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at the cost of ₹ **41000** crores



Redevelopment of 3 Railway Stations

■ Kotdwar ■ Kashipur Junction ■ Tanakpur

- Stations to be redeveloped as City Centres with provision of amenities like roof plaza, shopping zone, food court, kids' play area etc.
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and

Construction of 3 Road Over Bridges / Underpasses in Uttarakhand

- Seamless movement of rail & road traffic
- Safe & convenient passage for local residents across railway tracks
- Decongestion of traffic, reduction in travel time

By

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

26 February, 2024 | 11:00 AM onwards

(through video conferencing)

In the August Presence of

Ashwini Vaishnaw
Minister of Railways, Communications and
Electronics & Information Technology

Raosaheb Patil Danve
Minister of State for Railways
Coal and Mines

Darshana Jardosh
Minister of State for Railways
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PM Modi launches health projects worth Rs 37 crore in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated and laid the foundation for health projects costing Rs 11,391 crore in various parts of the nation from Rajkot on Sunday. The projects inaugurated by the PM include health projects worth Rs 37.13 crore in Uttarakhand. These include two units of food safety infrastructure, six units of PM Ayushman health infrastructure and two projects of the National Health Mission. The two food safety infrastructure units costing Rs 87.4 lakh inaugurated by Modi include two mobile food testing units. The projects launched under the PM Ayushman health infrastructure include the foundation laying for a critical care block costing Rs 20.35 crore and five block public health units costing Rs 4.05 crore. Under the National Health Mission, he laid the foundation stone for a transit hostel for health officials costing Rs 1.98 crore and an urban community health centre costing Rs 9.88 crore.



According to officials, under the Pradhanmantri Ayushman Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) Prime Minister Modi inaugurated block public health units at Purola in Uttarkashi district, Bhawali in Nainital district, Jakholi in Rudrapur district, Kapkot in Bageshwar and Barakot in Champawat. Under the National Health

Mission, the PM inaugurated an urban community health centre in Haridwar. Similarly, under PM-ABHIM, Modi laid the foundation for a critical care block in the district hospital at Rudrapur in Udham Singh Nagar while under the National Health Mission, he laid the foundation for the construction of a transit hostel for medical officers at the sub

district hospital at Srinagar in Pauri district. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the PM said that he had dedicated health projects worth Rs 11,391.79 crore to the nation from Rajkot in Gujarat. The five All India Institutes of Medical Sciences dedicated to the nation on Sunday show the swift pace of development taking place in the country. He said that for 50 years after India gained independence, there was only one AIIMS in the nation while in the past 10 days alone the nation has received seven new AIIMS. Modi said that his government is committed to facilitating modern health facilities in the nation. The health infrastructure in the country has changed swiftly during the past 10 years. The PM further said that his government had increased the MBBS seats from 50,000 to one lakh while the PG seats have increased from 30,000 to 70,000. The government is also encouraging Yoga and AYUSH education, the PM added.

Traffic to remain diverted during Assembly session starting today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Dehradun police issued a new traffic plan in view of the Assembly Session which will start from Monday. Several routes will remain diverted to ensure law and order and due to the probable protests and rallies on routes. According to the plan, the police will install barricades at Pragati Vihar, Shastrinagar, Haridwar Bypass, Defence

through Dharampur Chowk to ISBT will be diverted from the old Bypass Chowki to ISBT via Mata Mandir Road. Traffic going towards Mussoorie from the Mohkamur route will be diverted to Jogiwala, Ring Road, Ladpur, Sahasradhara crossing and IT Park to reach Mussoorie. All protest rallies who have been granted permission will only



Colony and Vidhan Sabha junction. All heavy vehicles will be diverted from Kargi Chowk and Doiwala towards Dudhli Road during the session. During heavy traffic pressure in the Rispana area, heavy vehicles might be temporarily stopped at Laltappad, Harrawala and Nayagaon. Vehicles going from Dehradun to Haridwar, Rishikesh, Tehri and Chamoli will be diverted towards Chhe Number Pulia via Nehru Colony and Fountain Chowk. The police informed that the traffic passing

proceed from Bannu School while their vehicles stay parked at the school premises. Vehicles arriving from Rispana towards the city will be diverted from the Haridwar Bypass towards Old Bypass Chowki when the rallies move towards the Pragati Vihar barrier. The authorities can also divert other routes across the city as per the requirement. The police appealed to commuters to use two-wheelers and alternate routes till the assembly session ends to avoid traffic inconvenience.

IG and SSP check security arrangements ahead of Assembly session

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The inspector general of Garhwal range Karan Singh Nagyal along with Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh took stock of the security arrangements inside and outside the Vidhan Sabha building and

superintendents of police, 20 police station in-charges, 117 sub inspectors and additional sub inspectors, 24 female inspectors and sub inspectors, 88 chief constables, 219 constables, 55 female constables, two companies and two sec-



various duty points in the city ahead of the Assembly session scheduled to commence from Monday.

They also conducted a brief with all the police personnel deployed on duty. Informing about police personnel deployed on duty for the Vidhan Sabha session, the SSP said that the department has deployed six additional superintendents of police, 14 deputy

tions of PAC, two quick response teams and five armed police guards.

He asked all personnel to carry out their duties diligently while staying calm and restrained. People protesting on roads or those who can disturb law and order should not be allowed to pass the barriers installed as per traffic plans.

Court sends Haldwani riot mastermind to 10-day PCR

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The court on Saturday night granted 10-day police custody remand (PCR) of the alleged mastermind of Haldwani violence Abdul Malik to the Nainital police. Malik was caught by the police on Saturday from Delhi, 16 days after the violence that took place in Haldwani's Vanbhulpura on February 8. The police produced him in the sessions court of Haldwani on Saturday night and appealed to the court for PCR arguing that a 10-day interrogation period was essential for investigation, as per the officials.

They said that the court considered the police's appeal and granted them Malik's PCR until March 6. The court scheduled further proceedings of the case following this period. The police had been searching for Malik in various States since the violence on February 8 that killed seven people and

injured over 100 persons including several police personnel, government officials and media persons. It also led to property damage worth over Rs two crores as per the officials. Considering Malik to be the prime accused of the violence who allegedly instigated others, the officials informed that the Municipal Corporation of Haldwani (MCH) issued a recovery notice of Rs 2.44 crore against him to deposit the money to cover damage caused to government property during the clash.

The police have so far arrested 81 accused in the case. Apart from this, officials said that the police will also take action against those people who had given shelter to Malik during his absconding period. The police are also expecting to get new information regarding the case from Malik that will help them to nab other remaining accused.

Maintaining democratic traditions & cooperation Opposition's responsibility too: Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State president Mahendra Bhatt has appealed to the Congress to maintain democratic traditions and cooperate constructively in the Vidhan Sabha. Terming the resignation of the Congress MLAs from the business advisory committee of the Assembly unfortunate, he said that it is important for all sides to respect public interest and public opinion. He requested the opposition MLAs to participate in a healthy debate in the house.

The BJP State president said that the Vidhan Sabha

basis of the decisions taken by the committee. However, it is unfortunate that the Congress has always played politics on this. The Congress members agree to the proposed agenda for the house in the committee's meeting but start raising ruckus for political gain on entering the house. Resigning from the business advisory committee is an insult of democratic traditions and should be reconsidered," the BJP State chief said.

Referring to allegations of the house being run on the basis of ma-



budget session starting on Monday is very important as it will decide the form of the State's development and public welfare in the coming one year.

He said that the policies in this budget will help in taking Uttarakhand one step closer to becoming an ideal State. Considering this, the opposition MLAs need to rise above partisan lines and cooperate constructively for a healthy debate in the Assembly. Bhatt said that the Vidhan Sabha is the best platform for raising issues of public interest and it is for this that the public has voted the MLAs to office. The BJP hopes that the Congress MLAs will debate with an open mind on the budget and various other public interest issues in the Assembly, he said.

Terming the resignation of Congress MLAs from the Assembly's business advisory committee unfortunate, the BJP State president requested them to reconsider their decision. "In the past too, the business of the house has been conducted on the

jority, Bhatt said that the Congress should accept that it has been rejected by the public in the elections. Everybody has the right to state one's views inside and outside the Assembly in a democracy but decisions are taken on the basis of majority and unanimous agreement, he stressed. "It is highly unfortunate that despite repeated electoral defeats in the past 10 years, the Congress has not lost the arrogance of power. This is the reason why it is not yet able to accept the decision of the public.

They will have to wait three more years to know the opinion of the public in Uttarakhand but actions like resigning from the business advisory committee and holding a symbolic Assembly session in Gairsain are making a mockery of democratic practices. Maintaining the dignity of democracy inside the outside the Assembly is the responsibility of the opposition MLAs too," Bhatt added.

Father of four arrested for teenager's rape

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police on Sunday arrested a man, who is married and has four children, from Haryana for allegedly eloping with a teenager. The officials informed that a woman named Nafisa (name changed) from Sahaspur registered a complaint on January 19 that her daughter (15) had gone to school to appear in an exam but she did not return. The family searched for her in all possi-

the accused in Haryana's Sonipat and pasted pamphlets about the accused across the Sonipat and other places for kidnapping the girl. The police also spread the information through social media and activated the local informer's system there. After consistently searching for the accused, the police finally arrested him on Sunday from Sonipat's Adarsh Nagar town. The officials informed that



ble places but could not find her. The police registered a complaint and started the investigation. It was revealed in the investigation that a man named Saddam alias Hussain Khan (35), a resident of Saharanpur, lured the minor girl to go along with him.

The officials said that the police got the possible locations of the accused based on the surveillance of his mobile phone numbers. The police also conducted raids on the possible hideouts of

the accused has four children and his wife is pregnant with their fifth child. The victim has said in her statement that Khan had allegedly raped her.

He was arrested under Section 363, 366(A) and 376(3) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3/4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The accused was sent to Suddhowala district jail after police presented him before the court on Sunday, the officials added.

कार्यालय नगर निगम रुद्रपुर (ऊद्यमसिंहनगर)
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फ़ॉन : 5151 / रजिस्ट्रार / 2023-24 / P.B. दिनांक : 24 फरवरी, 2024

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना
सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि नगर निगम, रुद्रपुर में **Proposal for the Establishment of a State-of-the-Art Municipal Solid Waste Processing Facility in Rudrapur in Accordance with SWM Rules 2016** एवं 01 वर्ष हेतु 04 बोलेरो वाहन मय वाहन चालक किराये पर उपलब्ध कराये जाने हेतु द्वितीय बार इच्छुक फर्मों / सेवाप्रदाताओं / एजेंसियों / वाहन स्वामियों आदि से दिनांक **26.02.2024** की प्रातः 11:00 बजे से दिनांक **04.03.2024** की सांय 05:00 बजे तक दोहरा निविदा प्रणाली (तकनीकी एवं वित्तीय निविदा) के अन्तर्गत अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो दिनांक **05.03.2024** को दोपहर 12:00 बजे निविदा समिति द्वारा खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा के सम्बन्ध में विस्तृत जानकारी / शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड शासन की वेबसाइट **www.uktenders.gov.in** तथा नगर निगम, रुद्रपुर की वेबसाइट **www.nagarnigamrudrapur.com** से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के सम्बन्ध में किसी भी कार्य दिवस पर प्रातः 10:00 बजे से सांय 05:00 बजे तक स्वास्थ्य अनुभाग नगर निगम, रुद्रपुर में सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है। निविदा को बिना कोई कारण बताये निरस्त करने का अधिकार नगर आयुक्त, नगर निगम, रुद्रपुर में निहित होगा।
(नरेश दुर्गापाल)
नगर आयुक्त, नगर निगम रुद्रपुर (ऊद्यमसिंह नगर)

(उदयराज सिंह)
प्रशासक, ऊद्यमसिंह नगर

TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
Regd. Address: 11th Floor, Tower A, Peninsula Business Park, Ganpat Rao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013
CIN No. U67190MH2008PLC187552

DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13 (2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("Act") read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ("Rules").
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited (TCHFL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Rules already issued detailed Demand Notice dated below under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) (all singularly or together referred to "Obligors")/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s) listed hereunder, to pay the amount mentioned in the respective Demand Notice, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice, as per details given below. Copies of the said Notices are served by Registered Post A.D. and are available with the undersigned, and the said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s), may, if they so desire, collect the respective copy from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours. In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/ Legal Representative(s) to pay to TCHFL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and/or realisation, read with the loan agreement and other documents / writings, if any, executed by the said Obligor(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to TCHFL by the said Obligor(s) respectively.

Loan Account No.	Name of Obligor(s)/ Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s)	Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.)	Date of Demand Notice & Date of NPA
TCHFL03740 00100071288 & TCHFL03740 00100071197	Mr. Dharam Veer Taneja (Borrower), Mrs. Beena Taneja & Mr. Yogesh Taneja (Co-borrower)	As on 13/02/2024, an amount of Rs. 25,98,947/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lakh Ninety Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Seven Only) is due and payable by you under the loan account TCHFL0374000100071197 and an amount of Rs. 5,32,310/- (Rupees Five Lakh Thirty Two Thousand Three Hundred Ten Only) is due and payable under the loan account no TCHFL0374000100071288 by you i.e. totalling to Rs. 31,31,257/- (Rupees Thirty One Lakh Thirty One Thousand Two Hundred Fifty Seven Only)	13-02-2024 07-02-2024

Description of the Secured Assets/ Immovable Properties/Mortgaged Properties:
All that Piece & Parcels of Residential Property, Admeasuring 90 Sq. Yds. i.e. 75.29 Sq. Mtrs. with Builtup Area Admeasuring 131.80 Sq. Mtrs., Comprised in Khata No. 260 (Fasli Year 1399 - 1404), Kharsa No. 507, Situated at Mauza Arcadia Grant, Pargana Pachwadon, District Dehradun (Uttarakhand), with all common amenities mentioned in Sale Deed. Boundaries: East – Road 18' Wide (Side 21'), West – Land of Sh. Devendra Singh & Others (Side 21'), North – Property of Sh. Devendra Singh & Others (Sid 38'-7'), South – Land of Sh. Amit Sharma (Side 38'-7').
*with further interest, additional Interest at the rate as more particularly stated in respective Demand Notices dated mentioned above, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc incurred till the date of payment and/or realization. If the said Obligor(s) shall fail to make payment to TCHFL as aforesaid, then TCHFL shall proceed against the above Secured Asset(s)/ Immovable Property (ies) under Section 13(4) of the said Act and the applicable Rules entirely at the risk of the said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s) as to the costs and consequences.
The said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s) are prohibited under the said Act to transfer the aforesaid Secured Asset(s)/Immovable Property(ies), whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of TCHFL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the Act or Rules made thereunder shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

Date : 26.02.2024
Place : Dehradun

Sd/-Authorised Officer
For Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited



OPINION 6
INDIAN NATIONHOOD
THRIVES AMID DIVERSITY

WORLD 8
TRUMP TRIUMPHS OVER HALEY
IN SOUTH CAROLINA

MONEY 10
MARKETS MAY FACE VOLATILITY AMID
DERIVATIVES EXPIRY: ANALYSTS

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MYTH BECOMES REALITY

Modi Bridges Ancient and Modern India



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated 'Sudarshan Setu', the country's longest cable-stayed bridge of 2.32 km, on the Arabian sea connecting Beyt Dwarka island to mainland Okha in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district. Modi began his day by offering prayers at Lord Sri Krishna temple at Beyt Dwarka. He later inaugurated the four-lane cable-stayed bridge called the 'Sudarshan Setu', which boasts a unique design, featuring a footpath adorned with verses from Srimad Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on both sides. The bridge, including 900 metres of central double span cable-stayed portion and a 2.45 km long approach road, has been constructed at a cost of ₹979 crore, as per an official release

PTI



Delhi BJP organises a programme in Old Delhi to listen to PM's Mann Ki Baat

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Modi urges first time voters to cast ballots in large numbers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

As the country prepares for general elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged first-time voters on Sunday to cast their ballots in record numbers, emphasising that their maiden vote should be for the country.

In the 110th episode of Mann Ki Baat, Modi announced that the monthly broadcast would not air for the next three months, adhering to political ethics ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

With the general elections expected in April-May, the PM said the possibility of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) being enforced in March, similar to 2019, hinting at the upcoming announcement of the



election schedule next month.

The MCC guidelines mandate that Governments refrain from using official events or public-funded platforms for activities that may favor the ruling party.

Modi highlighted the success of the programme in maintaining independence from Government influence over its 110 episodes, emphasising its dedication to the collective strength and

achievements of the country. "Mann Ki Baat is a programme "of the people, for the people, and by the people," Modi said.

"However, in line with political ethics, 'Mann Ki Baat' will not be broadcast for the next three months during the Lok Sabha elections," he said

"When we reconvene, it will be the 111th episode," Modi added, noting the significance of the number.

He encouraged first-time voters to participate in large numbers, declaring that the 18th Lok Sabha would symbolise their aspirations. As citizens become eligible to vote at 18, Modi urged youth not only to engage in political activities but also to stay informed about debates and discussions during this period.

Farmers stir pause brings respite to commuters

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

As the farmers halted their proposed march towards the national Capital, the Delhi Police on Sunday arranged a pathway for the commuters by removing a portion of blocks at the Singhu and Tikri borders, and authorities in Haryana also restored mobile internet services in seven districts on Sunday.

The services were suspended in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad, and Sirsa on February 11, and the suspension was extended on February 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24. Officials said no fresh order has been issued to extend the suspension of mobile services in the seven districts. A senior Delhi Police officer said they are removing a portion of the barrier from Point A to Point B for the commuters. "The deployment of police and paramilitary forces will ensure strict vigil round the clock. Force deployment will stay in place. Vehicle movement will not be allowed for now," he said. On Sunday, the city police removed two huge cement barriers for those commuters who walk towards Delhi using a small passage at the Singhu and Tikri borders.

Sandeshkhali continues to simmer

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

Continuing his attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government for "perpetrating atrocities on the poor people, including women" of the State of Bengal, Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said on Sunday that Sandeshkhali was just a trailer and that many more regions would rise up in revolt in the times to come.

