

But thereafter, Jaiswal showed why he is India's latest run machine when he overcame some anxious moments to post his fourth fifty-plus score in this series.

From a watchful start, India No. 3 Gill accelerated post-



lunch break, taking on Anderson with two elegant boundaries — one flick off the pads, and a punch straight back down the ground.

But Bashir gave England the

breakthrough by trapping Gill, halting the fine 82-run alliance between Gill and Jaiswal.

He delivered a ball that took off the crack just outside off stump, trapped Gill on the pad

as Indians reviewed unsuccessfully.

It sort of triggered the Indian collapse as the batters failed to grind deep in, showing little application.

Having given a lifeline after sloppy displays in Rajkot, Patidar had a nervy and tentative stay.

The only bright spot of his innings was driving down

Anderson past the gully for a boundary that brought up the 100 for India.

It was just a matter of time before Bashir trapped him with a ball that skidded onto his pads.

Post his century in Rajkot, Jadeja retained his No 5 spot and counter-attacked Hartley for successive sixes.

But Bashir in the thick of the action again as his ball came off the cracks with Jadeja managing to loop the ball straight to short leg.

England added 51 valuable runs to their overnight total as the Indian attack failed to make early penetration. The last five England batters added 241 runs after being 112/5 at lunch on the opening day.

Joe Root, who dug in deep with his classical century spanning a little more than six hours, remained stranded on 122 from 274 balls (10x4).

Robinson gifted away his wicket after making a career-best 58 that resulted in England's first innings ending at 353. Root and Robinson's eighth wicket alliance yielded 102 runs for England.

While Mohammed Siraj (2/78) erred in his line and length,

debutant Akash Deep could not add to his tally of three wickets to return with 3/38 from 19 overs. Jadeja took all the three wickets to return with 4/67 from his 32.5 overs.

Robinson had a great start to the morning when he flicked one away from a wayward Siraj in the first ball of the day for a boundary through fine leg.

There was no stopping him as he looked for every opportunity and took on Akash Deep with three boundaries that took him past his previous career-best Test score of 42. However a bizarre shot selection ended his gritty knock as he employed a grounded reverse sweep which was not necessary at that moment as Indian bowlers were hardly troubling the visitors.

The ball missed the edge of the bat but touched the gloves of Robinson before being grabbed by 23-year-old Dhruv Jurel that ended a dogged 102-run stand with Root.

England then fell in a jiffy with Bashir swinging his bat to the second ball and skied the ball to be caught at point. Jadeja trapped Anderson to end England resistance.

Bazball is not about being arrogant but bringing best out of team: Root



PTI ■ RANCHI

Senior England batter Joe Root said Saturday that his side's 'Bazball' approach in Test cricket is not about being arrogant but about getting the best result for the team.

England's record 434-run loss to India in the third Test in Rajkot led to widespread criticism about their ultra-aggressive approach they have adopted under coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes.

"There have been times recently when the best way to do that is by being a bit more aggressive. It's like if I connect with that shot and execute it better, (Jasprit) Bumrah will be under pressure and our outlook on the game is very different again."

"It's not about being arrogant... Bazball is a word that's used a lot but that's your word, that's

not how we look at it," Root told reporters after the end of second day's play in the fourth Test here.

"It's about how can we get the best out of each other as a team, how we're going to get better as a group. You're not always going to get it right but we'll continue to keep trying to improve."

Root emphasised the importance of adapting and evolving as a batter to counter the skills of world class bowlers.

"The reason I've played as many games as I have is that I've not wanted to stand still as a player, I have to try to keep evolving. If you keep on playing the same way over and over again, teams work you out, figure you out and find your weaknesses."

"They are world-class bowlers for a reason and there's a lot of information out there. So if

you don't try to get better and find different ways of scoring runs, you'll get found out.

"You're not always going to get it right but if you're not willing to make mistakes every now and then and sometimes get it wrong it doesn't matter anyway because they're still going to find you out."

Root returned to form with an unbeaten 122 from 274 balls in a classical Test match innings that helped England recover from 112 for 5 at lunch on day one to post 353.

In reply, India were 219 for 7 at stumps on Saturday, still trailing by 134 runs on a slow wicket with unusually low bounce.

