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MAGICAL BUMRAH MADE DIFFERENCE, SAYS HUSSAIN 12 SPORTS

# Uttarakhand scripts history

## INTRODUCES UNIFORM CIVIL CODE IN THE ASSEMBLY

### SALIENT POINTS

- Tribal population has been exempted from the UCC provisions. "Nothing contained in this code shall apply to the members of any Scheduled Tribes"
- Like marriages, live-in relationships must be registered. Live-in partners will have to register themselves with district officials or face imprisonment under the State's Uniform Civil Code. Children born of such relations will be considered legitimate and deserted women partners entitled to maintain their partners. The Bill stipulates a penalty of up to a month in prison or a fine of Rs 10,000, or both, if the partners do not submit a statement on their relationship to the registrar within a month.
- The UCC Bill prohibits bigamy or polygamy, and permits marriages only if "neither party has a spouse living at the time". The conditions for solemnising a marriage also take "public policy and morality" into account and retain the 'degrees for prohibited relationship' exception.
- The marriageable age for all men and women has been set at 21 and 18 respectively. Partners must be 18 or older in order to have a live-in relationship.
- Both men and women will enjoy equal inheritance rights under the new Bill.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttarakhand Government introduced the Uniform Civil Code Bill in the Assembly today. This is the first such move by any State Government since Independence that could set the roadmap as similar legislations in other States. Highly placed sources in the BJP in Delhi said, "We are glad that Dev Bhumi has taken this initiative." Emphasising the BJP's deliverables across the board, from Article 370 to Ayodhya, in the past decade, sources said the party and the Government have made huge inroads into the minds of the average Indian. Beyond gender, caste, creed, and religion from economy to social justice, the BJP is touching different lives across sectors from gas to taps, marital rights to inheritance, all sections of BPL families feel empowered, they asserted. "We actually believe in and implement our promise of the last mile delivery," said a senior BJP leader, adding that, "We will have a good debate on UCC." The Bill has exempted the tribal communities from the proposed law. The Bill also mandates registration of live-



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, with others, holds a copy of the Constitution of India, at Vidhan Sabha Bhawan, in Dehradun, on Tuesday

PTI

in relationships and children born thereof. The Bill categorically states that live-in relationships must be registered. It stipulates a penalty of a month in prison or a fine of Rs 10,000 or both if they do not submit a statement on the relationship to the local Registrar. They stand to face higher penalty in case they submit false information. The Bill also makes it clear that a marriage can only be solemnised if "neither party has spouse living at the time of marriage". If not registered the deserted woman will be entitled to maintenance from her partners. Only Goa has a common civil law, in operation since Portuguese rule. The Bill effectively bans polygamy. On Tuesday, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami marched into the House with the copy of the original Constitution. The Bill applies to all of Uttarakhand and to all its people living outside the State. The State's tribal population will not be affected. The BJP had promised UCC for Uttarakhand ahead of the 2022 Assembly Polls. They finally seem to have delivered.

## Ajit faction is real NCP: EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday declared Ajit Pawar's faction as the official Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), bringing an end to months of speculation regarding the factional dispute with his party's founder and uncle, Sharad Pawar. In its ruling, the EC also assigned the NCP symbol "Wall Clock" to the faction led by Ajit Pawar. According to the EC, the decision was made following established criteria for the viability of such a petition, which included assessing the aims and objectives outlined in the party constitution, examining the party constitution itself, and evaluating both organisational and legislative majorities. The Election Commission dealt a significant blow to Sharad Pawar, the founder of the NCP two decades ago, by offering him a one-time opportunity to name his new political entity and submit three preferences for it. This concession must be utilised by February 7, 2024. If Pawar's faction fails to meet this deadline by 4 pm on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, all the MLAs claiming loyalty



to the former Union minister will be considered independents. In response to the EC's order, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar stated that he "accepts with humility" the Election Commission's decision to declare his faction as the legitimate NCP. The NCP leader's reaction came shortly after the poll panel announced that the Ajit faction is the authentic NCP. The Sharad Pawar camp condemned the Election Commission's decision to declare the Ajit Pawar faction as the legitimate Nationalist Congress party, describing it as a "murder of democracy" and alleging that it was made under pressure.

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## Congress slams PM for Nehru jibe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of suffering from deep insecurities and complexes, saying that this leads him to "viciously" attack Jawaharlal Nehru. A day after Modi's criticism of former Prime Ministers Nehru and Indira Gandhi, the Congress pointed out that BJP veterans Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani never engaged in such behaviour. By doing so, Prime Minister Modi is seen as "demeaning" the high office he holds, according to the party. Additionally, the party shared certain audio recordings of Nehru to counter the current regime's repeated attacks on the Nehru-Gandhi legacy, questioning some decisions made during their tenures. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge expressed regret over how a Prime Minister, referring to Narendra Modi, continues to attack his predecessors, particularly Nehru, who laid the foundation of modern India. "It has become a habit of the BJP and its leaders, including Modi, to constantly attack Congress and leaders like Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and the present



lot who have sacrificed for the sake of nation-building. Here, I would like to ask Modi to name one person from his party or ideological background who has dedicated their life to the country. No one," Kharge said. Meanwhile, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said that the Prime Minister was at his nonsensical worst in the Lok Sabha, and undoubtedly, this was a repeat performance in the Rajya Sabha. Another party leader and granddaughter of Nehru, Priyanka Gandhi, also accused Modi of "misrepresenting" lines from a speech by Jawaharlal Nehru. She said, "Not only is this shameful, but it also reflects

the bitterness in the minds of the BJP towards the freedom movement and historical struggles for nation-building." Ramesh said that Modi suffers from deep insecurities and complexes, which lead him to attack Nehru not politically, but personally and in a vicious manner. "Vajpayee and Advani never did this. But Mr Modi, being who he is, thinks he is being clever but actually demeans the office he holds. Megalomania and Nehrophobia are a toxic mix that is leading to the murder of democracy in India," the Congress leader also said. Priyanka questioned the authenticity of Prime Minister Modi's allegations against Pandit Nehru.

"Is there any truth in this? Before jumping to conclusions, one should read and listen to that speech of Nehru," she said, sharing the audio recording of the speech along with the Hindi quote from it.

"Did Pandit Nehru, the guardian of India's consciousness, consider Indians lazy? Yesterday, in the temple of democracy, Parliament, Prime Minister Modi made this very allegation against Pandit Nehru. Is there any truth in this?"

"Our people, forgetting to trust themselves, think that others will help them. Our village people are strong and noble. It has become a habit that instead of taking matters into their own hands, they rely on officers and the government... Communities don't progress with the help of officers; they progress through their own strength. The only yardstick to measure progress is how 40 crore people of India move forward. The community grows through its hard work," Nehru is heard saying in the audio recording. "Look at the countries that are happy and prosperous. How did they become prosperous? Through hard work"

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Police personnel during the ED raid at the residence of Rajya Sabha member and AAP national treasurer ND Gupta

## ED raids Kejriwal staff in DJB kickback probe

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Intense friction between the Central probe agency, the ED, and the AAP-led Delhi Government escalated on Tuesday with fresh rounds of raids at premises linked to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal staff, Bibhav Kumar, and others. ED sources said these raids are part of its probe into charges that the AAP and some officials received kickbacks of ₹21 crore from a Delhi Jal Board contractor. The agency searched 10 locations linked to the personal secretary as part of

its money laundering probe in the DJB case. A dozen premises in the national capital were searched by officials of the federal agency from 7 am under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The residences of Bibhav Kumar, former Delhi Jal Board member Shalabh Kumar, the office of party Rajya Sabha MP and national treasurer N D Gupta, and the premises of Chartered Accountant (CA) Pankaj Mangal, along with others associated with the ruling party in Delhi, were covered in the search action.

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## 11 killed in MP firecracker blasts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL

At least eleven people were killed and nearly 200 others were injured in a powerful explosion and subsequent blaze at a firecrackers factory near Harda town in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. Official sources said that the factory had been closed recently due to irregularities, but it was later reopened after the owner received stay orders from the High Court. Several videos of the incident surfaced on social media, depicting the massive fire with intermittent explosions occurring at the site and people frantically running to save themselves. These videos showed thick plumes of smoke emanating from the



Smoke rises after a massive fire broke out in a firecracker factory in Harda, Madhya Pradesh, on Tuesday

factory, located at Bairagarh on Magardha Road on the outskirts of Harda town, about 150km from Bhopal.

A total of 142 individuals are currently receiving treatment at Harda district hospital, while 25 others have been transferred elsewhere for medical care. Twenty-one patients are undergoing treatment at AIIMS Bhopal, and four are receiving treatment at Narmada Hospital in Narmadapuram. "So far, nine casualties have been reported, and nearly 200 others have been injured in the Harda incident. Fortunately, the injured individuals are now out of danger," said Additional Chief Secretary Home Sanjay Dubey. The cause of the blast has not yet been ascertained, and efforts are underway to control the blaze, according to officials.

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## Kerala Marxists embrace Capitalism, abandon socialism

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerthod of Marxism and Communism in the country, has made a volte-face from its stance towards US-led capitalism and a liberal economy. With the state facing an unprecedented economic crisis, the Pinarayi Vijayan-led CPI(M) Government has thrown open its doors to foreign institutional investors (FIIs), global start-up companies, and foreign universities. Finance Minister K N Balagopalan, in his 150-minute-long speech, made it unambiguously clear that the CPI(M) is abandoning its ideology once and for all and accepting the Chinese ideology of welcoming capitalism in a big way.

"Rs 3 lakh crore of private investment in the next three years is what we are aiming for. The developed countries and foreign investors are expected to flock to Kerala because we have a chief minister who is as powerful as the Sun," said Balagopalan. What stood out in the budget proposal is the open invitation extended to foreign universities to set up campuses in Kerala. If everything goes well, universities like Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Leeds, and Birmingham (the alma maters of CPI(M)'s former secretary Prakash Karat and Pinarayi Vijayan's son Vivek) would open their campuses in the State soon. Interestingly, the CPI(M) cadre physically assaulted and



tortured TP Srinivasan, former Ambassador and chairman of the Kerala Higher Education Council, in broad daylight for broaching such a proposal in 2015. Srinivasan, himself a college lecturer before switching to diplomacy, was seen on TV news channels being beaten up by cadres of the CPI(M). The move to invite foreign universities to Kerala is seen

as a fallout from the exodus of students from the state to Europe, the USA, and Australia for higher education. "More than 1,000 students leave Kerala's shores on a daily basis in search of centers of excellence in other countries, and the chances of them coming back look bleak," Father Alexander Koodarathil, director of the KM Cherian Institute of Medical Sciences, said at a public function recently. What remains to be seen is whether foreign universities will be granted academic freedom to operate in the state. "They have their own selection procedures, and their qualifying standards are high. These universities do not adhere to the Indian style of reservation," said Dr

Achuthshankar R Nair, former head of the Department of Biomedicine and Bioinformatics at the University of Kerala. The efforts of the Kerala Government to seek the cooperation of foreign investors in major infrastructure projects are likely to be futile. "No investor worth their salt would take up major infrastructure projects in Kerala because there is no guarantee or consistency in the government's policies. Infrastructure projects have a long gestation period, and it would take years for investors to recoup their money," said Rajmohan Pillai, chairman of Beta Group, a business conglomerate based in Kerala.

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# Ruckus in Bengal House over no discussion on CAG report

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There was pandemonium in Bengal Assembly as the BJP MLAs led by Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday raised anti-Trinamool Congress slogans before staging a walk-out after Speaker Biman Banerjee refused an adjournment to discuss the Comptroller and Auditor General reports alleging a scam to the tune of about ₹2 lakh crores.

With the general elections approaching the BJP upped the ante against the Mamata Banerjee Government demanding a discussion and investigation into the fake job card scam.

Leading the slogan-raising saffron legislators out of the House State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari said, "the CAG report has mentioned about massive monetary defal-

cation," alleging how "this government has resorted to large-scale diversion of funds for the so-called miscellaneous expenses which is unaccounted for."

Adhikari who on Monday met Home Minister Amit Shah and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi said, CAG has mentioned in its reports about the financial embezzlements ... and now when we are referring to that report they are getting irritated."

The BJP had earlier cited the CAG report to allege how the TMC Government had presided over "mother of all scams."

Another BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul said, "we wanted to bring an adjournment motion but the Speaker as bias as he has always been turned down the request forcing us to stage a walk-out ... who will raise the issue if the



ministers, officers and the ruling party leaders indulge in financial fraud ... in Bengal there is no place for the Opposition ... they think they will commit theft at will and we will keep quiet ... but that is not going to happen and they will have to answer for their deeds."

Adhikari once again said on

Tuesday that during his meeting with the Finance Minister he had requested her to stop the release of GST funds unless the State Government produced audit reports of previous grants.

"I have demanded an investigation and requested the Finance Minister to first audit and then release the funds

because there is no financial discipline ... they are running a government not even like a club ... they are doing whatever they want ... after these are all public money," he said.

The TMC Government was prompt to react with Bengal Parliament Affairs Minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay wondering why the BJP was not raising the issue of Rs 7.5 lakh crore scam of the Centre and mentioned in the CAG report.

"They (BJP) are talking about a purported Rs 2 lakh crore scam which is still debatable ... but they are not taking up the Rs 7.5 lakh crore scam mentioned in the CAG reports because the BJP's name will get involved in it ... and we have reports how the CAG officials who prepared the reports mentioning their scam are now being victimized and being transferred," Chattopadhyay

said.

Referring to the audit reports Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had however said earlier that the reports were not true and had been "prepared to create a misleading picture ... so that they can be used by some people for false propaganda against the state administration before the elections."

She told the media about her writing a letter to Prime Minister in which she sought his intervention so that the central funds could be released without delay wondering how a "high office" like that of CAG could publish erroneous reports. However in the same breath she announced that "the State Government is capable of paying its workers and will not beg from the Centre for funds ... we will start paying the 21 lakh unpaid MNREGA workers their dues from February 21.

## Fake job cards: ED raids six locations in Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Amid political slugfest between the BJP and the TMC over the scams alleged by the Comptroller and Auditor General the Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday swooped down at six locations in four districts to investigate into the alleged irregularities in 100-days' work scheme under MNREGA project.

Simultaneous searches were conducted at the houses of Bengal Government officials at Behrampur in Murshidabad district, Dhaniakhali and Chinsurah in Hooghly district, Jhargram and Salt Lake in

North 24 Parganas adjacent to Kolkata, sources said adding documents related to fake account numbers and job cards were seized from various places. According to sources about 2.5 lakh fake job cards were issued under MNREGA and wages paid in the said accounts. The cards were identified subsequently after the Centre framed new rules of linking job cards with Aadhar cards, officials said.

When asked to comment on the raids conducted by the ED, Bengal minister Shashi Panja said that with the approach of the general elections the BJP Government was trying to create situations to malign the State governments.

## Iran announces visa waiver for Indian tourists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Iran on Tuesday announced a visa-waiver programme for Indians entering the country by air for tourism for a maximum stay of 15 days.

The visa-free entry has been rolled out for Indian citizens from February 4 subject to four conditions, the Iranian embassy said.

In December, Iran approved a new visa-free programme for India and 32 other countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia.

The Iranian readout said individuals holding ordinary passports will be allowed to enter the country without a visa once every six months, with a maximum stay of 15 days.



"It is important to note that the 15-day period cannot be extended," it said. "The visa abolition only applies to individuals entering the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran for tourism purposes," it said.

It said Indians wanting to stay for a longer period or make multiple entries within a six-month period or requiring other types of visas must obtain necessary visas from Iranian

missions in India.

"The visa abolition outlined in this approval specifically applies to Indian nationals who enter the country just through the air border," it said.

Last month, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar travelled to Iran during which he held wide-ranging talks with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on a range of bilateral and regional issues.

## Nose picking habit may lead to Alzheimer's disease: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

If you are a chronic nose picker, then beware. Medically termed rhinotillexomania, chronic nose picking has long been considered an innocuous habit, but a review of dozens of published studies suggests it may have serious implications for brain health and lead to neurodegenerative disease namely Alzheimer's.

Researchers at Western Sydney University in Australia delved into the possible link between chronic nose-picking which is medically known as rhinotillexomania and Alzheimer's disease. Their hypothesis centered on the introduction of germs into the delicate nasal cavity during this habit, which could potentially trigger inflammation in the brain.

The study is published in the journal Biomolecules.



Alzheimer's disease is characterized by the accumulation of proteins, particularly tau, in the brain.

While the precise cause of Alzheimer's remains elusive, scientists have increasingly recognized the role of neuroinflammation in its development.

The Australian researchers postulated that the inflam-

mation observed in Alzheimer's patients could be partially initiated by pathogens infiltrating the brain through the nasal passages and olfactory system.

These pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, and fungi, might induce chronic, low-grade brain infections that lack overt symptoms but contribute to inflammation and

the formation of detrimental protein plaques characteristic of the neurodegenerative disease.

Importantly, the study draws attention to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the importance of hand hygiene. The researchers emphasized the necessity of frequent hand washing and the use of hand

sanitizers to mitigate the risk of introducing germs into the nasal cavity during nose-picking.

Nose picking is a common but often condemned practice. To help a person stop picking their nose, mindfulness meditation or habit reversal training might be beneficial, say experts, though not related to this study.

However, not everyone picks their nose for the same reasons. Although some people pick their nose to remove irritating boogers, others may pick their nose out of habit or compulsion.

"One of the lessons learned from COVID-19 is the value of hand hygiene through frequent hand washing and the use of hand sanitizers, and we suggest these routine hygienic procedures be mandatory routine procedures for the incurable nose-picker," the researchers said.

## Bill imposes 10 years jail term, ₹1 crore fine to end exam malpractice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to Rs one crore, a Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Pitching The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, Union minister Jitendra Singh said its provisions are meant to safeguard the interest of meritorious students and candidates. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha after rejecting amendments proposed by the Opposition members.

Singh said the government "will not allow meritorious (candidates) to be sacrificed at the altar of organised crimes". He added that the students and candidates do not fall in the purview of this bill and there will be no harm to job aspirants.

The move comes against the backdrop of cancellation of a series of competitive tests such as the teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test (CET) for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar following question paper leaks.

The bill also proposes a high-level national technical committee on public examinations that will make recommendations to make the computerised examination process more secure. The committee shall look into developing protocols for insulating digital platforms, devising ways and means for developing fool-proof IT security systems, ensuring electronic surveillance of examination centres and formulating national standards and services for both IT and physical infrastructure to be deployed for conduct of such examinations.



In many instances, it has been observed that organised groups and mafia elements involved in malpractices deploy solver gangs, use impersonation methods and indulge in paper leaks.

The bill primarily aims to deter such nefarious elements. The objective of the bill is to bring in greater transparency, fairness and credibility to the public examination systems and to reassure the youth that their sincere and genuine efforts will be fairly rewarded and their future is safe.

Addressing a joint sitting of

both houses of Parliament at the beginning of the Budget session on January 31, President Droupadi Murmu had said the government is aware of the concerns of the youth regarding irregularities in examinations. "Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices," she had said.

Responding to the criticism by some opposition members that the government is centralising everything, Singh said the Modi-government believes in cooperative federalism and the bill does not attempt to centralise all the systems.

He said that whenever any exam is cancelled, the effort would be made to hold the re-examination as early as possible. However, he added that there can be no firm timeline for re-examination of cancelled exam as often such cases are examined by investigative agencies and they take their own time.

The minister also said that the UPSC is conducting exams in 14 languages and "we hope to gradually include all 22 languages".

Participating in the debate on the bill, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that the bill talks about penal provisions and is absent on prevent measures. He also accused that the entire emphasis of the government is to centralise all the authorities.

Citing reports, Chowdhury said that the country has witnessed large number of cases with regard to data leaks and how the government intends to plug these loopholes.

N K Premachandran (RSP) demanded that the provisions of the bill are against the principles of criminal jurisprudence and hence it should be referred to the standing committee for scrutiny.

TMC leader Kalyan Banerjee said that there is no birth of laws but the real problem is with their implementation.

## Panel recommends penal provisions against dumping waste in water bodies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As the issue of waste dumping into rivers, including the Yamuna, continues to pose a significant environmental challenge, a Parliamentary Committee has recommended that the Department of Water Resources develop norms that include penal provisions against citizens who engage in such activities.

In response to this pressing issue, infact, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has already taken steps to address this issue by banning open defecation and waste dumping on the floodplains of the Yamuna river as well as imposing an environment compensation or penalty of ₹5,000 for those found violating these regulations. But these are hardly being implemented. In alignment with these efforts, the Standing Committee on

Water Resources has urged the Department under the Ministry of Jal Shakti to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. Their aim is to explore strategies for promoting organic farming along the river's course, with incentives provided to farmers to minimize the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It's crucial that both regulatory measures and incentives for sustainable practices work hand in hand to address the multifaceted challenges facing river ecosystems.

The suggestions came in view of the potential health hazards due to the use of fertilisers and pesticides in the floodplains of Yamuna.

In its 27th report 'Review of Upper Yamuna River Cleaning Projects up to Delhi and River Bed Management in Delhi' submitted in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday also flagged that no study has been conducted to

assess the impact of construction and demolition debris, as well as bio-medical waste dumping on the health of river Yamuna.

It further stated that according to Delhi Development Authority's (DDA's) reply, a number of steps have been taken, such as deployment of security guards, installation of surveillance and issuing challans to prevent dumping.

The DDA noted that the number of challans issued has increased from one in the year 2018 to 610 in the year 2021, indicating the rise in instances of dumping of debris into Yamuna.

The committee stated that dumping of waste, construction material and bio-medical waste have the potential to obstruct the natural flow of water during intense precipitation and water may accumulate where it is not required and thus, may result in flash flood.

## Congress slams PM...

From Page 1

"Whether it's European nations, American countries, or prosperous Asian nations, it is hard work and unity that underpins their prosperity. Without these attributes, progress cannot be made... In

our India, the habit of working very hard has generally not been developed. It is not our fault; habits are formed due to circumstances," Nehru had said.

"But the truth is that we do not work as hard as Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, Russians, or Americans. Don't think that they became prosperous through magic; they achieved

prosperity through hard work and intelligence... We can also progress with hard work and intelligence; there is no other way," India's first prime minister said.

In a social media post, Priyanka Gandhi said that after independence, crores of people faced the challenge of filling their empty stomachs, and the slavery, plunder, and exploitation by the British had hollowed out the country.

## Kerala Marxists...

From Page 1

He pointed out how an industrialist like Sabu Jacob of the Kitey Group was driven away from the State by the Government.

The government has imposed a tax on companies with captive generation plants. For every unit of

power generated in the state, the producer has to pay 15 paise to the exchequer. The court fee for filing cases related to property dealings has been increased to Rs 2 lakh from the current rate of Rs 50, making the judicial system in Kerala the most expensive in the country

## ED raids Kejriwal staff in DJB...

From Page 1

Reacting to the raids, AAP leader Atishi claimed the BJP government is trying to scare its leaders. Addressing a press conference, Atishi accused the ED of "deleting" audio recordings of CCTV interrogations in the excise policy case. ED sources have refuted the charge. Atishi made the allegations against the agency at a press conference and called the entire probe a "scam" in itself. She cited a 2020 order of the Supreme Court and said it was mandatory for investigating agencies to have audio-visual CCTV footage of interrogations.