"Sandeshkhali has just started showing the way like Nandigram did in 2009 and 2011... you will see that in days to come areas like

Jeliakhali, Nyajat, Tushkhali, Hingalganj, and neighboring regions, and then the villages of entire Bengal will rise up in revolt... against the oppression of Mamata and her army of goons led by the likes of Sheikh Shahjahan, who have not only grabbed the lands of the people but also sexually assaulted their women and thrown their men behind bars when they protested," Adhikari said on Sunday, reminding how year after year villagers were not allowed to vote by the TMC goons.

"I can show you how the people of Gosaba, Sandeshkhali, Basanti,

Canning Hingalganj, Diamond Harbour have not been allowed to vote... mostly the Hindus of these areas have been prevented from voting by the goons of Mamata ... the people of Sandeshkhali have openly complained how they have not voted after 2011... now the time of reckoning has come... the people will take revenge for all the sins that have been committed against them... they have united and risen up in revolt," he said. Meanwhile, in a related development, a Central fact-finding team of former bureaucrats and judges was prevented from entering



Sandeshkhali on Sunday, even as the island continued to simmer with women coming out of their houses in

large numbers, demanding the arrest of local TMC leader and district board member Shahjahan.

Sources said six members of the fact-finding team, led by former Chief Justice of the Patna High Court L Narasimha Reddy, were stopped by the police at the Bhojerhat area, about 50 km from the Sandeshkhali ferry ghat. The police cited the imposition of Section 144 of the CrPC, refusing them entry into the area.

When the team members attempted to break the police cordon, four of them - Justice Reddy, Raj Pal Singh, Charu Wali Khanna, and Bhavna Bajaj - were taken into preventive custody for alleged breach of peace before being released at the Labazar

police headquarters in Kolkata.

"We were visiting Sandeshkhali, but they stopped us... Police have purposely stopped us and are creating problems for the common people. Police are not letting us meet the victims of Sandeshkhali," Charu Wali Khanna said. Justice Reddy wanted to know "what the police are trying to hide from the rest of the world... what has happened and what has been happening there at Sandeshkhali that the world should not see... there is something seriously wrong here in Bengal."

AI ensures zero human animal conflict

ARCHANA JYOTI ■
NEW DELHI

Amid a disturbing surge in human-animal conflicts nationwide, the Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh offers a glimmer of hope with no reported loss of human life due to wild animal attacks in the past year. Udanti and Sitanadi are two wildlife sanctuaries combined, covering a total area of 1842.54 square kilometres. It was declared a tiger reserve back in 2009. Officials from the tiger reserve have attributed zero human-animal conflict to proactive measures implemented to mitigate such incidents and ensure the safety of both humans and wildlife. They also credited this positive scenario to leveraging cutting-edge AI



technology, an AI-based app, 'Chhattisgarh Elephant Tracking and Alert', which, they said, has played a crucial role in preventing

human-elephant conflicts by promptly alerting people about elephant movements. They explained that this

groundbreaking app has revolutionised the management of human-elephant conflicts by leveraging real-time data and analytics to promptly alert local communities about elephant movements, thereby reducing the risk of potential encounters and minimising conflict situations. "The successful implementation of this technology has not only enhanced public safety but has also contributed significantly to fostering coexistence between humans and elephants within the reserve's vicinity." In addition to technological interventions, the tireless efforts of the anti-poaching team have played a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of the reserve, resulting in the arrest of 120 poachers in the past year. These efforts have not only helped

protect vulnerable species but have also contributed to maintaining the ecological balance within the reserve. Through concerted efforts, encroachments on approximately 650 hectares within the reserve have been effectively removed, creating a safer environment for both wildlife and local communities. By preserving vital habitats and preventing wildlife from encroaching into nearby villages, these initiatives have been instrumental in minimising conflicts and promoting harmonious coexistence, said the officials. Despite these commendable achievements, challenges persist, and human-wildlife conflicts continue to pose significant threats nationwide.

Banned SIMI member held after 22 years manhunt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested a 47-year-old member of Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) who also allegedly edited a magazine of the banned organisation besides indoctrinating many gullible youths. According to the police, Hanif Sheikh was declared a proclaimed offender in 2002 and has been absconding for the last 22 years. He was nabbed on February 22 from Bhusawal in Jalgaon district in Maharashtra where he was a teacher in an Urdu school under a different identity, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Alok Kumar claimed that Hanif was the most notorious and wanted SIMI terrorist who had played pivotal roles in various activities of the proscribed organisation across the country. Police said the SIMI magazine that Hanif Sheikh edited had his name printed as Haneef Hudai. This was the only lead available with the police, making it difficult to trace him, they said.

A case of sedition and under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was registered against him in 2001 at New Friends Colony police station in the national Capital.



Keeping alive the legacy of Sanskrit

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■
CHENNAI

As one enters the premises of an old but elegant building in Mylapore in Chennai, one is greeted with the hymns, slokas and chanting of songs worshipping Gods, Goddesses and wisdom. Hundreds of students undergo a gurukul style education spread across many classrooms. Their common identity is the customary tuft, veshti, angavastram and the cotton shirt.



Modernity, as practiced in the high profile colleges, is yet to make its presence in this institution which has an aura and halo of a place of worship. A group of ancient Hindu temples surround the college providing it a divine outlook. The visitor is likely to feel that he is in Sage Vasishtha's Gurukula, the alma mater of Lord Ram. A steaming pot of filter coffee, the chanting from the dozens of temples nearby and the ambience of Madras Sanskrit College is what gives life to Mylapore.

It is Madras Sanskrit College, established in 1906 by philanthropists and puritans of Indian tradition whose only passion was to preserve the age old Indian culture in its true form without getting polluted by alien forces. It is a wonder that the institution built from the scratch by V Krishnaswami Iyer, leading lawyer of Madras Bar Association, who went up to become the Member of the Governor's Executive Council, stood the challenges of time and survives till this day as the Sun of

Knowledge despite efforts by the all powerful Dravidian forces to destroy and demolish the college. What started as a Gurukula Patasala, today stands majestically and imparts courses in Mimamsa, Advaita Vedanta, Vyakarana, Sahitya, Jyothisha and Nyaya as well as in all the special branches of study selected by the students. The teaching is in the age old style and resembles intellectual bouts between students and teachers.

GUEST COLUMN

Reviving Ram Rajya: A pivotal alternative to decaying democracy



Vir Singh

In the lively clamour of elections, a profound silence casts its shadow, revealing the paradox of the "Festival of Democracy." The very essence of this festival simmers on the political crucible, overshadowing even the agricultural heartbeat of our nation. In the relentless pursuit of electoral dominance, the nation has metamorphosed into an election-centric entity, where the concoction of election strategies simmers day and night, permeating every moment of the year. Democracy, the lifeblood of our country, has endured various trials, from surviving British rule's divisive legacy to grappling with internal disputes and separatism post-independence. Now, at a critical juncture, democracy stands at a crossroads, yearning for a dynamic alternative to ensure its own transcendence.

In the meantime, in its national council meeting held recently, the Bharatiya Janata Party passed a resolution describing the Ayodhya Ram temple as a "historic and glorious achievement" for the country, establishing Ram Rajya in India for the next one thousand years with the invocation of the new Kalachakra.

India, with its diverse cultural and historical tapestry, has long grappled with two models of governance: democ-

racy and Ramrajya. While democracy is celebrated for its ideals of freedom and equality, concerns loom over its impact on the nation's integrity, well-being and glory. In contrast, Ram Rajya embodies the true essence of Indian culture, offering a harmonious and ideal system of governance. A closer examination of the threats posed by democracy unveils Ram Rajya as a meaningful alternative in the Indian context.

Despite its roots in ancient Greece, democracy has become a globally adopted political system. In the Indian context, democratic principles aim to secure individual freedoms, establish jurisprudence and foster governance.



However, over time, external influences have eroded the integrity of the democratic system. Western countries,

self-proclaimed defenders of democracy, have witnessed a contamination of democratic ideals by non-democratic elements, potentially leading to regrettable consequences for their native citizens.

In India, the mosaic of languages, religions and traditions poses both strength and challenge to democracy. While the democratic process promotes public interests, it simultaneously recognises parties and groups that may encroach upon national interests. This dual-edged nature leads the nation toward disintegration, often at the expense of long-term national interests.

Within a democracy, decisions are predominantly based

with the nation and its leaders. This breach in democracy enables the emergence of separatist ideologies, fragmented identities and the proliferation of toxic elements. The nation fades into the background as fear, violence, corruption and socio-cultural pollution thrive.

Democracy, instead of ensuring economic equality, engenders socio-economic disparities. Capitalism becomes integral to democracy, creating a divide where some thrive in opulence while the majority languishes in poverty. Inequality and unrest become inherent by-products of this democratic system. The duty of any governance system is to pave the way for a better future, a task hindered by the

democratic framework jeopardises the nation's future. Blindly imitating democracy has led European countries to grapple with issues arising from Islamic minorities, posing a threat to their peace and stability. In light of these challenges, it is time to reconsider democracy as the ideal governance system and reevaluate the merits of Ram Rajya. Rooted in ancient Hindu scriptures, especially the Ramayana, Ram Rajya envisions a just and merciful ruler, Lord Rama, whose kingdom thrives under a common culture, equality and prosperity. Ram Rajya prioritises dharma, justice and compassion, embodying Indian values. It fosters unity within society, discourages division, and upholds morality and ethical leadership. The focus on community welfare aligns with the rich vision of Indian culture, emphasising the holistic welfare of all living beings. In the concept of Ram Rajya, we should also consider that in the hands of Ram, there was also a bow and arrow for eliminating the demons.

In navigating the complex governance landscape, India finds itself at a crossroads between democracy and Ram Rajya. Striking a balance between democratic elements and the governance qualities inherent in Ram Rajya could pave the way for a culturally rich nation to overcome its unique challenges. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted after the consecration of Ramlalla in the Ram temple, the emergence of Ram Rajya in India is not only necessary but imperative for the nation's identity, eternity, cheerfulness and glory.

(The author is professor emeritus, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Views expressed are personal)

U'khand progressing swiftly in dairy production, says CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that Uttarakhand is progressing swiftly in the sphere of dairy production. He said this after administering the oath of office to newly elected office bearers of dairy production committees of seven districts including Chamoli, Pauri, Dehradun, Almora, Champawat, Pithoragarh and Udham Singh Nagar on

the Govardhan scheme and ensuring that farmers in remote rural areas also learn about the innovations related to animal husbandry.

The CM said, "It is due to the hard work of our farmers that daily milk production which was about 1,90,000 litres in 2020-21 increased to about 2,18,000 litres per day in 2023-24. The ratio of this

they are keeping the cattle in and explaining this to farmers in districts with low milk production will achieve an increase in milk production," Dhami said. He further said that the government is also making consistent efforts for improvement of cow breeds in the State. The milk yield from the State's Badri cow had dropped considerably and after improvements in the



Sunday at the CM residence. Dhami said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to ensuring the prosperity of farmers and those in animal husbandry in the rural areas. The State government is also implementing various schemes to ensure their welfare. He said that the Uttarakhand Dairy Federation is doing commendable work when it comes to purchasing milk from dairy producers, purchasing cow dung under

growth can be increased further if we work on innovations in the sector. At present the Nainital district is producing the maximum quantity of milk. Research should be conducted to see what the Nainital farmers and dairy producers are doing to achieve such a high milk production. Understanding which breeds of cows and buffaloes they are rearing, what fodder they are giving and the atmosphere

breed, the milk production capacity of this breed has doubled, he said.

Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development minister Saurabh Bahuguna the State government has resolve pendency cases of incentives to milk producers and also provided advance to them. The government is working on marketing and branding plan to provide more benefit to milk producers.

MCD gears up for legacy waste disposal in Sheeshambada

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) will send a detailed project report (DPR) to the State government for the disposal of legacy waste accumulated in the solid waste management and recycling plant in Sheeshambada. The project report will be based on the report of the team of scientists from IIT Roorkee who visited the site in December and January to take samples of the waste.

There is at least five lakh metric tonnes of refuse derived fuel accumulated in the waste management plant which has remained unprocessed in the past six years allegedly due to the failure of Ramky Enviro

reason for its accumulation in the plant, as per senior MCD officials.

The Dehradun municipal commissioner Gaurav Kumar said that the team of scientists from IIT Roorkee presented their report to MCD which has helped the corporation to understand the quantification and characterisation of legacy waste in Sheeshambada. "On the basis of this report, we will soon send a DPR to the government to take appropriate action for the legacy waste disposal via biomining. After MCD gets the nod on this project, we will start the process of biomining at the site. It will take 12 to 18 months to dispose



Engineers Limited (REEL) to dispose of it on time, as per MCD officials. The plant was established with the capacity to process the RDF and garbage for 15 years but it occupied most of the space in the plant with huge heaps of RDF and unprocessed garbage in the first four years due to REEL's failure to dispose of them on time. The REEL allegedly made poor quality RDF due to which, cement factories refused to buy them which was the main

of Sheeshambada's legacy waste once the work begins," the municipal commissioner said.

He also informed that MCD will soon start the tender process to commence biomining on the old trenching ground on Sahasradhara Road to treat about 10 lakh metric tonnes of garbage. This team of scientists had also visited this site to check samples. The work is expected in the next few months, Kumar added.

Police collect Rs 90.8 lakh penalty from 908 landlords in verification drive

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police on Sunday imposed a penalty of over Rs 90.8 lakh on 908 landlords in Dehradun for not getting their tenants verified as per the rules.



The police took this action under the verification drive to identify unverified and suspicious people living in the district as part of the police's preparation in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh informed that various police teams conducted door to door visits to check verifications of tenants, employees, domestic servants, street vendors and others belonging to other states and districts. During the massive verification campaign that lasted for five hours, the police verified and collected the personal information of a total of 5,871 people. The police also brought 315 suspicious people to the respective police stations after they failed to present any valid documents.

The police also collected a fine of Rs 41,250 from 151 suspicious persons under the Police Act. In the past two weeks, the police have taken action against about 2,000 landlords under the Police Act and imposed a penalty of about Rs two crore.

Singh said that the police are committed to ensuring fair and safe conduct of Lok Sabha elections in peace and harmony. The drive is being conducted against



The mark sheet of my high school examination Uttar Pradesh Board year 1986 and intermediate examination year 1988 is actually lost somewhere. Couldn't find it even after a lot of searching. If someone gets it, don't misuse it. Navneet Kumar son of Harichand Garg resident of 28 Feeta Road Vikasnagar-Dehradun.

The general public is informed that I have changed my name from GAURAV WALIA to GAURAV SINGH and in future I should be known as Gaurav Singh S/o Sumant Singh Walia, address: Nangal, Bulandawala, Doiwala, Dehradun.

In my Passport No Z5209272 my mother's name is mistakenly mentioned as CHOEDON whereas her correct name is TSERING CHUNTSO. It should be updated in passport for all future purposes. Namdak Choedon, D/o Amdo Tashi, address: Kargyu Monastery, Tibetan Colony, Clement Town, Dehradun

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E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSET CHARGED TO THE BANK UNDER THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("SARFAESI ACT") READ WITH RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("RULES")
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/Co-Borrowers/Guarantor/s (including the Legal Heirs, in case of death of any of the Borrower/Co-borrower/Guarantor (s)) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged (collectively referred as "Property") to RBL Bank Ltd. ("Secured Creditor/Bank"), the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Bank under section 14 of the SARFAESI Act read with the Rules, as detailed hereunder, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", "Whatever there is" and "Without Recourse Basis", for recovery of the Bank's outstanding dues plus interest as detailed hereunder under Rules 8 and 9 of the Rules by inviting bids as per below e-auction schedule:
Brief Description of Parties, Outstanding dues and Property

S. No.	Name of the Borrower & Guarantor (s)	Details of Property	Amount as per Demand Notice Date of Demand & Possession Notice under SARFAESI Act	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increase Amount	Inspection Date	Date/ Time of E-Auction	Last Date for Receipt of Bids along with documents	Name of Authorised Officer/ Phone No./Email Id
1	Tribhuvan Kumar Saini House no.129, Habibpur, Nawada, Bhagwanpur, Haridwar, Uttaranchal-247661	Khata No. 78, Khasra No. 261 Ka Part, Village Bhagwanpur, Jadid, Mustahkam, Pargana and Tehsil Bhagwanpur, District Haridwar.	Rs. 26,80,654.80/- (Rs. Twenty Six Lacs Eighty Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Four and Paise Eighty Only) as on 28.11.2022 against Demand notice dated 29.11.2022	Reserve Price: Rs. 38,00,000/- (Rupees Thirty Eight Lacs Only) EMD Amount: Rs.3,80,000/- (Rupees Three Lacs Eighty Thousand Only)	18.03.2024 (With prior appointment)	28.03.2024 At 2:00 PM.	On or Before 27.03.2024 upto 05:00 P.M.	Mrs. Monica Gupta Contact: 9910570226 Email id: monica.gupta@rblbank.com (Authorised Officer)
2	Babalesh Kumari House no.129, Habibpur, Nawada, Bhagwanpur, Haridwar, Uttaranchal-247661	Jadid, Mustahkam, Pargana and Tehsil Bhagwanpur, District Haridwar.	Date of Physical Possession Notice- 18.01.2024	Bid Increase Amount: Rs. 50,000/- (Rupees Fifty Thousand Only)				Manik Kapoor Contact: 999889121 email: manik.kapoor@rblbank.com
3	Monika Tribhuvan House no.129, Habibpur, Nawada, Bhagwanpur, Haridwar, Uttaranchal-247661							

Terms and Conditions:
(1) The E-Auction Sale will be online through e-auction portal. The interested bidders are advised to go through the detailed terms and conditions of auction available on the website of <https://www.bankauctions.com> & <https://www.rblbank.com/pdf-pages/news-before-submitting-their-bids-and-taking-part-in-e-auction>.
(2) It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the Property and specification before submitting the bid.
(3) The interested bidders shall submit their details and documents through Web Portal: <https://www.bankauctions.com> (the user ID & Password can be obtained free of cost by registering name with <https://www.bankauctions.com>) through Login ID & Password. The amount shall be payable through NEFT/RTGS in the following Account of RBL BANK Ltd:- Auction Proceeds Collection GL, Account No 2599001000139998 (IFSC Code RATN0000100) OR thru Demand Draft before 05:00 PM on or before 14.03.2024.
(4) Interested bidders may avail support/online training on E-Auction from M/s. C1 India Pvt Ltd Contact No: 7291981124/25/26. Contact Person Mr. Vinod Chauhan Mob No: 9813887931, e-mail-id: delhi@c1india.com and for any query in relation to Property, they may contact Mrs. Monica Gupta, Authorised Officer (Mob. No. 9910570226, email: monica.gupta@rblbank.com) and Manik Kapoor Contact: 999889121 email: manik.kapoor@rblbank.com)
(5) The Authorised Officer of the Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, & / or to postpone/cancel the auction at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final and binding.
(6) The successful bidder should bear the charges/fee payable for conveyance viz. stamp duty, registration charges etc., as per applicable law and shall also pay other known/unknown statutory/govt./labour dues/taxes/dues etc. over and above the purchase consideration.
(7) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the bid amount after adjusting the EMD already deposited within next day of acceptance of the bid price by the Authorised Officer and the balance 75% of the bid price on or before 15th day of the sale or within such extended period as agreed upon in writing by and solely at the discretion of the Authorised Officer. In case of failure to deposit 25% of the bid amount / 75% balance amount within the prescribed period mentioned above, the entire amount deposited (including EMD) shall be forfeited by the Authorised Officer without any notice and the property shall forthwith be sold again. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bids or to adjourn, postpone or cancel the auction sale without assigning any reason thereof.