"It felt like it's been a long time coming, it's been a lean series individually for me. You pride yourself as a senior player, especially with the history I've had in this part of the world, to try and make contributions

that put you in positions to win games.

"It's been disappointing but the fact I have got quite a lot of experience has been able to keep me calm and trust the stuff I am doing. The way I'm preparing meant it was going to come at some point. It was nice to do it yesterday when we were in the situation we were in at lunchtime."

'BRILLIANT BASHIR': Young spinner Shoaib Bashir grabbed four wickets in a marathon spell of 31 overs that spanned across all three sessions. He bowled one before lunch and then operated non-stop in the remaining two sessions with a total of 32 overs under his belt.

"The way he bowls is a great little insight into his character and personality, he is quite cheeky and great fun to be around."

"There's clearly a huge amount of skill in what he does, as he proved with the way he bowled for not just small spells but a long period of time," Root said.

"To be able to continually put pressure on some very good players of spin, I know the wicket was helpful at times, but he did an amazing job and it's a great sign for English cricket moving forward. You do have to work in partnerships and Tommy (Hartley) was excellent alongside him, too."

Root is confident that England have the edge in the match.

"We've got ourselves into a nice position at the end of the first innings. Obviously, it looks like it (pitch) is going to keep deteriorating and keep getting worse."

"So if we can get three early wickets tomorrow, hopefully that puts us in a really strong position for the rest of the game," he signed off.

Warner misses third T20I against NZ

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Dashing Australia opener David Warner is likely to be fit for the start of next month's IPL after missing the final T20I against New Zealand here due to adductor soreness.

The 37-year-old, who retired from Tests and ODIs last month, will take seven to 10 days to regain his full fitness.

"Warner will require a brief recovery period which is not expected to affect his availability for the upcoming Indian Premier League leading into to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup," Cricket Australia



said in a statement.

Warner had also sat out the second T20I as part of Australia's rotation strategy. He will quit the shortest format after the conclusion of the T20 World Cup in June this year.

Warner had captained Delhi Capitals last year following Rishabh Pant's horrific accident and emerged as the highest run-scorer for the team with 516 runs, including six fifties.

He was booed off the ground by the Kiwi supporters after scoring 32 in 20 balls in the opening T20 game against New Zealand in Wellington.

Sawai Man Singh Stadium and RCA office sealed

PTI ■ JAIPUR

One month before it hosts Indian Premier League matches, the Sawai Man Singh Stadium here has been sealed by the Rajasthan Sports Council which claimed that the state cricket body did not fulfil its liabilities, including payment of dues.

Rajasthan Cricket Association's (RCA) office and its academy were also sealed, along with the stadium.

Rajasthan Sports Council secretary Sohan Ram Choudhary had served a notice to the RCA for handing over the property to the state council on Friday, but it did not happen.

Since the handover did not happen, the state sports council went on to seal the properties owing to RCA's alleged failure of not being able to fulfil its conditions as per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and non-payment of dues.

"We had sent them (RCA) numerous notices but there was no reply from their end. They only replied to increase the MoU to 10 years (from eight years). They had liabilities and they did not fulfil them," Choudhary told the media.

"We have sat down with RCA to find a solution. They received approximately Rs 200 crores but told us that they haven't received the sum. They had a lot of money during the Rajasthan Premier League but they did not adhere to the MoU and did



not deposit the money, that's why we had to take this step," he added.

Choudhary, however, gave the assurance that the venue will host the IPL matches and all other games that are slated to be organised here.

"This is our premise and we just took it back. The IPL matches will happen and all other national and international matches will also happen and the players will get all the facilities," he said.

RCA president Vaibhav Gehlot, on his part, alleged that the move smacked of 'political malice' and that his body was not given enough time to respond.

"The pending dues are old one, Rs 8 crore is outstanding but suddenly sealing (because of) that old case and that too

before the IPL shows political malice. This should not have happened," Gehlot said.

"We were not given full time, the time given was less than two days, there should not be politics in sports but politics is happening which is not right," he added.

Gehlot said the RCA will consult its lawyers as to what steps it would take in this matter. The Sawai Man Singh Stadium will host the local team Rajasthan Royals' opening match against Lucknow Super Giants on March 24. The second game here will be on March 28 between Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals.

The IPL 2024 schedule was announced only for the first two weeks and 21 matches, owing to the general elections.

