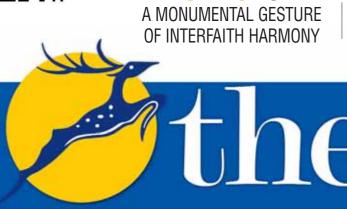
OPINION 6

WORLD 8

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PM MODI ASSURES FARMERS OF RELIEF

Amid the farmers' protest for the fourth consecutive day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that his Government at the Centre has been actively working on various schemes for the "benefit of farmers". Addressing a public gathering after laying the foundation stone for AIIMS at Rewari in Haryana, the PM said his BJP-led NDA Government has provided farmers with the "guarantee" to seek loans from banks, a privilege previously denied to them.

"We provided farmers with the Modi guarantee... banks did not grant them loans, but we assured farmers," the PM said. He made these assertions at a public rally where he recalled that his first address after the party named him the Prime Ministerial candidate in 2013 was at Rewari. Modi inaugurated several development projects worth several crores for Rajasthan and Haryana, including the Rewari AIIMS, a new rail line, and a metro line.

Modi noted that the journey began there, securing over 273 Lok Sabha seats, and expressed hope for the NDA Government to claim more than 400 Lok Sabha seats in the upcoming elections.

This holds significance as another round of meetings between farmer representatives Union Ministers scheduled for February 18,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the foundation stone laying and inauguration of various development projects, in Rewari district, on Friday

the meeting concluded on the night of Thursday-Friday. Meanwhile, the situation at

sensitive Delhi-Haryana and Haryana-Punjab borders peaceful, remained with continued talks between agitating farmers' organisations and Central Government representatives.

Haryana Police fired tear gas shells to disperse protesting farmers at the Shambhu border near Ambala. There was a mixed following 'positive' discussions in response to the 'Gramin Bharat Bandh called by the Samyukta Union markets and bazaars in Delhi and NCR opening.

Amid the impasse, Union Ministers and farmer leaders will meet on Sunday for the fourth round of talks. Despite inconclusive talks on February 8, 12, and 15, the third round of discussions between protesting farmers in Punjab and three central ministers concluded positively in the wee hours of Friday.

Agriculture Minister Kisan Morcha on Friday, with Arjun Munda described the meeting as cordial, with a positive discussion. confirmed that talks will continue on Sunday at 6 pm, expressing optimism in finding a solution through dialogue.

Among the farmer leaders were SKM (nonpresent political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher. Pandher highlighted the detailed

including a legal guarantee for MSP and debt waiver. He acknowledged the ministers' request for time.

Meanwhile, protesting farmers vowed to continue their presence at the Punjab and Haryana borders over various demands, as the deadlock persisted despite the third round of talks with Union Ministers.

During the Gramin Bharat Bandh on Friday, protests occurred in parts of western Uttar Pradesh in response to the 'Bharat Bandh' call given by the SKM. Commuters in Punjab faced inconvenience as buses stayed off the roads in support of the SKM's call for a 'Bharat Bandh' to press the Government to accept farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP. Markets and commercial establishments at several places in the State also remained shut farmers while demonstrations and blocked national highways in Pathankot, Tarn Taran, Bathinda, and Jalandhar.

They raised slogans against the Centre for not accepting their demands.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda said the meeting between the Government and the farmer leaders took place in a cordial atmosphere. He said there was a positive discussion, and the talks will continue, scheduled for Sunday at 6 pm. "We will find a solution by sitting together," he added.

Continued on Page 2



Bengal on boil over Sandeshkhali atrocities

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

On a day when a high-powered all-women fact-finding team branded Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as a "mischievous person who is providing shelter to the rapists of Hindu women," the National Commission for Scheduled Castes recommended on Thursday the imposition of Article 356 in Bengal

Days after visiting the disturbed areas of Sandeshkhali, the empowered NCSC team submitted a report to President Droupadi Murmu recommending imposition of President's Rule, said panel's president Arun Haldar. "The NCSC has found large-scale

atrocities on the Dalit and downtrodden people Sandeshkhali... in the context of the grave situation prevailing there, it makes a perfect case for the

Haldar said, adding, "there are provisions in Article 338 of the Constitution... according to which President's Rule can safely be imposed here... as there has been a blatant violation of the rights of the SCs and the downtrodden people, have submitted

recommendation to the President." The NCSC recommendation came on a day when the Bengal Police prevented a high-powered delegation of the BJP led by two Union Ministers Pratima Bhoumik and Annapurna Devi at Rampur village a few kilometre ahead of Sandeshkhali. The all-women team, sent by BJP president JP Nadda and including four other MPs, staged a sit-in for two hours before returning to Kolkata, where they submitted a report to Governor CV Ananda

Continued on Page 2

IT department freezes Congress accounts, tribunal gives breather

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Soon after the Congress alleged that the main bank accounts of the party were frozen over an income tax demand of ₹210 crore, the I-T appellate tribunal allowed to operate them pending a further hearing next week. The grand old party alleged that the move by the authorities just before the Lok Sabha polls was intended to impact all the party's ongoing political activities.