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Sd/-
Authorised Officer
RBL Bank Ltd.



It is a matter of immense joy and pride that the Vasantotsav 2024 is being organized at Raj Bhawan in coordination with the horticulture department between March 1-3, 2024. Along with the flower show, numerous competitions have also been organized, details of which are mentioned below.

[illegible]

- In Vasantotsav-2024, the schemes/programmes/technology run by regional departments/central departments/institutions/agricultural universities etc. will be showcased through their respective stalls.
- In Vasantotsav-2024, various institutions/firms, NGOs and women self-help groups etc. will also set up stalls for display/sale of their products.
- Contestants will prepare their exhibits and concerned departments at the designated place by 06:00 pm on February 29, 2024, after which permission will not be granted. The flower exhibition will be inaugurated on March 01, 2024 at 11:00 am. After this, the exhibition will be open for the general public from 01:00 pm to 6:00 pm and on March 02 and 03, 2024, from 09:00 am to 6:00 pm, Entry is free for the general public.
- In the exhibition, spaces are available for the photo exhibits, art gallery and cultural programs, based on the photographs of flowers taken by the visiting flower lovers/ photographers. There is also a food court with a variety of dishes for the general public to savour.

Therefore, all the respected citizens and flower lovers of the state are requested to visit Raj Bhawan, Dehradun in large numbers on 01, 02 and 03 March 2024 as per the above scheduled time and take advantage of the flower exhibition. Contenders willing to participate in the competitions can download and submit the entry form on the department website <https://dohfp.uk.gov.in> or <http://shm.uk.gov.in>

Address for receiving and submitting application form	1. Office-Chief Horticulture Officer, Vikas Bhawan, Survey Chowk, Dehradun Mob.- 9412962728	2. Office of the Director, Horticulture/Additional Director, Horticulture, State Park, Circuit House, Dehradun Mob.- 9634299775

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Shades of grey

Do political parties really mean to fulfil poll promises, or is it mere rhetoric to befool voters?

Every election season, political parties can be seen letting loose a long litany of promises — some really genuine, but mostly mere pleasing-to-the-ears rhetoric. These campaign pledges, called poll manifestos or electoral promises or even ‘jumlas’, are tailor-made to meet local voters’ aspirations that season. However, a critical question looms: Is it really feasible for the parties to fulfil these promises? This discourse has gained fresh attention following the Chief Election Commissioner’s (CEC) statement emphasising the voters’ right to know if these promises can be delivered. The CEC’s stance underscores the need for transparency and accountability in the electoral process, with the hope that it will prompt political actors to make promises more responsibly. At the heart of this debate lies a complex interplay of political dynamics, economic constraints, administrative capabilities and societal expectations. While political parties often design their agenda with the intention of securing electoral victory, the practicality of implementing poll promises after getting elected is subject to numerous challenges; mainly the inherent uncertainty and volatility of governance. The political discourse is ever-evolving and parties have to adjust to it, often going back on what they themselves might have vociferously advocated. Besides unforeseen events, economic fluctuations and global dynamics also make it difficult to fulfil poll promises. What may seem feasible during an election campaign could swiftly become untenable in the face of emerging challenges. The way out? At best, the parties can just declare: “It is our intention; conditions apply.” Such an honest declaration does not at least sound as if it



were a done deal. Interestingly, even voters know that certain promises are undeliverable but then they do not have much choice, especially since the rival party is also tomming schemes that cannot be fulfilled. Of course there are unforeseen, serious challenges to genuinely-made pledges but the problem arises when misleading or false promises are deliberately made to capture votes. Worse, the parties know they can get away with it as there are no punitive damages yet for this practice. It is imperative for political parties to adopt a more responsible approach. Instead of succumbing to populist rhetoric, they should prioritise honesty, realism and evidence-based policymaking. Transparency also plays a crucial role in fostering accountability. Voters have the right to be informed not only about the promises made but also about the rationale behind them and the strategy for implementation. Also, robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation should be established to track progress and hold Governments accountable for their party’s commitments. Then there is a need for greater public awareness to ensure that electoral promises are scrutinised rigorously. Citizens must actively participate in the democratic process, holding elected representatives accountable for their actions. Those deliberately making false promises must be punished through the ballot box.

PICTALK



Women devotees offer prayers during the Attukal Pongala festival, in Thiruvananthapuram

PTI

Revamping India’s intelligence network

There is a pressing need for reforms within India’s intelligence framework, addressing coordination deficits and accountability lapses

The imperative for a comprehensive overhaul of India’s intelligence framework becomes apparent when considering the existence of 14 intelligence agencies, each with varying and occasionally overlapping responsibilities. These agencies have come into being in response to strategic shifts and past shortcomings. In the aftermath of the 1962 conflict with China, the Directorate General of Security (DGS) was established within the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Subsequently, following the 1965 war with Pakistan, external intelligence was segregated into a distinct entity, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), which also birthed the Special Bureau aimed at enhancing organisational effectiveness. After the 1999 Kargil conflict, the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) were instituted. However, persistent issues stem from the lack of coordination among these agencies. The absence of a Director of National Intelligence or a Coordinating Minister exacerbates this problem.



Accountability remains a concern.

The intelligence apparatus, entrenched in the colonial-era police structure, grapples with adapting to contemporary challenges. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), primarily oriented towards domestic and political affairs, encounters limitations in counterintelligence endeavours. Despite initiatives like the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), cooperation deficiencies persist. In 2001, a Group of Ministers proposed elevating the IB to the status of the premier Counter-Terrorism agency, culminating in the establishment of MAC and Subsidiary MACs for intelligence amalgamation. Externally, the R&AW, responsible for external intelligence gathering, confronts challenges such as excessive reliance on TECHINT and insufficient development of human intelligence (HUMINT).

While the establishment of the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) aimed to address technological aspects, issues like overlapping mandates and coordination gaps have arisen. Reform is imperative, commencing with the delineation of contemporary challenges, specialisations, and oversight mechanisms. Concerning oversight, India lacks effective mechanisms for its intelligence agencies. Suggestions include appointing individuals well-versed in operational modalities at a macro level or establishing a National Intelligence Board for monitoring. Apex-level management necessitates enhancement, possibly through the appointment of a full-time intelligence adviser or a Director of National Intelligence under the NSA or MHA. Coordination and tasking, particularly between the Centre and states, remain deficient, necessitating legislative attention. The Intelligence Cycle requires refinement, with a clear demarcation between collection and analy-

sis. Personnel issues. Human intelligence (HUMINT) and technical intelligence (TECHINT) pose distinct challenges. While big data analysis is nascent, considerations regarding privacy and legislative authorization for extensive data scrutiny are paramount. The dearth of skilled manpower for HUMINT is a significant concern, and bolstering military expertise within intelligence agencies is imperative. Although inspired by the ideology of the 5 Eyes, I4C, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has not been effectively operationalized in the realm of digital warfare. Effectiveness in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency remains a pressing concern. Failures to establish the National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC) and inter-agency conflicts underscore the need for a robust system. Ensuring successful prosecutions following counter-terrorism arrests is pivotal. (The writer is an eminent expert-Counter Terrorism (in West Asia & Middle Eastern countries, views are personal)



NISHAKANT OJHA

The aftermath of a controversial election



UMANG KOHLI

Amid concerns over rising debt and geopolitical tensions, the resilience of Pakistan’s political fabric faces its sternest test yet



Pakistan has not given a fractured mandate, on paper, it may seem fractured however the call people have taken is clear. It goes without saying that if 100 independent candidates win, it’s no mean achievement for a party that is backing them. The story of what happened in 1968 in Pakistan is often forgotten, in that year, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto brought down the military presidency of Gen Ayub Khan. Pakistan has seen big upheavals in the past and as things stand today another one is brewing for sure. This time against a China-Pak Army selected candidate who will be nominated at the top post, against the will of the people. Most analysts believed Nawaz Sharif was sure to become the PM however why he did not make it to the top slot has to do with how he reacted to situations post-Kargil. Sharif was thrown out in 1999 by General Musharraf, who then led Pakistan’s army because he publicly ridiculed the army for apparently keeping him in the dark concerning the Kargil War. Now as they say once bitten twice shy, the Pakistani army always wanted a third person apart from Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan to be the notional head of Pakistan, and they are gunning for one. The Pakistani army used the clout of

Nawaz Sharif (whatever he had) to try and get to power someone they wanted and somehow get rid of Imran Khan. China has had a friendly relationship with the Sharif family so they are fine with someone coming up with Sharif’s backing. Now the question is, will the people of Pakistan accept the humiliation of subversion of their mandate? Has the Pakistani army become so weak that it does not hold any sway over the people of Pakistan? Does the US still have control over the Pakistani Army and what they do to influence elections in Pakistan? Would a coalition Government that lacks popular support be able to sustain itself? Will there be even more civil unrest in Pakistan in the months to come? Answers to these questions hold the key to what is going to unfold in Pakistan shortly. Things in Pakistan have never been quiet from within, and this election has exposed the hollow belly of the Pakistani electoral system. In most of the constituencies, the election was rigged. Some of the election commission officers have since resigned after admitting to mass-scale rigging. It’s almost incomprehensible how



THE US STILL HAS A LOT OF INTEREST IN PAKISTAN, MAYBE BECAUSE OF OLD TIES OR BECAUSE IT’S AN ISLAMIC NATION WITH A DECLARED NUCLEAR WEAPON SYSTEM. WHATEVER IT MAY BE, BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY OVERRIDING CONTROL OVER THINGS IN PAKISTAN ANYMORE

a US official spokesperson then has called the election reliable. The so-called results that have been thrown up show that PMLN has 79 seats, and PPP has 54 seats in a 264-seat parliament giving both of them combined a comfortable majority. I’ll look like a coalition Government would come up in Pakistan would be devoid of a popular mandate which is likely to fuel unrest in the public even more in the days to come. The mandate of the people seems to be with PTI and with Imran Khan. In this coalition too the two parties joining hands have a little in common and would provide a weak Government ridden by internal friction and lobbying. Under these circumstances, the people of Pakistan are going to feel cheated. In a country that has not a single respected institution in place and has a supreme court that is by and large influenced by vested interests, civil unrest looks around the corner. If this kind of circumstance persists, the balkanisation of Pakistan is not far away, no matter how hard China tries to keep it together. The US still has a lot of interest in Pakistan, maybe because of old ties or because it’s an Islamic nation with a

declared nuclear weapon system, whatever it may be but it does not seem to have any overriding control over things in Pakistan anymore. The US does have some control over the Pakistani Army however Pakistani Army seems to have lost all respect in the eyes of the general public in Pakistan. It looks like people are not fearful of the Pakistani Army anymore. It looks like the people of Pakistan would find it hard to digest that their mandate has been subverted. It’s a writing on the wall that this new coalition that has taken a good fortnight to form may just fall under its pressure in due course of time. How this new coalition Government would tackle the rising debt crisis would also be interesting to see. In the past Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has made low-brow and irresponsible comments against India, hopefully, he will have matured now and will refrain from jingoism. Sharif brothers are mature politicians, however, they would be under tremendous pressure from China, the US, the Pakistani Army and the people of Pakistan. (The writer is an expert on geopolitics and international Affairs. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHO REPORT ON AIR POLLUTION

Sir — The World Health Organisation’s report on air pollution has been released recently. According to this year 2020, 32 lakh people will have died due to air pollution. What is even more alarming is that five lakh deaths are of children under the age of five. This news was recently read that there are many causes of pollution in the world. Many people cook on kerosene and charcoal. The number of such is about 2.3 billion. Apart from this, leaves are burnt in many fields, which also causes pollution. The huge number of vehicles and the pollution caused by it is a matter known to all. Even today, many countries in South Asia depend on wood and coal.

It is necessary to increase the use of clean fuel to reduce air pollution in the country. It is necessary to increase the use of solar, stove, biogas, LPG natural gas and alcohol fuel. Apart from this, it is necessary to reduce the use of petrol and diesel vehicles and replace them with electric vehicles. The central government is alert about electric vehicles and is thinking and taking action on how their use will increase in the country. Domestic gas is also being used on a large scale in the country, so it seems that all these measures can save you from air pollution.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

PAROLE REGULATIONS

Sir — Handing and controlling parole to convicts in Indian jails is very contentious, and often misused. Parole is a "promise" or "word of honour" given by the convicts that they will return after a specific period. In special circumstances, it can be a "corrective rehabilitation". In India, the Prison Acts of 1894 and 1900 govern parole rules though they differ slightly across states. The parole, which can be custodial lasting six hours to regular, lasting one month, is monitored by prison officers and applies after the prisoner completes at least one year in prison unless specified by the court. A CAG report had said that parole was

Karnataka temple tax move draws ire



The Karnataka Government’s contentious proposal to impose taxes on Hindu temples has ignited a firestorm of debate, drawing sharp criticism from opposition parties and various religious groups. The bill stipulates that temples with annual incomes exceeding Rs 1 crore must contribute 10% to a Common Pool Fund, while those generating between Rs 10 lakh and

Rs 1 crore should chip in five per cent. Proponents argue that the fund’s proceeds will be directed towards the welfare of temple priests and the development of lesser-known C-grade temples. Despite passing through the assembly, the bill faced a decisive rejection in the council, where the opposition commands a majority. Meanwhile, a recent survey sheds light on public sentiment regarding the tax measure. It reveals that 52% of Hindus in Karnataka perceive the tax as discriminatory, while 48% deem it necessary. Furthermore, a significant majority of 62% believe that small temples should be exempt from this taxation. Although the Karnataka Government has refrained from disclosing anticipated revenue figures, experts speculate that the tax could generate up to Rs 1,000 crore annually, underscoring the financial implications and societal divisions surrounding this contentious issue.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

a "convenient" route of escape for convicts. Following a Delhi High Court verdict that had severely castigated the police for its inability to regulate the whole parole process adequately, serious offenders involved in rape-cum-murder, and those posing a threat to the country’s security and those who are not Indian citizens are "strictly" barred from being granted parole by the Government. But a lot more needs to be done and there is a need to impose a foolproof method to prevent prisoners from taking advantage of certain lax provisions still existing in law.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

SPORTS CONNECT PEOPLE

Sir — In this rapidly changing time, only a few things keep people close and give them a medium to be connected. One such medium is sports. Sports give the fans a feeling of attachment and affinity. It builds communities that feel the adrenaline rush every time their team moves up on the leaderboard and that shed tears when they are on the losing side. Be it the

nations, franchises, or clubs, they all have a legacy—a legacy that has triumphant victories and tragic defeats that keep the fans close and make them support the team even through the tough times. The Tifosi, for instance, have an undying love for Ferrari, given the glorious legacy the red machine has from the early days of Formula One. Even if the team is struggling on the leaderboard, the passion is still the same as it was during the era of sheer dominance when the likes of Michael Schumacher or Sebastian Vettel raced for "The Prancing Horse."

The reason behind this unwavering support and loyalty is the bond that fans develop with the sport, their heroes, and their triumphs. For those who don’t watch sports, all this might just be a waste of time, but for lovers of the game, it is an escape from a tedious and mundane life. It connects people and can be a meaningful way of finding purpose in one’s life.

Pratyush Tiwari | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING WORK AND WELL-BEING

It's time to shift from the disciplinary mantra 'act your age' to 'act your wage'



SHAINY SHARMA

In today's cutthroat and challenging work landscape, finding the right balance between professional devotion and personal well-being can be challenging. The modern work culture often encourages its employees to go beyond their potential, leading to exploitation, anxiety and burnout. The internet, social media, Gen Z and millennials with time have gone crazy about the term quiet quitting all over and now a new trend which is considered to be a 'loud quiet quitting' is buzzing everywhere- the notion of Acting Your Wage. It has emerged as a call from the fed-up workers and employees who believe it's a solution to establish boundaries and ensure that employees are neither overworked nor under-utilized. Since the beginning of the digital era (use of cell phones), Gen Z was expected to be available 24x7 in their workplace whereas the older generation worked according to their job timings. Millennials are tech-savvy and cannot stay away from their gadgets.

Acting your wage is a philosophy that revolves around performing only those tasks and duties for which an employee is contracted and compensated and not for taking additional responsibilities without proper recognition or compensation. In layman's language, it means dedicating yourself to the responsibilities explicitly tied to your compensation while avoiding the trap of overextending beyond your job description.

Today, younger workers have an egalitarian mindset- a penchant for social activism and expectations of two-way feedback. They work on a simple theory - what is a job worth? It is not about being complacent or neglecting work responsibilities instead, the generation believes in recognising the importance of self-care, setting boundaries and preserving energy for long-term productivity and well-being.