RANJI TROPHY QUARTERFINAL

Nair shines as Vidarbha post 460 vs Karnataka

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Karun Nair's 90-run knock was the highlight of the day as Vidarbha posted 460 all out in their Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Karnataka here on Saturday.

Resuming the second day on 261 for three after Atharva Taide's century and Yash Rathod's 93, Vidarbha rode on Nair's innings to post a big first-innings total.

In reply, Karnataka were 98 for two at stumps with Ravikumar Samarth and Nikin Jose batting on 43 and 20, respectively. The visitors trailed by 362 runs.

Vidarbha lost Akshay Wadkar (16) for the addition of just 23 runs to their overnight total, and were 319 for five, when Mohit Kale (16) was dismissed by Hardik Raj.

Nair and Aditya Sarwate (26) added 55 runs before the latter



was dismissed by Vidwath Kaverappa, who picked up four wickets in all while giving away 99 runs.

Kaverappa's victims also included the all-important wicket of Nair, who fell short of his 19th first-class hundred by 10 runs.

Karnataka began their response on a jittery note, losing skipper Mayank Agarwal (0) to Aditya Thakare with just four runs on the

board.

A 59-run partnership between opener Ravikumar Samarth (43 batting) and KV Aneesh (34) steadied the innings but Yash Thakur got rid of Aneesh with the score reading 63.

BRIEF SCORES: Vidarbha 460 (Atharva Taide 109, Yash Rathod 93, Karun Nair (90); Vidwath Kaverappa 4/99) leads Karnataka 98-2 (Ravikumar Samarth 43 batting; Yash Thakur 1/22) by 362 runs.

Sai, Indrajith, Kumar hand Tamil Nadu lead vs Saurashtra

PTI ■ COIMBATORE

Skipper R Sai Kishore led by example before Baba Indrajith and Boopathi Kumar struck useful half-centuries to hand Tamil Nadu advantage in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Saurashtra here on Saturday.

Thanks to their efforts, Tamil Nadu reached 300 for six at stumps on the second day of the match, giving them a lead of 117 runs with four first-innings wickets in hand.

Resuming the day at 23 for one, night-watchman Sai Kishore (60) and opener Narayan Jagadeesan (37) managed to put on a 54-run partnership for the

second wicket before Parth Bhut trapped the latter leg-before with the team score reading 63.

The hosts were in a spot of bother at 85 for three when Pradosh Ranjan Paul (13) fell to Parth Bhut, but Sai Kishore and Indrajith (80) added 49 runs for the fourth wicket to steady the ship.

Sai Kishore, who grabbed five wickets in Saurashtra's first innings, brought up his third first-class half-century before being dismissed by Jaydev Unadkat.

Boopathi Kumar (65), along with Indrajith, then stitched an impressive 119-run stand for the fifth wicket to put their team in control.

Indrajith was looking good for what



would have been his 17th first-class hundred but Dharmendrasinh Jadeja,

the visitors' highest wicket-taker of the season, got rid of the seasoned TN batter, with the team score reading 253 for five.

For the addition 14 runs, Boopathi was cleaned up by Yuvrajsinh Dodiya.

Vijay Shankar (14 batting) and Mohamed Ali (17 batting) saw the day out as Tamil Nadu finished the day with their nose well ahead.

For Saurashtra, it has been a collective effort from their bowling unit with all five bowlers finding themselves among wickets.

BRIEF SCORES: Saurashtra 183 trail Tamil Nadu 300-6 (Baba Indrajith 80; Parth Bhut 2/76) by 117 runs.

Madhya Pradesh fight back against Andhra

PTI ■ INDORE

A collective bowling performance helped Madhya Pradesh stage a remarkable fightback and extend their overall lead to 83 runs at stumps on the second day of their Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Andhra here on Saturday.

The 2021-22 winners MP resumed the day at 234 for 9 and they lost their last wicket without adding any run to their total. They had squandered a perfect start to their first innings when openers Yash Dubey (64) and Himanshu Mantri (49) put on 123 for the first wicket.

For Andhra, KV Sasikanth took 4 for 37 while Nithish Kumar Reddy returned with figures of 3/50. Shoaib Mohammed Khan and Girinath Reddy also chipped in with a wicket each as Andhra had a platform set to capitalise on the game.