Congress treasurer Ajay Maken, who alleged at a Press conference that Income Tax authorities had frozen its accounts, informed that the tribunal has put a lien of ₹115 crore on its accounts, and the

Tragedy strikes

Delhi, 11 killed

in factory fire

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

out inside a paint factory in Outer Delhi's Dayalpur market in Alipur on Thursday

evening. The victims are yet to be identified.

The charred bodies of the 11

victims, 10 men and one

woman, were recovered from the factory, which also houses

chemical godowns. The fire was preceded by a blast, and

soon it spread to nearby

buildings, including a drug

rehabilitation centre and eight



Indian Youth Congress members stage a protest against the Central Government over freezing of some bank accounts of the Congress

which, however, came as a huge relief for the party. Party leader Vivek Tankha, able to participate in the

party has been allowed to who appeared before the spend over and above that, tribunal against the order, said he told the tribunal that the Congress would not be

'festival of elections" if its accounts remain frozen. The tribunal will hear the matter next Wednesday before a final decision is taken. Several party

including party president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi, expressed their outrage and alleged that the Government's move was an attack on democracy. Maken, who said democracy was in danger in the country, detailed the tribunal's order. The Indian Youth Congress staged a protest against the Centre over the freezing of bank accounts of the Indian National Congress and its youth wing, alleging that the move was "political vendetta." **Continued on Page 2**

Major boost for defence



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

viving a major boost to the Indian industry with the aim of achieving self-reliance, the Government here approved proposals for various weapon systems worth ₹84,560 crore on Friday. This includes 15 maritime reconnaissance aircraft for the navy and coast guard, alongside radars and Continued on Page 2 | anti-tank mines.

The nod for these proposed deals was given in the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Officials emphasised that the approvals, in the true spirit of 'aatmanirbharta,' lay special emphasis on procurement of equipment from Indian vendors. The DAC, as the apex body in the Defence Ministry, is responsible for giving the go-

ahead to proposals of the three

Armed forces, with the final

decision resting with the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). Detailing the approved deals, officials highlighted that the DAC Acceptance granted (AoN) Necessity Medium procurement of Range Maritime Reconnaissance and Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft through the Buy and Make

This is aimed at strengthening surveillance interdiction capabilities of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) over the country's vast maritime area. The Indian Navy is set to receive nine aircraft, while the Coast Guard will procure six aircraft, with the total cost of this deal estimated at ₹29,000

Continued on Page 2

category. the

US vows to protect Indians

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden and his administration are working very hard to thwart and disrupt attacks on Indian and Indian American students, the White House has said.

Deaths of at least four Indian American students have been



reported in the last several violence, certainly based on weeks. The announcement by John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House comes amid a slew of attacks on Indian and Indian American students in various parts of the country. "There is no excuse for

race or gender or religion or any other factor. That's just unacceptable here in the United States," Kirby told reporters here when asked about the series of attacks on students from India and also those from the Indian American community.

Continued on Page 2



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Jaishankar, Blinken hold talks in Munich

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday held talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with a focus on key bilateral issues as well as the situation in West Asia, Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific.

The meeting took place in Munich on the sidelines of a security conference.

"Great to meet my friend US @SecBlinken this afternoon on #MSC2024 sidelines. Our talk centered on the situation in West Asia, Ukraine and Indo-Pacific. Reviewed the continuing progress in our bilateral ties," Jaishankar said

Jaishankar and Blinken are learnt to have deliberated on various aspects of India-US strategic ties.

There has been a major upswing in India-US ties in the last few years, especially in the spheres of defence and hightechnology.

Over two weeks ago, the Biden administration notified the US Congress on its proposed sup-



ply of 31 MQ-9B Predator long endurance drones to

The move was seen as significant forward movement to firming up the mega deal that was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington in June last

Defence Security Cooperation Agency of the US government delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale. The Jaishankar-Blinken talks

also came amid some unease between the two sides following Washington's allegations in December that it thwarted an alleged plot hatched by an Indian agent to kill Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil. The US federal prosecutors

charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta of working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot. India has already constituted a probe committee to investigate

Puri disburses loans to PM SWAnidhi beneficiaries



STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday here disbursed loans to 10,000 beneficiaries of PM SWAnidhi scheme in a programme jointly organized by Municipal Corporation of Delhi(MCD), State Level Bankers Committee, Delhi and Punjab National Bank. Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena, Meenakshi Lekhi, Union Minister of State for Culture and External Affairs, Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, Union Minister of State for Finance and Dr. Harsh Vardhan, MP, Lok Sabha were present as Chief Guests in the programme.
While addressing the event,

Puri said exploitation of street vendors and workers has stopped in the country under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The benefits of the govern-

ment welfare schemes under Prime Minister Modi have directly reached the eligible beneficiaries, he said adding under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, various beneficial schemes were made for the poor people. PM SWAnidhi scheme is the most special among all these schemes.