It is about recognising an individual's worth and ensuring that the time and effort they devote to their job align with the compensation they receive. Moreover, studies reveal that employees who practice this approach achieve a healthier work-life balance, preserve their energy levels, protect themselves from potential exploitation and most importantly, prevent burnout. Today many employees are taking the initiative to clarify their job roles with their seniors so that a clear understanding of what is expected is ensured and ambiguity is prevented. Also, employees are now practising the art of politely saying 'no' to additional tasks that fall outside their job description and instead actively seeking opportunities for advancement or higher roles that align with their skill set and career. Employers on the other hand, who tend to implement this notion will benefit as, it will enhance employee well-being, increase job satisfaction, improve productivity and most importantly strengthen the work culture. There will be a culture of transparency, fairness and respect within the organization. Organisations who are already provide clear and comprehensive job descriptions to employees, outline their roles and responsibilities, acknowledge and reward them for their contributions, and invest in training and development programmes that will offer them opportunities to grow and advance within the organisation are already away from this notion.

There is no denying the fact that success in any field grows out of learning how to build skills, how to ask for help and how to build capacity in ways that don't even exist. The act of wage is a way to take care of yourself to be stress-free. Remember, one needs to normalise doing the bare minimum at work. An individual signs up for a job. If the employers are not paying extra to do extra tasks, strictly don't do them. It's time to throw the disciplinary line 'act your age' and turn it to 'act your wage'.

(The author is a senior educator, views are personal)

Indian education system: The quest for perfection



The Indian education system stands at a crossroads, poised between recognition and realisation of its inherent potential



Looking back from the transition point to the third millennium, it could indeed be interesting—and revealing—as to what was the most encouraging achievement in the pivotal sector of education! The most mentioned of the responses to the query from seasoned academics and scholars, as well as the policymakers who had contributed to policy formulation and implementation for three-four decades, referred to the change in social responses from various strata of society.

The most serious impediment was ignorance of the value of education in the lives of the individual and the family. One wonders whether anything more could be expected from a society seriously emaciated for centuries, and subjected to live their lives in abject misery! Social structures that practised exclusion, seriously flawed assumptions on the role of women and its relationship to female literacy, and the excruciating hold of the clergy in deprecating the education of girls were indeed serious handicaps before all those who were assigned to implement the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education to all children till they achieve fourteen years of age!

The widely prevalent practice of early marriage, child labour, compulsions to earn daily bread, and the need for extra hands in farms and fields, were also prominent factors that severely impeded the process of enrolment in schools. It may be tough for the millennials to visualise a situation that for decades together, girls' education in India suffered for want of toilets for girls in schools. This is one area that remained neglected all along.

After the Prime Minister of India spoke from the ramparts of the Red Fort about sanitation practices, and the need for immediate reforms, things have



OUR EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND EFFORTS, IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED, DRIFTED MORE TOWARDS THE ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION FOR MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL GAINS

changed, and this deserves appreciation. However, considerable alertness and appreciation of the need are still necessary. Why do I say this? What one learns from personal interactions just cannot always be extricated from data! In 2016, one visited several institutions as a member of the TSR Subramaniam Committee on Education policy. In one of the colleges with an enrollment of around two thousand, a mention was made of the neglect of sanitation, the Director had this to say: Oh, it is too dirty and unhygienic for me to inspect! I mention this for two reasons; first; the systems of education paid little attention to such a significant impediment. Second; even after the universally acknowledged and appreciated movement for sanitation, and its great success, there is much more to be achieved on this front!

We are much better off at this juncture in educational achievements, particularly in the context of girls' participation in education and subsequently in every sector of knowledge, skills, services, defence and the like. What was the most ignored aspect of Indian education during the second half of the 20th century? Some academics and scholars—adherents of negativity included—would like to criticise all that has been done and achieved during this period. Those who are, ideologically unconstrained and capable of taking an objective analytical view express concern about certain aspects that are essential ingredients total the personality development of any individual. This is usually articulated in

every policy and programme, but current education practices get ignored in schools and even certain well-reputed institutions. Moral and ethical aspects of education, education in human values, and similar expressions are regular parts of every education initiative.

We also have the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, who could say "My life is my message"! How many of our present-day leaders—political leaders—could say that with inner conviction and confidence? There are still the old guards and young ones who took Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Karpuri Thakur, LK Advani, Narendra Modi, and the like as their role models.

A committed work culture, a sound value system, and a pursuit of higher and larger goals in life could only be inculcated in educational institutions and that remains a big challenge before the Indian education system. Our advantage is that we are familiar with how it could be achieved. Indian education has achieved sufficient recognition and success; within and outside the country. India and its ancient education systems aimed at comprehensive personality development, the comprehension of 'Ekam Sat Viprah Baudha Vadanti, 'Sarv bhut Hite Ratah', 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina', and much more on similar lines. We were privileged that MK Gandhi gave us a practical model of education that focused on enhancing the economic aspect but did not neglect this totality, and wanted the best to be drawn out of out of head,

hand and heart. Sri Aurobindo; and the mother; dwelled in higher echelons of human advancement, apart from what is usually aimed at imparting education.

Our education initiatives and efforts, it must be acknowledged; drifted more towards the acquisition of education for material and physical gains. Education, said the Mother; is not to prepare learners to succeed in life and society but 'to increase his perfectibility'! Addressing the students of the Ashram Schools she said: "Do not aim for success. Our aim is perfection.

Remember you are on the hold of a new world, participating in its worth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worthwhile." The Mother goes on to delineate it further for our comprehension: "To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities, and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and truer..."


Could anything more need be said on how our schools and institutions could move ahead in pursuit of excellence once they absorb the golden words and the strength of the philosophy behind them?

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)

The impact of amendments to criminal codes on national policing

The implications of amendments to three criminal codes on civil liberties and the integrity of the legal process remain subject to ongoing debate and scrutiny

Parliament has passed three criminal codes, among which the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) seeks to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). There is one provision in BNSS that seeks to increase the number of days within which police custody (PC) can be sought. When someone is in police custody, it means they are held by the police in a lock-up at the station. On the other hand, judicial custody means they are held in a central jail. The investigating agency gets 24 hours to investigate if they are not able to complete the investigation within that bracket, they must get permission from the magistrate, who can grant custody of the accused for up to 60/90 days,



PRAKHAR BAJPAI

depending on the seriousness of the crime. However, within this time-frame of 60/90 days, the magistrate is restricted to granting PC for the initial 15 days from the date of arrest, beyond which only judicial custody can be granted. This 15-day limit was extensively discussed in the Anupam Kulkarni v. CBI case, where the Supreme Court ruled that an accused

cannot be held in PC beyond 15 days from the date of arrest and PC in total can be for a maximum of 15 days, which means that PC could be granted by the magistrate in parts for the first 15 days or as a whole.

Understanding the new law

According to Section 187 of the BNSS, the PC can be granted within the first 40 days (for less serious offences) or 60 days (for more serious offences) after the accused is arrested. The change implies that the prescribed 15-day period of custody can now be split into shorter periods of custody sought over 40 days for offences punishable up to 10 years or 60 days for other offences. This represents a departure from the current practice under Section 167 of



the court's ruling that said PC beyond 15 days from the arrest date is not allowed. Nonetheless, the court granted custody to the police and noted that every accused person must respect the investigation and court proceedings and went on to mention that these ways of hindering the pursuit of justice would not be tolerated.

this interpretation needs to be reviewed by a larger bench. By analysing the two judgements passed last year we can conclude that there is a growing inclination towards favouring the investigating agency. Despite the accused attempting to avoid initial PC in the first case due to medical reasons, it's essential to recognise that the accused might exploit the 15-day bar by taking the excuse of loopholes on grounds of a medical emergency.

However, the second case sets a precedent keeping the investigation process at the heart of the criminal justice system which poses a potential series of inconsistencies. Therefore, Section 187 of the BNSS aims to definitively resolve the existing confusion and prevent

future inconsistencies regarding the timeline within which PC can be sought and sets the limit of 40/60 days. It seeks to find a middle path where the civil liberties of the accused are not exploited as the maximum number of days for which the PC can be granted is still 15 days which now can be granted in parts in 40/60 days and also favours investigating agencies by granting a reasonable time for custodial interrogation, which is crucial for uncovering the truth as denying the investigating agency the opportunity for further interrogation gives an advantage to the accused to disrupted the legal process.

(The writer is a law student; views expressed are personal)

Trump triumphs over Haley in South Carolina

PTI ■ CHARLESTON

Donald Trump secured a resounding win over his Indian-American rival Nikki Haley in her backyard in South Carolina in the Republican primary, enabling the former US president to move closer to clinching a third straight presidential nomination from his party in 2024.

Refusing to give up, Haley, 52, a two-time former governor of South Carolina on Saturday vowed to take the fight to the Super Tuesday states on March 5 when Republican primaries are scheduled to be held in 21 US states. Trump, 77, has now won every contest that counted for Republican delegates, adding to his previous wins in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and the US Virgin Islands.

The South Carolina primary race was called mere minutes after polls closed. After results were counted, US media outlets said Haley received 39.5 per cent

of the vote in the Palmetto State while Trump 59.8 per cent, giving the former president 44 delegates and just three to the former South Carolina state governor.

A candidate needs 1,215 delegates to bag the party's nomination in the November 5, 2024 presidential election. So far, Trump has won 102 delegates while Haley, the only major contender to the Republican frontrunner, has just 17 delegates.

"This was a little sooner than we anticipated, and an even bigger win than we anticipated," Trump told a crowd at his election night watch party in Columbia shortly after being projected the winner.

Saturday's result now places the onus on Haley, who continued in her concession speech to insist she has no plans to drop out of the race – a move that she said would leave the Republican voters in the upcoming primary states with "a Soviet-style



Republican presidential candidate former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley speaking at an election night event, Saturday in Charleston, S.C. AP/PTI

election with only one candidate."

"There are huge numbers of voters in our Republican primaries who are saying they want an alternative. I said earlier this week that no matter what happens in South Carolina, I would continue to run for president. I'm a woman of my word. I'm not giv-

ing up this fight when a majority of Americans disapprove of both Donald Trump and Joe Biden," she told her supporters in this historic city, a few blocks away from where she had launched her presidential campaign about a year ago.

"What I saw today was South Carolina's frustration with our country's direction. I've seen that same frustration nationwide. I share it. I feel it to my core. I couldn't be more worried for America. It seems like our country is coming apart. But here's the thing. America will come apart if we make the wrong choices. We need to beat Joe Biden in November," she said amidst cheers from her supporters.

"I don't believe Donald Trump can beat Joe Biden. Nearly every day, Trump drives people away, including with his comments just yesterday. Today, in South Carolina, we're getting around 40 per cent of the vote. That's about what we got in New

Hampshire too. "I'm an accountant. I know 40 per cent is not 50 per cent. But I also know 40 per cent is not some tiny group. There are huge numbers of voters in our Republican primaries who are saying they want an alternative," Haley said, making her case for her to continue her battle against Trump.

"South Carolina has spoken. We're the fourth state to do so. In the next ten days, another 21 states and territories will speak. They have the right to a real choice, not a Soviet-style election with only one candidate.

And I have a duty to give them that choice. We can't afford four more years of Biden's failures or Trump's lack of focus," Haley said. A confident Trump celebrated his victory in Columbia, South Carolina. "There's never been a spirit like this, and I just want to say that. I have never seen the Republican Party so unified," he

Manhattan residential building kills Indian journo

New York (PTI): A 27-year-old Indian national, who worked as a journalist here, tragically lost his life in a "devastating" fire caused by a lithium-ion battery in an apartment building in Manhattan. Fazil Khan was killed in the fire that broke out in a six-story residential building at 2 St. Nicholas Place in Harlem, Manhattan that left about 17 other people injured.

The New York City Fire Department said that its marshals have determined that the "devastating" fire was caused by a lithium-ion battery.

Khan is a journalist with New York-based media company The Hechinger Report, which is focused on innovation and inequality in education.

The Consulate General of India in New York expressed condolences on Khan's death and said it is extending all possible assistance to repatriate his mortal remains to his family in India. "Saddened to learn about the death of 27-year old Indian national Fazil Khan in an unfortunate fire incident in Harlem, NY," the Consulate said in a post on X Saturday.

The Consulate said it is in touch with Khan's family and friends.

"We continue to extend all possible assistance in repatriation of his mortal remains to India," the Consulate said.

Khan was a data reporter at The Hechinger Report and according to his profile on X, he was an alumnus of Columbia Journalism School. The Hechinger Report said in a post on X that it learned Saturday that Khan died in a fire in the New York City building where he lived. "We are devastated by the loss of such a great colleague and wonderful person, and our hearts go out to his family.

He will be dearly missed," it said. Firefighters said the fire originated in the building's 3rd floor. At 2:14 pm Friday, the FDNY responded to the 2-alarm fire at 2 St. Nicholas Place in Harlem. Firefighters arrived within minutes to find people on the fire escape.

Sunak warns of 'toxic' culture in UK politics

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has warned against a growing toxic culture in politics amid reports of members of Parliament facing security threats over their voting intentions in the House of Commons related to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

The 43-year-old British Indian leader issued a statement on Saturday to condemn the hijacking of protests on the streets of the country by extremists to glorify terrorism. It came as a report in 'The Sunday Times' newspaper claims that three unnamed female MPs have been sanctioned additional security after concerns about their safety. "The explosion in prejudice and antisemitism since the Hamas attacks on the 7 October [2023] are as unacceptable as they are un-British. Simply put antisemitism is racism," said Sunak in his statement.

"Legitimate protests hijacked by extremists to promote and glorify terrorism, elected representatives verbally threatened and physically, violently targeted and antisemitic tropes beamed onto our own Parliament building," he said, with reference to an offensive projection on the Palace of Westminster recently.

"And in Parliament this week a very dangerous signal was sent that this sort of intimidation works. It is toxic for our society and our politics and is an affront to the liberties and values we hold dear here in Britain," he said of the scenes of chaos in the Commons last week over a Gaza ceasefire vote.

While he did not make a reference to it specifically, his intervention came soon after the governing Conservatives suspended party MP Lee Anderson after he claimed during an interview that Pakistani-origin London Mayor Sadiq Khan was under the control of "Islamists".



The Opposition had demanded action over the remarks, which Labour Leader Keir Starmer branded as a "racist and Islamophobic outburst".

"This isn't just embarrassing for the Conservative Party, it emboldens the worst forces in our politics," said Starmer.

The row follows an article by former home secretary Suella Braverman over the weekend that claimed Islamists and extremists were taking charge in all walks of life in Britain, attacked as "extreme rhetoric" by the Opposition parties.

Braverman, sacked from the Cabinet by Sunak last year, was reacting to Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle saying that he had selected certain amendments to a motion related to ceasefire in Gaza in a bid to ensure all options were on the table for MPs to vote on and to protect MPs' safety.

According to 'The Sunday Times' report, UK Security Minister Tom Tugendhat has been working with the Home Office, the police and the parliamentary authorities to significantly enhance the safety and security of MPs. As part of the overhaul, the royal and VIP executive committee (RAVEC), which is responsible for the security of the royal family as well as senior politicians including the prime minister and home secretary, has been brought in to help assess the threat to MPs. "Many MPs are petrified by the abuse they are facing," a senior security source was quoted as saying.

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Mediators are making progress on an agreement for a weeks-long ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and the release of dozens of hostages held in Gaza as well as Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, Israeli media reported Sunday. Israel's War Cabinet met to discuss the proposal late Saturday, but there was no official word on what they had decided. Several Israeli media outlets, citing unnamed officials, said it tacitly approved the deal and that Israel would send a delegation to Qatar for further discussions.

Hamas says it has not yet been involved in the latest proposal developed by the United States, Egypt and Qatar, but the reported outline largely matches its earlier demands for the first phase of a truce. Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was in Cairo last week. Israel is meanwhile developing plans for expanding its offensive to the southern-most city of Rafah, on the

Gaza-Egypt border, where more than half the territory's population of 2.3 million have sought refuge in squalid tent camps, packed apartments and overflowing shelters. Aid groups have warned of a catastrophe and the US and other allies of Israel have said it must avoid harming civilians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he'll convene the Cabinet this week to "approve the operational plans for action in Rafah", including the evacuation of civilians.

A senior official from Egypt, which along with Qatar is a mediator between Israel and the Hamas militant group, said Saturday that the draft cease-fire deal includes the release of up to 40 women and older hostages in return for up to 300 Palestinian prisoners, mostly women, minors and older people.

The Egyptian official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations, said the proposed six-week pause in fighting would

include allowing hundreds of trucks to bring desperately needed aid into Gaza every day, including the northern half of the besieged territory. He said that both sides agreed to continue negotiations during the pause for further releases and a permanent cease-fire.

The prime minister's office did not respond to a request for comment on the War Cabinet's discussions or the Israeli media reports.

Negotiators face an unofficial deadline of the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan around March 10, a period that often sees heightened Israeli-Palestinian tensions. Hamas has said it will not release all of the remaining hostages until Israel ends its offensive and withdraws its forces from the territory, and is also demanding the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including senior militants — conditions Netanyahu has vehemently rejected.

But an earlier proposal from Hamas outlined an initial phase that resembles the

reported draft agreement, indicating the two sides might be able to converge on a temporary cease-fire.

Israel declared war after the October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel, in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostages. More than 100 hostages were released in a cease-fire and exchange deal in November. Around 130 remain in captivity, a fourth of whom are believed to be dead.

Families of the hostages have followed the fits and starts of the negotiations with hope and anguish.

"It feels like Schindler's list. Will he be on the list or not?" Shelly Shem Tov, the mother of Omer, 21, who is held captive, told Israeli Army Radio of her son's chances of being freed in an emerging deal.

Israel responded to the attack with a massive air and ground offensive that has driven around 80 per cent of Gaza's population from their homes, putting hundreds of

thousands at risk of starvation and the spread of infectious disease. The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza says 29,606 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, two-thirds of them women and children.