But Madhya Pradesh bowlers joined forces to pull off a remarkable performance, bowling out Andhra for a mere 172 in their first innings to hand their side a 62-run lead.

None of the Andhra batters could make a mark against a probing MP bowling line-up. Andhra skipper and current Ranji season leading run-scorer Ricky Bhui was dismissed for 32 (53 balls, 5x4s, 1x6s) by Kulwant Khejroliya.

The damage, however, was done at the top by MP and India bowler Avesh Khan who removed Andhra opener DB Prashanth Kumar for a four-ball duck and also accounted for No. 3 Ashwin Hebbur for just one.

Anubhav Agarwal trapped K Revanth Reddy leg-before for 22 and also pinned India batter Hanuma Vihari for 14 in front of the wickets.



Late in the innings, Agarwal accounted for the dangerous Shoaib Mohammad Khan for 22 to return with a fine 18-6-33-3.

Left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya also got into the act to return 3/41 from his 19 overs, accounting for the highest-scorer of the innings Karan Shinde (38), Nithish (7) and Sasikanth (12).

The visiting side were bowled out for 172 in 68.3 overs, following which Madhya Pradesh reached 21 for no loss at stumps on the second day with an overall lead of 83 runs.

Dubey was batting on six while wicketkeeper-batter Mantri reached 50 not out with the help of three fours to make it MP's day on Saturday.

BRIEF SCORES: Madhya Pradesh 234 in 81.1 overs (Yash Dubey 64, Himanshu Mantri 49, Saransh Jain 41 not out; Nithish Kumar Reddy 3/50, KV Sasikanth 4/37) and 21/0 in 7 overs (Himanshu Mantri 15 not out) lead Andhra 172 in 68.3 overs (Karan Shinde 38; Anubhav Agarwal 3/38, Kumar Kartikeya 3/41) by 83 runs.

"I didn't finish university, I barely finished high school. All I know is from the books I've read, and the plays that I've read"

— Jacob Elordi



BOOKS

The New Delhi World Book Fair is a celebration of the written word that transcends boundaries and bridges cultures. Here - as in others counties of the world - the significance of books reverberates with resounding clarity

EXPLORING
PAGES OF POSSIBILITY

By
Rajdeep Pathak

As the vibrant panorama of the New Delhi World Book Fair unfolded its final chapter on February 18, 2024, it bid a fond farewell to nine days filled with the symphony of literary marvels and cultural splendour. Nestled within the expansive embrace of Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan, this majestic event, inaugurated on February 10th, played host to a multitude of nearly 15 lakh book lovers, who traversed its labyrinthine corridors in search of enlightenment and inspiration. Here, amidst the grandeur of more than 1,000 publishers hailing from 40 illustrious nations such as India, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Spain, and beyond, over 2,000 enchanting stalls stood as beacons of literary excellence. Organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) under the nurturing wing of the Ministry of Education, this year's fair unfurled its vibrant banner under the resplendent theme of "Bahubhashi Bharat - Ek Jeevant Parampara" (Multilingual India - A Living Tradition). With the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia taking part as the guest country, the air was suffused with the heady aroma of cultural exchange, literary discourse, and harmonious dialogues, weaving a rich flavour of mutual appreciation and understanding between the two nations. While traversing through the stalls with long overhanging signages guiding paths for visitors, one could also wonder at the very craftsmanship of the engineers who put up the display in a manner that attracted students, school children, writers, authors, guest speakers, men and women with their families alike from far end - thanks to the event management groups of companies who designed this panoramic extravaganza, the effect was spell-binding. However, what really attracted once again is the versatility and the imaginative and creative manner of enticing the readers/visitors and capturing (read holding on) to their interest. There were many window shoppers who just passed by. While some stalls engaged children in solving different crossword puzzles through creative games, there were others like ours (Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti), where spinning on the traditional charkha became a centre of attraction for the young and the old who wanted to try their hands on spinning. What came as a surprise in this digital age where Kindle and other such forums have become the latest fad, is that the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, "My Experiments with Truth" was still a popular choice amongst the buyers. The Children's Pavilion became a delightful sanctuary for young book enthusiasts, offering a diverse array of activities including storytelling, illustration workshops, calligraphy sessions, art demonstrations,