Meanwhile, ED sources refuted claims that audio recordings were "deleted" from the statement of an accused in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case, adding that the agency will take "legal recourse" against the minister for leveling such allegations. They said the footage was recorded in a video-only format during interrogation as the CCTV system did not have an audio recording facility at the time. Audio recordings were added to the

video capturing system of the ED interrogation process only in October last year, the sources said. The ED officials said the agency was proposing to take legal action against the Delhi minister and that no footage was deleted. They stated that audio recording of interrogations began only in October 2023.

In a statement, AAP said the ED has planted an informal and unsigned "statement" in the media. "If ED is clean, let them issue a formal signed statement on their letterhead. The informal and unsigned statement issued by ED is full of wrong and false assertions, and we urge the media not to publish it until ED issues a formal statement. Once ED does that, we will issue a counter statement to show how it is false.

At a press conference, Atishi said raids were being conducted by the ED at the premises of Kumar and Gupta since 7 am. There are reports that the probe agency will conduct raids on the premises of other AAP leaders throughout the day, she claimed. "Yesterday, I posted on Twitter about doing a big expose on the ED today.

## 11 killed...

From Page 1

The administration is investigating how such a large quantity of explosives came to be present at the factory. After news of the incident reached Bhopal, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav held a meeting to assess the situation and announced that the Army was being contacted to arrange for helicopters for rescue operations.

"In the meeting, the Chief Minister emphasized that providing immediate treatment to the injured from the Harda accident is our top priority. Ambulances are being dispatched to Harda from surrounding areas, and the Army has been contacted to organize helicopter assistance," the CMO said in a post on X. "I have spoken to the relevant officials and requested details of the incident," Yadav added.

The Centre has been informed about the tragedy," the CM added. Yadav announced a financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each deceased individual and said that the entire cost of treatment for the injured persons would be covered by the state government.

## Ajit faction is real NCP...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, former Union Minister Praful Patel welcomed the ruling. "This is a travesty of democracy. What transpired is regrettable," former Maharashtra minister Anil Deshmukh remarked. Deshmukh also cited a similar occurrence in the case of Shiv Sena, alluding to the Election Commission's recognition of the Eknath Shinde-led group as the authentic Shiv Sena after Shinde rebelled against Uddhav Thackeray in 2022. After the verdict, Supriya Sule stated that party workers are with Sharad Pawar, and

he will rebuild the party. In its 141-page order, the EC stated that the "test of legislative majority" helped Ajit Pawar's faction secure the NCP symbol. "...the Commission had examined the applicability of all three tests: the 'Test of Aims and Objectives of the Party Constitution,' the 'Test of Party Constitution,' and the 'Test of Majority' to adjudicate the present dispute case," it said.

"The Commission scrutinised the affidavits of support filed by both factions and concluded that the group led by the Petitioner enjoyed majority support among the

legislators. In light of these findings, this Commission holds that the faction led by the Petitioner, Ajit Anant Rao Pawar, is the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and is entitled to use its name and reserved symbol 'clock' for the purposes of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968," the EC said.

In a detailed order, the EC further stated that neither of the two factions contended that they adhered to the aims and objectives of the party constitution while accusing the other of violating it. On the aspect of the 'Test of Party Constitution,' the EC

found that although both factions had no dispute over the party constitution, they were not adhering to the same. Consequently, this test also failed to yield any determinative result. The EC stated that it examined the affidavits of support filed by both factions and concluded that the group led by the petitioner (Ajit Pawar) enjoyed a majority among the legislators. The commission noted serious inconsistencies in terms of timelines in the claims of the Sharad Pawar group, which undermined the reliability of their claim to organisational majority.

Ajit Pawar had garnered the support of a majority of NCP MLAs in July last year and backed the BJP-Shiv Sena government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in Maharashtra. In July last year, Ajit Pawar, along with 40 MLAs, rebelled against his uncle and NCP founder Sharad Pawar to join the BJP-Sena government. Both factions asserted that they were the authentic NCP. Two days before rebelling against Sharad Pawar, Ajit Pawar had approached the EC, staking a claim to the party name and symbol and subsequently declaring himself as the party president.

# ED deleted recording of interrogation: AAP

Agency sources deny charges

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday accused the Enforcement Directorate of "deleting" audio recordings of CCTV interrogation in the excise policy case. ED sources have refuted the charge. AAP leader and Delhi minister Atishi made the allegations against the agency at a press conference and called the entire probe a "scam" in itself. Addressing a press conference, Atishi alleged that an accused had applied in court and sought CCTV footage because he was investigated by the ED once along with a government witness. Atishi claimed that despite an investigation of two years, ED has not been able to recover anything. "For the past two years, AAP leaders have been threatened like this. In the name of liquor scam, investigating agencies CBI and ED have been raiding AAP leaders now and then in Delhi. But despite such investigations for nearly two years, ED has not been able to find anything," she said. "During that investigation, statements were given, and there was a CCTV camera installed in the room. However,



it was found that the statement produced in court and what happened during the investigation in the room is completely different. Also, when ED gave the footage, it deleted the audio of the footage. ED deleted all the conversations that happened in that room, and evidence was tampered with," she alleged. She claimed that the party had learnt from trusted sources that "all the audio files of the footage of investigations done by the ED in the past one and a half years have been deleted by the ED." "It is clear today to everyone that this is not the investigation of a scam, but this ED investigation is a scam in itself. Today I want to ask ED that 'Who ED is trying to save by deleting these audio files?'" Atishi said. "What ED is trying to hide by deleting all the audio recordings of the past one and a half years? Provide details of all the audio files of the investigation

# City governance model has been put on ventilator: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after the ED carried out raids at premises linked to AAP leaders, the BJP on Tuesday said the Arvind Kejriwal government has put the governance model of Delhi on "ventilator" by focussing solely on its "publicity, drama and scams". The BJP's reaction came after Delhi Minister Atishi said the Centre is trying to "scare and silence" the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) through the Enforcement Directorate. The AAP's allegation against the BJP came after the ED searched the premises of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary Bibhav Kumar and AAP Rajya Sabha MP and party's treasurer ND Gupta as part of a money laundering case. About 10-12 premises in the city were raided under a probe linked to alleged irregularities in DJB's tendering process, officials said. Hitting back at the AAP, Union minister Meenakshi Lekhi listed the alleged scams under the Kejriwal government and said those who created space for themselves by projecting themselves as "out-right honest" have become "synonymous with corruption" today. She also hit out at Kejriwal for skipping the ED summons and asked Atishi to tell people when the Delhi chief minister would appear before the probe agency to answer its questions.



"One can always see that every time you ask questions related to law, adherence to law and order and regulations, one finds that everywhere they are missing in action," Lekhi told a news conference at the BJP headquarters. Their only emphasis has been "on drama, publicity, wrong doings and creating so much of ruckus and racketing in the form of scams," she charged, adding they are "responsible for putting the governance model of Delhi on the ventilator". The ED has issued five summons to Kejriwal for questioning in alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The AAP national convener has skipped all the five summons. Slamming Kejriwal for skipping the ED summons, Lekhi said when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, he "sat before a SIT (special investigation team) for seven hours and answered each and every question". "All the rubbish allegations which were brought against him, he faced everything, from

the trial court to the Supreme Court. That's the way you face up. That is called adherence to the law and order, governance and the Constitution of this country. You don't lie and behave in this manner," she added. Welcoming the raids on AAP leaders, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the party was involved in corruption and the probe agency was exposing it. Sachdeva said the AAP were involved in scams related to the excise policy and the Delhi Jal Board. "Aam Aadmi Party and its leaders, including Kejriwal, have indulged in corruption. The probe agencies are exposing their corruption," Sachdeva said. The BJP leader said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "guarantee" to recover "every single penny looted" from the government exchequer. "We welcome the probe. Facts will come up through the investigation," Sachdeva said. Delhi BJP Secretary Bansuri Swaraj has stated that corruption is continuously increasing in the AAP regime whether it's the Delhi government or the Delhi Municipal Corporation, both have become synonyms for corruption. Swaraj has stated that while the spokespersons of the AAP have been adept at creating a political atmosphere with false statements, the magic of their words has now faded away, and they have lost credibility among the public.

# My Government spending 40 per cent of Budget on education, health: Kejriwal



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said there is no greater virtue than providing good education to children and his government has doubled the budget for education and now spending 40 per cent of Delhi's total budget on education and health. Making this assertion here after inaugurating the newly constructed building of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar School of Specialized Excellence in Paschim Vihar, he also claimed the central government is spending only 4% of its budget on education and health. Kejriwal said earlier the dreams of children studying in government schools used to die, but we have given wings to their dreams by providing all kinds of modern facilities. This school is equipped with modern facilities including 54 classrooms, two libraries, 13 labs, 18 activity rooms, a lift, and a multipurpose hall, where 1200 children can be admitted. Earlier, on February 4, the

Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone for 4 new school buildings in the Kirari Legislative Assembly constituency, where 10,000 children will be able to receive education. This school building is three stories tall, besides the basement, constructed by PWD. The original school structure, constructed in 1997 as a G+1 building, had 45 Semi Permanent Structure (SPS) rooms. It was among the first three Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas created by the Directorate of Education, GNCTD in the late 1990s. Safety concerns in 2019 led to the demolition of old SPS rooms and the installation of temporary sheds in the open space on the school premises to ensure the uninterrupted education of children here. In 2020, approval was granted for the construction of a new G+3 Pucca building. Construction began in July 2022 and is completed now. During this event, Education Minister Atishi and other dignitaries were present.

# LeT member, retired Army man, operating in JK held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested an alleged member of the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba module operating in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara, officials said on Tuesday. The accused, who is a retired army personnel, has played an instrumental role in receiving arms and ammunition from across the Line of Control (LoC), they said. The accused, identified as Riyaz Ahmad Rather and is a resident of Kupwara district, was arrested on Sunday from New Delhi Railway Station, the police said. Riyaz was a havildar in the Indian Army and retired last year, police said. He was involved in hatching a conspiracy along with one Khurshed Ahmad Rather and Ghulam Sarwar Rather in



receiving arms and ammunition from across the LoC by the terrorist handlers, a senior police officer said. The investigating agencies in Jammu and Kashmir received an information on Sunday that one Riyaz Ahmad Rather was wanted in the recent terrorist module case busted by them in which five people were arrested and incriminating material, including five AK rifles (short), five AK Magazines and 16 short AK rounds, were recovered, he added. These arms and ammunition were sent by Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) based

LeT terrorist handlers Manzoor Ahmad Sheikh alias Shakoor, a resident of Gabra Karnah; and Qazi Mohammad Khushal, a resident of Dhanni Karnah, the officer said, adding that both were operating from across the border. It was informed that Riyaz was absconding and would reach New Delhi Railway Station in the wee hours. A team was constituted and deployed at the railway station. They identified Riyaz and apprehended him when he was trying to flee from exit gate number-1 in the early hours, the officer said. It was revealed that he, along with his friend Altaf, had boarded Mahakaushal Express from Jabalpur and reached Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station around 3 pm on Saturday, the police said.

They took an auto-rickshaw and reached New Delhi Railway Station. Riyaz was about to go to some other hideout, they said. Riyaz is suspected of having received a consignment of arms and ammunition from Khurshed Ahmad Rather and Ghulam Sarwar Rather - both already arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir Police. Riyaz and his friend Altaf retired from the Indian Army on January 31, 2023, the police said. One mobile phone and one SIM card have been recovered from Riyaz's possession, they said. Riyaz has been arrested under appropriate sections of law. The Jammu and Kashmir Police officials have been informed for further necessary action at their end, the police said.

# Viral video shows man firing at marriage function, probe on

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking cognisance of a viral video in which a man can be seen firing during a marriage function, the Delhi Police has registered a case and launched an investigation into the matter, officials said on Tuesday. "We have registered an FIR and started further investigation into the matter. We got to know that a man fired more than three bullet rounds during a marriage function in Kumhar basti of Gharoli village," said a senior police officer. According to a purported video, a man can be seen firing bullets from a pistol during a marriage function in Gharoli village under the Ghazipur police jurisdiction. The video



went viral on social media. It was found during investigation that a marriage was solemnised on February 4 and the alleged person got into an act of celebratory gun fire when the "baraat" was about to leave for Baraut in Uttar Pradesh, police said. The person who is seen firing the weapon in the video was identified as Satpal (50), the father of the groom, they said. "An FIR under relevant provision of the Arms Act and 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the IPC has been registered against him. The man has a valid pistol license," the officer said. "Further investigation is on into the matter," he added.

# Noida Authority wins Water Digest World Water Award in two categories

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Noida Authority has won the annual 'Water Digest World Water Award 2023-24' in two categories, officials here said on Tuesday. The authority has won the award in the categories for 'best STP' (sewage treatment plant) and 'water reuse' as it competed with several government agencies, they said. Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat presented the award during a ceremony in New Delhi on Monday to Noida Authority Additional CEO Satish Pal and General Manager (Water) R P Singh. "Today participated in the



Water Warriors for Peace 2023-24 program organized by Water Digest organisation in New Delhi. In the annual program of Water Digest, selected talents working in the interest of society in the field of water are honoured. This effort of the organisation gives us an opportunity to know new water war-

riors every year," Shekhawat said in a post in Hindi on X. Pal said currently a total of eight sewage treatment plants are being operated on Sequential Batch Reactor method at four locations in Noida area. "The capacity of all operated plants is 411 MLD. Availability of high grade treated water with full chlorination under stages 1, 2 and 3 at all the plants is with Territory Treatment Plant and all the plants are connected online on CPCB server," he said. "A total of 260 MLD of treated water is currently available from all these plants," the authority's additional CEO added.

# Expediently audit DJB accounts from 2018 to 2021, HC orders CAG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to expediently audit the accounts of Delhi Jal Board (DJB) from 2018 to 2021. The high court's direction came while closing the proceedings of a plea seeking direction to CAG to audit the accounts of DJB whose financial audit has allegedly not been carried out for the last several years. The court was informed by the counsel for CAG that they have received annual accounts statements from DJB for 2018-19 to 2020-21 and they are in the process of auditing the accounts.



"In view of the statement, the writ petition is closed with a direction to the CAG to audit the accounts of DJB as expediently as possible in accordance with the law," a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice

Manmeet P S Arora said. The petition was filed by Delhi BJP leader Harish Khurana seeking direction to DJB to maintain proper accounts and other relevant records and prepare an annual statement of the profit and

loss with proper balance sheets from 2015 onwards as prescribed under the law and to direct CAG to conduct an audit of the board. Responding to the petition, DJB said it was making every effort to ensure that all final statements and balance sheets were duly prepared and audited in the interest of transparency and compliance with the law. It termed the petition to be "politically motivated" and said the allegations levelled against it were "false, frivolous and vexatious". CAG has also told the high court that there is no negligence on its part as accounts were not provided for auditing. It had said that it made "several correspondences" for seeking accounts for audit from DJB

and the Delhi government but as accounts were not made available, the audit could not be accomplished. The petition said it has been clearly stated in response to the RTIs of May 11, May 24 and July 22, 2021 that the copy of the balance sheet for the year 2015-16 and onward is under preparation. "It is mandatory to maintain financial accounts and conduct an annual audit of the accounts in order to ascertain effective functioning of the state and local bodies. Maintaining financial accounts and conducting an annual audit of the accounts help to secure accountability, transparency of the state and local bodies' functioning towards the general public," the plea said.

# Engage all stakeholders to resolve ITO Barrage issue, Water Department told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Parliamentary committee has urged the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation to play role of an "honest broker" in resolving the contentious issue of ITO Barrage here by pro-actively engaging all stakeholders. In view of huge flooding in Delhi in July 2023, the Standing Committee on Water Resources in its 27th report "Review of Upper Yamuna River Cleaning Projects up to Delhi and River Bed Management in Delhi" said that in August it undertook a field visit to the ITO Barrage for an inspection of its role and working in flood management in the city. The panel was apprised that the

Yamuna Barrage near ITO, Delhi across river Yamuna was constructed by the Haryana Irrigation Department during 1966-67 for the then Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (DESU) for meeting cooling water requirement of Indraprastha Power Station and Rajghat Power House of Delhi Thermal Power Control Board (DTPCB). After construction of the barrage, its operation and maintenance were assigned to Haryana Irrigation Department, the committee said in its report. Indraprastha Power Station was decommissioned on December 31, 2009 and Rajghat Power House was also made non-operational in May 2015. "Since, this Barrage 87 was con-

structed to supply cooling water for the thermal power houses therefore, this barrage has no role in flood management in Delhi," the committee said. The function of the barrage is not for regulation of flood water. Further, the committee noted that the team of experts from CWC visited the Barrage in July 27 last year. "During the visit, it was observed that on that day some of the gates were in fully closed position/partially opened position. The main cause of non-functioning of these gates is heavy silting in and around the gates and poor maintenance of hydro-mechanical equipment. Rope connection to the gate or counter in some bays was detached," the panel said in its report. In this regard, the committee



noted the submission of Haryana, according to which, the only reason of non-maintenance/over hauling of gates is attributed to failure of IPGCL authorities to provide maintenance and operation cost apart from capital investment as per requirement. "On the other hand, Delhi government believes that they have technical capability to operate and maintain ITO Barrage at present and can operate it in a better way as per requirement during the flood in Delhi territory," the panel said. However, in this regard, the Haryana government is referring to a decision taken in a meeting of 2015 wherein it was decided that supplies available at the barrage be considered for further distribution among

Uttar Pradesh Haryana and Rajasthan at Okhla. "Hence, it is not feasible for Haryana to transfer the control of the barrage to Delhi," the committee said in its report. It further noted that a committee under the Chairmanship of Central Water Commission has been constituted by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation for joint flood management study of river Yamuna, for its stretch between Hathnikund and Okhla Barrage. One of the scopes of the study is to review the utility of ITO barrage in present context, it said. The committee stressed that this issue needs to be sorted out as early as possible for ensuring the safe operation of the

barrage so that Delhi does not again become a victim of floodings as witnessed in the month of July 2023. The committee urge upon the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation to mediate in the matter and play the role of an honest broker in resolving this contentious issue between the concerned State Governments by pro-actively engaging all stakeholders," it said in the report. It also suggested that Bathymetric survey of Yamuna should be carried out once in five years or within a specified time period so that concern of silting of river bed could be addressed and clinical dredging could be done to accommodate the probable flood coming in the river.

# India to fence border with Myanmar: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Tuesday. The move could virtually put an end to the Free Movement Regime (FMR) prevalent along the porous border. The FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any document. The 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, which passes through Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, currently has FMR. It was implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy. Fencing along the border has been a persistent demand of the Imphal Valley-based Meitei groups which have been alleging that tribal militants often enter into India through the porous border.



The Meitei groups also allege that narcotics are being smuggled into India taking advantage of the unfenced international border. In a post on X, Shah said the Narendra Modi government is committed to building impenetrable borders. "It has decided to construct a fence along the entire 1643-kilometer-long Indo-Myanmar border. To facilitate better surveillance, a patrol track along the border will also be paved,

he said. The home minister said a 10-km stretch of the border in Moreh in Manipur has already been fenced. Furthermore, two pilot projects of fencing through a hybrid surveillance system are under execution. "They will fence a stretch of 1 km each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approx 20 km in Manipur have also been approved, and the work will start soon," he said.

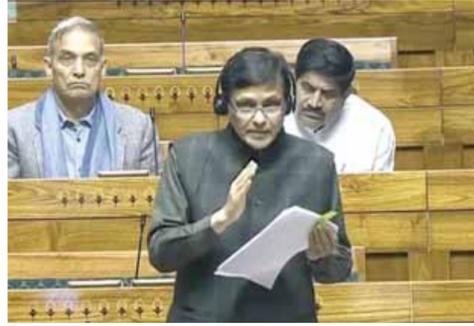
# LS passes Bill providing quota to OBC in JK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill to provide reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local bodies in Jammu and Kashmir, with the government asserting that important changes have taken place in the Union territory since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

Replying to a brief debate on the Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill-2024, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the people of Jammu and Kashmir have started enjoying the fruits of development ushered in by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Currently, there is no provision for reservation of seats for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir. The bill seeks to provide reservation to OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir and bringing consistency in the local



body laws of the Union territory with the provisions of the Constitution.

"With this, justice will be ensured to the citizens of Other Backward Classes of Jammu and Kashmir for the first time after 75 years of independence," according to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill. In his reply to the discussion on the bill in the Lok Sabha, Rai said he made no reference to the opposition demand for the government to spell out a time frame for holding of elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the restoration of statehood.

Rai said the opposition members, participating in the debate, were resorting to a drama of supporting the bill granting reservation to OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu and Kashmir and were raising other issues. "I wish to make one thing clear, no matter how much you go around in circles, but in Jammu and Kashmir wherever you go you will only hear 'Modi, Modi' and the development ushered in by Modi," the minister said. Earlier, opposition members in the Lok Sabha urged the government to hold assembly

elections in Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest. Participating in the debate, Hasnain Masoodi of the National Conference (NC) demanded that the polls in the Union territory be held soon. He said the central government should have decided on the polls before the Supreme Court had to intervene in the matter. The top court had a few months back asked the Election Commission to hold assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir by September this year. Masoodi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Monday said his government would take big decisions. Polls in the Union territory should be held before other big ticket decisions are taken, Masoodi said. Minister of State for Home Ajay Misra intervened to point out that local bodies' elections were held in the erstwhile state. Participating in the debate, TMC leader Saugata Roy also referred to the Supreme Court observation and pitched for early assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir. On August 5, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was made a

Union territory with a provision for a legislative assembly after the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, which accorded special status to the erstwhile state. Supriya Sule(NCP)demanding a timeline and "not a vague" answer from the government on holding assembly polls and giving statehood to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. She said while the Election Commission will decide on the date, the government could at least give a tentative timeline for holding the democratic exercise. Jugal Kishore Sharma(BJP) said the bill would ensure justice to OBCs. Chinta Anuradha(YSRCP) said this was a progressive legislation and would help streamline the election process in the local bodies, including panchayats. Shiv Sena member Pratap Jadhav, Navneet Rana (Ind), Kaushalendra Kumar (JD-U), Ramesh Bidhuri (BJP), Veeraswamy Kalanidhi (DMK), N K Premachandran (RSP), Ve Vaithilingam and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (both Congress) also participated in the debate.

# 2 Bills modifying list of SC/STs in AP, Odisha passed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed two bills which seek to modify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The Upper House cleared the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 by voice vote.