The ministry's death toll doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. Israel says its troops have killed more than 10,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has devastated the territory's health sector, with less than half of hospitals even partially functioning as scores are killed each day in Israeli bombardment.

At the Emirates Hospital in Rafah, three to four newborns are placed in each of its 20 incubators, which are designed for just one. Dr. Amal Ismail said two to three newborns die in a single shift, in part because many of their families live in tents in rainy, cold weather.

"No matter how much we work with them, it is all wasted," she said.

Corruption scandals cast shadow over Portugal's general election

AP ■ LISBON

The official two-week campaign period before Portugal's early general election began on Sunday, with the country's two moderate mainstream parties once again expected to collect the most votes but with the expected rise of a populist party potentially adding momentum to Europe's drift to the right. The centre-left Socialist Party and centre-right Social Democratic Party have alternated in power for decades. But they are unsure of how much support they might need from smaller rival parties for the parliamentary votes needed to form a government after the March 10 vote.

Corruption scandals have cast a shadow over the ballot. They have also fed public disenchantment with the country's political class as Portugal prepares to celebrate 50 years of democracy, following the Carnation Revolution that toppled a rightist dictatorship on April 25, 1974. The election is



Socialist Party leader Pedro Nuno Santos, left, and Luis Montenegro, leader of the Social Democratic Party, greet each other before an election TV debate in Lisbon, Portugal. The center-left Socialist Party and center-right Social Democratic Party have alternated in power for decades. But they are unsure of how much support they might need from smaller rival parties to form a government after the March 10 vote.

being held after a Socialist government collapsed last November following a corruption investigation. That case brought a police search of Prime Minister António Costa's official residence and the arrest of his chief of staff. Costa hasn't been accused of any crime.

Also in recent weeks, a Lisbon court decided that a former Socialist prime minister should stand trial for corruption. Prosecutors allege that José Sócrates, prime minister between 2005-2011, pocketed around 34 million euros (USD 36.7 million) during his time in power from graft, fraud and money laundering.

The Social Democratic Party has also been tainted by corruption allegations.

During the recent weeks of unofficial campaigning, a graft investigation in Portugal's Madeira Islands triggered the resignation of two prominent Social Democrat officials. The scandal erupted on the same day the Social Democratic Party unveiled an anti-corruption

billboard in Lisbon that said, "It can't go on like this."

A housing crisis, persistent levels of low pay and unreliable public health services are other areas where the records of the two main parties are at issue.

Hot-button topics that have driven political debate and encouraged populist parties elsewhere in Europe, such as climate change, migration and religious differences, have largely been absent in Portugal's campaign. A five-year-old populist and nationalist party called Chega! (in English, Enough!) has made the fight against corruption one of its political banners. "Portugal needs cleaning out," one of its billboards declares. The party's leader, 41-year-old lawyer André Ventura, has been riding in third place in opinion polls and could become a kingmaker if his political influence grows. His party got just 1.3 per cent of votes in a 2019 election, but jumped to 7.3 per cent in 2022. It could collect more than double that this time, polls sug-

gest, if a protest vote materialises. A key question is whether the Social Democrats will end up needing the votes of Chega! to make up a parliamentary majority after eight years in opposition.

The Socialist Party could, as in the past, forge parliamentary alliances with the Portuguese Communist Party or Left Bloc party to take power. Socialist leader Pedro Nuno Santos, his party's candidate for prime minister, is a lawmaker and a former minister for housing and infrastructure. Santos, 46, quit the previous government under a cloud over his handling of bailed-out flag carrier TAP Air Portugal and a dispute over the site of a new Lisbon airport. Luís Montenegro, the 51-year-old Social Democrat leader aiming to become prime minister, has been a lawmaker for more than 20 years. He heads the Democratic Alliance, a grouping with two smaller right-of-centre parties formed for the election.

Brit Indian doctor's rock band embarks on UK-wide tour

PTI ■ LONDON

A 25-year-old British Indian doctor whose passion for music resulted in a band with some of his fellow medical colleagues has embarked on his first UK-wide tour, with the launch show in London recently proving a sell-out. Gulzar (Gulz) Singh Dhanoya started the indie-rock band named Gulz during his university days as a medical student. It was over the COVID pandemic that the singer-songwriter plucked up the courage to put out some of his musical creations onto the audio streaming service SoundCloud and soon this one-man bedroom project struck a chord with an ever-expanding fan base. The lead singer and songwriter is now busy rehearsing with his four bandmates for their next live gig in Birmingham on March 16.

"How it usually works is that at the moment I go away and think of an idea for a song and it's very bare bones. Then we go into a studio rehearsal room and all of us together kind of think about our parts and we just keep playing it over and over. It's a great way to kind of balance our creative ideas," Gulz told PTI.

While two of his other bandmates are also National Health Service (NHS) doctors like him, two are professionals in other fields which he feels helps bring some flexibility to striking a balance with late-night hospital shifts.

He admits sometimes wondering how they are all able to commit to their music with stressful full-time jobs. "It's a huge commitment. Obviously, the working day is long and then it's fitting in shows and rehearsals and social media

stuff. It's like a second job and one that doesn't realistically pay compared to a 'normal' job. It's very cliché, but it's just because we love it," he said.

Born in Newcastle to a Punjabi father born in India and mother born in Southall, west London, music was a part of Gulz's life from a very young age.

From strains of Mohammed Rafi to Stevie Wonder, his musical influences were an eclectic mix – something that chimes with the kind of tunes he is now creating lyrically and musically.

"I began by sort of writing music that sounds like the music I like and have tried to retain that in some ways. I just try to weave certain themes of my life at the time into the stuff that I'm writing, be it relationships and breakups or just having some fun," he said.

AP ■ WESTROZEBEKE (BELGIUM)

It was the puddles of green sludge left by the tires of massive tractors in western Belgium's industrial farmlands that drew the attention of biological engineer Ineke Maes. The slime was destructive algae, the result of the excess of chemicals used by farmers to boost their crops, but at a high cost to nature. Maes had hoped the European Union's environmental policies would start to make a fundamental difference by improving exhausted soils.

In recent weeks, some of those tractors moved off the land and onto the roads, blocking major cities and economic lifelines from Warsaw to Madrid and from Athens to Brussels. Farmers were demanding the reversal of some of the most progressive measures in the world to counter climate change and protect biodiversity, arguing

that the rules were harming their livelihoods and strangling them with red tape.

And the impact has been stunning.

The farmers' protests affected the daily lives of people across the 27-nation bloc, costing businesses tens of millions of euros in transportation delays. The disruption triggered knee jerk reactions from politicians at national and EU level: they committed to rolling back policies, some of them years in the making, on everything from the use of pesticides to limiting the amount of manure that could be spread on fields. To environmentalists like Maes, who works for the Belgian Better Environment Federation umbrella group, it would almost be laughable if it were not so depressing.

"In the environmental movement, we joke that we should get tractors ourselves to make a point. Then we would

be competing fair and square. The purpose should be that we get negotiations, and that we get a deal through democratic process — the rules, you know," she said. Reasoned arguments, she says, have been drowned out by the rumble of tractor engines.

And there's no end in sight.

After hundreds of tractors disrupted the EU summit in Brussels early this month at a volume that kept some leaders awake at night, farmers plan to return on Monday. They intend to be there when agriculture ministers discuss an emergency item on the agenda — the simplification of agricultural rules and a decrease in checks at farms that environmentalists fear could amount to a further weakening of standards.

The political noise level from the tractors — not to mention the loads of manure dumped outside official buildings — does get through, offi-

cials said. "That puts a bit more pressure on the ministers inside. So I would believe that ministers will be a bit more — insisting to have concrete results," said a high-level EU official, who asked not to be identified because the meeting has yet to take place.

It is this attitude that drives the environmental lobby and NGOs to distraction: knowing that scientific arguments are too often no match for the rule of the street. As a result, the EU's flagship Green Deal, that aims to make the continent carbon-neutral by 2050, is under threat.

"You really should not lose that long-term view, that vision of the future when you are working on policy," said Maes. "You should not respond to the issues of the day by simply scrapping very important rules that have been seriously discussed, considered, that have been included in environmental impact reports and so on —

and that have also been democratically approved in that way."

Yet ahead of Monday's farm protest and meeting of agriculture ministers, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, for many the most powerful EU politician, insisted that she "remains fully committed to delivering solutions to ease the pressure currently felt by our hard-working farming women and men."

Von der Leyen's change in emphasis comes ahead of the June 6-9 elections, when a good showing by her Christian Democrat group, the European People's Party, will be key to keeping her at the helm of the all-powerful Commission. As her party has swayed toward putting farmers and industry first, so has she.

"It is a bit difficult putting a pin on Mrs. von der Leyen," said Jutta Paulus, a Green member of the European Parliament.

Belarusians vote amid opposition calls for poll boycott

AP ■ TALLINN (ESTONIA)

Polls opened Sunday in Belarus' tightly controlled parliamentary and local elections that are set to cement the steely rule of the country's authoritarian leader, despite calls for a boycott from the opposition, which dismissed the balloting as a "senseless farce."

President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for nearly 30 years, accuses the West of trying to use the vote to undermine his government and "destabilize" the nation of 9.5 million people.

Most candidates belong to the four officially registered parties: Belaya Rus, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Party of Labor and Justice. Those parties all support Lukashenko's policies. About a dozen other parties were denied registration last year.

Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who is in exile in neighboring Lithuania after challenging Lukashenko in the 2020 presidential election, urged voters to boycott the elections.

"There are no people on the ballot who would offer real changes because the regime only has allowed puppets convenient for it to take part," Tsikhanouskaya said in a video statement. "We are calling to boycott this senseless farce, to ignore this election without choice."

Sunday's balloting is the first election in Belarus since the contentious 2020 vote that handed Lukashenko his sixth term in office and triggered an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations.

Protests swept the country for months, bringing hundreds of thousands into the streets. More than 35,000 people were arrested. Thousands were beaten in police custody, and hun-

dreds of independent media outlets and nongovernmental organizations were shut down and outlawed.

Lukashenko has relied on subsidies and political support from his main ally, Russia, to survive the protests. He allowed Moscow to use Belarusian territory to send troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

The election takes place amid a relentless crackdown on dissent. Over 1,400 political prisoners remain behind bars, including leaders of opposition parties and renowned human rights advocate Ales Bialiatiski, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022.

The opposition says the early balloting that began Tuesday offers fertile ground for the vote to be manipulated, with ballot boxes unprotected for five days. Election officials said Sunday that over 40% of the country's voters cast ballots during the five days of early voting. Turnout stood at



43.64% by 9 a.m. on Sunday, an hour after polls formally opened, according to the Belarusian Central Election Commission. The Viasna Human Rights Center said students, soldiers, teachers and other civil servants were forced to participate in early voting.

"Authorities are using all available means to ensure the result they need — from airing TV propaganda to forcing voters to cast ballots early," said

Viasna representative Pavel Sapelka. "Detentions, arrests and searches are taking place during the vote."

Speaking during Tuesday's meeting with top Belarusian law enforcement officials, Lukashenko alleged without offering evidence that Western countries were pondering plans to stage a coup in the country or to try to seize power by force. He ordered police to beef up armed patrols across

Belarus, declaring that "it's the most important element of ensuring law and order." After the vote, Belarus is set to form a new state body — the 1,200-seat All-Belarus Popular Assembly that will include top officials, local legislators, union members, pro-government activists and others. It will have broad powers, including the authority to consider constitutional amendments and to appoint election officials and judges.

Lukashenko was believed a few years ago to be considering whether to lead the new body after stepping down, but his calculus has apparently changed, and now few observers expect him to step down after his current term ends next year.

For the first time, curtains were removed from voting booths at polling stations, and voters were banned from taking pictures of their ballots. During the 2020 election,

activists encouraged voters to photograph their ballots in a bid to prevent authorities from manipulating the vote in Lukashenko's favor.

Belarusian state TV aired footage of Interior Ministry drills in which police detained a purported offender who was photographing his ballot and others who created an artificial queue outside a polling station.

Belarus for the first time also refused to invite observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor the election. Belarus is a member of the OSCE, a top trans-Atlantic security and rights group, and its monitors have been the only international observers at Belarusian elections for decades.

Since 1995, not a single election in Belarus has been recognized as free and fair by the OSCE. The OSCE said the decision not to allow the agency's monitors deprived the

country of a "comprehensive assessment by an international body."

"The human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate as those who voice dissent or stand up for the human rights of others are subject to investigation, persecution and frequently prosecution," it said in a statement.

Observers noted that authorities have not even tried to pretend that the vote is democratic. The election offers the government an opportunity to run a "systems test after massive protests and a serious shock of the last presidential election and see whether it works," said Artiom Shraibman, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center. "The parliament will be sterile after the opposition and all alternative voices were barred from campaigning. It's important for authorities to erase any memory of the protests."

Pak EC gears up to hold Prez poll by March 9

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Still struggling to address the rigging allegations after general elections in the country, Pakistan is now gearing up to elect the new president by March 9. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is set to hold an election for the office of the country's president by March 9, two days before the retirement of half of the senators after completing their six-year term, Dawn reported quoting sources.

"The president will be elected by the present senators after setting up of all the four provincial assemblies," a senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) office-bearer said, adding that the election could take place on March 9 or 10.

The six-party alliance, set to form a coalition government at the Centre under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif, has already announced Asif Ali Zardari as its consensus candidate for the country's top constitutional office.

Zardari previously served as the president from September 2008 to 2013 after the resignation of the military ruler Pervez Musharraf.

Article 41(4) of the Constitution says that "election to the office of president shall be held not earlier than sixty days and not later than thirty days before the expiration of the term of the president in office: Provided that, if the election cannot be held within the period aforesaid because the National Assembly is dissolved, it shall be held within thirty days of the general election to the Assembly".

Since the general elections were held on February 8, the presidential election is required to be conducted by March 9, just two days before the retirement of half of the 100-member Senate.

The sources said the Senate elections were also due in the first week of March, but because of the delay in the general elections of the National and provincial assemblies, the



Senate elections will now be held either in the last week of March or the first week of April which means the upper house will remain dysfunctional and incomplete for some period.

According to a PPP leader, it is because of the upcoming presidential election and to ensure Zardari's win that the party has chosen its two senators, Nisar Khuhro and Jam Mahtab Dahar, from taking the oath as MPAs in the Sindh Assembly.

According to the formula applied for the president's election, the vote of a senator is counted as a single vote, whereas in the Sindh Assembly, one vote will be equal to nearly four votes. In this way, Zardari will get benefit in the presidential elections.

Incumbent President Dr Arif Alvi is already on an extended tenure after completing his five-year term on September 9 last year. Article 44(1) of the Constitution says that the president will hold office for a term of five years from the day he assumes charge, but he continues to hold the office until a successor is chosen.

Dr Alvi is the country's fourth democratically elected president to complete the five-year term. The three presidents before Dr Alvi who completed their full terms were Chaudhary Fazal Elahi (fifth president, from 1973 to 1978), Asif Ali Zardari (11th, from 2008 to 2013), and Mamnoon Hussain (12th, from 2013 to 2018). Therefore, Dr Alvi is the third consecutive president to

have a full term and the first one to have an extended term due to an incomplete electoral college, which comprises the National Assembly, Senate and the four provincial assemblies.

The term-wise data of senators suggests that the PML-N and the PPP stand to lose a large chunk of their members — 69 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively — as they retire on March 11 after completing their terms. But after the February 8 polls, both the PML-N and PPP will be able to add to their tally in the Senate. The PTI, however, will be at a definite disadvantage if it fails to conduct the intra-party elections before the Senate polls, and it may have to depend on the SIC to get representation in the upper house of the parliament. Up until now, the total strength of the Senate has been 100, including 23 members each from the four federating units and four each from erstwhile Fata and Islamabad.

The 23 seats allocated to a province comprise 14 general seats, four reserved for women, four for technocrats and one for a minority member. This time around, though, only 96 members will grace the chamber as the representation of the erstwhile tribal areas will end following their merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the 25th Constitutional Amendment.

This means that the upcoming elections to the Senate will elect 48 new senators — 11 each from all four provinces on general and technocrats' seats, two from Islamabad and two minority members from Punjab and Sindh. At present, the house has 97 members due to the death of PML-N's Rana Maqbool Ahmed and the resignations of PTI's Shaukat Tarin and Anwaarul Haq Kakar of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) after assuming the office of the caretaker prime minister. The term of a senator is six years, but half of them retire every three years, and elections are held for new members, according to Dawn.

Owais elected Sindh Assembly Speaker, Anthony his deputy

PTI ■ KARACHI

Senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party Syed Owais Shah was on Sunday elected as the Speaker of the Sindh province Assembly while the party's Christian face Anthony Naveed was elected as his deputy, becoming the first non-Muslim deputy speaker in the country's history.

Outgoing speaker Agha Siraj Durrani said a total of 147 votes were cast for the post of speaker, of which Shah received 111. His opponent and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) leader Sofia Shah got 36 votes, Dawn newspaper reported. Nine independent members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and one member of the Jamaat-e-Islami did not participate in the voting and boycotted the election.

PPP leader and prominent Christian rights activist Anthony Naveed was elected as the deputy speaker of the provincial assembly, becoming the first non-Muslim deputy speaker in the history of Pakistan. Naveed secured 111 votes while MQM-P's Rashid

Khan got 36 votes. Following the win, Naveed took his oath in Urdu and then went up to the speaker's dais to embrace Speaker Shah.

On Sunday, nine PTI-backed independent members of the Sindh Assembly also took the oath, resulting in a total of 157 members taking the oath. Jamaat-e-Islami's member Muhammad Farooq also took the oath, while 3 members of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) were absent.

With 114 members, the PPP is the largest party in the Sindh Assembly, and MQM-P is the second-largest party with 36 seats. The GDA has 3 members, Jamaat-e-Islami has 1, and there are 9 independent members. On Saturday, several new and young faces, who had won the recent general election in Sindh, were sworn in as lawmakers of the Sindh Assembly. Many members, being first-time lawmakers with no previous parliamentary experience, took their oath in the session chaired by outgoing Speaker Durrani, expressing hope to bring about change.