ORGANISED BY THE NATIONAL BOOK TRUST (NBT) UNDER THE NURTURING WING OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, THIS YEAR'S FAIR UNFURLED ITS VIBRANT BANNER UNDER THE RESPLENDENT THEME OF "BAHUBHASHI BHARAT - EK JEEVANT PARAMPARA" (MULTILINGUAL INDIA - A LIVING TRADITION). WITH THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA TAKING PART AS THE GUEST COUNTRY, THE AIR WAS SUFFUSED WITH THE HEADY AROMA OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE, LITERARY DISCOURSE, AND HARMONIOUS DIALOGUES, WEAVING A RICH FLAVOUR OF MUTUAL APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS



drama classes, and explorations into the wonders of space. Notably, the fair has demonstrated its dedication to inclusivity and accessibility in literature through specialized events tailored for children with special needs, in line with its overarching 'Books-for-All' initiative. Further, amidst this vibrant mosaic of India's cultural panorama, as showcased at the World Book Fair, the symphony of myriad languages, dialects, and traditions harmoniously intertwined into a seamless expression of unity. Here, as one flapped through the pages of literature and glanced at the strokes of artistry, the feeling resonated with a profound testament to the nation's rich heritage. The unveiling of "Jaadui Pitara", an enchanting e-learning oasis, emerged as a beacon of enlightenment in consonance with the vision of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Overflowing with the treasures of puzzles, riddles, and tales, this marvellously inclusive repository, deftly translated into 22 languages through the marvels of (artificial intelligence) AI, stood poised to revolutionize the landscape of childhood education. Alongside, a constellation of specialized modules, meticulously crafted in alignment with NEP 2020, adorned this educational tableau, offering a cornucopia of resources and insights tailored to the modern learner. Embracing the noble vision of fostering a nation of avid readers, an ethereal e-library welcomed all with its boundless offerings, inviting one and all to immerse themselves in the splendour of knowledge.

In this timeless mosaic of human civilization, books stand as luminous threads weaving together the very fabric of knowledge, imagination, and cultural heritage. Like radiant beacons illuminating the path of enlightenment, books beckon us into realms of limitless discovery and profound insight. Amidst this vast literary landscape, book fairs emerge as vibrant marketplaces of intellect, where bibliophiles and seekers of wisdom converge in a harmonious symphony of literary delight. The English author Neil Gaiman once remarked, "Literacy is more important than ever it was, in this world of text and email, a world of written information. We need to read and write, we need global citizens who can read comfortably, comprehend what they are reading, understand nuance, and make themselves understood." His words underscore the contemporary relevance of literacy in an age dominated by digital communication. Maya Angelou, the celebrated poet and civil rights activist, aptly encapsulated the transformative power of literacy when she asserted, "Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him." She underscored the profound impact that exposure to literature can have on shaping young minds and nurturing a lifelong love for reading. Book fairs, with their wide array of offerings spanning genres and age groups, play a crucial role in instilling this habit of reading and nurturing a generation of literate and intellectually curious individuals.

Book fairs also serve as vital platforms for promoting diversity and inclusion within the literary world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the acclaimed Nigerian author, emphasized the importance of diverse representation in literature when she said that "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity". Therefore, by showcasing literature from diverse cultures, perspectives, and voices, book fairs contribute to a more inclusive literary landscape, fostering empathy, understanding, and interconnectedness among readers. Book fairs, by bringing together a diverse array of literature, empower individuals to engage with various forms of written expression, thereby fostering critical thinking and communication skills essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world. The New Delhi World Book Fair is a celebration of the written word that transcends boundaries and bridges cultures. Here - as in others counties of the world - the significance of books reverberates with resounding clarity, underscoring the enduring relevance of organizing such transformative events with new creative engagements. It is time when we move beyond just literacy... (The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Sansthan, views are personal)



RISKS LURK BEHIND THE GLAMOUR

A recent tragic death during smile enhancement surgery of a 28-year-old man in Hyderabad highlights the risk of cosmetic procedures. In a chat with ARCHANA JYOTI, experts emphasise the need for thorough consideration before surgery, advocating stricter regulations, and increased awareness