The first bill seeks to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes in Andhra Pradesh, while the second one seeks to modify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Odisha. Both the bills were piloted by Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda in the upper house. Members from various parties expressed their views on the two legislations, including from the BJP, Congress, TDP, DMK, Trinamool Congress, BJD and AIADMK. Replying to the debate, Munda said both the bills have been brought with a long-term planning. In Andhra Pradesh, three more ethnic groups - Bondo Porja, Khond Porja, Parangiperia are being added to the list of Scheduled Tribes. While in Odisha it will add four



groups in the list. All these are part of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and they have been added to the scheduled list after 75 years of independence. "There are 75 PVTGs which are spread from Andaman Island to the mainland. The government has started a scheme and worked in mission mode with a target to reach them in the far-flung area in which they reside," said Munda. According to him, the names of such 10 PVTGs were not added in the list of scheduled tribes and they were deprived of conditional rights and faced injustice. Munda further said he has written letters to the state governments, where the population of PVTGs are on the decline.

Moreover, the government has also launched schemes such as PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, he said. He thanked the members of the house and said there is no need for any politics in supporting such kind of bills. Munda said some members have suggested adding some more communities from their states in the list and the government is considering that. However, he added inclusion in the list of scheduled tribe is based on certain criteria of characters. "Scheduled tribe is a character, not a caste. It inherits the character of the community," he said.

Participating in the discussions, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the two bills seek to correct the historical anomalies with the inclusion of seven communities from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh in the SC/ST list. The passage of the bills in Rajya Sabha and later in Lok Sabha will have an immense socio economic and psychological impact on the four primitive tribes from Odisha, he said.

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he noted that it is after 22 years that the Parliament has taken up bills to make changes in the SC/ST list. He also attacked the Congress for doing nothing for backward castes even after being in power for such a long period. Pradhan said in 2013-14, the tribal affairs ministry had a budget allocation of Rs 42,095 crore which has gone up by considerable amount now. He said the government will not leave out any deserving community which needs to be included in the SC/ST list. Citing the example of Odisha, he noted more than 120 proposals came to the central government. He noted that proposals have been sent back to the state government with some queries

and as soon as the Odisha government sends them back, those would be considered by the government. Binoy Viswam(CPI)alleged that the BJP government is against tribals, people from backward castes and women and only in the time of elections they seek the support from such communities. Ryaga Krishnaiah (YSRCP) and Ashok Kumar Mittal (AAP) also participated in the discussion. Santanu Sen(TMC)said "while standing to speak on this bill, it really gives me pain when I recall that the respected President of India who belongs to a tribal community is not invited during the inauguration of this new Parliament building or during the Pran Pratishtha in Ayodhya. This reflects how this government respects the tribal communities at large." Hanumanthiah(Congress)sought to know why the government cannot look at the whole Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list afresh and make it an inclusive list of SCs and STs across the country at a time so that this problem will not be there and every now and then we need not have to amend these bills from time to time.

# Probe hate crime angle behind 403 student deaths abroad, Centre told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over deaths of Indian students abroad, Congress leader K C Venugopal in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday asked the government to probe if there were any "hate crime" angle to the incidents.

Raising a "matter of serious concern" during the Zero Hour, Venugopal said according to recent information shared by the External Affairs Minister in the Lok Sabha, a staggering 403 Indian students have lost their lives in foreign countries since 2018. "Chair, this is not a number...Families devastated, dreams shattered and futures extinguished," he said. Citing the information provided by the minister, Venugopal said Canada topped the list with 91 incidents, followed by the United Kingdom with the 48 cases. In the United States of America alone four Indian or Indian-origin students lost their lives in January this year. "This number demands our immediate attention and collective efforts to ensure the



safety of Indian students those who are studying abroad. We must ask whether some of these cases in fact (are) hate crimes. I urge the government to conduct a thorough investigation into each case to determine if hate crimes are a contributing factor. It is essential to address the root causes of this rise in violence. "We cannot ignore the pain of the families who have lost their loved ones. As a nation, we have a responsibility to protect our students to give them the opportunity to learn and grow in a secure environment. The government must engage in robust diplomatic efforts with the countries where our students are studying,"

Venugopal said. The Congress leader also made a case for establishing a comprehensive records system to accurately track and report incidents involving Indian students overseas. In his Zero Hour submission, Sasmit Patra (BJD) asked the government to consider inclusion of "Ahimsa" or non-violence in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution as requested by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. He further said the Odisha Assembly too has passed a resolution in this regard. Ashok Bajpai(BJP) asked the government to bring a law to take action against people who denigrate Hindu culture and gods.

# Coast Guard ship Varaha arrives in Kenya for 3 days



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further enhance ties with Kenya, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Varaha, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, arrived at Port Mombasa for a three-day, on Monday as part of the overseas deployment of ICG ships. Coast Guard officials said here on Tuesday. The primary objectives of the visit are to strengthen long-standing diplomatic ties, enhance maritime cooperation, and promote interoperability with the Kenya Coast Guard Services (KCGS) and other maritime agencies. The itinerary includes professional interactions such as onboard training and lectures on Visit, Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) and Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR), cross-deck visits, joint yoga sessions, planning conferences, and table-top exercises for Marine Pollution Response (MPR). Activities during the port call involve Courtesy Calls by the

Commanding Officer on various dignitaries and government officials of Kenya, including the Kenya Coast Guard Services. Kenya and India have historically maintained warm and friendly bilateral relations, sharing common values and diverse cultures. Regular interactions between ICG and KCGS occur through ICG ship visits and various capacity building programmes. The overseas deployment of ICG ships aligns with the organization's plan to foster bilateral relationships and strengthen international cooperation with Foreign Friendly Countries (FFCs). During this Africa deployment, the ship is also scheduled to make port calls in Maputo, Mozambique and Dar-e-Salam, Tanzania. This visit plays a crucial role in strengthening bilateral relationships with key maritime agencies, including the Kenya Coast Guard Services (KCGS), Mozambique Navy and Tanzania Naval forces.

# Rajya Sabha passes Bill to decriminalise offences related to water pollution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill which seeks to decriminalise minor offences related to water pollution, enable the Centre to prescribe service conditions of chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards, and exempt certain categories of industrial plants from statutory restrictions. The Bill, which seeks to amend the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, was approved by the Rajya Sabha by voice vote.

Piloting the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill 2024 in the Upper House of Parliament, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said that development and environment protection must go together. "There should be harmony in ease of living and ease of doing business, he added while replying to a debate on the Bill. He said its provisions will lead to greater transparency in dealing with various issues related to water pollution. According to the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill, the amendment proposes to rationalise criminal provisions and ensure that citizens, businesses and companies operate without fear of imprisonment for minor, technical or procedural defaults. Also, the nature of penal consequence of an offence must be commensurate with the seriousness of offence, it added. According to the Bill, the cen-



tral government will be empowered to exempt certain categories of industrial plants from the application of section 25 relating to restriction on new outlets and new discharges. "This will reduce the duplication of surveillance and unnecessary burden on regulatory agencies," Yadav said. According to the proposed law, the central government will prescribe the manner of nomination of chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards. It also empowers the central government to issue guidelines on the matters relating to the grant, refusal or cancellation of consent by any state board for establishment of any industry, operation or process, or treatment and disposal system or bringing into use of new or altered outlets. "Amendments in the Water Act are also necessary to make in line with the Air Act, as both laws contain similar provisions," he said. As water is a state subject under the Constitution, hence it was not considered in the Jan Vishwas Bill 2022, through which the Air Act was amend-

# Foundation stone laid for new hostel for NE students in JNU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move easing the accommodation and commuting challenges for students from the North East keen to study in Jawaharlal Nehru University here, Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region, Culture and Tourism, G Kishan Reddy on Monday laid a foundation stone of a 28 crore

worth hostel 'Barak' having 214 rooms for both genders and modern amenities. The move is part of the Government's Look East Policy. This will ensure that students from the Northeast do not have to scout for the rented rooms outside the premises. At a North-East Sannelan here, the Minister also inaugurated North Eastern Cultural and Social Institute in Dwarka, with a budget of Rs 116.38 crore. It

will feature diverse amenities, including an auditorium, a library-cum-reading room focused on materials related to the North Eastern Region, an art gallery showcasing the region, an exhibition hall, research center, sale outlets and a guest house. The centre will also house facilities like a state handloom display, a food court, and exhibition spaces.

# Modi wishes speedy recovery to King Charles III

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday wished Britain's King Charles III, who has been diagnosed with cancer, a speedy recovery and good health. Modi posted on X, "I join the people of India in wishing speedy recovery and good health to His Majesty King Charles III."

# Naxals building urban network by roping in poor youths: Police

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Naxals are trying to expand their urban footprint in Maharashtra by roping in youngsters from poor sections in slums in big cities like Mumbai and Pune for military tasks and setting up safe havens, according to police. Naxals are trying to direct the discontent among youngsters from low-income groups living in urban slum pockets against the government, a senior police officer disclosed to PTI. "In their documents, Naxals have mentioned that their 'urban network' is quite strong in cities like Mumbai, Nagpur, Nasik, Pune and Gondia," said Special IG, anti-naxal operations (Maharashtra) Sandip Patil. Naxalites are targeting youngsters from lower socioeconomic groups living in slums for spreading the Maoist ideology and for (engaging them in) military tasks, he added.

"They are trying to rope them in for logistical tasks involving ordnance, arms and ammunition, medical help, and for building safe havens in forest and urban localities," he said. Naxals mentioned in their secret documents that their network is quite strong in slum areas in Mumbai, Pune, Nasik, Nagpur and Gondia, Patil said. "They are trying to attract youngsters from lower socioeconomic groups living in slums. They want to capitalize on the negative mentality among these youngsters struck by poverty and domestic problems. They want to turn this sentiment against the government," the police officer said. Explaining how Naxalites are playing on the psychology of target groups and trying to fish in troubled waters, Patil said their organisations pretend that they are fighting in the interest of the people but their real motive is to spread Maoist ideology.

# BJP accuses Congress of using Karnataka funds to 'incite' people against Centre

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The BJP on Tuesday lodged a protest with Governor Thaaewardh Gehlot against the state government's alleged use of public money to issue front page advertisements in various newspapers asking people to take part in 'Chalo Delhi' march against the Central government. Ahead of a planned showdown in Delhi led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on February 7 at Jantar Mantar, the Congress government issued an advertisement in various newspapers asking people to march to Delhi. The advertisement read: "To protest against the financial atrocities committed by the Central government on Kannadigas and Karnataka - Chalo Delhi". The state government claimed

that not even a penny for drought relief was given to the state though the demand was for Rs 18,177 crore. A special grant of Rs 5,495 crore as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission has been announced. The government also alleged that there was disparity in the tax share given by the Centre to the State. It also accused the Centre of cutting grants for collaborative schemes. "Losses to Karnataka by Central government from 2017-18 was Rs 1.87 lakh crore," the government claimed in its advertisement. In its memorandum to Gehlot, the BJP alleged that the advertisement "incites the people of Karnataka with misleading and false information regarding devolution of funds from the Centre".

# HC hears plea against Hindu prayers in Gyanvapi mosque cellar

**PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ**

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday heard both the Hindu and Muslim sides on the Gyanvapi mosque committee's appeal challenging the Varanasi district court order allowing Hindu prayers in a cellar of the mosque. Justice Rohit Ranjan Agrawal said the hearing would continue on Wednesday.

The Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, which looks after the affairs of the mosque in Varanasi adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple, had filed the plea on Friday last challenging the Varanasi court order allowing prayers in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque.

In the middle of the hearing Tuesday as the court hour was over, the judge said the hearing would resume at 10 am on Wednesday.

The Allahabad HC had on Friday not given any immediate relief to the Gyanvapi Masjid committee which had challenged the Varanasi district court order.

On Tuesday, appearing on behalf of the Muslim side, senior advocate SFA Naqvi submitted that by the order of January 31, the district judge had given final relief sought in the suit at the initial stage, which cannot be permitted.



Naqvi further submitted before the court that the order was passed in a "very hurried manner" and on the day of retirement of the judge concerned. Varanasi district judge Ajaya Krishna Vishvesha retired from service on January 31.

On behalf of the Hindu side, Vishnu Shankar Jain submitted that the order for appointing a receiver was passed on January 17 and the court order for offering puja was passed on January 31.

The Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee moved the high court within hours of the Supreme Court refusing to hear its plea against the

district court order. Naqvi had on Friday last submitted that while passing the impugned order, the district judge did not consider their documents.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, representing the Hindu side, pointed out that the district court by the means of an order dated January 17 had appointed the Varanasi district magistrate receiver of the property and in pursuance of the order, he took possession of the same on January 24. The order passed on January 31 is only a consequential order. The order dated January 17 has not been challenged and thus the appeal is not maintainable, he had argued.

According to the January 31 order, the advocate general has given an undertaking that the district administration of Varanasi will maintain law and order in pursuance of the January 31 order.

Jain had also submitted that by permitting puja, no harm has been caused to the other side because puja was going on in the past and was stopped in December 1993.

In the appeal filed before the court, the Board of Trustees, Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple and Shailendra Kumar Pathak, head priest, Acharya Ved Vyas Peeth Temple Complex, have been made respondents.

# Modi courts global CEOs for investment in oil, gas sector

**PTI ■ BETUL (GOA)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday courted top oil and gas executives, showcasing opportunities the world's fastest growing economy offers and the reforms that his government has made particularly in exploration and production.

Modi met about 20 top executives of firms ranging from ExxonMobil and BP to QatarEnergy and French giant TotalEnergies, discussing energy scenarios as well as investment opportunities, sources in knowledge of the development said.

He referred to the recently launched exploration licensing round to seek global giants to invest in finding and producing oil and gas in the country.

The sources said he spoke on reforms in the oil and gas sector, including a shift from purely revenue-based bidding for oil and gas areas to an exploration-focused bidding.

India is the world's third largest energy consumer and imports 85 per cent of its needs. The government wants to increase the domestic production to cut imports.

Indian CEOs attending the meeting included Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal as well



as executives from Reliance Industries Ltd. Refusing to divulge details of the meeting, Agarwal talking to PTI said literally every body from the oil and gas industry were there.

Each CEO made a small submission and the prime minister wrapped up the discussions.

"In my submission, I stated that India is the best place to invest globally. Reforms undertaken in recent years have made it attractive and global majors should come and invest in exploration and production in India," he said.

Vedanta, he said, is looking to its investment by USD 4 billion to double oil and oil equivalent gas production to 300,000 barrels per day in 3 years.

"India is the only country which has the resources as well as the demand. So whatever we produce here can be consumed here," he said.

With lower taxes and mining lease for the entire economic life of the fields, investments can flow in, he said.

"We have to produce more for a self-reliant India and we have everything in place — a favourable policy climate, right regulatory environment and a supportive government," he said.

# Horse trading will invite stern action: Bihar Dy CM



who are sore over the sudden loss of power caused by the JD(U) supremo's volte-face, have been claiming that the day might see some upset with RJD leader Awadh Bahari Chaudhary still occupying the Speaker's chair. However, the Deputy CM said, "It is only a matter of time before the Speaker, against whom all NDA MLAs have moved a no-confidence motion, is replaced. Either he will resign or face the ignominy of being voted out in the House where a majority of members do not have faith in him."

The NDA, which also enjoys the support of former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi's four-MLA-strong HAM and an Independent, has a combined strength of 128 in the assembly which has 243 members.

The Mahagathbandhan, which includes Congress and three Left parties besides RJD, has 114 members, eight short of majority. Besides, Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMM has one MLA and though the party has not revealed its cards, it has been accusing the RJD of having poached four of its MLAs a couple of years ago.

Choudhary, however, made it clear that the government would take "stern action" if attempts were made to destabilise the government through horse trading.

**PTI ■ PATNA**

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Tuesday asserted that the newly formed NDA government will sail through the trust vote slated for next week and warned the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan of "stern action" if horse trading was attempted.

Choudhary, who also heads the BJP's state unit, spoke to PTI here upon returning from Delhi, where in the last couple of days, he called on top leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"The BJP's relationship with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) has matured over the past few decades, with a few bittersweet experiences in between. The synergy will be on display during the trust vote which we are bound to win," said Choudhary.

The government which was formed on January 28 is scheduled to seek vote of confidence on February 12, the inaugural day of the budget session.

Mahagathbandhan leaders,

**RAMPUR FERTILIZERS LTD.**  
CIN: L15136UP1988PLC010084  
Email id: info@rampurfert.com  
Regd. Off.: Judges Barelly Road, Rampur-244901 U.P.

**NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING**

In pursuance of Regulation 47 of SEBI (LODR) 2015, Notice is hereby given that the meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Wednesday, the 14th February 2024, at 4:00 P.M. at its Regd. Office, Judges Barelly Road, Rampur-244901 (U.P.). inter alia, to consider, approve and adopt unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended on December 31st, 2023 pursuant to Regulation 33 of LODR. The said information is also available on the Company's website at www.rampurfert.com and the same has been also sent to CSE and MSE to upload on their websites i.e. www.cse-india.com, www.mse.in respectively.

By order of Board  
Sd/-  
Rajeev Kumar  
Date: 06.02.2024  
(Company Secretary)

**M. P. PASCHIM KSHETRA VIDYUT VITARAN CO. LTD.**  
GPH Compound, Polongund, Indore, Phone No.: 0731-2426144/166/204/150  
Email: mp.pskv@gmail.com, CIN No.: U40109MP2002SG001521  
No. MD/WZ/06/PUR/EOI/1868 Indore, Dated: 06.02.2024

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)**

M.P. Paschim Kshetra Vidyut Vitaran Co. Ltd., Indore is a power distribution company in MP having head quarter at Indore, intends to carry out Technical Loss Estimation Study upon 1% of each parameters such as Feeder, PTR, DTR, S/s, etc. and 59.44 Lakh consumers of various categories.

Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited from interested firms/consultants having experience in the field of Technical Loss Estimation Study.

The interested firms/consultants are requested to submit their technical proposal indicating their technical capability, appropriate supporting document in respect of their experience in carrying out works in electricity distribution utilities, details of job carried out along with relevant technical specification related to the required work, technology, equipment involved etc. along with financial capability.

The related information may be downloaded from website <https://mptenders.gov.in>, <http://www.mppwz.co.in>.

Interested firms/consultants are requested to submit their offer online to the CE (Purchase), O/o MD (WZ), GPH Campus Polo ground, Indore, latest by 15:00 Hrs., Date 26.02.2024.  
M.P. Madhyam/113636/2024 C.E. (PURCHASE)

**ELECTION PROGRAMME**

Election programme for the election of the Managing Committee of The Jamapur Primary Agriculture Co-operative Society Ltd., Jamapur to be held on 17.03.2024.

| Sr.No. | Particular  | Date                     | Times                   | Place   |
|--------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 01.    | Exhibition of 1st list of voters as required under Sub Para(2) of rule 35 and objection on the list of Voters will be submitted on the last day of Exhibition of Voter list in the office of Assistant Registrar, Co-op Societies, Gurugram | 08-02-2024 to 15-02-2024 | 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  | 1. In the Regd. Office of the Society & village falling in the area operation of the society<br>2. Assistant Registrar Co-operative Societies, Gurugram Near John Hall Civil Line, Gurugram<br>3. Central Co-operative Bank, Gurugram |
| 02.    | Hearing of objection of the list of voters as required under sub para(4) of rule 35   | 16-02-2024               | 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. | ARCS Office, Gurugram   |
| 03.    | Filing of Nomination Papers.  | 29-02-2024               | 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. | In the office of Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Gurugram, Near John Hall, Civil Line, Gurugram  |
| 04.    | Scrutiny of Nomination Papers.  | 01-03-2024               | 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. | Do.....   |
| 05.    | Display of List of Validly nominated Candidates.  | 01-03-2024               | 04:00 p.m.              | Do.....   |
| 06.    | Withdrawal of Nomination Papers.  | 05-03-2024               | 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. | Do.....   |
| 07.    | Allocation of Symbols   | 05-03-2024               | 03:00 p.m.              | Do.....   |
| 08.    | Display of List of contesting candidates.   | 05-03-2024               | 04:00 p.m.              | Do.....   |
| 09.    | Taking of poll, if necessary.   | 17-03-2024               | 08:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. | In the premises as per list of Booth attached   |

Note:-(1) Election of the Managing Committee of the said society will be held as per section 28 (b) of the Haryana Cooperative Societies Act 1984  
(2) Election will be held as per orders of Hon'ble High Court of Punjab & Haryana in Bej/Sonia vs. State of Haryana in CWP No. 3648 of 2007. (Rajesh Kumar)  
(3) Election will be held under the instructions of Government (Covid-19) as applicable. Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Gurugram, (Returning Officer)

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** e-mail: [sephbpd@gmail.com](mailto:sephbpd@gmail.com)  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA**  
c-3015 Parmanandpur, Railway Station Road, Bhawanipatna, Dist. Kalahandi, PIN -766002

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
Identification No. EEPH-BHPT- 34 of 2023-24/ Dt. 03.02.2024  
e-Procurement Notice

- Name of the Work : 1 No Work.
- Type of Bid : Double Bid System
- Estimated Cost : Rs. 126.40 lakh
- Period of Completion : 2 (Two) Calendar Months
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 11.00 AM of dt. 08.02.2024 to 5.00 PM of 22.02.2024
- Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal : 5.00 PM of 22.02.2024
- Date & Time of opening of technical bids : At 11.30 AM of 23.02.2024.
- Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, P.H. Division, Bhawanipatna, Railway Station Road, At/Po- Parmanandpur, 766002 Dist- Kalahandi.

Further details can be seen from the web site <http://tenders.ori.nic.in> or [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Superintending Engineer, P.H. Division, Bhawanipatna  
OIPR-13059/11/0016/2324

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh Delhi-110005

**PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
(See proviso to rule 8(6))  
Notice for sale of movable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Movable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Movable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

| Sr. No. | Name of Borrower(s)/ Co Borrowers/ Guarantors  | Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any | Amount Outstanding                | Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit | Date and Time of Property Inspection        | Date & Time of E-Auction                    |
|---------|--|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| (A)     | (B)  | (C)   | (D)                               | (E)                                 | (F)   | (G)   |
| 1.      | Mr. Karmvir Singh Sehrawal (Borrower) Nikko Rani (Co Borrower)- LAN No. LDVLE00027244098 | MARUTI EECO FLEXI, Registration No.: DL1LT1628 Mfg: 2013        | 6,62,123/- as on January 30, 2024 | Rs. 30,000/-<br>Rs. 25,000/-        | February 19, 2024 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM | February 29, 2024 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM |

The online auction will be conducted on website (URL Link- <https://auctions.cardekho.com/#/>) of our auction agency Car Dekho. The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till February 28, 2024 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must offer their offer along with the earnest money deposit (refer column E) in a sealed envelope that mentions "offer for purchase of property" ICICI Bank Limited, Plot No. 23, Shal Tower 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi - 110005 or to our marketing agent Car Dekho at address: 11th Floor, Tower B, Emaar Digital Greens, Golf Course Ext, Road, Sec-61, Gurugram, Haryana - 122001 on or before February 28, 2024 before 05:00 PM. The marketing agency has also been engaged as auctioneer for proper conduct of auction. Earnest Money Deposit MD/PO should be from a Nationalized/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at "Delhi".