Maryam Nawaz files nomination for Punjab CM

Lahore (PTI): Senior PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, on Sunday submitted her nomination papers for the post of chief minister of Pakistan's politically crucial Punjab province. "The nomination papers of Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the Chief Minister of Punjab have been submitted," the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) said in a post on X.

Maryam, the 50-year-old senior vice president of the PML-N, is set to become the first woman chief minister of Punjab province, a province of over 120 million people, as she enjoys the support of the majority in the house. She has already been given security usually provided to the chief minister and she is holding meetings with the top bureaucracy of the province. She is considered to be the political heir of PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif, who surprisingly nominated his younger brother Shehbaz Sharif as his party's prime ministerial candidate. "The election of Chief Minister Punjab will take place on Monday (tomorrow). The candidates of CM can submit nomination papers on Sunday (today)," Punjab Assembly Secretary Amer Habib said.

Pakistan plane crash in May 2020 blamed on 'human error'

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan International Airlines plane crash that killed 101 people near the Jinnah International Airport here in May 2020 was a result of "human error" by the two pilots, according to the investigation report on the incident.

The Aircraft Investigation Board (AIB) finally released its report on the reasons for the Airbus 320 failing to land safely at the Karachi airport and instead crashing into a residential neighbourhood near the airport. The board has held the failure of proper judgement while landing by the two pilots as the main reason for the fatal crash in which 101 people, including 99 passengers, lost their lives while two passengers miraculously survived.

Several houses in the neighbourhood and parked vehicles were destroyed and damaged in the disaster. The report said the air traffic controller had four times warned the pilots that they shouldn't land as their altitude was not right. According to the report,

when the pilots first tried to land the aircraft, its engines hit the ground, which led to the system supplying lubricant to the engines shutting down. The report said that "engine failure" eventually led to the crash. The report also held the PIA and the Civil Aviation Authority responsible for not having clear procedures on whether pilots should fast during the month of Ramadan while on duty.

The AIB also noted that after the engine failure, the power supply went off in the aircraft and the last four minutes of the flight were not recorded on the data box. The pilots have also been held responsible for not being in sync with each other when trying to land the plane. Airworthiness documents show that the Airbus A320 had been previously used by China Eastern Airlines from 2004 to 2014, following which it was inducted into the PIA's fleet.

There have been eight recorded incidents of the PIA aircraft crashes between 1965 and 2020.

'Delays in Western military aid costing lives'

AP ■ KYIV

Half of promised Western military support to Ukraine fails to arrive on time, complicating the task of military planners and ultimately costing the lives of soldiers, the country's defense minister said on Sunday. Speaking at the "Ukraine. Year 2024" forum in Kyiv, Rustan Umerov said that each delayed aid shipment meant Ukrainian troop losses, and underscored Russia's superior military might. Commemorations to mark the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Saturday brought expressions of continued support, new bilateral security agree-

ments and fresh aid commitments from Ukraine's Western allies. But Umerov said they still needed to deliver on their commitments if Ukraine is to have any chance of holding out against Russia.

"We look to the enemy: their economy is almost 2 trillion dollars, they use up to 15% official and non-official budget (funds) for the war, which constitutes over \$100 billion dollars annually. So basically whenever a commitment doesn't come on time, we lose people, we lose territory," he said.

Umerov and Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi toured front-line combat posts earlier Sunday amid a worsening ammunition shortage and

dogged Russian attacks in the east. They heard from front-line troops and "thoroughly analyzed" the battlefield situation on their visit, Syrskyi said in a Telegram update. He did not specify where exactly he and Umerov went, but said that "the situation is difficult" for Ukrainian troops and "needs constant control" along many stretches of the front.

Ukraine has suffered setbacks on the battlefield, having lost the strategic eastern city of Avdiivka following intense battles this month, and as military aid for Kyiv hangs in the balance in the US Congress.

Syrskyi earlier this month replaced Ukraine's top military commander, Valerii Zaluzhnyi,

in the most significant shake-up of the top brass since the start of the full-scale war, after a long-expected counteroffensive last summer failed to produce major breakthroughs. Russia still controls roughly a quarter of the country.

Russian shelling and rocket strikes on Sunday continued to pummel Ukraine's south and east, as local Ukrainian officials reported that at least two civilians were killed and a further eight suffered wounds in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces.

A woman was wounded and a railway station turned into a smoldering ruin amid heavy shelling in the eastern city of Kostiantynivka, according to

the head of the municipal military administration. Ukraine's public broadcaster, Suspilne, cited local police as saying that the strikes also damaged an Orthodox church, over a dozen residential buildings and dozens of shops, a post office, schools and local government offices. Russia and Ukraine also continued to trade nightly drone attacks, with Ukraine's air defenses shooting down 16 of 18 Iranian-made Shahed drones launched overnight by Moscow. A Russian drone on Sunday morning struck an unspecified facility in Ukraine's western Khmelnytskyi region, the regional military administration reported without giving details.

SL to end visa extensions granted to war-hit Russian and Ukrainian tourists

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Thousands of Russians and Ukrainians staying in Sri Lanka on extended visas due to the war have been asked to leave the island nation within two weeks, officials said. The immigration controller has issued a notice to the Tourism Ministry that the Russian and Ukrainian tourists must leave the country within two weeks from February 23 as their visas have lapsed, they said.

However, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's office issued a notice that says he has ordered an investigation as to how the decision to ask them to leave had been made without a cabinet decision to revoke the previous extension of stay.

The President's Media Division said that the Sri Lankan government has not officially decided to revoke the

visa extensions previously granted to these tourists. Russian and Ukrainian tourists had been allowed extended stays in the country due to the war breaking out between the two European countries. Nearly 300,000 Russians and 20,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Sri Lanka since the outbreak of the war in 2022.

However, the number of tourists currently residing on the island nation on extended visas is not available. Authorities said the decision to allow them longer stays was then made because of flight shortages.

Immigration authorities said there have been complaints of abuse of tourist visas by Russian and Ukrainian nationals running illegal businesses, employing foreigners, and deploying payment methods for services bypassing local systems.

Idaho set to execute long-time death row inmate

AP ■ BOISE (IDAHO)

For nearly 50 years, Idaho's prison staffers have been serving Thomas Eugene Creech three meals a day, checking on him during rounds and taking him to medical appointments.

This Wednesday, some of Idaho's prison staffers will be asked to kill him. Barring any last-minute stay, the 73-year-old, one of the nation's longest-serving death row inmates, will be executed by lethal injection for killing a fellow prisoner with a battery-filled sock in 1981. Creech's killing of David Jensen, a young, disabled man who was serving time for car theft, was his last in a broad path of destruction that saw Creech convicted of five murders in three states. He is also suspected of at least a half-dozen others.

But now, decades later, Creech is mostly known inside the walls of the Idaho Maximum Security Institution as just "Tom," a generally well-behaved old-timer with a penchant for poetry. His unsuccessful bid for clemency even found support from a former warden at the penitentiary, prison staffers who recounted how he wrote them poems of support or condolence and the judge who sentenced Creech to death. "Some of our correctional officers have grown up with Tom Creech," Idaho Department of Correction Director Josh Tewalt said Friday. "Our warden has a long-standing relationship with him. ... There's a familiarity and a rapport that has been built over time."

Creech's attorneys have filed a flurry of last-minute appeals in four different courts in recent months trying to halt the execution, which would be Idaho's first in 12 years. They have argued Idaho's refusal to say where its execution drug was obtained violates his rights and that he received ineffective assistance of counsel. A three-judge panel of the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday rejected an argument that Creech should not be executed because he was sentenced by a judge rather

than a jury.

It's not clear how many people Creech, an Ohio native, killed before he was imprisoned in Idaho in 1974. At one point he claimed to have killed as many as 50 people, but many of the confessions were made under the influence of now discredited "truth serum" drugs and filled with outlandish tales of occult-driven human sacrifice and contract killings for a powerful motorcycle gang.

Official estimates vary, but authorities tend to focus on 11 deaths. Creech's attorneys did not immediately return phone calls from The Associated Press. In 1973, Creech was tried for the murder of 70-year-old Paul Schrader, a retiree who was stabbed to death in the Tucson, Arizona, motel where Creech was living. Creech used Schrader's credit cards and vehicle to leave Tucson for Portland, Oregon. A jury acquitted him, but authorities say they have no doubt he was responsible.

The next year, Creech was committed to Oregon State Hospital for a few months. He

earned a weekend pass and travelled to Sacramento, California, where he killed Vivian Grant Robinson at her home. Creech then used Robinson's phone to let the hospital know he would return a day late. That crime went unsolved until Creech later confessed while in custody in Idaho; he wasn't convicted until 1980.

After he was released from the Oregon State Hospital, Creech got a job at a church in Portland doing maintenance work. He had living quarters at the church, and it was there he shot and killed 22-year-old William Joseph Dean in 1974. Authorities believe he then fatally shot Sandra Jane Ramsamooj at the Salem grocery store where she worked.

Creech was finally arrested in November 1974. He and a girlfriend were hitchhiking in Idaho when they were picked up by two painters, Thomas Arnold and John Bradford. Creech shot both men to death and the girlfriend cooperated with authorities.

While in custody, Creech

confessed to a number of other killings. Some appeared to be fabricated, but he provided information that led police to the bodies of Gordon Lee Stanton and Charles Thomas Miller near Las Vegas, and of Rick Stewart McKenzie, 22, near Baggs, Wyoming.

Creech initially was sentenced to death for killing the painters. But after the US Supreme Court barred automatic death sentences in 1976, his sentence was converted to life in prison.

That changed after he killed Jensen, who was serving time for car theft. Jensen's life hadn't been easy: He suffered a nearly fatal gun injury as a teen that left him with serious disabilities including partial paralysis. Jensen's relatives opposed Creech's bid for clemency. They described Jensen as a gentle soul and a prankster who loved hunting and spending time outdoors, who was "the peanut butter" to his sister's jelly. His daughter, who was 4 when he was killed, spoke of how she never got to know him, and how unfair it

was that Creech is still around when her father isn't.

Creech's supporters, meanwhile, say decades spent in a prison cell have left him changed. One death row prison staffer told the parole board last month that while she cannot begin to understand the suffering Creech dealt to others, he is now a person who makes positive contributions to his community. His execution date will be difficult for everyone at the prison, she said, especially those who have known him for years.

"I don't want to be dismissive of what he did and the countless people who were impacted by that in real significant ways," said Tewalt, the corrections director. "At the same time, you also can't be dismissive of the effect it's going to have on people who have established a relationship with him. On Thursday, Tom's not going to be there. You know he's not coming back to that unit — that's real. It would be really difficult to not feel some sort of emotion about that."

Markets may face volatility amid derivatives expiry: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With no major domestic market-moving event scheduled this week, stock market investors would largely focus on global trends and foreign fund movement, and may face volatility amid monthly derivatives expiry, analysts said.

“We expect volatility to remain high due to the scheduled expiry of February month derivatives contracts. Besides, participants should keep a close watch on the performance of the global indices, especially the US for cues,” Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research at Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Last week, BSE Sensex rose 73.16 points or 1 per cent to close at 73,142.8 points and inched closer to its record high level of 73,427.5.

“Markets remained volatile in the passing week but managed to end with a gain of nearly a per cent. After the initial rise, mixed global cues combined with profit taking in select heavyweights capped the momentum.

“Consequently, the

benchmark indices, Nifty and Sensex, continued to oscillate in a narrow range till the end and finally settled at 22,212.70 and 73,142.80 respectively,” Mishra said.

After the marginal dip, the US benchmark index, the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) has resumed the uptrend and also crossed a new milestone of 39,000.

With a strong base of around 38,400, we expect the prevailing tone to continue in the index and that could also help our markets to maintain the positive bias, Mishra added.

Investors are also expected to take guidance from the minutes of the February Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting released by the central bank last week.

The rate-setting panel has hinted a cautious approach towards monetary easing amid uncertainties around inflation outlook.

“On the economy front, almost all MPC members continued to express a cautious approach to monetary easing, given the uncertainties surrounding the inflation outlook,” Shrikant



Chouhan, Head Equity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

In the latest bi-monthly policy review held earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India's six-member panel decided to leave the key policy rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the sixth time in a row.

Analysts pointed out that

factors like crude oil prices, rupee movement, quarterly GDP data to be released in India as well as in the US, and monthly global manufacturing PMI data in the coming week will also influence the market sentiment.

With Q3 FY24 results season behind us, the market focus will be on the macro

developments both domestic and international, Chouhan said.

Besides, six IPOs worth more than Rs 3,300 crore will be hitting the stock markets next week, including Platinum Industries and Exicom Tele-Systems public issues which will open for subscription on February 27 and IPO of Bharat Highways

Infrastructure Investment Trust on February 28.

Paytm issue may be reviewed, scrutiny on Byju's progressing well: ICAI By Bishaswar Malakar

Kolkata, Feb 25 (PTI) Amid the unfolding Paytm Payments Bank Ltd crisis, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal on Sunday said its financial reporting review board (FRRB) may deliberate on issues of the fintech firm in the near future.

The FRRB of the statutory body is currently conducting a review of the accounts of tech-based education unicorn Byju's over alleged governance concerns, and the exercise is progressing well, the ICAI president said.

“So far, we have not considered it (Paytm issue), but the board meeting of the FRRB will take place in the near future and it will consider appropriate action if required. So far, we have not decided anything as far as this matter is concerned,” ICAI President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal told PTI in an interview.

Newly elected committees, including FRRB, of the ICAI are expected to hold meetings from March onwards, he said.

Notably, the banking sector regulator Reserve Bank of India has already imposed restrictions on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd due to alleged regulatory concerns. The FRRB may determine whether any scrutiny of the books is necessary over allegations of regulatory lapses and their impact on the payment bank's accounting, he said.

“It is the discretion of the board whom to review and when to do so. It has a robust system,” the newly elected ICAI chief said.

Asked whether ICAI was waiting for a complaint regarding Paytm, Agarwal said, “The institute can take cognizance both suo motu and through complaints. In Byju's case, it was suo motu.”

Speaking on Byju's, he said that the progress on the board's scrutiny is “going well and the report is expected by the end of this year”.

While explaining the FRRB structure, the ICAI chief said, “The board has a three-tier

structure--technical, group, and then finally the board review.”

According to him, the FRRB is empowered to review the financial statements of listed companies.

“In cases of gross negligence, we proceed with further investigation. If there are minor issues, we provide advisory guidance,” Agarwal said.

Constituted in July 2002, it is an important wing of ICAI that works to bring improvements in financial reporting practices and thereby promote investors' confidence in audited statements.

Meanwhile, investors and the founder of the troubled edutech firm Byju's had locked horns over alleged mismanagement and governance issues.

The investors voted for a leadership change in an Extraordinary General Meeting on Friday and also moved NCLT.

The six investors, who moved the resolutions, hold more than 32 per cent stake in Think & Learn (T&L), the firm that operates the online tuition platform Byju's.

Government makes efforts to improve soil health

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 8,300 soil testing labs have been set up across the country since 2014-15 as part of the government's efforts to improve soil health and reduce input cost incurred by farmers to grow crops, according to an official.

These are static soil testing labs, mobile testing labs, mini labs and village level soil testing labs.

That apart, the government has also distributed 23.58 lakh soil health cards to farmers free of cost. The move is aimed at promoting balanced use of fertilisers, cut input cost and boost crop productivity.

“The root of farmers' welfare is in the health of soil,” a senior government official said.

The government is implementing Soil Health Management & Soil Health Card Schemes under the National Project on Soil Health & Fertility of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture since the year 2014-15.

Now, these schemes have been merged as Soil Health & Fertility component of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).

“So far, 23.58 crore soil health cards have been distributed free-of-cost to farmers under the scheme,” the official said.

Based on the recommendations on Soil Health Card (SHC), the trainings and demonstrations are conducted to create the awareness among the farmers for adopting the recommendations on judicious use of chemical fertilizers.

So far, 93,781 farmer's trainings, 6.45 lakh demonstrations, 7,425 farmer's melas/ campaigns on soil health card recommendations have been organized across the country, the official highlighted.

Since 2014-15, the official said that a total of 8,272 soil testing labs have been set up across the country.

Out of these, 1,068 are static soil testing labs, 163 mobile soil testing labs, 6,376 mini soil testing labs and 665 village level soil testing labs.

“Total Rs 229.95 crore has been released to states/UTs for soil testing labs under the scheme. Out of this, Rs 83.31 crore has been released to states/UTs for the past five years,” the official said.

IOC, GAIL, ONGC fined for third straight quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned oil and gas giants including IndianOil, ONGC and GAIL (India) have been slapped fines for the third straight quarter for failing to meet listing norm requirements of having the requisite number of directors on their board.

Stock exchanges have fined oil refining and fuel marketing giant Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiners Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) a cumulative Rs 32.5 lakh, stock exchange filings showed.

In separate filings, the companies detailed the fines imposed by the BSE and NSE for either not having the requisite number of independent directors or the mandated women director in the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, but were quick to point out that appointment of directors was done by the government and they had no role in it.

The companies had faced



fines for the same reason in the previous two quarters as well.

The six PSUs in separate filings said they have been slapped with a fine of Rs 5,42,800 each for the third quarter. While ONGC and its subsidiaries HPCL and MRPL, GAIL and OIL faced fines for not having the required number of independent directors on their board, IOC for not having a woman independent director on its board.

Listing norms require companies to have independent directors in the same proportion as executive or functional directors. They are also required to have at least one woman director on

the board.

For the second quarter, IOC, ONGC, OIL, GAIL, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, HPCL and Engineers India Ltd had faced a fine of Rs 5.42 lakh.

For the latest fine, IOC in the regulatory filing said that “being a government company, the power to appoint directors (including independent directors) vests with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, and hence the non-appointment of women independent director on the Board during the quarter ended December 31, 2023 was not due to any negligence/fault by the company.”

Accordingly, IOC said it should not be held liable to pay the fines and the same should be waived-off.

“IOC regularly takes up with ministry for appointment of requisite number of independent directors (including woman independent director) to ensure compliance with corporate governance norms enunciated under SEBI (LODR) as well as the Companies Act,” it said, adding, it had in the past received similar notices from the two stock exchanges and its waiver request was granted.