From smoothing wrinkles to reshaping body contours, the allure of cosmetic procedures often promises transformative results and a boost in self-confidence. Cosmetic surgery has emerged as a popular option for individuals seeking to enhance their physical appearance and address perceived imperfections. However, there lies a landscape fraught with risks and complexities that warrant careful consideration. Consider a few cases of 2023: *Chethana Raj, a promising young TV actor, who tragically lost her life after undergoing plastic surgery in Bengaluru. Her father, K Varadaraj, revealed that hospital authorities attributed her death to a cardiac arrest. *The untimely demise of Luana Andrade, a 29-year-old Brazilian influencer, following liposuction surgery in São Paulo, serves as a chilling reminder of the risks inherent in cosmetic procedures. Complications during the surgery led to four cardiac arrests, ultimately claiming her life. *Argentine model and actor Silvina Luna died due to complications related to a kidney illness associated with prior plastic surgery. These reported cases involve celebrities or in some others, complainants managed to reach out to media or vice versa. The recent one that has been reported this year is of LN Vinjam (28) who lost his life on February 18 while undergoing a 'smile designing' procedure, just weeks before his wedding. There are countless unreported instances of individuals suffering after cosmetic enhancements. Many endure silent pain as their pursuit of an ideal

POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS

Hematoma: Hematoma, a pocket of blood resembling a bruise, can occur in 1 percent of breast augmentation procedures and is the most common complication after facelifts.

Seroma: Seroma, the pooling of sterile body fluid beneath the skin's surface, is a common complication following surgeries like tummy tucks.

Blood loss: While some blood loss is expected during surgery, uncontrolled blood loss can result in severe outcomes such as a drop in blood pressure.

Infection: Despite preventive measures, infections remain common after plastic surgery, affecting around 1.1 to 2.5 percent of individuals undergoing breast augmentation. Cellulitis, a skin infection, is one example, while severe cases may require intravenous antibiotics.

Nerve damage: Many surgeries carry the risk of nerve damage, leading to numbness or tingling sensations. While often temporary, nerve damage can sometimes be permanent, affecting sensitivity or function in the operated area.

Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism: Though relatively uncommon, these conditions can be life-threatening, with rates slightly higher in procedures like abdominoplasty.

Organ damage: Procedures like liposuction pose risks of visceral perforations, where surgical instruments inadvertently puncture internal organs, potentially leading to fatal consequences.

Scarring: Scarring is an inevitable outcome of surgery, with some individuals experiencing hypertrophic or keloid scars, which can be red, thick, and raised, causing aesthetic concerns.

General appearance dissatisfaction: Despite overall satisfaction rates, some individuals may experience dissatisfaction with their postoperative results, particularly if there are contouring issues or asymmetry problems.

Complications of anesthesia: Anesthesia carries its own set of risks, ranging from lung infections to tions, stroke, heart attacks, and death.



DR MANISH JANGRA
Consultant Dermatologist,
Park Hospital

appearance is botched by incompetent surgeons. **Dr Manish Jangra**, Consultant Dermatologist from Park Hospital points out that craze for cosmetic procedures is rising day by day. Minimally invasive procedures have seen an even larger increase than surgical ones. "When it

comes to cosmetic dermatology, individuals often seek treatments to address a variety of concerns related to their skin's appearance and texture, correcting skin tone, smoothing wrinkles, removing hair on the face or body and reducing surface fat. "When we talk about Botox a lot of thing comes in our mind as it is widely used by various media platforms and many famous celebrities for various indications. Botox is a botulinum toxin obtained from bacteria. It is basically used in dermatology for various cosmetic issues like frown lines(Forehead) Crow footprints (Lateral to Eyes). These are basically used to smooth wrinkles over face. This is also used for