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 9372730494/ 8126013708 or Car Dekho at 7701827194.

Tenders which are acknowledged by the Bank/e-auction vendor official and registered before the cut-off time with complete details shall only be considered for auction.

The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/n4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/n4p4s)

Date: February 07, 2024  
Place: Delhi NCR

Authorised Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General public is hereby informed at Large that my Client Sh. Gopal Mehta S/o Om Parkash Mehta R/o 285 Sant Nagar East of Kailash New Delhi-110065, is the absolute owner of property being in Plot No. 22, at Barhi Industrial Area, Barhi, Sonapat, Haryana, having Area measuring about 1600 Sq. Mtrs. & said property is free from all kinds of encumbrances, i.e. sale, agreement to sell, gift, attachment, auction or other Govt. decrees etc. and nor the same has been acquired by any Govt. Authority. That my aforementioned clients have lost/misplaced the said property to a professional property i.e. Conveyance Deed dated 11.04.2007 executed on behalf of Haryana State Industrial & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. in favour of proprietorship concern of Sh. Gopal Mehta namely M/s United Colours of India at C-160, 2ND Floor, Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi-110048, duly registered as Document No. 98 Book No. 1, Jild No. 95 on page No. 91 and additional copy pasted on Jild No. 1590 at page Nos. 22 to 31 on dated 11.04.2007.

Public at large is requested/directed to hand over the same back to my client who is in possession of said original conveyance deed regarding which Police Complaint has also been registered in P.S. Crime Branch Delhi vide I.R.No.181936/2022 Dated 03/03/2022. It is hereby notified that if any person or body is having any right, title, claim or interest in said property based on the aforesaid Conveyance Deed, same be sent at address mentioned below within 7 days from today after which it will be deemed that, no such right, title, claim or interest in respect of such property of any person or body, exists.

(SANDEEP SHARMA) Advocate  
Tis Hazari, Delhi-110054

**Form No. 3**  
(See Regulation-15 (1)(a)) 16(3)  
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL CHANDIGARH (DRT 2)**  
1st Floor, SCO 33-34-35, Sector-17, Chandigarh  
(Additional space allotted on 3rd & 4th Floor also)  
Case No.: OA/1774/2021  
Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993  
Exh. No.: 21170  
ICICI BANK LIMITED VS. SHALINI CHAUDHRY

To, (3) M/S RAJEDA DEVELOPERS LTD., 406 4TH FLOOR, RECTANGLE ONE D4 DISTRICT CENTRE SAKET, NEW DELHI, DELHI

**SUMMONS**

WHEREAS, OA/1774/2021 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on 15/11/2023. WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/ notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 26,847,816/- (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed).

In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-

- to show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted;
- to disclose particulars of properties other than the properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;
- you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;
- you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/ or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;
- you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets. You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 13/03/2024 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date: 17/11/2023.

Signature of the Officer  
Authorised to issue summons

**CH. CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, MEERUT**  
(NAAC ACCREDITED with A++ Grade)

**CONTRACTUAL RECRUITMENT IN THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**  
Adv. SFS 02/2024

Online applications are invited for Teaching Assistants for eligible candidates (As per UGC notification 18 July 2018 and subsequent UP Government order no. 1190/सत्तर-1-2019-16(114)/2010 dated 15 October 2019 and First Statutes of University as amended from time to time) for appointment in the various departments in the University.

Online submission of application start from 05.02.2024 to 01.03.2024

Last date of submission of the printout of online filled form (download) is 07.03.2024

Link for the form and other details: <http://www.ccsu.ac.in/ccsu/recruitment> in for further details and eligibility conditions **REGISTRAR**

**New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**  
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)  
Website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.in)

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.in](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.in) & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

| Sl. No. | Job No.   | Sale Start Date | Sale End Date           | Tender Opening Date and Time |
|---------|---|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.      | Job No.- 16/E-TENDER/SPO/2023-24<br>Name of Work:- Procurement of Manhole Covers with Frame for Jal Division-II, Estimated Rs. 50.40,000.00 | 07.02.2024      | 20.02.2024 upto 5:00 PM | 21.02.2024 11:00 AM          |

Store Purchase Officer,  
NOIDA

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

**KOLKATA DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL NO. 1**  
42C, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, 9th Floor  
Jeevan Sudha Building, Kolkata - 700 071  
Case No. RC No. 01 of 2022 arising out of OA/136/2001  
Rare Asset Reconstruction Ltd. & Ors. vs Official Liquidator & Ors.

**SALE NOTICE**

Pursuant to the order no. 22 dt. 30.01.24 Passed by LD Recovery Officer, DRT - 1, Kolkata there will be sale of the immovable properties as mentioned below "AS IS WHERE IS AND WHATEVER IS BASIS":

| Properties  | Reserve Price   |
|---|---|
| A/73, Haz Khus Enclave, New Delhi - 110016.<br>(Rupees) Eighteen crore Three lakh Thirty four thousand (Three hundred only) | Reserve Price of the property Rs.18,03,34,300/-<br>(Rupees) Eighteen crore Three lakh Thirty four thousand (Three hundred only) |
| (Note: Total outstanding maintenance amount of Rs. 24,50,000/- excluding Reserve Price)                                     | EMD, 10% of Reserve Price Rs.1,80,33,430/-<br>(Rupees) Four crore Eighty lakh Thirty Three thousand Four hundred Thirty only    |

The sale will be done through e-auction. The intending purchasers will have to deposit an earnest money for an amount of 10% of the reserve price in the manner required for taking part in e-auction which shall be adjusted in the case of successful bidder and refunded to other bidders on the date of sale itself. Successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale proceeds after adjustment of EMD, on being knocked down, by next date i.e. by 3:00 P.M. after conclusion of the e-auction, failing which the earnest money deposited shall be forfeited. The purchaser shall deposit the balance 75% of the sale proceeds within 15 days from the date of auction sale. The reserve price below which the property (ies) shall not be sold is indicated against the property as the reserve price. EMD/further payment should be made through RTGS/NEFT/DD in to the Account No. 20014996623 the name of Recovery Officer, DRT1, Kolkata of India Bank, Kolkata Main Branch, having IFSC Code No. DIB000M667.

Notice is hereby given that in the absence of any order of postponement, the said property shall be sold by way of online Auction (e-auction) which will be conducted on 13.03.2024 Between 12:01 p.m. to 01:00 p.m. with 3 minutes unlimited extension e-auction platform at The prospective bidder is required to download the Sale Proclamation and sale notice from <https://drt.auctioning.net>, of M/S E-Procurement Technologies Ltd., at B-704, Wall Street, Ahmedabad-380 006, Gujarat, Register Tiger, contact Mr. Praveen Thevar, M: 9722778828, email id: [wb@auctioning.net](mailto:wb@auctioning.net) and register their names for participating in the auction with earnest money through Demand Draft/Pay Order in favour of Recovery Officer, DRT-1, Kolkata payable at Kolkata so as to reach the Tribunal on or before 11.03.2024. The participants/ intending purchasers are necessarily required to submit following documents/papers for registration because only registered participants/tending purchasers can login and participate in the E-auction.

- Self attested copy of Pan Card.
- Self attested Valid Residential proof.
- Self attested Valid E-mail ID and Mobile No.

However the undersigned will not be responsible for any error occurred through net work at the time of Auction. The user ID and password will be directly sent to registered Participants/tending purchasers with further directions, if any, for login and participating in the auction through on-line. The other terms and conditions are same as per proclamation of sale issued by the undersigned on 30.01.24. The intending purchasers or representatives should contact Mr. Manoj Jha, Mobile No. 7498996888 for details & inspection.

Date: 30th Day of January, 2024 **RECOVERY OFFICER**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
e-OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE  
No.- 128-W/280/Tender Notice/23-24W-(NIT-55) Dated: 06.02.2023

Sr. Divisional Engineer-I/Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of President of India invites e-tender on the prescribed form for the under noted work:

Name of work: Construction of a permanent relay hut building for existing relay hut no. 07 and 10 to enhance single reliability and safety in the section of SSEW/NSNP under ADEN/PNP

Approx. Cost: Rs. 58370371/-

Earnest Money: Rs. 112800/- Earnest Money should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. Note: EMD or Demand Draft will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter No. 2015/CE-1/C/1/5/1 dated 31.08.2016.

Completion period: 06 Months

Date and time of submission of tender and opening of tender: Upto 15.00 hrs on 01.03.2024 opening of e-tender at 15.00 hrs on 01.03.2024

Website particulars, published-tender, notice location etc complete details of tender can be seen and web site where the tender form can be downloaded

Similar nature of work: Supply and erection of prefabricated structure (Building, Cabin, Toilet etc.)

**NOTE:** All attachments must be self attested by the tenders and the affidavit should be submitted in the new format attached with tender conditions as per Annexure-XXIV is compulsory. 401/24

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Mission 370

Prime Minister Modi gives an assertive reply to the 'Motion of Thanks' in Parliament

In a spirited address to Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded to the 'Motion of Thanks' on the President's address, outlining his Government's achievements and outlining the vision for future. In the process, his bold proclamation that the BJP is poised to secure "at least 370 seats" in the Lok Sabha elections caught the nation's attention. It must have sounded like music to the ears of his followers and party members. Modi reiterated his commitment to transforming India into a global powerhouse. The speech resonated with a sense of determination and optimism, emphasising the need for continued efforts to realise the nation's full potential. The Prime Minister's assertion regarding "at least 370 seats" reflects the party's confidence in its governance and people's endorsement of its policies. The number is not arbitrary; it holds historical significance, referring to the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. This strategic reference underscores the BJP's commitment to its core principles and the successful execution of its policy agenda. It is true that the BJP under Modi has been an invincible election machine winning election after election and decimating the Opposition. The BJP has also fulfilled two of its main promises — Abrogation of Article 370 and construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya, while implementation of the Uniform Civil Code and "one nation, one election" is on the cards. So it can go to voters and reasonably claim that it has delivered on its promises. Thus Modi's optimism is not ill-founded: The seat count may be real rather than just rhetoric.



Understandably, Modi's announcement has sparked intense debates across the political spectrum. The Opposition leaders have questioned the feasibility of such a sweeping victory, emphasising the need for a more nuanced approach to governance. The Congress and other political rivals have challenged the BJP on various fronts, ranging from economic policies to social issues. In response, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his belief in the people's mandate and trust in the BJP's leadership. He expressed confidence in the party's ability to connect with voters and address their concerns effectively. Behind Modi's bold proclamation lies a meticulous electoral strategy. The BJP has been consistently working to strengthen its grassroots connections, leveraging technology and engaging with the youth. The party's success in recent Assembly elections has bolstered its confidence, and the ambitious target of 370 seats reflects a belief that its agenda resonates with a majority of the electorate. This is indeed time for him to focus on other pressing issues: Inclusive economic growth and employment generation must now top his agenda. Besides, social cohesion and restoring law and order in troubled States like Manipur must be priority. The people of India have given him all the support and mandate for the nation's betterment. It is a big responsibility which he must shoulder.

## PICTALK



Students participate in the 12th national school under-15 chess championship, in Patna

## Unravelling colonial legacy in army heritage



ASHOK K MEHTA

Gradually, the military traditions are being overshadowed. The Republic Day Parade has transformed from a military display to a political and cultural event with military elements

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mere mention during the tri-service Commanders' conference in 2022 on the 'rich heritage of ancient Indian strategic thinking' as part of 'dismantling colonial legacy', in short, "Indianisation" of strategic culture set the cat among the pigeons. In the absence of any strategic operational directives or White Paper, political leadership employs oral instructions. I recall individual service chefs devising their service strategy based on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's annual Commanders address.

The three services policy briefs would be integrated by IDS for jointness. This was before the theatrisation era, the groove in which the needle is stuck since 2019 when Gen Rawat was appointed CDS and ordered to theatreise. But we now know from two former security czars and one Foreign Secretary — Narendra Vohra, Shivshankar Menon and Shyam Saran — that a national security strategy was prepared and ready for release thrice but political will was absent. Similarly now, leaving theatrisation to CDS and service chiefs, a collegium of equals to square the circle — is impossible. Theatrisation has to be a political decision like CDS was.

So services attempt what is possible: the mission to Indianise colonial heritage. While the Navy is changing 'gears', badges of rank and ensign, the Air Force is silent on its transformation. The Army as usual is in a tizzy changing the names of cantonments, roads and so on. Project Udbhav was intensely impressive in rediscovering the Indic heritage of state and battle crafts and grand strategy. A Military Heritage Festival to tap indigenous military skills was aimed to extract military wisdom from 5000-year civilization imbibing from religious scriptures and Arthashastra by Chanakya, though not long ago, Rand Corporation's George Tanham, a friend of India's said: "India has no strategic culture". That shook the cuckoo's nest. Maj Gen (ret'd) BS Dhanoa hit the bull's eye when he wrote that ancient military wisdom will not replace the need for niche weapons and



technology. Inference: these exercises are diversions by the government for not providing funding for modernisation. This year, minus pensions, defence allocation is 1.4 per cent of GDP.

This returns us to the costless exercise of Indianisation and disrobing colonial heritage. Like hiring and now firing Gorkhas from Nepal, tinkering with Republic Day Parade, Beating Retreat and so on. The Modi government prides itself on its impeccable nationalist policy on defence and security. Instead of India catching up with China, Beijing is galloping to catch up with the US leaving New Delhi miles behind. Symbolism — jumlas as the opposition calls it — issued are par excellence. For the government Indianisation of the military also translates to subtle politicization. This has never been as stark as in the last decade. The military content of the Republic Day parade has been stripped, and replaced with police and paramilitaries. Gradually military is being sidelined by the second line of defence. Republic Day Parade has transformed from a military pageant to a political and cultural show with military frills.

When I was a kid living in Lucknow Cantonment in the 1950s, I would watch Gorkha squads march by and listen to military bands play on



THIS RETURNS US TO THE COSTLESS EXERCISE OF INDIANISATION AND DISROBING COLONIAL HERITAGE. LIKE HIRING AND NOW FIRING GORKHAS FROM NEPAL, TINKERING WITH REPUBLIC DAY PARADE, BEATING RETREAT AND SO ON

Sundays at Mohamad Club. Gorkhas will soon no longer march down Kartavya Path and military bands beating retreat along Vijay Path won't sound the same. Military bands are very colonial, specifically pipes and drums that are specially designed to play Scottish Highland tunes. They do not lend easily to Indian compositions. Soldiers who play pipes and drums are the medical platoon in the battle for casualty evacuation. Each Infantry battalion has a medical platoon which doubles up as pipers and drummers. Pipers sway to Highland music. The sway is to be gentle but evocative, not what Indianisation has made pipers resemble — hip-hop musicians. While commanding a Gorkha battalion, I introduced the Madal, a Nepali drum into the pipes and drums with an eye to fusing it with Nepali tunes. The Madal was removed from the band after I left office. Trying to fuse Indian instruments like flute, tabla, harmonium, and conch shells into marching music is a steep uphill. This year 31 very unfamiliar Indian tunes made their debut. It would have been better to gradually phase out old colonial scores while phasing in indigenous tunes. Old favourites like 100 Pipers, Abide with Me, and Col Bogey's March have become history. The only marching

tune that cannot be wished away is Sare Jahan Se Achha composed by Mohd Iqbal (though it too might disappear). Some of the new scores were Kargil, Tiger Hill, Swadesh, Vikrant and the Navy's vocal rendition of Jai Bharati. The bands of the Army, Navy, Air Force, paramilitary and police (they were infiltrated in 2016) played splendidly in perfect formations. The pipes and drums of the army raised the curtain followed by brass bands of the paramilitaries and police. Then came the brass band of the Air Force, Navy and Army. Long after sunset, at 6.15 heralding dusk, buglers sounded the retreat as the tricolour was rolled up for reveille the next day and another Retreat the next year. On matters traditionally military it is time CDS and service chiefs told the MoD bureaucrats and the political class to take it easy on Indianisation. Otherwise, politicization will march ahead masquerading as Indianisation. Dismantling colonial legacy must be handled with caution and care preserving military traditions, customs and ethos.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## PAYTM UNDER SCANNER

Sir — This refers to the news KYC non-compliance led to a ban on Paytm Bank (Feb 5). Recently, RBI has highlighted the digital shortcomings of the Paytm App. The opening of new accounts of Paytm is going to be blocked from 29th Feb, for the company has been violating the compliance standards set by the government regarding financial transactions. Such restrictions will hamper the rights of account holders to conduct financial transactions.

The closure of Paytm Fastag services will force the drivers to pay double at the toll plaza. The government and RBI also need to introduce an alternate option. Nowadays the utility of National Common Mobility Cards has increased a lot, and banning them will sabotage digital payment measures. However, the opening of a large number of accounts on the same PAN by Paytm company without cross-verification reflects digital dishonesty. Multiple types of online frauds are also happening due to misuse of payment gateways.

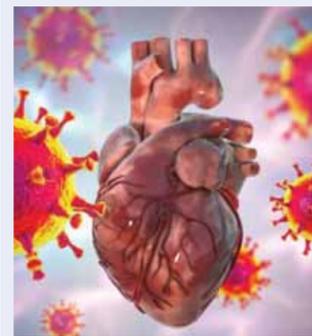
Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

## SUPPORT THEORY WITH PRACTICAL

Sir — When it comes to acquiring knowledge and applying it in a real-world scenario, practical education is always considered a better method than theoretical education. Imagine somebody teaching you to swim or drive a vehicle within four walls of a classroom. You have to get into the water to learn swimming and you have to be out on the road to learn driving. Some subjects are skill-based and practice-oriented. Theoretical knowledge of skill-based subjects needs to be supported by practice.

The advantages of practical work are unmatched, and they include experiments in laboratories, study tours, projects, assignments, etc. Students equipping themselves with theoretical knowledge has value once they apply it for practical purposes. There are several

## Cardiovascular impact of pandemic



The recent findings of the research conducted by some centres in the US and published in the 'American Journal of Preventive Medicine' have shown that the number of deaths due to cardiovascular dis-

ease during and after the coronavirus pandemic rose by 9.3%. Strangely, even persons with no history of cardiovascular ailments have died of heart attack or stroke after testing positive for COVID-19 and some, even after being vaccinated with both doses of vaccines. This probably is the reason why lakhs of people still prefer not to get vaccinated, and those who are vaccinated are afraid to take the booster. The mystery surrounding these deaths will probably continue to haunt us in the same way the mystery of the origins of the virus in China remains unsolved by the World Health Organisation. Until then, God save the world. Family history and ageing also cause our bodies to perform in sub-optimal conditions as compared to the years of our vigorous youth. If left unattended, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels and lead to life-threatening conditions such as heart problems, stroke and cardiac arrest.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

benefits of practical work, but at the same time, it must be remembered that theoretical knowledge is also important. Succinctly put, practical work is the application of theory, and theory creates a strong base for practical work. A student must be able to balance theory and practice for the best results. Theory and practice are two sides of the same coin.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

## KEJRIWAL'S ALLEGATIONS

Sir — Arvind Kejriwal is a habitual offender and has played the game of Hit and Run since he was in the process of joining electoral politics under the slogan of India against Corruption. He accused Nitin Gadkari, and Arun Jaitley of corruption charges who in turn filed a defamation suit against AK and he had to tender an apology to escape from the legal consequences since the accusations were without any substance. During the run to Punjab Vidhansabha elections

2017, AK named Akali Leader Vikram Majithia the kingpin of Drug abuse in Punjab and later apologised for the act. Now he is again trying to play the old game of building a narrative through allegations against the BJP in the media without coming forward with any evidence, which he was doing in the past too.

This time BJP filed a police complaint and the Crime Branch of Delhi Police is duty-bound to question AK who again is trying to run away but this time he seems to be trapped in his own nest. The law of the land must punish him if he fails to justify his allegations so that politicians do not make a mockery of Freedom of Expression to abuse and defame political opponents.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Crafting dignity for nation's shoe artisans



SARITA BRARA

The KVIC's initiative to train shoe artisans has not only equipped them with the skills but has bestowed upon them the dignity of labour

Asignboard in the bustling Janpath market in Delhi reads, "Beauty parlour of shoes and chappals." Seated on the pavement beneath this poster is Boti Ram, known as 'the leather doctor,' donned in a coat and muffler on a chilly January day. The hoarding, adorned with the logo of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), states: "All kinds of footwear that seem to have lost their life and color are rejuvenated and beautified here."

Under the initiative of KVIC, Boti Ram and fellow footwear artisans underwent training in the art of revitalizing worn-out, dusty, or damaged shoes. This two-month training equipped these traditional artisans with the skills to craft shoes independently, covering the entire process from cutting and closing to bottom-making and finishing.

Boti Ram, originally from Khekre in Chhatarpur district, Madhya Pradesh, arrived in Delhi in 1971, seeking employment. He initially learned the art of shoe repairing from a mentor he refers to as his Guru from



Rajasthan. Thanks to the training and encouragement he received from KVIC at Gandhi Darshan in Raj Ghat, Boti Ram now earns between Rs 300 to Rs 1000 per day. KVIC introduced the innovative program of footwear manufacturing and footwear repairing by traditional artisans in 2019-20 as a pilot project. Historically, footwear was crafted solely by artisans using manual tools. As shoes produced by the organized sector were attractive, durable, and cost-effective, many artisans were compelled to pursue other professions. The objective was also to elevate this craft to a respectable profession, encouraging the unemployed to consider it as a livelihood option.

KVIC inaugurated the first-of-its-kind footwear training centre in Delhi to train the marginalized community in 2019-21. The initiative aimed to provide logistical support

to trained artisans in establishing their shoe-making businesses after completing their training. No fees were charged from the artisans for the training provided by the Agra-based Central Footwear Training Institute (CFTI), a unit of the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises. In fact, the trainees received a stipend of Rs 300 per day for 50 working days during their two-month training period. Upon completion, artisans were also equipped with tools and necessary items for their profession, including a tin box to carry their instruments. They received nearly 20 items, including scissors, ramps, leather hole pincers, tipahi (cobblers' tripod), hand-stitching needles, black and brown brushes, colours, wax, thread, and other essentials.

Over ninety artisans have been trained in the art of making and repairing shoes and chappals. Prior to the pilot project's commencement, awareness camps were organized in various parts of Delhi. "My earnings have definitely increased after receiving training from Khadi and Village Industries

Commission (KVIC) in 2019," says Boti Ram. Now Boti Ram has a lucrative corner in the busy Janpath, frequented by thousands of shoppers, including numerous foreigners, tourists, and other market visitors. KVIC officials mention that artisans like Boti Ram can obtain loans at subsidized interest rates under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP). Cobblers/footwear artisans are also covered under the PM Vishwakarma Yojana, which provides benefits, including a loan of up to 3 lakh at a 5% interest rate payable in four years. Other scheme benefits include skill upgrading, toolkit incentives, credit and marketing support, incentives for digital transactions, and recognition of PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID Card. The training has not only given them the skill to earn their livelihood, tools, and financial assistance but, most importantly, it has bestowed shoe artisans like Boti Ram with the dignity of labour.