GAIL in the filing said “appointments are outside the purview/control of the GAIL's management.” “The non-compliance with regard to the composition of the Board was not within the control of the company and the company has been regularly pursuing with the Government of India (GoI) for appointment of requisite numbers of independent directors to meet the compliance requirements,” ONGC said.

The appointment of directors on its subsidiaries HPCL and MRPL too are done by the government.

Number of M&A deals in India falls in 2023: PwC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The number of merger and acquisition (M&A) deals during 2023 dropped by 10 per cent on an annual basis to 793, said a PwC India report on Sunday.

However, the total disclosed deal value for M&A declined much steeper at 38 per cent during the year, according to the report titled ‘Deals at a glance’.

The report further observed that PE (Private Equity) investments totalled USD 36 billion, marking a substantial 36 per cent drop from 2022.

Despite this decline, the average investment size per deal increased to USD 46 million from USD 42 million in 2022, reflecting a potential shift towards larger opportunities.

While early-stage investments were 53 per cent less compared to that in 2022, the report said, these along with growth-stage investments continued to make up the major share, constituting around 73 per cent of fundings in 2023. On the other hand, buyouts demonstrated resilience with only a 5 per cent decline compared to 2022. This suggests a nuanced landscape, where investors show interest in diverse strategies and larger-scale ventures, even amid an overall decrease in PE investments, the report said.

“In 2023, India resiliently navigated global headwinds, solidifying its appeal to international investors. The economic fundamentals stay strong reflecting investor enthusiasm for the country's expanding economic opportunities and this optimism is also echoed in



PwC's latest CEO Survey. Despite a restrained deal-making environment throughout the year, the deal activity stabilised towards the last quarter leading us to anticipate an upswing in 2024,” said Dinesh Arora, Partner & Leader Deals, PwC India.

In calendar year 2023, PwC said the retail and consumer sector emerged as the most active sector with technology finishing up marginally behind for the second consecutive year.

Following closely were the professional services and fintech sectors, which exhibited high activity in terms of volume. Meanwhile, financial services, renewable power, and healthcare dominated in deal value.

Top 10 deals of 2023 included JV buyouts, strategic investments, PE buyouts, and stock mergers and contributed 21 per cent of the total deal value. While PE deals were higher in volume overall, strategic deals dominated the top deals with domestic deals and group-level consolidations as a significant theme, the report said.

PwC is a network of firms in 152 countries with over 3,27,000 people providing assurance, advisory and tax services.

GST Council may soon clarify tax exemption to RERA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council is likely to soon clarify that Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) will not be required to pay Goods and Services Tax (GST), an official said.

According to the official, RERA, which functions as a regulator as well as facilitator for the realty sector, is covered under Article 243G of the

Constitution dealing with powers, authority and responsibilities of panchayats. RERA was set up in different states to ensure transparency in real estate projects, protect the interest of consumers and to establish an adjudicating mechanism for speedy dispute redressal.

The official said that after discussions with RERA functionaries about the nature

of their function it was decided that GST is not applicable on them. The official further said that RERAs are funded by respective state governments and hence levying GST would mean taxing state governments.

A meeting of GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state ministers, is likely to be held before the imposition of Model

Code of Conduct for the general election due in April-May.

The last meeting of GST Council was held on October 7, 2023.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said before July 18, 2022, certain services offered by key regulatory bodies in India, including the Reserve Bank, Securities Exchange Board of

India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) network, were not subject to GST.

This exemption was lifted on July 18, 2022, leading to discussions about the tax implications for RERA bodies as well.

“Furthermore, in the residential real estate sector, Input Tax Credit (ITC) is not permissible, which means excluding RERA authorities from GST considerations could potentially reduce expenses for both developers and homebuyers. Consequently, a clarification from GST Council on this matter would be significantly beneficial for the sector,” Mohan added.

V-TAPP 2024 unveiled



Amaravati: VIT AP University, a leading institution in technical education, proudly announced the launch of V-TAPP2024 (VIT AP Technical Fest) today, marking the beginning of a two-day extravaganza that brings together students from various colleges, universities, and institutions.



Neelam Yadav, Manager (PR), POWERGRID was conferred with Media Federation of India Award for the “Best Women Communicator of the Year” at 18th, Media Excellence Awards, 2024 held at New Delhi

India seeks permanent solution to food security



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact besides pressing for finding a permanent solution to public stock holding of grains for food security and protection of the interests of fishermen at the WTO ministerial meeting beginning Tuesday.

The Indian delegation is led by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The four-day 13th ministerial conference (MC13) will start on February 26 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Trade ministers of 164 member countries of the World Trade Organisation



(WTO) are meeting against the backdrop of the uncertain global economic situation due to the Red Sea crisis, the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The key issue of India's interests at the meeting relates to finding a permanent solution for its minimum support price (MSP) issue for food security,

agricultural reforms, fisheries subsidies, e-commerce moratorium on import duties, dispute settlement, and WTO reforms.

*Food security issues

The public stock-holding (PSH) programme is a policy tool under which the government procures crops like rice and wheat from

farmers at MSP, and stores and distributes foodgrains to the poor.

India stresses the need for PSH for its large, vulnerable population and wants a permanent solution from the MC13. Food procurement, stockholding, and distribution are crucial to India's food security strategy. MSP is normally higher than the prevailing market rates and sells these at a low price to ensure food security for over 800 million beneficiaries. However, the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture limits the ability of a government to purchase food at MSP.

Under global trade norms, a WTO member country's food subsidy bill should not breach the limit of 10 per cent of the value of production based on the reference price of 1986-88. As part of the solution, India has asked for measures like

amendments in the formula to calculate the food subsidy cap. Developed nations are of the view that such programmes distort global trade prices of food grains.

*Joint Support Initiatives (JSIs) or plurilateral agreements

India opposes this move being pushed for certain nations. For example, India is strongly opposing efforts of a group of countries led by China to push a proposal on investment facilitation for development agreement at the WTO.

The country has maintained that this agenda falls outside the mandate of the global trade body.

According to experts, the attempt of the group to integrate the proposal into the WTO has systemic concerns for the organisation and it would impact developing nations in

pursuing their interest in future.

***Agricultural reforms**

India's stance is to protect farmer livelihoods and ensure equitable market access. However, developed nations are pushing to reduce domestic support and increase market openness irrespective of the fact that they themselves provide large subsidies to their rich farmers.

***WTO reforms**

India advocates for inclusive reforms that consider developing countries' interests, against the backdrop of developed nations' proposals for flexible negotiation processes, dropping of decision-making by consensus and the integration of non-trade issues into WTO without consensus.

India supports efforts to improve the working of the WTO but its key pillars like

special and differential treatment for less developed and developing nations, equal voice and dispute settlement mechanism should be retained while undertaking reforms, an official said.

India also seeks a revamp of the Appellate Body to ensure fairness, facing off against the USA's reluctance to do so and EU's proposal for alternate mechanisms.

The US, a frequent participant in WTO disputes, has been obstructing the process due to dissatisfaction with inefficiencies and perceived overreaches by the WTO's judiciary.

*Fisheries subsidies

The members have already reached the first part of the agreement in 2022 under which subsidies will be prohibited for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

PARA BADMINTON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Yathiraj, Pramod, Krishna win gold

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

India's Suhas Yathiraj, Pramod Bhagat and Krishna Nagar capped their impressive run by securing gold medals in men's singles SL4, SL3 and SH6 class respectively at the Para Badminton World Championship here on Sunday.

The world No 3 Yathiraj, a Paralympic silver medallist, outwitted Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan 21-18 21-18 in SL4 final (standing/lower limb impairment/minor) for her maiden world title.

"Gold it is, happy and proud

to be world champion," tweeted the 40-year-old Yathiraj, who hails from Karnataka and is an IAS officer of the 2007 batch of Uttar Pradesh cadre.

Yathiraj, who has an impairment in one of his ankles, is currently the secretary and director general of Youth Welfare and Prantiya Rakshak Dal in the UP government.

Tokyo Paralympic gold medallist Bhagat, who won a gold and two bronze at the Para Asian Games in China, edged out England's Daniel Bethell 14-21 21-15 21-14 in SL3 (standing/lower limb



impairment/severe) final.

Bhagat thus completed a hat-trick of crowns after Stoke Mandeville in 2015 and Basel in 2019. He also won a gold medal at 2022 Tokyo and 2009 Seoul edition.

"This win holds a very special place in my heart for various reasons," said the Bihar-born shuttler, one of the six siblings, who was diagnosed with polio when he was five years old.

"First being that I have managed to equal my idol Lin Dan's record of five world championships and second being having been able to retain three consecutive world championships."

Apart from the gold, the 35-year-old also won two bronze medals in men's doubles and mixed doubles along with Sukant Kadam and Manisha Ramadass respectively. The three medals took his tally to 14, which includes 6 gold, 3 silver, 5 bronze across categories.

In SH6 category (standing/short stature), Krishna Nagar, a Paralympic gold medal winner, also emerged champion after prevailing 22-20 22-20 over China's Lin Naili in another men's singles final.

In women's singles SU5 (standing/upper limb

impairment), Manisha Ramadass signed off with a silver medal after losing 16-21 16-21 to China's Yang Qiu Xia in the final.

The men's doubles pair of Chirag Baretha and Raj Kumar and women's doubles combination of Rachana Shaileshkumar and Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan settled for a silver each, after losing their respective final matches in SU5 and SH6 categories.

In women's doubles (SL3-SU5) category, Manasi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan also signed off with a silver medal after losing 20-22 17-21 to Indonesian combination of

Leani Ratri Oktilla and Khalimatus Sadiyah in the final.

Bhagat vs Bethell

Pramod and Bethell enjoy a healthy rivalry with the England shuttler having won 11 times in 17 meetings.

The final turned out to be an exhaustive and tight contest as the duo engaged in a slugfest for an hour and 40 minutes.

"This match with Bethell would be my toughest both mentally and physically. I have not been playing well against Bethell past few months and this was my time to prove doubters wrong."

Patty wins LPGA Thailand by one stroke

AP ■ CHONBURI (THAILAND)

Local favourite Patty Tavatanakit held off a fast-finishing Albane Valenzuela to clinch the LPGA Thailand by one stroke on Sunday.

The 24-year-old Bangkok native showcased her prowess with a brilliant approach shot to tap in an easy birdie on the final hole to card a final round 67, finishing at 21 under-par-267 at Siam Country Club Pattaya Old Course.

"I'm honestly speechless. I was so nervous today and choked a bit as there are many Thai fans showing up to support me," said Tavatanakit, whose triumph marked her second LPGA victory since her win at the ANA Inspiration in 2021.

"It's a dream come true to win a home tournament in front of my parents."

Tavatanakit has been riding a wave of success, having

triumphed at the Ladies European Tour in Saudi Arabia seven days ago. Ranked 43rd in the world, she joins former world No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn as the second local champion of this tournament, following Jutanugarn's victory in 2021.

Valenzuela, ranked 91st in the world carded a brilliant 63, including an eagle on the fifth hole and seven birdies - six on the back nine - finishing at 20 under-par-268. "I gave it my all out there. I'm proud of my performance," the 26-year-old Swiss said.

Sei Young Kim of Korea, the 2020 Women's PGA Championship winner, closed with a solid 65, ending with a total of 18 under-par-270, tying for third place alongside her compatriot Hye-jin Choi, who posted a 66.

LPGA tournaments are also scheduled over the next two weeks in Singapore and China.

Paolini defeats Kalinskaya in comeback victory for Dubai title

AP ■ DUBAI

Jasmine Paolini earned her biggest title by defeating Anna Kalinskaya 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 in the Dubai Championships final.

Paolini fought back from a break down in the second and third sets en route to the second WTA singles title of her nine-year tour-level career.

The 26th-ranked Paolini and 40th-ranked Kalinskaya defied a field that started with 16 of the top 20 women, including the top four.

Paolini won her first title in Slovenia in 2021 and lost three finals since then. She lost to Kalinskaya a month ago in the Australian Open fourth round.

Saturday's victory assured the Italian of a top 15 debut when the rankings are updated on Monday.

"It's so special. I'm really happy and really surprised," an emotional, smiling Paolini said on court.

"I'm just happy that I believed I could win every match. I remember my first match this week. It was second set, I'd lost the first and was a break down, yet now I'm here winning the title. It's unbelievable."

Paolini trailed 6-4, 3-1. Then she was 4-2 down in the third set. She stopped Kalinskaya serving for the match at 5-4.

Kalinskaya came through qualifying and beat three top-10 players in a row - including No. 1 Iga Swiatek - to reach her first final.

Gopi wins elite men race in New Delhi Marathon



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Asian champion Gopi Thonakal won the New Delhi Marathon title but missed out the Paris Olympics qualifying time by a big margin here on Sunday.

The 35-year-old Gopi, who had clinched the Asian marathon title in 2017, won the men's elite race covering the distance of 42.195km in 2 hours, 14 minutes and 40 seconds, well outside the Paris Games qualifying time of 2:08:10.

Gopi, who had also won the

title here in the 2017 edition, was below his personal best of 2:13:39. His timing was also below the national record of 2:12:00 which has been standing in the name of Shivnath Singh since 1978.

Srinu Bugathra, who won the 2021 edition title, finished second in 2:14:41, while Akshay Saini was third with a time of 2:15:27.

Gopi had earlier admitted that the Paris Olympics qualifying time could be beyond the reach of the Indians.

Ashwini Madan Jadhav won the women's elite race, clocking 2:52:25, while Thakor Nirmaben Bharatjee (2:55:47) and Divyanka Chaudhary (2:57:06) were second and third respectively.

The New Delhi Marathon, which was held under the aegis of the Athletics Federation of India, saw thousands of participants from more than 200 cities, 27 states and several countries in different categories.

The course passed some of the city's iconic landmarks such as Humayun's Tomb, Lodhi Garden and Khan Market.



box at Old Trafford to see the team concede the deciding goal on a counterattack in the seventh minute of stoppage time. Alex Iwobi tucked home

the finish, sealing Fulham's first win at Old Trafford since 2003, with United's players having poured forward seeking a winner after Harry

Knapp makes 11 birdies, seizes control at Mexico Open

AP ■ VALLARTA (MEXICO)

PGA Tour rookie Jake Knapp ran off 11 birdies and seized control of the Mexico Open at Vidanta with an 8-under 63, giving him a four-shot lead going into the final round with a spot in the Masters on the line.

Knapp began the third round in a four-way share of the lead and playing in front of the largest gallery while paired with Alvaro Ortiz of Mexico. He wasted no time making himself the target. Knapp, a 29-year-old from UCLA, stuffed his opening shot into 2 feet and the next one to 4 feet for a birdie-birdie start. Turns out he was just getting warmed up. He closed out the front nine with five birdies over the last six holes for a 28, and no one got closer to him than three shots the rest of the way.

Sami Valimaki of Finland lost momentum on the back nine until finishing with birdie from the collar of the green on the

par-5 18th for a 67, leaving him four shots back.

Knapp was at 19-under 194, and only Valimaki was within six shots of him. Ben Silverman (63), Henrik Norlander (65) and Chan Kim (66) were seven shots behind.

Ortiz, the younger brother of Carlos Ortiz, didn't make a birdie until the 18th hole and had to settle for a 73, leaving him 10 shots out of the lead.

More than the Masters is at stake for Knapp and Valimaki, another PGA Tour rookie who earned his card this year from being among the leading 10 players on the European tour. A victory comes with a two-year exemption, a spot in the remaining five \$20 million signature events and the PGA Championship.

Knapp has spent four years on the Canadian tour and three years on the Korn Ferry Tour, where last year he finished high enough on the points list to earn a PGA Tour card. During lean times, he worked as a



bouncer in a club - it was called "The Country Club" - in Costa Mesa, California, and now appears to have hit his stride.

He contended at Torrey Pines and tied for third, and he's hoping that experience will serve him well in the final round of the Mexico Open.

"I've been playing professional golf for quite a while. I've had some good stuff and some bad stuff," he said. "It will definitely all be a part of it."

Matt Wallace, the other player who shared the 36-hole lead,

had a 71 to fall eight behind.

Knapp, with his long, powerful swing, did everything well at the start. He made birdie puts of about 15 feet and 25 feet on the fourth and fifth holes, got up-and-down from a bunker on the par-5 sixth, drove the reachable par-4 seventh and two-putted from about 80 feet and closed out the front nine with a tee shot to 4 feet on the par-3 ninth.

Even when he got in trouble, driving so far left he had to take a penalty drop on the 10th, he escaped with bogey by making a 10-foot putt. He followed that with two more birdies to widen his lead to five shots at one point.

Knapp's short game kept the lead from being even larger. He hit a poor wedge and chip that led to bogey on the par-5 14th hole, and a weak chip from short of the 16th green led to another bogey. But he had no complaints from having so many chances, and converting 11 of them.



Camara hat trick helps Brest win 3-0

AP ■ PARIS

Midfielder Mahdi Camara scored a first career hat trick as Brest won 3-0 at Strasbourg in the French league, keeping this season's surprise front-runner on course to qualify for the Champions League for the first time.

Camara scored twice in the first half for second-place Brest, an unheralded side from a port city in Brittany which has never finished higher than eighth in the top flight. Camara then coolly converted a penalty in the 60th minute. He was involved in the buildup to the first goal, too.

Camara did well to win the ball near the edge of the penalty area in the 33rd and, after a shot was charged down, he guided the rebound into the right corner from 20 meters with the aid of a slight deflection.

Seven minutes later, the former Saint-Etienne player showed good technique to control a cross from the right and finish neatly. He then sent goalkeeper Alaa Bellaarouch the wrong way from the spot.

The win moved Eric Roy's side 10 points behind league leader Paris Saint-Germain and guaranteed staying in second place after Sunday's league games.

Coach Patrick Vieira's Strasbourg slipped to 12th place.

That meant Nantes moved up to 11th on goal difference after earlier winning 1-0 at Lorient, which dropped down to 16th and the relegation/playoff spot in France's 18-team league.