Hyperhidrosis of palms & for excessive sweating. "Then there are Fillers. These are used to fill the area that has lost tissue or to fill that gap. "Dermal fillers, sometimes called soft tissue fillers, are substances designed to be injected beneath the surface of the skin to add volume and fullness. The time they take to work, as well as how long they last, also vary. Some fillers last six months, while others last up to two years or longer. They can be used to enhance lips, enhance shallow area like undereye trough & to soften the static wrinkles. But they must be injected by dermatologist with great experience in aesthetic practice," warns Dr Jangra. He reiterates, this must be

injected by qualified dermatologist only as various quacks too are flourishing in market claiming to be cosmetologists leading to various complications. People must check qualification and experience of the doctor first and should cautious about the quacks using term "Cosmetologists." There is no such degree by this name approved by National Medical Commission (NMC), cautions Dr Jangra. "Also you must ensure to go to dermatologist with MD/DNB/DVD (Degree in Dermatology). A lot of dentists / MBBS / non medicos/nurse have started practicing as cosmetologists, playing with health of the common people." **Dr Sachin Ambekar**, Director, Minimal Access Surgery and Medical Director at Massh Hospital, stresses on the necessity for hospitals to be equipped to handle emergencies and emphasizes the importance of thorough patient history-taking before any surgical procedure minor or major which he's had in the previous history. If he's had a surgery, what kind of anaesthesia, did he have any kind of complications and if there is any detailed notes discharge summary available with the patient. Before any surgery the medical teams get multiple tests done that



DR SACHIN AMBEKAR
Director of Minimal Access Surgery and
Medical Director at Massh Hospital

includes local anaesthesia test dose, IV antibiotic test dose. The anaesthetist or the surgeon takes a detailed history of the medical and surgical history. While it is mandatory for every centre involving dentists, oral maxillofacial, aesthetic and plastic surgery to have qualified doctors on its panel but it is most important to keep a backup in case there is any emergency. **Dr Madhu Goel**, Director, Gynecologist and Obstetrics at Fortis La Femme highlights several key points surrounding the motivations, types, and potential risks associated with these surgeries. From addressing perceived flaws to enhancing confidence and conforming to societal beauty standards, rise of social media and celebrity culture have also contributed to the desire to emulate certain looks or features, she notes. While many cosmetic procedures are generally safe and backed by research, it's crucial for patients to be aware of the potential risks and complications involved. As with any surgical procedure, there are inherent risks such as anesthesia complications, infections, scarring, and changes in sensation. "Therefore, thorough consultation with a qualified healthcare provider and a realistic understanding of both the benefits and risks are essential steps," advises Dr Goel.



DR MADHU GOEL
Director, Gynecologist and Obstetrics
at Fortis La Femme

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DOCTORSPEAK

India's Over-the-Counter Topical Steroid Crisis



DR DIKSHA AGRAWAL
Consultant Dermatologist
Ghaziabad Dermatology Centre

LACK OF AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
There is a general lack of awareness among the public regarding the appropriate use of topical steroids and their potential adverse effects. Consumers may be influenced by advertisements or recommendations from non-medical sources, further perpetuating the misuse of these medications. For instance, skin thinning occurs due to the inhibition of collagen synthesis by steroids. This can result in skin atrophy, making it more fragile and prone to injuries. Additionally, continuous application of topical steroids can lead to the development of stretch marks (striae) on the skin, highlighting the detrimental effects of steroids. This scenario urgently calls for collaboration between regulatory authorities, healthcare professionals, pharmaceutical companies, and the public to ensure the safe and appropriate use of topical steroids in India.

MISDIAGNOSIS AND SELF-MEDICATION
Many individuals lack proper medical knowledge and may incorrectly diagnose their skin conditions. This leads them to self-medicate with topical steroids without seeking professional advice. This practice not only exacerbates existing skin issues but also puts them at risk of developing dependence on these potent medications.

PROFIT-DRIVEN PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY:
Some pharmaceutical companies prioritize profits over public health by making topical steroids readily available without stringent regulations. This accessibility encourages indiscriminate use among consumers who may not be aware of the potential risks and side effects associated with these medications.

WHO: Nations must step up tobacco control measures



SAIMA WAZED
Regional Director of WHO
South-East Asia

Despite significant declines in tobacco consumption over the years, the South-east Asia region continues to be the home of the highest number of tobacco users, including smokeless tobacco. Moreover, the use of e-cigarettes is on the rise, particularly among young people, posing additional health risks. Highlighting the gravity of the menace causing health issues like cancer, respiratory issues, and heart disease, newly elected Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia, Saima Wazed, has called for heightened efforts in controlling both tobacco and e-cigarette usage within the region. Of particular concern is the increasing number of adolescent tobacco users, indicating a concerning trend among younger populations. Regarding e-cigarettes, she said, despite efforts by some countries to ban or regulate e-cigarettes, more comprehensive measures are required. "Several countries in the region have set ambitious targets for tobacco control, with initiatives such as "Tobacco Free Bangladesh" and "Tobacco Endgame" in India. "Moreover, countries are implementing demand reduction strategies advocated by WHO, such as the MPOWER package, to further curb tobacco consumption," Wazed said.