(The writer is a senior journalist. Views are personal. Charkha Features)



## FIRST COLUMN

### EAT SATTVIC FOOD FOR A HEALTHY MIND & BODY

As the food for body must be sattvic, food for thought must also be pure



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

It is said; "As is the food, so is the mind; As is the mind, so are the thoughts; As are the thoughts, so is the conduct; As is the conduct, so is the health". Food has a direct and intimate connection with the mind and plays a vital part in the makeup of the mind. Most of us eat food in order to derive energy, however, it would be surprising to know that of all the species, man is the only living being who dislikes raw food found in its natural state. As compared to animals who eat things as they are, man boils, fries, melts, mixes and adopts various methods of cooking in order to satisfy the cravings of the tongue, the eye and the nose. As a consequence, the food value of these articles is either reduced or destroyed. Indian scriptures categorise food into three types namely saattvik, rajasic and tamasic.

As per Chandogya Upanishad, when the food is pure, the whole nature becomes pure; when the nature becomes pure, the memory becomes firm; and when a man is in possession of a firm memory, all the ties are severed. Similarly, Bhagavad Gita says that foods that are too bitter, sour, salty, pungent, dry, and hot can lead to pain, distress, and disease of the body. Further, it says that foods cooked more than three hours before being eaten, foods that are tasteless, stale, putrid, decomposed and unclean should be avoided by those who seek excellent physical and mental health. Hence purity of food is most important if men were to live a life filled with peace & happiness. Sattvic food calms the mind whereas rajasic food excites the mind which creates worry within us which in turn causes hurry and both of these together bring about ill health. That is why it is said that today worry, hurry and curry are the root causes of man's ailments.



Most of us are not aware of the fact that the mind is made out of the subtle essence of food. So primarily it is the intention with which the food is procured, cooked or served that matters the most. Non-vegetarian food, for instance, is not fit for human consumption not just for physical or environmental reasons but basically because it is procured using inhuman violent means, making it a complete 'no no' for good health. We must also understand that the quality of thoughts that originate in the mind while food is being consumed drastically affects its quality. A very visible example of this is "Prasad" which is prepared in the remembrance of the Almighty and loaded with good intentions and which is consumed as pure food by devotees. Similarly, home-cooked food that contains a mother's love and concern for her family is far more nutritious and fulfilling than food that is commercially produced or sold in restaurants with the aim of earning money.

Ask those who are forced to eat outside every day. In other words, if the intention of the cook is any other but to nourish the consumer with good health and love, the food meets half the hunger. Remember! food can always be made nutritious with the power of positive thought. The most nutritious form of food is the one that is prepared with fresh vegetarian ingredients, cooked in the Almighty's remembrance and served with love to someone who receives it with the same respect and benevolence and consumes it in peace. However, it is not as simplistic as saying that all vegetarians have better moral or physical strength than non-vegetarians.

This is because the mind is more powerful than matter or food. And so if the quality of thoughts that is the subtle food of the mind that's consumed or created by a person each second is not elevated despite the intake of sattvic food, it would not be possible to bring out a strong, morally upright character. Therefore as the food for the body must be saattvik, food for thought must also be pure and elevated for a truly healthy being.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

# International CRAs: Anything but fair



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

It is certainly high time for credit rating agencies to make their methodologies completely transparent, consultative and objective so that they accurately reflect the true picture

Despite rising to become the world's fifth-largest economy from 12th position in the last 15 years (2008-23), with the second-highest growth rate recorded during the period among all peers, India's economy has remained stuck at the lowest investment grade, albeit with a stable outlook, assigned by the international credit rating agencies (CRAs) - that is, BBB- by Fitch and S&P, and Baa3 by Moody's. While an investment grade implies that low default risk on loan repayment, a lower rating, called a "speculative grade" signifies a high risk of default. The remarkable economic rise of India and its growing international heft have made no difference to the CRAs. As the first essay in a recently released collection titled "Re-examining Narratives: A Collection of Essays" by the Office of the Chief Economic Advisor stresses, CRAs need to reform their sovereign rating process to correctly reflect the default risk of developing economies, thereby saving them billions of dollars in funding costs crucial for development.

CRAs predate the Bretton Wood institutions of the World Bank and the IMF; they analyse the creditworthiness of governments and assign them "sovereign ratings" which provide indicators to investors around the world about the "ability" and "willingness" of governments to repay debts. These, in turn, determine their ability to borrow from global lenders and the corresponding interest rates. A good rating makes borrowing cheap and also attracts foreign investments. Sovereign credit ratings measure not only the overall economic conditions of a country, including the volume of its foreign, public and private debt and investment, transparency of the capital market and forex reserves but also assess the overall political stability and the economic stability a country will maintain during political transitions. These are subjective assessments and the methodologies used by CRAs are opaque, to say the least.

CRAs are like sundry Western agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, some of them with questionable credibility and capacity, who take it upon themselves the task of ranking countries on issues ranging from democracy, governance, corruption, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, gender parity, human rights, openness of governments, etc., using samples which are often too small, or opinions of "expert" whose selection processes remain couched in complete opacity. They use processes that lack objectivity, methodologies that lack transparency and ignore the historical and civilisational characteristics of nations; neither do they consult them about the fairness of their processes. It is cultural colonialism that through these agencies, a decaying West is now trying to impose Western concepts, Western values and Western views upon developing nations whom the West still looks down upon and refuses to treat as equal - it is a 'superior' West grading unruly developing nations on its own scales.

If it was just that, there would be inconsequential, but the problem arises because international financial institutions often base their decisions upon these rankings and there are unfair international comparisons on such rankings which are often dubious - to call them 'unscientific' would be mild. Things started changing



MOODY'S COMBINES TWO QUANTITATIVE PILLARS - ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND FISCAL STRENGTH WITH TWO QUALITATIVE PILLARS, INSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE STRENGTH (I&GS) AND SUSCEPTIBILITY TO EVENT RISK—TO ARRIVE AT THE FINAL SCORECARD

with the rise of China and India. China now treats them with utter contempt despite their loud protestations about its authoritarian system. Now Indians have also started questioning their methods - exposing their weaknesses, contradictions and hypocrisies, and other nations will also join sooner or later. The world today is multipolar and consensus-driven, and must accommodate multiple narratives instead of only Western. The global credit rating industry is an oligopoly, with only three leading agencies: Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch who rate the countries on "investment grades" from BBB-/Baa3 to AAA/Aaa, or "speculative grades" from BB+/Ba1 to D/C. Typically, to rate a sovereign, CRAs use various parameters that include growth, inflation, government debt, short-term external debt and political stability. Qualitative components contribute significantly to determining credit ratings, and as the CEA Report says, "Institutional Quality, proxied mostly by the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs), emerges as the foremost determinant of a developing economy's credit rating, which presents a problem since these metrics tend to be non-transparent, perception-based, and derived from a small group of experts, and cannot represent the willingness to pay of the sovereign". CRAs came under scrutiny and regulatory pressure following the financial crisis and the Great Recession of 2007-09. It was argued that they provided inaccurate positive ratings to mortgage-backed securities giving them the highest AAA ratings, leading to huge quantities of bad investments. They were accused of trying to raise their profits and market shares in exchange for these inaccurate ratings, which triggered

the subprime mortgage market collapse that precipitated the financial crisis. In the USA, the Credit Rating Agency Reform Act of 2006 allowed the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to regulate their internal processes, record-keeping, and business practices; post-2008, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 enhanced the regulatory powers of SEC further, forcing them to disclose their credit rating methodologies. Others have also brought them under some regulation, like the European Securities and Markets Authority or SEBI in India. Disclosure of methodologies has not led to improvement either in transparency or objectivity. For example, in the Sovereign Rating Model (SRM) used by Fitch, the factors include quantitative SRM indicators and subjective Qualitative Overlay (QO) indicators. SRM indicators include (1) Structural Features that cover composite governance indicators, GDP per capita, share in world GDP, years since last default or restructuring and broad money supply; together, they carry 53.5 per cent weightage; (2) Macro-Economic Performance, Policies and Prospects which include indicators like real GDP growth and its volatility and consumer price inflation, with a total weightage of 10.1 per cent; (3) Public Finance indicators like gross government debt, foreign-currency government debt, general government interest and general government fiscal balance, with a total weightage of 18.5 per cent and (4) External Finance indicators like reserve-currency flexibility, sovereign net foreign assets, commodity dependence, forex, external interest service, current account balance and FDI, with 17.9 per cent total weightage.

But these weights again are only "illustrative", as the agency says, adding another layer of opaqueness to methodology. While the composite governance indicator is based on WGLs which are not free from methodological contradictions, the QO factors are qualitative and depend on the CRA's perceptions of the country; they include indicators like political stability and capacity, financial sector risks, macroeconomic policy credibility and flexibility, GDP growth outlook for five years, macroeconomic stability, fiscal financing flexibility, public debt sustainability and fiscal structure. The methodology is silent about the weightage given to the qualitative factors in the final rating. Even the WGLs use a host of other indices on global competitiveness, freedom, rule of law, corruption, quality of regulation, etc. produced by sundry agencies which again are perception-based. Moody's combines two quantitative pillars - Economic Strength and Fiscal strength with two qualitative pillars, Institutional & Governance Strength (I&GS) and Susceptibility to Event Risk-- to arrive at the final scorecard, but adjusts each by a subjective qualitative score; here also WGLs have a 40 per cent weightage in I&GS. S&P combines the "Flexibility and Performance Profile" with the "Institutional and Economic Profile" to determine an "indicative rating level", and weights on these are neither fixed nor uniform. These subjective assessments determine the cost of borrowing for countries, hurting developing nations the most.

(The author, a former Director General from the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India, is currently a Professor at the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management)

# NGOs have a major role to improve development indicators

Collaborative efforts among NGOs, Government bodies and other stakeholders are vital for building a more inclusive, equitable and developed society

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become integral architects of societal development, leaving an indelible mark on key development indicators and fostering community growth. NGOs act as catalysts for change, addressing gaps in transformation, supporting marginalised groups, delivering essential services, and persuading better policy decisions. Their functions encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from education and healthcare to women's empowerment and environmental sustainability. In India, NGOs have led transformative projects, positively impacting development indicators. Education-focused initiatives contribute to increased literacy rates; healthcare pro-



FAUZIA KHAN

jects lead to lower maternal and child mortality; and women empowerment programmes positively affect gender equality. According to a survey conducted by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), as of 2021, 26.5% of NGOs are engaged in religious activities, while 21.3% work in community and/or social services. About one in five NGOs works in education, while 17.9% are

active in the fields of sports and culture, and only 6.6% work in the health sector. Additionally, access to clean water, sanitation, and sustainable environmental practices are also areas where NGOs contribute significantly. According to the Great Place to Work India report, about 80% of NGOs in India primarily focus their efforts on promoting quality education, ensuring good health and well-being, and working towards eradicating poverty.

Furthermore, in the complex landscape of Indian democracy, the nearly 3.4 million NGOs play a pivotal role in bridging gaps left by state initiatives. Beyond disaster relief, NGOs engage in diverse activities, addressing issues ranging from human rights to environ-

mental conservation. During the COVID-19 crisis, they provided essential aid to vulnerable populations, showcasing their agility in responding to urgent needs. Functioning as enablers, NGOs collaborate with self-help groups, amplifying the impact of grassroots initiatives. They empower marginalised communities, enabling them to demand quality services and ensure accountability in governance. NGOs have significantly influenced participative governance, contributing to the formulation of landmark laws, including the Environmental Protection Act of 1986 and the Right to Education Act of 2009. Acting as social mediators, NGOs intervene at societal levels, challenging prevail-

ing norms and fostering awareness. In a society steeped in superstition, faith, and custom, they serve as catalysts for change, shaping attitudes and behaviours. Despite their significant contributions, NGOs grapple with challenges such as limited funding, operational hurdles, and the need for sustainable models. Overcoming these challenges requires resilience and innovation as NGOs seek creative solutions to address the evolving needs of the communities they serve.

A study reveals that Indian NGOs face significant challenges hindering their effectiveness. Poor financial planning impedes community development programmes, necessitating stronger financial strategies. The absence of stan-

dardised legal models exacerbates financial fragility, jeopardising sustainability. Inadequate investment in human resources, coupled with negligence of staff retention, stems from a short-term focus on project management. Employee retention challenges and insufficient funds for incentives impact morale. Weak HR management, resource mismanagement, and a limited understanding of governance principles further hinder NGOs. To address these, the central government must liberalise grant rules. NGOs should establish HR guidelines, prevent fund misuse, and avoid political interference. Embracing innovation and technology while focusing on community-building can enhance NGO impact in India.

Collaboration is the key for NGOs to amplify their impact. Partnerships with government bodies, corporate entities, and other NGOs enhance the reach and effectiveness of initiatives. Successful collaborations leverage the strengths of each partner, leading to comprehensive and sustainable solutions to complex social issues. Embracing technology, fostering community engagement, and investing in capacity-building are among the best practices adopted by NGOs. For example, The GROW Fund has initiated ongoing capacity-building and organisational development sessions, empowering NGOs to grasp the significance of monitoring, systematic engagement with vendors, and data analytics. This has played a

pivotal role in fostering a holistic understanding of organisational strengths and identifying areas for improvement. Another important area to explore for NGOs is cultivating community-based institutions and providing local training. This empowers NGOs to plan, implement, and assess developmental projects effectively, fostering innovative solutions to local challenges. By embracing community-driven approaches, NGOs can access local resources and gain increased support from the people they serve.

(The writer is a member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha & former Minister of State for GAD, Education, Health, and WCD in the Government of Maharashtra; views are personal)

# Yemen's Houthi rebels attack 2 more ships in Mideast waters

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Two ships, including one heading to India from the US, travelling in Middle East waters were attacked by suspected Yemen Houthi rebel drones early on Tuesday, authorities said, the latest assaults in the Iranian-backed fighters' campaign of targeting vessels over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.



vessel, which suffered "minor damage," the firm said.

The first attack happened in the southern part of the Red Sea, west of the Yemeni port of Hodeida, with the projectile causing "slight damage" to the vessel's windows on the bridge, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. A small vessel had been nearby the ship before the attack, it added.

A second ship came under attack later Tuesday off Yemen's southern port city of Aden, the UKMTO reported. Ambrey identified it as a Marshall Islands-flagged, Greek-owned vessel coming from the US heading to India.

"The vessel reported an explosion 50 meters off its starboard side," Ambrey said. "No injuries or damage were reported." Later, a military spokesman of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, Brig.

Gen. Yahya Saree, claimed in a statement that the rebel forces attacked two separate vessels, one American and one British, in the Red Sea. He provided no evidence to support the claim.

The Houthis made no claim about the attack off the coast of Aden. One of the ships the Houthis claimed they attacked — the Morning Tide — matched details provided by Ambrey. Tracking data showed it to be in the Red Sea near the reported attack. The Morning Tide's owner, British firm Furadino Shipping, told The

Associated Press no one was hurt in the attack and the ship was continuing onward to Singapore. Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe.

In recent weeks, the United States and the United Kingdom, backed by other allies, have launched airstrikes targeting Houthi missile arsenals and launch sites for its attacks.

The US and Britain struck 36 Houthi targets in Yemen on Saturday. An air assault Friday in Iraq and Syria targeted other Iranian-backed militias and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in retaliation for a drone strike that killed three US troops in Jordan.

# Blinken returns to Mideast in push for hostage deal, but obstacles loom

AP ■ RIYADH

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi Arabia's crown prince Monday at the start of his fifth visit to the Middle East since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, hoping to press ahead with a potential cease-fire deal and postwar planning while tamping down regional tensions.

But on all three fronts he faces major challenges: Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed the United States' calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by US strikes.

In Gaza, meanwhile, Hamas has begun to reemerge in some of the most devastated areas after Israeli forces pulled back, an indication that Israel's central goal of crushing the group remains elusive. Video footage from the same



areas shows vast destruction, with nearly every building damaged or destroyed. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said the military would continue to conduct operations in northern Gaza for many months and press ahead with its main offensive in the south, where it has been locked in heavy fighting for weeks, until it has "full reign" over the entire territory.

He said the offensive will eventually reach the town of

Rafah, on the Egyptian border, where some 1.5 million displaced Palestinians have sought refuge. Egypt has said an Israeli deployment along the border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago.

Blinken met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman shortly after arriving in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Saudi officials have said the kingdom is still interested in normalising relations with Israel in a potentially historic deal, but only if there is a credible plan to create a Palestinian state.

Blinken "underscored the importance of addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza and preventing further spread of the conflict," and he and the crown prince discussed "the importance of building a more integrated and prosperous region," the State Department said in a statement. But any such grand bargain appears a long way off as the war still

rages in Gaza, where 113 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours alone, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory. Another 205 people were wounded, the agency said. The fatalities bring the overall Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war to 27,478. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children. The war has levelled vast swaths of the tiny enclave, displaced 85% of its population of 2.3 million Palestinians and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

## HAMAS RETURNS TO WAR-BATTERED STREETS

A video circulating online Monday showed masked gunmen leading a line of shirtless detainees past bombed-out buildings in northern Gaza, forcing them to shout out that they are thieves.

# Hundreds missing as death toll from Chile's wildfires reaches 123

AP ■ SANTIAGO

Volunteers in central Chile tried to remove charred metal, broken glass and other debris Monday from neighborhoods devastated by wildfires over the past several days, as officials raised the death toll to 123. Hundreds of people remain missing.

The fires appeared to have diminished by Monday morning after burning intensely since Friday on the eastern edge of the city of Viña del Mar. Two other towns in the Valparaiso region, Quilpé and Villa Alemana, also have been hit hard, and President Gabriel Boric said Sunday that at least 3,000 homes had been burnt down in the area.

An additional 10 victims were added to the death toll on Monday afternoon, said Marisol Prado, the director of Chile's Forensic Medical Service.

Prado said that many bodies were in bad condition and difficult to identify, but added that forensic workers would be taking samples of genetic material from people who have reported missing relatives.

Viña del Mar's Mayor Macarena Ripamonti said that at least 370 people have been reported missing in the city of about 300,000 residents.

The fires ravaged several neighborhoods that had been precariously built on the mountains that loom to the east of Viña del Mar, which is also a popular beach resort.

Officials have suggested that some of the wildfires around the city could have been intentionally provoked. Dry weather, strong winds and low humidity helped the fires spread faster, Boric said.

Priscila Rivero, a chef from the neighborhood of Alto Miraflores, said that it took about 15 minutes for the flames to travel from a neighboring hill to her home.

She said she rushed her

children to safety when she saw the fire approaching, but by the time she returned to salvage some of her possessions her house was burning, with licks of flame emerging from the windows.

"It's the place where we have lived all our lives" Rivero said. "It's so sad to see it destroyed, and to lose our memories, our photos, the pictures from my parents' wedding, but some of that will remain in our hearts."

Later Monday, a statement from US President Joe Biden said "Jill and I are deeply saddened by the loss of life and devastation caused by the ongoing wildfires in Chile."

"My administration is in contact with our Chilean partners, and the United States is ready to provide necessary assistance to the Chilean people," he said.

Schools and other public buildings in Viña del Mar and in the capital city of Santiago are currently serving as depots, where people are taking donations of water, food, candles and shovels for the victims of the fires.

In Viña del Mar and the nearby towns of Villa Alemana and Quilpé, police have asked people who have not been affected by the fires to stay at home so that rescue crews can move around with more ease.

Hundreds of people affected by the fires returned to their homes on Monday to search through the debris. Many have said they prefer to sleep near their homes in order to prevent looters from taking what is left of their possessions, or from claiming the land their homes were built on.

In the neighborhood of Villa Independencia, on Viña del Mar's eastern periphery, Marco Delgado tried to clear rubble from his home, which he built 25 years ago, when the area was first settled haphazardly by workers without construction permits.



Locals embrace each other amidst debris and burnt-out houses after forest fires reached their neighbourhood in Vina del Mar, Chile, on Sunday.

# Turkiye mourns quake victims

AP ■ ANTAKYA

Millions of people across Turkey on Tuesday mourned the loss of more than 53,000 friends, loved ones and neighbours in the country's catastrophic earthquake a year ago. To mark what it calls the "Disaster of the Century", the government arranged a series of events to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the disaster in southern Turkey.

In Antakya, the capital of the southern province of Hatay, angry crowds jostled with police as officials were led to the commemorations. Mayor Lutfu Savas was greeted with chants calling for him to resign, while Health Minister Fahrettin Koca was jeered and booed as he gave a speech.

Amid the fog of the Orontes River, people chanted "Can anyone hear me?" — echoing the voices of those buried under the rubble a year ago — and "We won't forget, we won't forgive." "Some of us were buried alive," said Mustafa Bahadirli, a 24-year-old in Antakya. "We called our government father" but the government left us without a father. We were abandoned for days and are still abandoned."

Sebnem Yesil, 22, criticised both the government and opposition politicians such as Savas, the mayor. "I think they have been extremely disrespectful," she said. "It has been a year, they never came and now they're here for a ceremony .... You didn't hear our voices, you didn't help, at least let us grieve."

After a moment of silence at 4:17 a.m. to mark the time the quake struck, carnations were tossed into the river in an act of remembrance and a local orchestra played a song to honour the victims.

Hatay, which lies between the Mediterranean Sea and the Syrian border, was the worst affected of the 11 southern provinces hit by the 7.8 magnitude quake. Including the 6,000 people killed in neighbouring Syria, the quake left more than 59,000 dead. Crowds in Adiyaman held a silent march, passing a clock tower that for the past year has shown the time of the earthquake.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later oversaw a draw for newly built homes in Kahramanmaraş, the quake's epicentre, after inspecting the work being done to rebuild the city and rehouse thousands who remain in tents and pre-fabricated containers.

"Today, we are drawing lots for 9,289 houses in Kahramanmaraş and handing over their keys," Erdogan said. He added that the govern-

ment aims to deliver 200,000 homes across the quake zone by the end of the year.

Then families that were picked out of the draw were called to the stage to receive the keys to their new homes from Erdogan. The ceremony was broadcast nationally. Earlier, in a social media post at 4:17 a.m., Erdogan said the loss from the disaster "continues to burn our hearts as fresh as the first day", adding: "Thank God, our nation has successfully passed this painful and historical test."

Opposition politicians are also visiting the region, with the Republican Party's leader Ozgur Ozel attending the commemorations in Hatay before travelling to Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş. Schools were closed for the day in many of the quake-affected provinces.

In Malatya, the governor banned any marches or other public displays outside officially sanctioned events for three days. Meanwhile, Mads Brinch Hansen, head of the International Federation of the Red Cross delegation to Syria, told reporters in Geneva that there were few prospects for post-earthquake reconstruction in the war-battered country.