Cameroon defender Jean-Charles Castelletto netted the only goal for Nantes early into the second half after being set up from the left by winger Moses Simon, who was a runner-up with Nigeria at the Africa Cup of Nations earlier this month.

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Third-place Nice can close the gap on Brest to one point if it beats last-place Clermont at home.

PSG hosts improving Rennes in the first home game since Kylian Mbappé's decision to leave at the end of the season.



Raphinha stars as Barcelona beats Getafe 4-0

AP ■ BARCELONA

Raphinha made the most of Barcelona by scoring one goal and playing a part in two more to lead a 4-0 rout of Getafe.

Barcelona's biggest win since September saw it move past Girona and provisionally claim second place in the Spanish league.

Raphinha opened the scoring in the 20th minute at Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium. The Brazil winger then participated in passing moves to help João Félix and Frenkie de Jong add goals in the 53rd and 61st. Substitute Fermin López rounded it off with a goal in stoppage time.

Leader Real Madrid is five points clear of Barcelona before it hosts Sevilla on Sunday. Girona, which fell into third place, is one point adrift of Barcelona before playing Rayo Vallecano on Monday.

Barcelona had been struggling at its stadium with only one win in its previous three home games, including a 5-3 debacle to Villarreal that prompted coach Xavi Hernández to announce he would not see out the final year of his contract next season.

But after recent stumbles by Girona, the biggest of the two Catalan clubs finds itself in position to at least become Madrid's closest chaser with a third of the season remaining.

Raphinha, a key part of Barcelona's costly rebuild two summers ago, was injured earlier this season and lost his spot in the starting 11 when teenager Lamine Yamal broke out as the team's next great hope.

"I am especially happy because I was having fewer minutes since coming back from injury, but the most important thing is the win that keeps us alive in the league," Raphinha said. "It is a privilege to compete with Lamine ... Watching Lamine play so well makes me play better. And I am sure that he feels the same way."

Raphinha led Barcelona's attack with his speed down the right side that repeatedly beat Getafe's high back line.

Raphinha latched onto a long

ball by Jules Koundé and slotted a left-footed shot inside the far post to put the hosts ahead.

He had another good chance to score on the break in the 40th, but he fired too high with only the 'keeper to beat.

Getafe threatened to level early in the second half when Luis Milla's long strike hit the post after goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen got a touch.

But Barcelona again broke Getafe's pressure when Andreas Christensen charged from his spot as holding midfielder to receive a through ball by Raphinha that played him clear on the right flank. Christensen squared the ball for Felix to finish off.

Raphinha helped make it three when he drew goalkeeper David Soria off the line and laid off for De Jong. De Jong then assisted López for his goal.

Getafe stayed in 10th place.

"We insisted on playing with a high back line, but we didn't execute well at any point," Getafe coach José Bordalás said about his team's worst loss of the season. "We even tried moving players into different positions to try to improve, but my team was never itself and never comfortable. We have to forget this game and just move on."

LUKA'S DOUBLE

Luka Romero scored his first goals since joining Almeria on loan from AC Milan last month to help limit Atletico Madrid to a 2-2 draw.

Romero canceled out the opener by Ángel Correa with a long strike in the 27th.

Atletico's Rodrigo de Paul put the visitors ahead before the 19-year-old Romero struck again in the 64th.

The draw at bottom side Almeria left Atletico in fourth place but just three points ahead of Athletic Bilbao.

Also, Matija Nastasic's 88th-minute equalizer gave Mallorca a 1-1 draw at Alaves.

Valencia's game at Granada was postponed after the visiting team requested not to play in the aftermath of a deadly fire in the eastern city of Valencia on Thursday.

New era at Man United begins with a loss

AP ■ LONDON

The week started at Manchester United with Jim Ratcliffe completing his purchase of a minority stake and setting out a three-year plan to return the club to the top of English soccer, knocking local rivals Manchester City and Liverpool "off their perch" in the process.

It ended with the team getting mostly outplayed in its own stadium by Fulham - an opponent in the bottom half of the Premier League - and beaten 2-1 to lose ground in the race for Champions League qualification.

Not only did sixth-place United's four-game winning run in the league come to an

end on Saturday, fourth-place Aston Villa beat Nottingham Forest 4-2. That left an eight-point gap between Villa and United after 26 of 38 games.

It remains to be seen if the Premier League will have four or five places in next season's Champions League. Fifth-place Tottenham is three points ahead of United and has a game in hand.

Failing to qualify for the lucrative competition will be a huge blow to United's status, not to mention its finances. It could also spell the end for United manager Erik ten Hag as Ratcliffe looks to raise the standards at the fallen giant.

Dave Brailsford, the sporting director of Ratcliffe-owned INEOS and now on United's board, was in the directors'



box at Old Trafford to see the team concede the deciding goal on a counterattack in the seventh minute of stoppage time. Alex Iwobi tucked home

the finish, sealing Fulham's first win at Old Trafford since 2003, with United's players having poured forward seeking a winner after Harry

Maguire's equalizer in the 89th.

"After one defeat, you have to see the bigger picture," Ten Hag said, "and the bigger picture looks very good."

Douglas Luiz scored two of Villa's goals, with Ollie Watkins and Leon Bailey also netting in its first home win of 2024. One of the three defeats at Villa Park this year came at the hands of United.

"If we arrive to game 33 in the same position, we maybe look to Champions League," Villa manager Unai Emery said. "For now it is about being in the top seven positions."

CITY AND ARSENAL WIN

With first-place Liverpool not playing in the Premier League this round because of its

involvement in the English League Cup final on Sunday, title rivals Manchester City and Arsenal had a chance to trim the gap to the leaders.

They both took it - and now the top three are separated by just two points.

Second-place City moved one point behind Liverpool by beating Bournemouth 1-0 away, with Phil Foden grabbing the 24th-minute winner from a rebound after Erling Haaland had a shot parried out.

It was Foden's 16th goal of the season in all competitions, already tying the England forward's most in a single season.

"Phil Foden is playing the best football I have seen from him," said City manager Pep

Guardiola, who described his players as "supermen" for coping with a demanding schedule.

"We demand too much of our players but they respond. I know people say, They earn a lot of money,' but it is too much, honestly. But business must go on and it surprises me every time how we are still there."

Arsenal responded to City's result by dominating Newcastle a few hours later, winning 4-1 at Emirates Stadium to stay a point behind City.

An own-goal by Sven Botman was followed by strikes by Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka, before Jakub Kiwior glanced in a header for the fourth. Joe Willock, a former Arsenal

player, scored an 85th-minute consolation for Newcastle.

EVERTON DENIED

Relegation-threatened Everton conceded an equalizer in the fifth minute of stoppage time to draw 1-1 at Brighton. A victory would have pushed Everton three points clear of the bottom three and ended an eight-match winless run in the league.

Instead, Lewis Dunk headed in Pascal Gross' cross to cancel out Jarrad Branthwaite's opener for Everton at Amex Stadium.

Newly hired Crystal Palace manager Oliver Glasner 's tenure got off to strong start as his team beat next-to-last Burnley 3-0.

ASHWIN, JUREL, KULDEEP SHINE

INDIA NEED 192 RUNS TO WIN 4TH TEST AGAINST ENGLAND

PTI ■ RANCHI

Dhruv Jurel's defensive chef-d'oeuvre found a perfect match in the destructive symphony of spin by fifer-man Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav as India seized decisive control of the fourth Test against England at the end of a dramatic third day here on Sunday.

India walked off at the stumps, having chiselled off 40 runs from the 192-run target without losing a wicket.

Rohit Sharma (24 batting) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (16 batting) would be confident of the team mustering the remaining 152 runs without much theatre.

However, it was Jurel who started India's resistive movement with a defiant 90 that came in 149 balls and 211 minutes. It carried the hosts to 307 in their first innings from the overnight 219 for seven.

In their second essay, England just did not have any answers to the questions posed by Ashwin (5/51), his 35th five-wicket haul in Tests, and Kuldeep Yadav (4/22), getting bowled out for a meagre 145.

Opener Zak Crawley (60) was the lone post of fight. It would have been worse for



England without that Crawley fifty before his innings was halted by Kuldeep. Ravindra Jadeja bagged a solitary wicket but it was the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow.

In fact, Crawley was the only English batter to go past 30 as they lost their last seven wickets for just 35 runs with Ashwin and Jadeja weaving their magic.

Introduced late, the left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep struck in his third over when he cleaned up Crawley with a gem of a delivery that skidded through, unsettling

the middle-stump. Crawley was looking in an ominous mood and tore into the Indian attack against the run of play to stretch their overall lead past 150 as Rohit

persisted with Ashwin and Jadeja in the second session. But Kuldeep breathed fire into the attack as he got drift and was at his deceptive best. Having survived through an

umpire's call, England skipper Ben Stokes was castled by Kuldeep with the ball staying low. Bairstow looked in firm control in his 42-ball 30 (3x4) but fell in the first ball after tea when Jadeja exploited the cracks on the pitch to turn it away and the batter drove it straight to short cover. Kuldeep then dismissed Tom Hartley and Ollie Robinson in four balls, before Ashwin raced to his fifth wicket as stumper Dhruv Jurel took a brilliant reflex catch to oust James Anderson. In the process, Ashwin also became the highest wicket-taker at home for India. He now has 354 wickets from 59 Tests at home, overtaking Anil Kumble's tally of 350 from 63 matches. 'Jurel' in the crown But Jurel's innings might just have ended India's search for a wicketkeeper batter in Tests in the absence of recuperating Rishabh Pant. The 23-year-old from Agra was not only terrific with his glovesmanship but exhibited oodles of maturity during that determined fifty as India mounted an incredible fightback, trimming England's first-innings lead to a mere 46 runs. After reaching his maiden fifty in 96 balls, the Rajasthan

Royals' wicketkeeper-batsman shifted gears, taking on English spinners Shoib Bashir and Tom Hartley. Jurel hurried for a single off Hartley to bring up his fifty in an entertaining 40-run stand off just 75 balls for the ninth wicket with Akash Deep (9). But Hartley denied him a hundred with a quicker delivery that stayed low. Young England off-spinner Bashir completed his maiden Test five-wicket haul, trapping Akash to finish with figures of 5 for 119 in only his second Test. Jurel and Kuldeep's 76-run partnership for the eighth wicket also rescued India from a precarious position when they were reduced to 177 for seven on the second day. Under overcast conditions in the morning session, the overnight duo of Jurel and Kuldeep faced a 134-run deficit. Kuldeep showcased superb application on a pitch with variable bounce, playing 131 balls with immaculate defence and effective strike rotation. Kuldeep's determined innings ended when an Anderson delivery that stayed low took a bottom edge and disturbed the timber.



Irfan lauds Akash for a memorable debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Sunday praised Akash Deep for making an immediate impact on his Test debut, with the right-arm seamer producing a three-wicket burst on the first day morning of the ongoing fourth Test against England in Ranchi.

Pathan said that for a fast bowler to make his debut in India is very difficult, but the way Akash bowled and picked up his three wickets, he showed promise of a bright future ahead of him. "As a batter you want your debut to happen in India but as a fast bowler you dream to have your debut in England, Australia, South Africa or New Zealand," Pathan told PTI on the sidelines of the New Delhi Marathon on Sunday.

"The way he bowled in the first session of the match and to pick up three

wickets is commendable. We can only hope to see Akash's career graph to go up from here," he added. The former India player also praised opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal for becoming only the fifth from the country to have scored 600 or more runs in a Test series. "Yashasvi Jaiswal is a very special cricketer, he has very bright future and he will make it big," the former cricketer said. Pathan, who was at the marathon as chief guest, said India had the potential of becoming a sporting nation. "To participate in such events is really special. I have always believed that India can become a sporting nation. Twenty thousand people participated here today and everyone was smiling. The people want to be fit and want to participate in such activities, it is always good to see this," he expressed.

Australia beats New Zealand

AP ■ AUCKLAND

Australia beat New Zealand by 27 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system in the heavily rain-affected third T20 international Sunday to complete a 3-0 sweep the series and to harden its favoritism for the World Cup later this year. New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner won the toss in his 100th T20 international and sent Australia in, mindful the rain might dictate terms later in the match. It did. Australia's was interrupted three times by rain breaks and finally terminated after 10.4 overs when it was 118-4. New Zealand was set 126 to win in 10 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis system, which seemed a relatively charitable target. But New Zealand botched the run chase for the second time in three days at Eden Park, unable to conquer Australia's world class attack. Under the revised rules for the 10-over innings, Australia was allowed five bowlers who could bowl two overs each with a three-over power play. The young left-armed Spencer Johnson took 1-10 from his two overs, showing why he made \$1.4 million in the IPL auction earlier this year. Nathan Ellis conceded only 11 from his two overs, Mitchell Starc only 15 and Adam Zampa took 1-20. Ellis bowled four dot balls to New Zealand's biggest hitter, Glenn Phillips, in the fifth over and at the midpoint of its innings New Zealand was 51-2, needing 75 from the last 30 balls. Australia's bowlers continued to bowl a tight line and length to frustrate the Black Caps



batters and after Ellis bowled the ninth over for the cost of only 8 runs, New Zealand needed 43 off the last over to win. The honor, or duty, of bowling the last over went to Matt Short who already had contributed for Australia, making 27 off 11 ball, batting at No. 3. The first ball of the over went for six but the next three balls

were singles, the fifth ball went for two and the last ball for a boundary as New Zealand fell hopelessly short. "I think I feel most comfortable when I'm playing shots," Short said. "It was a bit of a strange game because of the rain and being off and on. The aggressive way is the way we want to play our T20." Credit also goes to wicketkeeper Matthew Wade

who took over the captaincy from Mitch Marsh and led Australia with great tactical insight in tricky conditions. "Our bowlers were unbelievable today the way they came out and executed," Wade said. "It's as clinical a bowling performance as I've seen from an Australian unit and for Matt Short to come out and bat the way he did is exciting for the future. "We've got depth in our squad and everyone's enjoying their cricket." Australia should have been massively disadvantaged by the fact its innings was abruptly ended after only 10 overs when it had been playing for 20. But it already was in a powerful position. Thanks to Short and to Travis Head, who made 33 from 30 balls, and Glenn Maxwell who made 20 off 9 after being dropped first ball, Australia already was 67-2 after its six-over power play. New Zealand couldn't match the clinical aggression of the Australian batters. Glenn Phillips and Mark Chapman faced most of the last five overs and simply couldn't find a way to score consistent boundaries against the outstanding Australian attack. Australia has demonstrated the ability to win in all circumstances in this series, including its thrilling final ball victory in the first match, before an emphatic 72-run win in the second game. "They're obviously a quality side," Santner said. "Their big three quicks and obviously the power they possess, I guess they showed us (how to play) throughout the series. "The first one was a close one and I guess we got outplayed the last two.



England spinner Leach to undergo knee surgery

PTI ■ LONDON

Left-arm spinner Jack Leach is set to undergo a knee surgery on Tuesday after being ruled out of the England's ongoing five-Test tour of India. Leach, who came into the India series as England's most experienced spinner, took part in only the opening Test at Hyderabad which his side won by 28 runs. The 32-year-old spinner suffered an injury on the field which caused severe swelling, forcing him to leave the tour after missing the second Test and subsequently returning home. "I'm going to have an operation to get the rest of the swelling out because it's not budging," Leach was quoted as saying by the BBC. The report added that the knee injury trouble is the latest for Leach who suffers

from Crohn's disease, having also missed last year's Ashes in England due to a stress fracture in his back. On the tour of New Zealand five years ago in 2019, Leach had also contracted sepsis. "It need to be an unfortunate one. It was the second ball of the first innings in the field so that whole game I was playing with this knee problem. I obviously knocked it a few times throughout that game and it has just created a long period of recovery," he said. "I need to get the operation done and then hopefully I can get back to playing cricket. I'd love to have a run of playing cricket and getting into a bit of a rhythm again and hopefully that can happen again once I've got this sorted." After the conclusion of the India tour, England's next assignment will be the first home Test at Lord's from July 10.

ICC suspends Hasaranga for two matches, Gurbaz fined match fees

PTI ■ DUBAI

The ICC has suspended Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga for two matches and docked a fine of 15 per cent on the match fee of Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz for breaching its Code of Conduct during the third T20I in Dambulla. The global governing body said in a release that Hasaranga has been banned after the spin bowling all-rounder accumulated a total of five demerit points within a 24-month period, which includes his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct. "Sri Lanka's T20I skipper and second-ranked T20I bowler on the ICC Men's Player Rankings, Wanindu Hasaranga, has been presented with a two-match suspension after his total demerit

points reached five within a 24-month period following his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct, for which he received a 50 per cent fine and three demerit points," the ICC said in a statement. The incident involving Hasaranga took place towards the end of the third and final T20I on Wednesday when he approached the on-field umpire Lyndon Hanibal to criticise a decision regarding a full toss delivery not being adjudged a no-ball. Hasaranga was thus found guilty of breaching the article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. The article relates to "personal abuse of a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire or Match Referee during an International Match". With Hasaranga accumulating five demerit points, it converts to



two suspension points, the ICC said. "This means he will either get a ban for one Test match or two ODIs or T20Is, whichever comes first, for the player or player support personnel. Consequently, Hasaranga will be suspended from participating in Sri Lanka's first two T20Is against Bangladesh next month," the ICC said. **Gurbaz penalised** Afghanistan batter Gurbaz too was penalised for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct in the same match for having violated the article 2.4 of the code, which concerns "disobeying an Umpire's instruction during an International Match". This has resulted in one demerit point being added to Gurbaz's disciplinary record, which marks his second such offence in a 24-

month period and the player accumulating two demerit points. "The sanction was imposed on Rahmanullah for altering the grip of his bat on the field despite repeated warnings against doing so," the ICC said. The ICC added that both the players have admitted to the offences and have accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad from the elite panel of match referees. "The charges were brought forth by on-field umpires Lyndon Hannibal and Ravendra Wimalasiri, third umpire Ruchira Palliyaguruge, and fourth umpire Ranmore Martinez," the ICC said. Sri Lanka won the series 2-1 with Afghanistan sealing a narrow three-run win in the final T20I. Hasaranga was named the Player of the Series for his all-round show.