portion of global tobacco consumption. Smokeless tobacco usage is particularly prevalent, with the region hosting nearly 77% of global users. Furthermore, there are approximately 11 million adolescent tobacco users, indicating a concerning trend among younger populations. Regarding e-cigarettes, she said, despite efforts by some countries to ban or regulate e-cigarettes, more comprehensive measures are required. "Several countries in the region have set ambitious targets for tobacco control, with initiatives such as "Tobacco Free Bangladesh" and "Tobacco Endgame" in India. "Moreover, countries are implementing demand reduction strategies advocated by WHO, such as the MPOWER package, to further curb tobacco consumption," Wazed said.

BOOK REVIEW

Rhythm of the Ruins unveils emotional brilliance

Enter the world of 'Rhythm of the Ruins' by Mukul Kumar, a captivating collection of poignant poems that capture the essence of life's complexities, offering a profound exploration of the beauty found amid chaos and change. From the slums of Bombay to mythic realms, the book promises to touch the hearts and minds of all who dare to delve into its pages

By SWARN KUMAR ANAND

*I miss you terribly, Papa
My sky stretches, serene
Within the fortress of his care,
Deluge or draught draws from
My shelter a joyous smug stare.*

Mukul Kumar's poetry collection "Rhythm of the Ruins" commences with an unwavering dedication to his late father, painting a vivid picture of the poet's profound connection to his Papa. The poem portrays the father as a

nurturing guardian, providing a sense of eternal peace and security. Evoking imagery of a serene sky sheltered within the fortress of paternal love, Kumar finds solace amid life's uncertainties. The phrase "joyous smug stare" hints at the comfort and pride derived from his father's strength and support. *Rhythm of the Ruins* offers a profound exploration of the human experience through thought-provoking poems. Mukul Kumar's mastery of personification infuses each piece with a unique blend of

romance and realism, drawing inspiration from sources as diverse as Renaissance paintings to the chaos of modern life. The title poem, "The Rhythm of the Ruins," sets a captivating tone for the entire collection, prompting readers to ponder the beauty inherent in disorder and flux. Through introspective exploration, the poem delves into the tumult of inner emotions, conveying a yearning for resolution



amid tumult. The vivid imagery of a cloud withholding its rain and the subsequent silence following a storm portrays the poet's struggle for catharsis. Despite the pervasive sense of emptiness, there emerges a resilient endeavour to impose order upon chaos, driven by a desire for rejuvenation symbolised by the invocation of "Gaia" and "Eros". "Will She Come Back?" is an exploration of longing and uncertainty, where time seems

to blur into an unintelligible haze. It delves into the universal question of whether someone departed will return, evoking themes of hope, longing, and the enigmatic nature of fate. With its emotive depth and evocative language, the poem invites readers to contemplate the intricacies of human relationships and the enduring quest for closure. Throughout the book, Mukul Kumar delves into a wide range of themes, from love and loss to the complexities of human nature and the beauty of imperfection. Each poem is

a journey in itself, offering readers moments of reflection and insight. "Not Missing the Rainbow" invites us to ponder the significance of common sights and experiences. What sets "Rhythm of the Ruins" apart is Mukul Kumar's ability to convey deep emotions with simplicity and clarity. His language is accessible yet rich, inviting readers to immerse themselves in the beauty of his verses. One of the most remarkable aspects of this collection is its ability to resonate with readers on a personal level. Kumar's

attention to detail and keen observation of life's nuances ensure that each poem feels like a deeply personal experience. These are poems to return to time and time again, each reading offering new insights and revelations. From its evocative title to its stunning cover design, *Rhythm of the Ruins* (The Browser) is a book that demands attention. Whether you are a lover of poetry or simply someone who appreciates the beauty of well-crafted words, this collection is sure to leave a lasting impression.

(The writer is a Senior Faculty at the Department of Political Science in the School of Liberal Education, Galgotias University, Greater Noida.)

(The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force) Karnataka)