"We don't have the funding to even think of going into larger scale rehabilitation and reconstruction," he said.

# Protests in Haiti demand PM resignation

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI)

Protests shut down major cities in Haiti on Monday as demonstrators clashed with police and demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Banks, schools and government agencies closed in Haiti's northern and southern regions while protesters blocked main routes with blazing tires and paralysed public transportation, according to local media reports. In Hinche, a city in Haiti's central region, protesters celebrated the arrival of heavily armed state environmental agents and their com-

mander, Joseph Jean Baptiste, who demanded that Henry resign. "I want Ariel to stand in front of my bullets, so they go through him," the commander said as someone filmed him while the crowd cheered. "We're the ones who have the support of the population," he said. The agents, who belong to the Security Brigade for Protected Areas, have come under government scrutiny following recent clashes with police in northern Haiti.

Smaller demonstrations took place in the capital of Port-au-Prince, where dozens of protesters gathered in front of Henry's office before police fired tear gas,

dispersing the crowd. Among the protesters was presidential candidate and former Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who was seen in a video wiping his face as supporters yelled. "We are not stopping!" At least three days of protests culminating on Wednesday are expected across Haiti, with Feb 7 considered the supposed deadline for Henry to resign.

The date is significant in Haiti: Feb 7, 1986 marked the day that former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier fled for France, and Feb. 7, 1991 marked the day that Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically-elected president, was sworn in.

# 6 hurt, 2 assailants shot dead during attempt to attack Turkish courthouse

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Two people were shot dead while trying to attack a courthouse in Istanbul on Tuesday, Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. The man and woman were killed during an "attempt to attack" a security checkpoint at the Caglayan courthouse at 11.46 a.m. local time (0846 GMT), Yerlikaya posted on social media.

Six people were injured in the incident, including three police officers. "I congratulate our heroic police officers. I wish a speedy recovery to our injured," the minister added.

Caglayan, which is also known as the Istanbul Justice Palace, is a huge court complex in the Kagithane district on the city's European side.

Yerlikaya later identified the attackers as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, or DHKP/C, a far-left group that is considered a terrorist organization in Turkey, the United States and the European Union. The attack took place on the day when Turkey was commemorating

the anniversary of an earthquake in the country's south that killed thousands of people.

The DHKP/C has been largely inactive in recent years. In March 2015, the group took a prosecutor hostage at the same courthouse, demanding details about the police killing of a teenager during anti-government protests the previous year. Two gunmen died as police stormed the building, and the prosecutor later died of his injuries.

The group also claimed responsibility for a February 2013 suicide bomb attack on the US Embassy in Ankara in which a Turkish security guard was killed and four other people wounded.

Last month, a man was shot and killed at an Istanbul church in an attack that was claimed by the Islamic State group. Two men were later arrested on suspicion of killing Tuncer Cihan, 52, on January 28 at the Santa Maria Church in the Buyukdere neighbourhood. Dozens of suspected IS members and supporters also were detained.

# Indian-origin lawyer appointed Aus new Race Discrimination Commissioner

Melbourne (PTI): Prominent Indian-origin lawyer Giridharan Sivaraman has been appointed as the new Race Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Race Discrimination Commissioner is responsible for combatting all forms of racial discrimination and promoting understanding, tolerance and harmony across all sectors of Australian society. Sivaraman is currently the Chair of Multicultural Australia, and a Principal Lawyer at Maurice Blackburn where he is head of the firm's Queensland Employment Law department.

I congratulate Mr Sivaraman on his appointment and thank him for taking on this important role. His comprehensive understanding and demonstrated passion in the race discrimination and human rights space will be a great asset to the Australian Human Rights Commission," Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said in a statement on Monday.

Taking to X, Sivaraman posted: "I'm honoured to be appointed Commonwealth Race Discrimination Commissioner. And excited, and slightly terrified!"

Sivaraman has run numerous state and national race discrimination cases and led the pro bono compensation scheme for underpaid 7-Eleven workers, many of whom came from migrant backgrounds, the Rights Commission said in a press release on Monday.

As a member of the Queensland Multicultural Advisory Council, Sivaraman appeared at a state parliamentary inquiry to demand legal reform to better protect the rights of victims of racial vilification. Welcoming Sivaraman, Commission President, Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher said, "There has been a marked increase in reports of racism and hate speech in recent months, and it is therefore vital that we amplify efforts to empower communities to address racism at its root causes and continue our public campaign to take action to combat racism." "For decades, the fight for systemic equality and speaking truth to power have been at the heart of Mr Sivaraman's work.

# King Charles went public with diagnosis as ex-patron of cancer charities

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's King Charles III chose to make his cancer diagnosis public in keeping with his role as patron of cancer charities when he was the Prince of Wales, Buckingham Palace has said. The palace announced on Monday evening that the 75-year-old monarch had begun a schedule of treatment and remains "wholly positive" after being diagnosed with an unspecified form of cancer. It stressed that while the "issue of concern" came to light during his recent hospital treatment for a benign prostate enlargement, the King "does not have prostate cancer."

"The King has elected to make his diagnosis public once the schedule of treatment had begun, noting that as Prince of Wales, he was a patron of a number of cancer-related charities,"



King Charles III welcomes Rishi Sunak during an audience at Buckingham Palace, London, where he invited the newly elected leader of the Conservative Party to become Prime Minister and form a new government, Oct. 25, 2022.

said a palace spokesperson. "In this capacity, His Majesty has often spoken publicly in support of cancer patients, their loved ones and the wonderful health professionals

who help care for them," the spokesperson said. Wishes for King Charles' health have been pouring in from leaders around the world, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi who

wished him a "speedy recovery and good health".

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told the BBC he was "shocked and sad" to hear of the King's cancer diagnosis but thankful the illness was "caught early". "All our thoughts are with him and his family. I'm in regular contact as I always am," said Sunak, indicating his customary weekly audiences with the King will continue during the treatment.

Buckingham Palace said in an official statement that it was during the King's recent hospital procedure for benign prostate enlargement, a separate issue of concern was noted and subsequent diagnostic tests have identified a form of cancer.

The monarch has commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone public-facing duties. However, he will continue to

undertake State business and official paperwork as usual. "His Majesty is grateful to his medical team for their expert care and swift intervention, is wholly positive about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible," Buckingham Palace said.

"Regrettably, a number of the King's forthcoming public engagements will have to be rearranged or postponed. His Majesty would like to apologise to all those who may be disappointed or inconvenienced as a consequence," it said.

The King will continue to receive Red Boxes, which contain official papers for his review and sign-off, and process State documents as there are no plans to appoint Counsellors of State — which include his wife Queen Camilla and son and heir Prince William.

# Sunak relieved at early detection

London (PTI): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Tuesday that he was "shocked and sad" to learn that King Charles III has cancer but relieved that the illness was "caught early". Buckingham Palace announced on Monday evening that the King has begun outpatient treatment for an undisclosed form of cancer. It was found during his recent treatment for an enlarged prostate but is not connected to that condition, the palace said. "Thankfully, this has been caught early," Sunak told the BBC, saying he would "continue to communicate with him as normal" — indicating his customary weekly audiences with the King will continue during the treatment. "He'll just be in our thoughts and our prayers. Many families around the

country listening to this will have been touched by the same thing and they know what it means to everyone... hopefully we get through this as quickly as possible," Sunak said. Less than 18 months into his reign, the 75-year-old monarch has been forced to withdraw from public engagements but will continue with State business. Charles became King in September 2022 when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, died at the age of 96 after 70 years as the longest-reigning British monarch. Buckingham Palace said in an official statement that it was during the King's recent hospital procedure for benign prostate enlargement, a separate issue of concern was noted and subsequent diagnostic tests have identified a form of cancer.

# Pak may shut down internet on polling day: Interior min

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The caretaker government in Pakistan will consider shutting down the internet connections on the polling day on Thursday only if there is a request from a district or a province, interim Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz said on Tuesday.

"So far, there has been no decision made regarding the suspension of internet services at any place. The caretaker government will consider shutting down the internet connections only if there is a request," The News International newspaper reported, quoting him as saying. Ejaz was addressing a press conference along with the caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi. Ejaz's announcement is important as just a day earlier, Solangi had turned down the possibility of an internet shutdown on February 8. "Local administrations have the authority to decide on an internet shutdown in light of the law and order situation, however, no such situation has so far been reported," Solangi had said on Monday. Earlier on Sunday, caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai had announced that the internet service will remain temporarily restricted in the sensitive polling booths in the province on the polling day.

Ejaz, while talking about the law and order situation on Tuesday, said that the government was making efforts to hold peaceful elections without any loss of lives. "The election atmosphere in Sindh is full of excitement and it does not seem that any political party has enmity with another," the newspaper quoted Ejaz as saying, and added that he did not see any tension between the candidates in Balochistan during his visit. The interior minister said that the government will provide security in three layers - police, civil armed forces, and the army. "The commandos will be deployed in Balochistan to respond in the shortest possible time," he said. Meanwhile, the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Tuesday upheld its stay order under which it had directed the authorities to provide uninterrupted internet service including mobile internet service across the country till the February 8 elections, Geo News reported.

On January 24, the SHC directed the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted access to internet services to all citizens till the February 8 elections. During the hearing of a case today, SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi expressed dismay over the suspension of internet services, saying, "How would the internet work anywhere else when it's not even working for them [judges]?"

## Security beefed up in Pak's restive Sindh and Balochistan ahead of elections

PTI ■ KARACHI

A surge in attacks targeting contesting candidates and offices of the election commission in Pakistan's Sindh and Balochistan provinces, occurring just 48 hours before the general elections, has prompted increased deployment of security forces in the troubled areas. Since Sunday night, election violence has claimed at least seven lives in Karachi, Nushki and Sibi.

In Sibi, militants hit an election rally of a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate for the National Assembly in which four people lost their lives and six were injured. In another incident, candidates of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were shot at and hand grenades thrown at their homes injuring at least three of them seriously. In Karachi a clash took place between PPP and the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) workers on Monday night, leading to the death of a 12-year-old boy. Police officials said since Sunday some 40 attacks or blasts were carried out with hand grenades and weapons on election camp offices of candi-



dates in 10 districts of Balochistan. "The most affected areas in Balochistan include Turbat, Panjgur, Gwadar, Mastung, Kalat, Khuzdar, Sibi, Surab, and Quetta," a police official said. He said in the majority of the cases, the election offices and houses of candidates belonging to the PPP, BN-Mengal, National Party, and BNP-Awami have been targeted. Most of the nationalist parties in Balochistan are contesting the elections without any alliance with any mainstream

political party. Another police official in Karachi said PPP candidate Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah was ambushed by armed men and his vehicle peppered with bullets in Mirpurkhas in Sindh leaving him seriously wounded and one of his guards was killed on Monday evening. On Monday night, unidentified men on motorcycles threw six hand grenades at the election office of PPP candidate Mir Ali Hasan Zehri in Hub town which is at the border with Karachi. "Three children were injured in the attack. Zehri was not present," local police officer Sohrab Khan said. Three blasts occurred in the Kharan area of Balochistan, where unknown armed men targeted school buildings proposed for polling stations. Several school buildings, including a girls' school, were damaged in the grenade attacks on Monday. In Panjgur on Monday, armed men opened fire on the residence of Mir Asad Baloch, the president of the Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A). A grenade was also hurled at Baloch's house. Security guards returned fire, causing the attackers to flee from the site. The house of an ex-deputy chairman Senate and candidate for the National Assembly from Turbat-Panjgur, Sabir Baloch, was also attacked when armed men opened fire at his residence. Unidentified persons on motorcycles also used hand grenades to attack parties' election offices and election commission offices in Nushki and other areas of Makran in the restive Balochistan province on Monday.

## Pakistan's EC App faces allegations of potential poll result manipulation

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's election commission's new app to swiftly transmit and tabulate election results is in the crosshairs due to concerns raised by some officials about the possibility of manipulation of the software to impact the outcome of the polls on Thursday.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) prepared the Election Management System (EMS) app for transmission of results from each polling station to a centralised system where tabulation of all results would be completed by the Returning Officers, who are in charge of preparing and releasing the result of each constituency. The ECP is set to use the system on February 8 after claiming that the countrywide test run of EMS has been a "success". However, two election officials in Sindh province have pointed out faults in the EMS after the second test run last week. Abdul Qadir Mashori, the Qambar assistant commissioner (AC) and Returning Officer (RO) for

National Assembly seat NA-197 (Qambar-Shahdadkot-II); and Usman Khokheli, the Bakrani AC and RO for PS-12 (Larkana-III) seat of Sindh Assembly, have written letters to their superiors, conveying almost identical issues regarding the EMS.

Mashori's letter, which emerged on Sunday, was sent to the Qambar-Shahdadkot district returning officer on February 3. Mashori told the Dawn newspaper that the issues he had pointed out were later resolved and that he had conveyed the same in a follow-up letter.

Mashori in his letter has stated that the data regarding duties assigned to polling officials were uploaded to the EMS, which was later "found missing". "This weakness of [the] system has created many issues and also raises [a] question mark on the reliability and validity of the software." The official expressed apprehension that either the system was an "utter failure" or was being "controlled" by someone.

## Colombia extends cease-fire with National Liberation Army

AP ■ BOGOTA

Colombia's government and the nation's largest remaining guerrilla group have reached a last-minute deal to extend a cease-fire that began last year by six months, with ELN rebels also promising that they will stop kidnapping civilians for ransom. The truce was set to expire on Tuesday. But in a brief statement issued just minutes before midnight, both sides said that they have extended the cease-fire for 180 days.

The statement says the National Liberation Army, known by its Spanish acronym ELN, will "temporarily and unilaterally suspend economic detentions" in order to contribute to the cease-fire.

Government officials said they were pleased with the new terms of the cease-fire.

"Many of the peace deals that have been signed in this country have had little impact on the ground," Otty Patiño, Colombia's peace commissioner, told local radio station Blu. "It is very important to work on territorial peace." Colombia's government and the National Liberation Army have been holding peace talks since late 2022 as President Gustavo Petro tries to pacify several armed groups that weren't part of a 2016 peace deal between the govern-



Colombian President Gustavo Petro holds a ceremony to formally begin a six-month cease-fire as part of a process to forge permanent peace with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Bogota, Colombia, Aug. 3, 2023. Colombia's government has extended a cease-fire with the FARC-EMC rebel group that was set to expire in Jan. 2024, as both sides hold peace talks in Bogota in an effort to reduce violence in rural parts of the country. AP/File

ment and the nation's main rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

A cease-fire between the government and ELN started in August, and has reduced fighting between both sides. But during the truce, the rebels also have been recruiting teenagers, and financing their operations through extortion and kidnappings, leading to complaints that the cease-fire hasn't done enough to improve security for civilians in rural areas. In October, the cease-fire almost broke down when an ELN detachment in

northern Colombia kidnapped the parents of Luis Diaz, one of the nation's most beloved soccer players.

Diaz's mother was quickly rescued by police, while his father was released 12 days later following numerous protests and petitions.

According to Colombia's Defence Ministry, the National Liberation Army is holding at least 38 hostages. The group has asked the government to provide it with alternate ways to finance its operations, while talks continue to take place.

## Imran's PTI-backed candidate contesting against Nawaz Sharif

Lahore (PTI): A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed woman candidate contesting against PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif here was indicted in a terrorism case on Tuesday, as authorities in Pakistan's Punjab province intensified crackdown on jailed former premier Imran Khan's party leaders and supporters ahead of elections. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates are contesting the February 8 polls independently after the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan to deprive Khan's party of its iconic election symbol 'bat'. Since the PTI is facing the wrath of the military establishment, its independent candidates are not being allowed to campaign in their constituencies, thus paving the way for the PMLN, which is currently the blue-eyed of the military, to win the election.

In Lahore, Sharif, 74, a three-time former premier, is contesting on NA-130 against PTI-backed strong candidate Dr Yasmin Rashid. However, Rashid was indicted by an Anti-Terrorism Court on Tuesday in a case related to attacking a police station in

Lahore on May 9 violence that had erupted after the arrest of Khan by paramilitary Rangers. Dozens of military and state buildings, including the Army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, were torched and vandalised by many PTI activists during the unprecedented violence that broke out after Khan's arrest. Rashid has been in jail since May last and her party supporters are doing door-to-door campaigning. PTI leaders see her indictment as a fear of Sharif fearing his defeat. The PTI on Tuesday also alleged that the houses of the party leaders and supporters are being raided across the province by the police. Police are also harassing women workers, it said. In Lahore, police sealed the main election office of its incarcerated candidate Aaliya Hamza who is contesting against former premier Shehbaz Sharif's son Hamza Shehbaz in Lahore's NA-118. Similarly, police raided the residence of PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in the Gujrat district of Punjab and harassed his wife and sister who are contesting polls.

## Imran's wife moves Pak HC against declaring her residence as sub-jail

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's wife on Tuesday petitioned a top court here against authorities' move to declare her residence as sub-jail and requested it to move her to the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, citing "potential security issues." Bushra Bibi, 49, was imprisoned at Khan's Bani Gala residence here after an accountability court last week sentenced the couple to 14 years in jail in the Toshiakhana corruption case. She filed the petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against declaring her Bani Gala residence as sub-jail and instead moving her to Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is lodged too.

"Authorities had declared the Bani Gala residence a 'sub-jail' to confine the former first lady at the request of Adiala jail superintendent," The News International newspaper said. Khan and Bushra were handed a 14-year jail term, each, when accountability court's Judge Muhammad Bashir announced the verdict in the case related to the illegal sale of state gifts, thus called the Toshiakhana corruption case. "We're continuing to monitor Pakistan's electoral process quite closely, and as we have said, we want to see that process take place in a way that facilitates broad participation with respect for freedom of expression, assembly, and associations," Patel said. Pakistan will hold its general elections on February 8. "We have concerns of all incidents of violence and restrictions on media freedom; freedom of expression, including internet free-

## US continues to monitor Pak's electoral process quite closely: Official

Washington (PTI): The United States is closely monitoring Pakistan's electoral process, an official of the US State Department has said, observing that it has concerns over the infringement with respect for freedom of expression, assembly, and associations. Speaking at his regular press briefing, US State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said that it wants the broad participation of the people of Pakistan in the country's election.

"We're continuing to monitor Pakistan's electoral process quite closely, and as we have said, we want to see that process take place in a way that facilitates broad participation with respect for freedom of expression, assembly, and associations," Patel said. Pakistan will hold its general elections on February 8. "We have concerns of all incidents of violence and restrictions on media freedom; freedom of expression, including internet free-

dom; and peaceful assembly and association. We're concerned by some of the infringements that we've seen in that space. Pakistanis deserve to exercise their fundamental right to choose their future leaders through free and fair elections without fear, violence, or intimidation, and it is ultimately for the people of Pakistan to decide their political future," Patel said. Meanwhile, The New York Times reported that a political crackdown has been more visible in Pakistan than those in previous years, making this week's vote among the least credible in the country's history.

"As Pakistan heads to the polls on Thursday, its powerful military is using a familiar playbook to sideline its nemesis of the hour, crippling PTI in the first national election since the party's leader, former Prime Minister Imran Khan, ran afoul of the generals and was ousted by Parliament in 2022," the daily reported.

## 'Security still fragile at Russian-occupied nuclear power plant'

AP ■ KYIV

Security at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains fragile amid worrying recent staff cuts enacted by Russian authorities occupying the facility, which is one of the 10 biggest atomic power plants in the world, the United Nations nuclear watchdog chief said Tuesday.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi, who is in Kyiv, told The Associated Press that his upcoming visit to the plant as the war approaches its two-year milestone will aim to assess the impact of recent personnel reductions after Russia denied access to employees of Ukraine's Energoatom. "This huge facility used to have around 12,000 staff. Now, this has been reduced to between 2,000 and 3,000, which is quite a steep reduction in the number of people working there," Grossi said. "To man, to operate these very sophisticated big installations you need a certain number of people performing different specific functions."

"So far the situation is stable, but it is a very, very delicate equilibrium," he said. "So this is why I need to see for myself what is the situation,

what are the prospects in terms of staffing, medium-term and long-term as well."

The IAEA has repeatedly expressed alarm about the facility amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe. The plant has repeatedly been caught in the crossfire since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022, and seized the facility shortly after. The plant's six reactors have been shut down for months, but it still needs power and qualified staff to operate crucial cooling systems and other safety features. Rossi said he would also check the stability of the facility's cooling function in the wake of the Kakhovka Dam collapse over the summer, and the presence of mines in and around the plant. The plant suffered yet another blackout last month, highlighting continuing nuclear safety concerns as battles rage nearby. "All these things tell us that the situation in Zaporizhzhia continues to be fragile and it requires constant care," Grossi said. Of particular concern is the Russian decision to block access for Ukrainian staff employed by Kyiv's national operator, who refused to sign contracts with the Russian operator at the site.

## Thai ex-PM being investigated for royal defamation

Bangkok (AP): State prosecutors in Thailand said Tuesday they have revived an investigation into whether former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra almost nine years ago violated the law against defaming the monarch, a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Thaksin had been charged in 2016 with violating the law on royal defamation — also known as Article 112 — for remarks he made to journalists the previous year when he was in Seoul, South Korea, a spokesman for Phetcharakun, a spokesperson for the Office of the Attorney General, at a news conference.

Thaksin, who was ousted by a 2006 military coup, is currently confined to a police hospital in Bangkok where he is serving time for convictions related to corruption and abuse of power. He had been in self-imposed exile since 2008, but voluntarily returned to Thailand in August last year to begin serving an eight-year prison sentence. He was moved almost immediately to the hospital on grounds of ill health and about a week after that, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year. The reduction made Thaksin, now 74, eligible to apply for parole after serving at least one-third — four months — of his amended sentence, and could be released later this month.

## Russia brings US election into Mideast attacks

United nations (AP): Russia accused the United States on Monday of aggression against Iraq and Syria aimed at preserving its global dominance and salvaging the Biden administration's "image" ahead of US elections. The US retorted that its military response to unjustified attacks by Iranian-backed proxies against American forces is not only legal but will continue. The exchange came at a contentious UN Security Council meeting called by Russia, Syria's closest ally, where both countries also said they did not want an escalation and spillover of the Israel-Hamas war. Many council members expressed fears of a growing Mideast conflict and urged de-escalation and stepped-up peace efforts. Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the US of violating international law and continuing "to sow chaos and destruction in the Middle East."

He said violence by the United States and its allies has escalated from the Palestinian territories to Lebanon, the Red Sea and Yemen and is "nullifying international efforts to reestablish peace in the Middle East." He called on all countries "to unequivocally condemn these senseless acts ... which

violate the sovereignty of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic."

The Russian ambassador claimed the United States is attempting "to flex muscles ... to justify and salvage the image of the current American administration ... in the light of the upcoming presidential pre-election campaign." And he claimed the Americans were undertaking military action in an effort "at any price to preserve their dominating position in the world."

US Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood countered that the United States has an absolute right to self-defense against attacks on American forces and the actions it has taken were "necessary and proportionate."

He told the council that since Oct. 18, Iran-aligned militia groups have attacked US and coalition forces over 165 times in Iraq, Syria, and in a drone attack on a Jordanian facility hosting US forces fighting Islamic State extremists on Jan. 28 that killed three US Army members and injured many more. The US responded with 85 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria on Feb. 2 which both countries claimed resulted in civilian deaths, injuries and property destruction.

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Short term e Tender Notice

| Name of Work/Item   | Time Period                     |
|---|---------------------------------|
| For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh:<br>Corrugated Boxes for 10x125g Curd Cups<br>(Dimensions: 485Lx1925x42H + 2 mm) (Internal) | From February 2024 to June 2024 |

NOTE:  
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.  
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Website : [www.rathisteelandalpower.com](http://www.rathisteelandalpower.com) Ph: 011- 40512426

**2<sup>ND</sup> CORRIGENDUM TO THE NOTICE OF EXTRA-ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**

Dear Members,  
This is in reference to the Notice of Extra-Ordinary General Meeting dated January 19, 2024 ("EGM Notice") of Rathi Steel and Power Limited ("The Company") to be held on Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 12:30 P.M. (IST) through Video Conference (VC)/ Other Audio-Visual Means (OAVM) facility, for seeking approval for matters contained in the said Notice. The said notice has been duly dispatched to the members of the Company as per the applicable laws. It has been observed that there is an inadvertent typographical error in the number of additional equity shares to be added in the increased authorized capital and accordingly, the Company through this corrigendum wishes to bring to the notice of the members of the Company, that following para forming of the ordinary resolution as set out in Item No. 1 contained in the EGM Notice shall be read in the manner explained below:  
**Point (ii) to the Ordinary Resolution (Item No. 1) dealing with of alteration of Authorized Share Capital, shall be read as:**  
(ii) To create an additional 4,16,48,147 (Four Crores Sixteen Lakhs Forty-Eight Thousand One Hundred and Forty-Seven) Equity Shares of Rs. 10/- (Rupees Ten only) each, aggregating to Rs. 41,64,81,470/- (Rupees Forty-One Crores Sixty-Four Lakhs Eighty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Seventy only).  
All other particulars and details mentioned in the EGM Notice dated January 19, 2024, shall remain unchanged. The corrigendum shall be read in conjunction with the EGM Notice together with explanatory statement and corrigendum dated February 02, 2024. This corrigendum is also available on the Company's website viz. [www.rathisteelandalpower.com](http://www.rathisteelandalpower.com), and on the website of BSE Limited viz. [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com).  
For Rathi Steel and Power Limited  
Sd/-  
Shobhita Singh  
(Company Secretary & Compliance Officer)

Place: New Delhi  
Date: 06-02-2024

# FIU, ED seek report from RBI on Paytm

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate and the Financial Intelligence Unit have asked the RBI to share its report on the recent action taken to bar Paytm Payments Bank Ltd from accepting deposits or top-ups in customer accounts, official sources said on Tuesday.

Federal agencies ED and FIU, tasked with checking violations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), are already probing matters related to the payment gateway under provisions of the anti-money laundering law.

Following the action of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Paytm has said it did no wrong and asserted that its brand owner company One97 Communications, founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma and Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) are not being investigated for money laundering or foreign exchange violations.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has asked the RBI to share its latest report so that it can analyse if it needs to initiate a probe against PPBL, a senior official told PTI.



The agency has been probing Paytm and other online payment wallets as part of a money laundering investigation against Chinese-controlled mobile-phone applications that allegedly laundered funds using merchant IDs created on these fintech platforms.

Once the report is studied, the future course of action will be prepared. The agency can initiate a fresh probe or subsume the fresh charges under its ongoing investigation involving Paytm, the sources said.

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) has also sought the report from the RBI to analyse whether Paytm or PPBL followed the required procedures as a "reporting entity" under section 13 of the PMLA.

Under this section of the anti-money laundering law, a financial institution, bank or intermediary has to furnish details to the FIU about maintaining records of all transactions and documents evidencing identity of its clients and beneficial owners as well as account files and

business correspondence relating to its clients, the sources said.

The FIU functions under the finance ministry and is tasked to detect money laundering and black money in the country's economic channels. It is empowered under the PMLA to receive suspicious transaction and cash transaction reports from various "reporting entities", analyse them and disseminate vital information to intelligence and enforcement agencies apart from regulatory authorities.

The RBI on January 31 had directed PPBL to stop accepting deposits or top-ups in customer accounts, wallets, FASTags and other instruments after February 29. Withdrawal or utilisation of balances by its customers from their accounts, including savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, and National Common Mobility Cards, are to be permitted without any restrictions, up to their available balance.

Paytm Wallet users can continue to carry on transactions till February 29. However, after February 29, they will be able to use their existing balance till the time it is exhausted, but cannot add any money to their account. The same rule is applicable to PPBL Accounts, Paytm wallet-linked services like Fastag, and National Common Mobility Cards that are used for travel in the metro and other public transport.

# HDFC Bank talking to Paytm Waiting and watching as events unfold: Executive

PTI ■ MUMBAI

HDFC Bank is "talking" to its longstanding partner Paytm as the fintech tries to find a way out of the current restrictions placed by RBI, a senior executive at the largest private sector lender said on Tuesday.

Stressing that the bank would have been conversing with the fintech even otherwise given its partnership in the acceptance and aggregator space, HDFC Bank's country head for payments Parag Rao said it is in a "wait and watch" mode.

Rao was replying to a question on reports about Paytm reaching out to large banks for support. "Paytm has been a partner over the years for our acceptance business, for our aggregator business. Under the current circumstances, we don't know too much about what is happening but we are talking, we are waiting and watching to see how events develop. That is all I can say right now," Rao said.

At an event to launch a new credit card proposition for small businesses here, he also said that ever since RBI placed severe restrictions on Paytm, there has been a "significant increase" in the traction witnessed by HDFC Bank for its payments app and also merchant business.

Every "upheaval" in the market which impacts a rival opens up opportunities for other participants as the smart customers realign themselves, Rao said, adding that there is traction for Fastag, prepaid card offerings and sound boxes as well.

Rao made it clear that HDFC Bank's partnership with Paytm is with the parent entity One97 Communications, and not with the Paytm Payments Bank, which is under regulatory



scrutiny.

The restrictions placed on Paytm take effect from February 29, and HDFC Bank will watch as the events unfold over the next two weeks, Rao said.

Meanwhile, Rao also said the bank will be launching a completely revamped mobile phone app in up to two months from now. The new platform will be far better placed in offering all the contemporary services and directing the users to the right services, he added.

The bank launched four variants of credit cards for small businesses on Tuesday, with joining fees going up to Rs 10,000 for the most exclusive of the cards.

Rao said it first launched a dedicated credit card for small and medium businesses over two years ago, where it has over 3.5 million cards already, and added that learnings from the same have been taken on board for the new set of offerings. It is also contemplating to launch a dedicated credit card for gig economy workers and freelancers. The benefits in the card will include services such as working at co-working spaces and accounting packages, Rao said.

# Sanghi Industries seeks shareholders nod for Adani deal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sanghi Industries has sought shareholders' approval for related party transactions with Adani Enterprises, Ambuja Cements, ACC, and other group companies.

In its voting recommendations released today by proxy advisory firm InGovern, wherein it has recommended shareholders to vote in favour of resolutions proposed by Sanghi Industries. In an industry requiring optimum capacity utilisation to ensure good margins, InGovern, in its report, has stated that the capacity of Sanghi Industries is grossly underutilised.

As such, the receipt of advance payment for confirmed bulk purchases from Ambuja Cements and ACC will translate into profits for Sanghi Industries. To ensure compliance, the company has also obtained a fairness opinion from Shailesh Haribhakti & Associates, a firm whose founder has knowledge and experience in the cement industry. InGovern has stated that it recommends shareholders to vote in favor as



the approval sought by Sanghi Industries is for a defined period and for routine business transactions. Being two of India's largest cement companies, the synergies with Ambuja and ACC will have a positive impact on the liquidity position of Sanghi Industries, it has claimed.

The company will be able to run the business operations in a much better manner, extending the benefits to other stakeholders. Similarly, RPTs with Adani Enterprises will ensure a consistent supply of superior quality solid fuels to Sanghi Industries.

# Sensex rebounds 454 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent on Tuesday following buying in IT giants TCS and Infosys, foreign fund inflows and positive global trends.

After a firm opening, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 454.67 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 72,186.09. As many as 19 Sensex shares advanced and 11 declined. During the day, the barometer jumped 529.98 points or 0.73 per cent to 72,261.40.

The Nifty gained 157.70 points or 0.72 per cent to close at 21,929.40, driven gains in BPLC, HDFC Life and HCL Tech.

A rebound in Chinese markets also bolstered the sentiment, analysts said. Chinese markets jumped up to 4 per cent after Monday's steep losses as a state-run investment fund said it would jack up share purchases. Reports also suggested China President Xi Jinping was set to meet with officials to discuss the markets.

"The market exhibited a positive breadth, registering moderate gains, with investors showing reluctance to significantly trim their positions ahead of the RBI MPC meeting. Expectations for a dovish monetary policy buoyed sentiment in the bond market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

The RBI Monetary Policy Committee headed by governor Shaktikanta Das started its three-day deliberations on Tuesday. The panel will announce the policy decision on Thursday.

Oil & gas stocks also advanced as the market weighed down geopolitical risks in the Middle East and awaited improvements in the weekly



US crude inventory, he added. Among the Sensex firms, HCL Technologies, Tata Constructions Services, Maruti, Wipro, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement and Mahindra & Mahindra were the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel climbed over 2 per cent after the company on Monday posted a 54 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,442.2 crore for the December quarter, mainly on account of growth in high-value customers.

Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

"All key sectors, barring banking, are attracting buying on a rotational basis and that is helping the index to maintain a positive tone amid consolidation," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.23 per cent and midcap index jumped 1.06 per cent.

Among the indices, oil & gas zoomed 3.02 per cent, IT jumped 2.94 per cent, tech climbed 2.74 per cent, telecommunication went up by 2.17 per cent, energy (2.07 per cent), auto (1.65 per cent) and capital goods (1.61 per cent).

# Inflation within tolerance band: Sitharaman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said inflation has come down within the tolerance band as a result of the steps taken by the government to check price rise, especially in perishable commodities. Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman said Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is working with the government on de-humidification of onions through Gamma Rays to give it a longer shelf life.

"The government is seized of the difficulties, which arise due to shortage of perishable goods, which are not grown in India. The committee sits and reviews periodically, and the efforts have shown on the ground that inflation is now within the tolerable band," she said.

India's retail inflation has declined from an average of 6.8 per cent in April-December 2022 to 5.5 per cent in the corresponding period of 2023. The retail inflation is now stable and within the notified tolerance band of 2 per cent to 6 per cent.

The minister said that in order to check the volatility in prices of onion, the government has progressively increased its buffer size from 1 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) in 2020-21 to 7 LMT in 2023-24. As of February 3, 2024, a total of 6.32 LMT of onion was procured, and 3.96 LMT of Grade-A onion was released through retail sales, e-Nam auction and bulk sales.

"Currently, steps are being taken so that the preservation of very highly perishable commodities, like onion, can be improved," she said, adding lots of steps have been taken by the government, particularly for meeting the shortage in supply of perishable goods.

Sitharaman said India has imported 8.79 lakh metric tonnes of Tur Dal and 15.14 lakh metric tonnes of Masoor Dal in calendar year 2023. Similarly, the country imported other dals and released them in the market.

India has also brought the branded 'Bharat Dal' through which Chana Dal is made available at Rs 60/kg for one kg pack and Rs 55/kg for 30 kg packs.

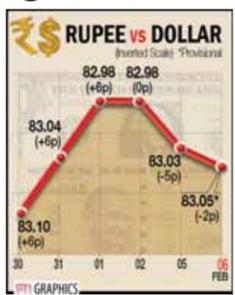
# Rupee settles 2 paise lower at 83.05 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 2 paise to close at 83.05 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid a firm American currency against major currencies overseas.

However, positive sentiment in the domestic equity markets and lower global crude prices supported the domestic unit, forex analysts said.

Investors were cautious as the Reserve Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC), the six-member rate-setting panel, began the deliberation on Tuesday. The central bank will announce the key interest rate decision on Thursday.



At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.03 against the dollar and touched the intra-day low of 83.06 against the greenback.

The local unit finally settled at 83.05 (provisional) against the US currency, registering a loss of 2 paise from the previous day.

The rupee settled 5 paise lower at 83.03 against the dollar on Monday.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 104.36.

Analysts attributed the higher level of the US currency to the recent macroeconomic data, which showed steady growth in the world's largest economy. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.24 per cent to USD 77.80 per barrel.

# POWERGRID opens Northern Region UNMS Control Centre



RK Tyagi, CMD, POWERGRID, inaugurated the newly established Northern Region U-NMS Control Centre on February 2 in the presence of Yatindra Dwivedi, Director (Personnel), POWERGRID, AK Mishra, ED (NR-I), Burra Vamsi, COO(POWERTEL), Vikram Singh Bhal, ED (CMG-Coord.), AK Behera (ED, TBCB-AM), RN Gupta, CGM (AM, NR-I), Sunita Chohan (CGM, GA&C) and other senior officials. The Unified Network Management System (UNMS) is designed to meet the requirement of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Communication System for Inter State Transmission of Electricity) Regulation, 2017 and Central Electrical Authority (Technical Standards for Communication System in Power Sector Operations) Regulations, 2020.

# Centre launches Bharat rice at ₹29/kg

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday launched 'Bharat rice' at a subsidised rate of Rs 29 per kilogram to provide relief to consumers amid a 15 per cent rise in retail prices of the grain in the last one year. Launching the subsidised rice that will be available in 5 kg and 10 kg packs, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal said the government is making efforts to ensure that daily food items are available at affordable rates for the common people.

"When the wholesale intervention (to control prices) was not benefiting more people, the retail intervention was started under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)," Goyal said.

As part of the retail intervention, rice will be retailed at Rs 29 per kg under the 'Bharat brand' to provide relief to middle class consumers and the poor, he said.

In each kg of 'Bharat rice', there will be 5 per cent of broken rice.

Goyal said the government's efforts have already helped in rapidly bringing down the prices of tomato and onion.

"Wheat inflation has been zero in the last six months since we started selling 'Bharat atta'. The same impact we will see in rice," the minister said and emphasised that the prices of commodities going into middle class



persons' thali is quite stable.

"The government is proactive in making daily needs at affordable rates," Goyal said.

He also flagged off 100 mobile vans that will sell 'Bharat rice' and also distributed 5 kg packs to five beneficiaries.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) will provide 5 lakh tonne of rice to two cooperatives — National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) — as well as retail chain Kendriya Bhandar in the first phase. These agencies will further pack the rice in 5 kg and 10 kg packs and retail through their outlets under the 'Bharat' brand. The rice will also be sold through e-commerce platforms.

The government has resorted to retail sale of FCI rice after it received a lukewarm response for sale of rice to

bulk users at the same rate through the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

The government hopes to get good a response for 'Bharat rice' too, like it has been receiving for 'Bharat dal', which is being sold at Rs 27.50 per kg and 'Bharat chana' at Rs 60 per kg through the same agencies. Sharing his personal experience, Goyal said he has started using 'Bharat dal' and 'Bharat atta', and both of them are delicious.

"Now, I have purchased 'Bharat rice'. This will also be of good quality," he added.

To a query on whether an accurate analysis has been done with respect to the average price of rice since there are many varieties in the market, Goyal said, "it has been correctly analysed... This is a proactive government".

Retail prices of rice are yet to be under control despite restrictions on exports and bumper production in 2023-24. The government has asked retailers, wholesalers, processors and big retail chains to disclose their stocks to check hoarding.

Ministers of State for Consumer Affairs Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti and Ashwini Choubey, Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh and Food Corporation of India (FCI) CMD Ashok K Meena, among others, were present at the event to launch the rice.

# IBBI amends norms related to insolvency resolution process for personal guarantors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended norms pertaining to insolvency resolution process for personal guarantors and voluntary liquidation process.

Changes have been made to the Insolvency Resolution Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors regulations and Bankruptcy Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors regulations. Restrictions have been removed for an Insolvency Professional (IP) to be appointed as a Resolution Professional (RP) for the process for personal guarantors.

In a release on Monday, IBBI said the removal of the restrictions will allow the same IP to get appointed in both the corporate process as well as the insolvency and bankruptcy proceeding of the personal



guarantors to the corporate debtors for better harmonisation and effective coordination of both processes.

"The amendment removes restrictions on an IP to be appointed as RP or Bankruptcy Trustee (BT) in the insolvency resolution process or bankruptcy process of Corporate Debtors (PGs) to Corporate Debtors (CDs) respectively, if she has acted or is acting as interim resolution professional, RP or liquidator during the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) or liquidation process of the CD," it said.

To address complexities and unique challenges inherent in the PG cases, IBBI said the amendments also aim to make the convening of meeting of creditors mandatory.

"This mandatory involvement of creditors brings a comprehensive and collaborative approach to the resolution process, enhancing the efficacy and fairness of the system.

"The amendment intends to foster active participation and cooperation among all stakeholders, thereby reinforcing a robust and equitable framework for addressing financial distress in PG cases," the release said.

Meanwhile, IBBI has amended the norms to streamline the voluntary liquidation process. With the latest changes, directors of the corporate person while initiating the voluntary liquidation process should disclose pending proceedings or assessments before statutory authorities.

# Maharashtra tops medal tally in KIWG

PTI ■ LEH (LADAKH)

Maharashtra topped the medal tally, pipping Karnataka to second spot as the first part of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) concluded here on Tuesday. Maharashtra won 20 medals, six of them gold. Karnataka too finished with an identical number of gold but their total medal count was just eight. Hosts Ladakh, who won a pair of historic Khelo India gold medals in speed skating, finished third with 13 medals. The second part of the KIWG is scheduled in Gulmarg, J&K from February 21-25. Gulmarg will host four sports disciplines. On Tuesday, more than 3,000 fans braved icy conditions to watch the two ice-hockey finals. Army won the men's title 3-1 after a shootout, while ITBP clinched the women's gold, defeating Ladakh 4-0. In the men's final, Army opened the scoring in the ninth minute of the second period through Tsewang Dorjay. Mohammed Ismail equalised for ITBP soon after. At the end of the third period, the scoreline stood 1-1. Two periods of extra time did not produce a result. In the shootout, Army scored twice



to settle the issue. "Our rivalry with ITBP has been going on for a long time, and today's match was the hardest in the series. We knew it would be exciting, but we were surprised by the huge crowd and the support from the public. "We know we could have played better, but we're still happy that we came out on top

in the end," said Stanzin Phandey, the Army captain. ITBP women's team captain Tashi Dolker said after the win, "It feels like a historic moment." In the ice-skating competition, 32-year-old Shruti Kotwal of Maharashtra, who trains and competes in the US and was participating in KIWG for the

first time, comfortably won both the long-track events (500m and 1000m) in the above-17 years category clocking 1:00.56 and 1:49.25 seconds, respectively. Shruti holds the national record in the 500m event with a timing of 41.97 seconds. After hosts Ladakh won the women's short track 1600m

relay gold, the long track Ladakh skaters -- Padma Angmo, Insha Fatima and Tasnia Shamim -- made a clean sweep of medals in the under-17 1000m race. Maharashtra added three long-track skating gold to catch up with Karnataka's six gold and overtake them on cumulative medal count.

# India hockey player Varun accused of rape

PTI ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Arjuna award-winning Indian hockey player Varun Kumar has been booked under the stringent POCSO act by the Bengaluru Police after a woman accused the defender of sexually abusing her multiple times when she was a minor. The 22-year-old, in her complaint filed on Monday, said that she came in contact with Varun in 2018 through Instagram, and the player raped her on multiple occasions promising her of marriage when she was 17. She said Varun was training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre in Bengaluru when she met him. Varun, who was awarded the Arjuna in 2021, was recently promoted as a DSP in Punjab Police. "Based on the complaint received from the woman, we have registered a case on Monday against the Hockey player under appropriate section of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and sections 376 (rape) and 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) of the Indian Penal Code," a senior Bengaluru Police officer said on Tuesday. Varun, who was in the Indian standby list for the Tokyo Olympics, is currently training with the national squad in Bhubaneswar for the upcoming FIH Pro League. India are scheduled to face Spain in their opening encounter on February 10. There was speculation that Varun, a 2022 Commonwealth Games silver-medallist, is on the run, but Hockey India rubbished the rumour. "He is not absconding. He is in Bhubaneswar with the team," a Hockey India source told PTI. Varun, who hails from Himachal Pradesh, made his debut for India in 2017. In the FIR, the woman has alleged that Varun



insisted on meeting her after they got in touch on Instagram and she relented after some of his friends convinced her. The two eventually became friends and got into a relationship. According to the woman, he took her to a hotel in Bengaluru's Jayanagar in July 2019 and made physical relations with her despite being aware that she was a minor. She said she had resisted but he promised to take their relationship a step further and marry her later. "She accused him of getting physical with her on several occasions over the five-year long relationship she shared with him on the pretext of marriage," the FIR stated. The woman alleged that he started distancing himself from her and stopped responding to her calls and messages after her father died last year. According to her FIR, Varun paid her a visit after the tragedy but stopped communicating after that. She said that Varun resumed communication with her when she approached the police on a previous occasion. However, he again distanced himself when she persisted on the topic of marriage. He then threatened to upload her photos on social media if she exerted pressure on him.



AP ■ PARIS

# India beat Nepal 4-0 to enter SAFF U 19 Women Championships final

PTI ■ DHAKA

Neha struck twice in a second-half blitz as India beat Nepal 4-0 in their last league match to storm into the final of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championships here on Tuesday. India will face hosts and defending champions Bangladesh in the final to be played on Thursday. The Young Tigresses had

earlier won their first match 10-0 against Bhutan, followed by a 0-1 defeat to Bangladesh. After a goal-less first half, the Indian girls dished out an impressive display in the second session to slam in four goals. Neha scored in the 54th and 80th minutes while Sulanjana Raul (85th) and Cindy Remruatpui Colney (90+3) got the other goals for India.

The Paris Olympics organizing committee has expressed surprise that the salary of its president is reportedly being investigated by the French National Financial Prosecutor's Office. According to French media, quoting the French agency AFP on Tuesday, the investigation into Tony Estanguet's pay was handed to Paris police last week, less than six months before the Olympic Games open on July 26. The financial prosecutor's office, contacted by The Associated Press, declined to comment. The Games organizing committee set Estanguet's pay in 2018 at the end of its first board meeting. It was then reportedly agreed that the former three-time Olympic canoe champion would receive an annual pay of 270,000 euros gross until 2020, with possible extra incentives based on performance criteria that would not exceed 20% of annual salary. "We wish to remind people that the organising committee president's remuneration is subject to a strict framework,"

# Paris Olympics organisers surprised by reports of investigation into president pay



Games organizers said on Tuesday in a statement. The organizers added Estanguet's income was decided independently, in line with the advice of a committee "made up of independent experts whose role is to ensure the appropriateness of our remuneration policy."

The organizing committee said Estanguet's payment terms were approved by France's General Economic and Financial Control body, following consultation with the main body involved in the collection and distribution of social security contributions. "All invoices connected to this

remuneration are subject to an annual audit by the organizing committee's independent internal audit unit as well as an inspection by the remuneration committee," Games organizers said. "These measures are not legally imposed but correspond to an approach of voluntary

transparency. In keeping with the approach we have always taken towards all oversight bodies, Paris 2024 is ready to answer questions regarding its management." The probe into Estanguet's pay follows other investigations by financial prosecutors targeting the Games organizing committee. In October, the organizers said their headquarters were again visited by French financial prosecutors investigating suspicions of favoritism, conflicts of interest and misuse of funds in the awarding of contracts. The headquarters were first searched in June. Financial investigators have been zeroing in on 20 or so of the many hundreds of business contracts that Olympic organizers have signed as they race to prepare the French capital for 10,500 athletes and millions of spectators.

# Qatar has turned its fortunes around after World Cup exit

AP ■ DOHA (QATAR)

In the World Cup, Qatar is just another team. In the Asian Cup, Qatar is a force to be reckoned with. Just over a year since it exited its own World Cup in the group stage and without a single point, Qatar is a win away from back-to-back Asian Cup finals and the chance to retain its trophy. The Maroons play three-time champion Iran in the semifinals on Wednesday at Al Thumama Stadium. "Despite doubts from some quarters about Qatar's chances of reaching the final, our team is filled with confidence and excitement, fueled by positive energy," Qatar defender Tarek Salman says. The tournament host has good reason to be positive. In forward Akram Afif, it has one of the players of the tournament, while the team has been driven on by fervent support from fans whose passion does not appear to have been dimmed by the disappointment of the World Cup when Qatar was certain of elimination after just two group games. "The motivation within our team is strong," Salman adds. "Both sides are determined to reach the final. However, we won the title in the previous edition and we want to repeat that success again." Qatar won the Asian Cup for the first time in 2019 and has looked assured in its defence of the trophy, advancing from the group stage with maximum points and beating Palestine in the round of 16. In the quarterfinals, it needed penalties to overcome Uzbekistan. Iran was one of the pre-tournament favourites and will likely represent Qatar's toughest test yet. "Iran are a very strong team," Qatar coach Marquez Lopez says. "We have not underestimated any team we have played in this competition so we will not start doing that against Iran. "Of course, we enter this match with big motivation, we are one step away from the final. We have a chance to reach a second straight final which is a big driving factor for us." Iran also advanced from the group stage with a 100% winning record and beat pre-tournament favourite Japan in the quarterfinals. It is aiming for a record-equalling fourth Asian title and its first since 1976. "I told the players to forget the Japan match. What is important now is to beat Qatar and reach the final," Iran coach Ardeshir Ghalehnoy says. "We know they are a good team, the defending champions, and have spent a lot to improve the team."

# Anurag kicks off 1st BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur on Tuesday kicked off BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships 2024 which is being held for the first time. Speaking post the event the Minister said "World's 25 per cent population lives in South Asia and Southeast Asian region and with the coming together of 7 BIMSTEC countries, the Bay of Bengal area not only becomes a region used for travel and transportation but also becomes an area of progress, development and collaboration which will help in not only deeper friendship but also building a deeper sporting culture which will help deepen even friendship between athletes and that is exactly the



thought that our Prime Minister envisioned when he announced this sporting event at the summit in Nepal." BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) constitutes a unique link between South and South-East Asian countries with five members from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and two members from South-East Asia (Myanmar & Thailand). The 1st BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships is being held at Delhi's Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex from February 6 to February 9, 2024 with competitions being held for Under 20 age category in Swimming, Water Polo and Diving events.



# Spanish league to denounce fan who touched player backside during game

AP ■ MADRID

The Spanish league will take action against the young fan who appeared to touch the backside of a Sevilla player during a game. The league said on Tuesday it identified the fan with the help of authorities and will denounce him to local prosecutors. The league will also denounce alleged racist insults against Sevilla player Yasser En-Nesyri in the same game, a 2-1 win at Rayo Vallecano on Monday. En-Nesyri scored twice. Lucas Ocampos was getting ready for a throw in past the half-hour mark at Vallecas Stadium when the fan -- apparently a minor -- reached out and poked his backside. The Argentine winger turned to argue with the young fan and then called the referee over. The match was halted briefly as the referee talked to the match delegate. Some fans laughed at the incident as Rayo players

appealed to the crowd to behave. "You can see what happened in the (video) images," Ocampos said. "I hope La Liga takes it as seriously as it takes racism and these things. I don't think all the Rayo people are like that because they have always treated us with respect, but there is always one fool. "I kept my calm because I have two daughters, I hope this doesn't happen to them in the future. I hope that the action that has to be taken is taken, and I hope that a fool like this does not stain a set of fans who otherwise behaved very well." Sevilla coach Quique Sanchez Flores said some people were "not prepared" to be at stadiums so close to players. "I don't know what goes through the minds of people who are coming to the stadiums," Flores said. "We have to look into that. It worries me. It worries me when you see these rare things happening in stadiums."

# 11th edition of ISL to begin on September 14

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The top-tier Indian Super League, which will run into its 11th edition, will kick off on September 14 and will run till April 30, 2025, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Tuesday. As usual the senior competition calendar for the next season (2024-25) will kick off with the Asia's oldest tournament Durand Cup slated from July 26-31. I-League on the other hand will be held from October 19-April 30, while the Super Cup will run concurrently with the league season from October 1-May 15. I-League 3, which will act as a qualifying tournament for I-League 2, will be held from August 1-September 30. I-League 2 is slated from January 15-April 30.

The 78th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy will be held from November 5-15 (Group Stage) and December 1-15 (Final Round). The Indian Women's League will be held from October 25-April 30. The IWL-2 will be from January 25-April 30. The 29th Senior Women's National Football Championship will take place in September (Group Stage) and October (Final Round). All the senior leagues are set to finish by the end of April next year, it was decided in the AIFF executive committee. As far as the national state tournaments are concerned, the season will begin with the Junior Boys and Junior Girls National Football Championship tier 1 and tier 2 in July.

It will be followed by the Sub-Junior Boys and Sub-Junior Girls National Football Championship tier 1 and tier 2 in August. The National Beach Soccer Championship will be held in February next year, the Men's Futsal Club Championship will take place in May 2025. The AIFF Youth Leagues (U13/U15/U17) are set to have a nine-month calendar from September-May. The nomination criteria for member associations for the 2024-25 season of the IWL 2, I-League 3, the AIFF Youth Leagues (U13/U15/U17) and the Men's Futsal Club Championship have also been released.

September 30, 2024. AIFF Youth Leagues (U13/U15/U17): September 1, 2024 - May 31, 2025. Indian Super League: September 14, 2024 - April 30, 2025. I-League: October 19, 2024 - April 30, 2025. Indian Women's League: October 25, 2024 - April 30, 2025. IWL 2: January 25, 2025 - April 30, 2025. Super Cup: October 1, 2024 - May 15, 2025. Junior Boys National Football Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: July 15 - July 31, 2024. Junior Girls National Football Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: July 15 - July 31, 2024. Sub-Junior Boys National

Football Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: August 5 - August 31, 2024. Sub-Junior Girls National Football Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: August 5 - August 31, 2024. 29th Senior Women's National Football Championship Group Stage: September 1 - September 15, 2024. 29th Senior Women's National Football Championship Final Round: October 1 - October 15, 2024. 78th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy Group Stage: November 5 - November 15, 2024; Final Round: December 1 - December 15, 2024. National Beach Soccer Championship: February 1 - February 20, 2025. AIFF Men's Futsal Club Championship: May 1 - May 20, 2025.

**AIFF CALENDAR 2024-25**  
Durand Cup: July 26-August 31, 2024.  
I-League 3: August 1 -

# MAGICAL BUMRAH WAS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO SIDES, SAYS HUSSAIN



**PTI ■ LONDON**

The magical first innings spell by Jasprit Bumrah was the difference between India and England in the just-concluded second Test, according to former England captain Nasser Hussain, who said the visitors were powerless against the Indian pacer's genius. India's go-to bowler in all formats, Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levelling 106-run win. The pacer put up a reverse swing master-class in England's first innings that yielded him six wickets (6/45), following it up with a three-wicket haul in their second essay for match figures of 9 for 91.

"I think, really, it was just the magic of Jasprit Bumrah that was the difference. He got three-for today (Monday), but

it was that incredible spell in the first innings, 6-45, that blew away England for 253 on a really good, flat pitch," Hussain wrote in his column for 'Sky Sports'. Bumrah's bowling and young Yashasvi Jaiswal's first innings double ton were the highlights of India's win in Visakhapatnam. Hussain felt that England could do nothing but "doff their cap" to the genius of Bumrah. "Sometimes you can be critical of your own team, look at your performance and say, 'what could we do better?' But sometimes you also have to just doff your cap to the opposition and say they were touched by genius. "That's exactly what happened. That spell from Bumrah in England's first innings was genius. Reverse swing, with his slightly unorthodox action and

the way he leans across to the offside, he creates angles," he added. Bumrah dismissed Joe Root for the eighth time in Test cricket before producing a ripping yorker that bamboozled an in-form Ollie Pope in England's first innings. "He's all over Joe Root at the moment - he's got him out eight times in Test cricket - and he got Ollie Pope with an absolute beauty of an in-swinging yorker. "He also bowled Ben Stokes from round the wicket, who dropped his bat in disbelief." **'SERIES SET UP PERFECTLY AHEAD OF THIRD TEST':** Hussain feels England should be prepared for an even stronger hit-back from the hosts in the remaining three Tests. "It is set up perfectly, with three Tests to play. I think it will be a tight series but England are

going to have to expect India to come back even harder." In the opening two Tests, India were without the services of Virat Kohli, who opted out due to personal reasons and the injured Mohammed Shami. The hosts suffered another blow when Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul were ruled out of the second Test as well. "India have missed quite a few key players so far. Mohammad Shami, I think, is out for the series. Ravi Jadeja could well be out for another Test match and Virat Kohli has been out of the first two. We are talking about some serious cricketers there. "Kohli may well come back in, KL Rahul also, so I would expect a stronger Indian side in those last three games of the series. England will know that they're going to have to up their game," Hussain said. The third Test will begin in Rajkot on February 15.

# Second string Indian team to tour Zimbabwe

**PTI ■ HARARE**

A second string Indian team will tour Zimbabwe for a five-match T20I series starting July 6, the country's cricket board announced on Tuesday. The series that will be held immediately after the conclusion of the marquee T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies on June 29, is unlikely to feature any top Indian players as it has been the case during previous tours of the African nation over the years. The five matches will be held at the Harare Sports Club on, July 6, 7, 10, 13 and 14.

"Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday announced that Zimbabwe will host India for a five-match Twenty20 International (T20I) series in July. The series is scheduled to take place from 6 to 14 July 2024 in Harare," ZC stated in a release. The confirmation of this tour comes after productive discussions between ZC and the BCCI, with the primary objective of fortifying bilateral ties and fostering a spirit of collaboration between the two cricketing boards. BCCI secretary Jay Shah said:

"The BCCI has always played a pioneering role in contributing to the global cricketing community. We understand that it is a period of rebuilding for Zimbabwe, and Zimbabwe Cricket needs our support at this juncture. "Our pledge to support Zimbabwe Cricket reflects a shared vision for the growth and prosperity of cricket on the international stage." Expressing his enthusiasm, ZC Chairman Tavengwa Mukuhliani said: "We are absolutely thrilled to be hosting India for a T20I series in July in what will be our biggest international attraction

at home this year." A tour by the Indian team takes care of Zimbabwe's entire year's TV revenue. "The game of cricket has always immensely benefited from India's influence and dedication to the sport, and I would like to say a huge thank you to the BCCI for committing to tour Zimbabwe once again," Mukuhliani said. "The significance and magnitude of this tour cannot be over-emphasised, especially as it is coming at a time we are working round the clock to re-establish ourselves as a force to reckon with at the highest level of the game."

# Saumy makes transition from academics to cricket

**PTI ■ CHENNAI**

Teenage Indian left-arm spinner Saumy Kumar Pandey, one of the leading wicket-takers in the ongoing U19 World Cup in South Africa, possesses a striking similarity to Ravindra Jadeja's bowling action. The reason is simple: the veteran India all-rounder is Pandey's inspiration. Hailing from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, Pandey was fascinated by Jadeja's body language and intent on the field and tried every single day to emulate his icon. The cricketer has shown tremendous potential for the future with 16 wickets in five games so far, with a best of 4/19. "Jadeja has been his inspiration. He has been fascinated by Jadeja's body language and fielding intent," Pandey's childhood coach Aril Anthony told PTI on Tuesday. According to Anthony, Pandey is also a brilliant student, who passed his higher secondary subjects with flying colours. So, what made him foray into cricket? "Initially, when he started playing cricket at age 7 or 8, he was physically very weak. He



was advised by doctors to do some physical activity to boost his immunity," added Anthony. "His father told me that he had a huge interest in cricket since childhood and was able to hold the bat at the age of three or four. "He was a sharp kid. Even in academics, he scored around 93 per cent in Higher Secondary. His parents wanted him to be an engineer or a doctor but were left spellbound after seeing him bowl under my guidance (chuckles). "He has a knack of grasping things quickly and implements them well, which is what you are currently witnessing at the World Cup," said his coach.

Both his parents are government teachers, which could be the reason he has excelled in academics and also quickly honed the intricacies of spin bowling. Anthony said that when Pandey, the highest wicket-taker for India in the U19 World Cup so far, came to him, the teenager's wish was to become an all-rounder like Jadeja. "He wanted to become an all-rounder and was very much interested in batting as well. However, the skill that impressed me the most was his bowling, and I advised him to focus on his bowling. He started as a spinner; he was

never into fast bowling," added Anthony. Anthony said that besides bagging 135 wickets in the last three years at the junior level, Pandey also finished as the second-highest wicket-taker in district-level U16 and U19 tournaments. He has also fared well in the 2022-23 Cooch Behar Trophy, where he emerged as the second-highest wicket-taker for Madhya Pradesh, scalping 23 wickets in nine innings at an average of 15.17. Pandey's good run of form could attract him towards the Indian Premier League but Anthony has cautioned the youngster not to get carried away. "Currently, he is focused on white-ball cricket, and I have advised him to focus only on one-day cricket for now. He has shared his dream of playing in the IPL, but I have told him not to think about it now. "Suppose he gets picked by an IPL team now and is hammered for sixes aplenty, it could affect his confidence. So, he should progress step by step, starting with India U19, followed by the Ranji Trophy, and then thinking about Team India and the IPL.



# We wanted to take captaincy pressure off Rohit: MI head coach

**PTI ■ CAPE TOWN**

Mumbai Indians head coach Mark Boucher has revealed that Rohit Sharma's removal from the team's captaincy was a tough decision meant to free him as a batter given that he did not have a great run in the past couple of seasons. The Reliance-owned franchise, in the most talked about one-way 'all-cash trade' in the IPL history, bought back all-rounder Hardik Pandya after his successful two-year stint with Gujarat Titans. The team subsequently named him the skipper replacing Rohit, who led the side to five IPL titles. "We saw a window to get Hardik back as a player," Boucher told South Africa-based podcast 'Banter with The Boys'. "We still want him (Rohit) as a player, absolutely because we know he has some great value to add and just go out there and actually enjoy it, without the hype of being the captain," he said. "He probably hasn't had the best couple of seasons with the bat but he has done well as captain and I just thought after speaking with whole Mumbai Indians group, we thought may be this is an opportunity for him to step in for his last year or so," the coach added. While the hype around an Indian skipper will still be there but Boucher expects Rohit to operate more freely with the bat. "He will still captain India so that hype is going to be there

but when he steps into the IPL, may be take that extra bit of pressure off him as captain and may be we get the best out of Rohit Sharma..." he hoped. "...Playing with nice smile on his face and spending time with beautiful family that he has got, there's no easy way to do it," he said. Boucher said Rohit's busy schedule also puts pressure on Indian captain. "One thing I picked up with Roh (nickname) is that he is a fantastic guy and he has been captaining for ages and he has been doing really well and not just for MI but for India as well, he walks into a place and there are cameras on him and he is so busy," Boucher said. Rohit enjoys a massive fan base in social media and Boucher urged fans to understand his removal was a cricketing decision. "A lot of people don't understand this in India and people get quite emotional about it...It is more of a cricketing decision that was made...It will bring the best out of Rohit as a person and a player and let him just go out there enjoy and score some good runs." On Pandya's return, Boucher said that the Baroda man has shown admirable leadership skills for Gujarat Titans in the past two editions. "He is a Mumbai Indians boy and he won his first year as captain and came runner up in the second year, so there's obviously some very good leadership skills," he said.

# Australia routs West Indies for 86

**AP ■ CANBERRA (AUSTRALIA)**

Fast bowler Xavier Bartlett ran through the West Indies lineup with another impressive total of 4-21 as Australia swept the one-day international series with another resounding eight-wicket win on Tuesday. Australia won the first match by eight wickets in Melbourne and the second by 83 runs in Sydney. Bartlett, who grabbed four wickets in his debut ODI at MCG in the series opener before the pace bowler was rested at Sydney, ripped through West Indies batting as the visitors were bowled out for 86 - its fifth-lowest total in ODIs. Jake Fraser-McGurk made a rapid 41 off just 18 balls as Australia sped to 87-2 in just 6.5 overs with the opening batter smacking three sixes and five fours. Josh Inglis was also in a hurry and made a brisk unbeaten 35 off 16 balls as fast bowler Matthew Forde gave away 40

runs off his two overs with Fraser-McGurk and Inglis both showing plenty of aggression. "It's pretty insane. It's just great to get a taste of international cricket," Bartlett said. "To cap it off with a series win was great. There was still some pressure there (today) but I relaxed a little bit more and tried to enjoy it a little bit more and they came out alright again." Australia's 12th successive win came in its landmark 1,000th ODI as it became only the second country after India to play so many ODIs. Bartlett was on target from the onset once Steven Smith won the toss and elected to bowl first. He had opener Kjoern Ottley leg before wicket in his second over but television replays suggested the batter had inside edged the ball. Lance Morris, one of the two changes Australia made with Bartlett, had an injury scare when he walked off the ground with a side strain in his



fifth over. But Bartlett, who replaced rested Josh Hazlewood, bowled at an impeccable line

and length as he conceded just 11 runs in his first five-over spell. Morris dented West Indies

enough before walking off the field as he had Keacy Carty as his first international wicket when Marnus Labuschagne

grabbed a stunning catch at backward point and then had Teddy Bishop clean bowled with a superb full delivery. Alick Athanaze top-scored with 32 but when he fell to a rash sweep against Adam Zampa and was caught at deep backward square leg, West Indies lost the last six wickets for just 16 runs and the innings got folded in just 24.1 overs. Smith recalled Bartlett who had the wicket of Romario Shepherd with his first ball of the second spell and then cleaned up West Indies innings by having the wicket of Alzarri Joseph. "Our batting let us down, it did for the entire series," West Indies captain Shai Hope said. "We need to do some real soul-searching to understand what's needed in certain conditions... The mindset has a lot to do with it, playing the situation. We just didn't bat as well as we could have. We must take the positives with us and try to negate the negatives.

# Challenge for Test cricket is revenue sharing model: Graeme

**PTI ■ CAPE TOWN**

As Test engagements shrink leagues across the world, former South Africa captain-turned-administrator Graeme Smith said the five-day format needs a balanced revenue-sharing model than a busy calendar to survive. Currently, India is the biggest beneficiary of the ICC's revenue distribution model, assured of 38.5 per cent of the total earnings for the 2024-27 cycle. While the Indian board will get USD 231 million annually, West Indies would get just about USD 27.50 million, South Africa USD 26.24 million and a minnow like Afghanistan would fetch only USD 16.82 million per year. Smith said the challenge lies in addressing this disparity. "Everyone talks about scheduling but the real challenge for Test Cricket is financial modelling. You have heard Johny Grave (Cricket

West Indies CEO), he has been openly speaking about the revenue sharing model," Smith, who is the commissioner of the ongoing Betway SA T20 League, told PTI Bhasha in an interview. "West Indies winning the Test in Australia is great for the game but they didn't get any revenue for that tour. We discuss in MCC Cricket Committee meetings what should be the revenue sharing model to make nations so financially strong that they want to play Test Cricket. "Players feel that they can make more money playing T20 rather than Tests. Those financial decisions eventually impact the format," added the former MCC cricket committee member. Several West Indies players prefer to be T20 freelancers and reject contractual agreement with the cricket board, citing lack of funds. As a result, the Caribbean board, along with Pakistan, has been



vocal in its criticism of the model. Despite being one of the most successful Test players from his country, Smith said the T20 format is important for the growth of the game and making sure that it remains commercially viable. "I love Test Cricket and I want Test Cricket to be strong but it is probably a 6 or 7 nation format and T20 is for growth. It is introducing new players, new fans and new markets to the game," he said. "It is important for South African cricket to bring

gravitas to its own product and keep cricket in this region strong," said the league commissioner of Betway SA20 league. Smith said the idea is to create all-format players, taking a cue from the IPL which threw up talent like Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya and Yashasvi Jaiswal. "We want to follow the IPL in producing all format players. We would love to see our national team competing in World Cups and playing Test matches all around the world and having a robust T20 league as well," he added.

Smith said he is mighty impressed with the performance of young guns like Jaiswal and Shubman Gill in Test cricket. Jaiswal became the third youngest Indian to score a double century in the just-concluded second Test against England while Gill struck a hundred in the same match. "Indian Cricket is so blessed that they have so much talent. When we talk about these two, their fame and their skills come into light largely through the IPL. Talent is coming through different platforms now and if you are good enough, you can still play every format," said the veteran who has 9265 runs in 117 Tests. He feels sad that the once formidable South Africa has failed to perform well in the five-day format in the recent past. "It hurts. We haven't played good Test Cricket for long. We have some quality players but no one is averaging above 40

while when we played the average of six players was about close to 50," said Smith who led his country to record 54 Test wins. He also said that Indian Cricket has enough talent to see through the transition phase once legends like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are retired. "Virat and Rohit have been incredible for Indian Cricket. I think Indian Cricket will always have enough talent but it will be a sad day to see these guys retire," he said. Considered one of the greatest ever captains of all time, Smith did not give any names when asked who he thought could be the future captain of the Indian team. "I think someone who can handle the expectations and pressure and manage the players. Captaining India is a very big job and comes with a lot of responsibility and a lot of pressure," said the veteran who became captain at 22.