Puri stated that Prime

Minister Modi had launched PM SWAnidhi scheme during the critical times of Covid pandemic. The scheme saved the livelihood of street vendors that had become difficult due to the Covid pandemic. Referring to the achievements of the scheme, the minister stated that more than 80 lakh street vendors have benefited from this scheme. He said the percentage of women street vendors among those receiving loans under the scheme is about 47 per cent of all loans

He said about 75 percent of the beneficiaries of PM SWAnidhi are from marginalized sections.

IT department freezes Congress...

From Page 1

Scores of Youth Congress leaders and workers gathered on Central Delhi's Rajendra Prasad road with banners and raised slogans against the BJP-led Centre.

Security was beefed up around the area, and barricades were deployed. national BV, Srinivas president of the Indian Youth Congress, alleged that the

party's accounts were sealed just before the elections on purpose" in "an attempt to bring a one-party system." "On our petition, the Income

Tax Department and the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) have said we have to ensure that Rs 115 crore have to be kept in the banks. This 115 crore is the lien marked in the bank accounts. We can spend an amount over and above that," Maken said.

"This means that Rs 115 crore has been frozen. This Rs 115 crore is much more than we have in our Current Accounts," he explained. Congress treasurer had earlier said the freezing of its accounts on "flimsy grounds" had affected all political activity of the party barely two weeks before general elections are announced. The accounts, including that

of the Indian Youth Congress, were frozen on an Income Tax demand of Rs 210 crore for 2018-19, an election year, Maken said.

According to him, the party filed its Income Tax returns for the concerned year a few days late, and that is why this action was taken. The matter, he said, also pertains to a discrepancy in cash receipts of Rs 14.4 lakh given to the party by its MLAs and MPs as donations made from their salaries. He said the IT authorities' orders freezing the accounts had come on

Wednesday. While Maken said four main bank accounts were frozen, sources later put the number at nine. The party was unable to use even the funds received under its crowdfunding scheme, Maken said at the Press conference.

'Don't be afraid of Modi, the Congress is not the name of power of money, but of the power of people... We have bowed dictatorship, nor will we ever bow down," said Rahul.

Terming the Government "power-drunk" for freezing the accounts of India's largest opposition party just before the Lok Sabha elections, Kharge said it is a "deep assault" on democracy.

Priyanka unable to join Congress Yatra due to illness

PNS NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that she has been admitted to hospital due to an illness and hence would not join the party's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on Friday. She sent her best wishes to her brother Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders for the Nyay Yatra and said she would join them as soon as she felt better.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was supposed to join her brother at Chandauli in Uttar Pradesh after the Yatra entered the state from Bihar, sources said. "I was eagerly waiting for the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra to reach Uttar Pradesh. But due to an illness, I had to be admitted to the hospital today itself. I will join the Yatra as soon as I feel better. Till then, I give my best wishes to all the Yatris -- my dear brother and my colleagues from Uttar Pradesh, who are diligently preparing for the journey -- reaching Chandauli-Banaras," Vadra said in a social

media post. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi is leading the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra from Manipur to Mumbai. The Yatra is cur-

rently passing through Bihar. Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addressed

a mega rally in Bihar's Aurangabad on Thursday. On Friday evening, the Yatra reached Uttar Pradesh, the key Hindi heartland state that sends the maximum number of MPs to the Lok Sabha. It will traverse through the state from February 16 to 21 and then again from February 24 to 25. According to the Congress, February 22 and 23 are rest days for the Yatra. The East-West Manipur-

Mumbai Yatra traverses 6,700 km through 15 states and aims to highlight the message of "nyay" (justice) while meeting common people on the way. Rahul in his public address during his Bihar leg of the yatra charged the Narendra Modi government with having brought the 'Agniveer' scheme in order to spend the defence budget for the benefit of a big business house, instead of emoluments paid to the soldiers. Rahul made the allegation at Mohania in Kaimur district of Bihar, bordering Uttar Pradesh, a region from where youngsters are known to enrol in the armed forces on a large scale.

Earlier in the day, Rahul said his party will accept long-pending demands of farmers in the country and ensure a legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP) of crops if the INDIA bloc comes to power after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing the 'Kisan Nyay Panchayat', a gathering of farmers, in Bihar's Rohtas, as part of his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', he claimed that "cultivators are not getting the remunerative prices for their

His comment comes at a time when Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a farmers' body, called for 'Bharat Bandh' on Friday to press the BJP-led central government to accept cultivators' demands, including a legal guarantee of minimum support price for crops.

US vows to protect Indians

From Page 1

disbursed.

"The president and this administration have been working very, very hard to make sure we're doing everything we can to work with State and local authorities to try to thwart and disrupt those kinds of attacks and make it clear to anybody who might consider them that they'll be held properly accountable," Kirby said.
Vivek Saini, a student

working part-time in a department store, died following an attack by a drug addict in Lithonia, Georgia in January. Syed Mazahir Ali, an Indian student at Indiana Wesleyan

Akul Dhawan Illinois University of Urbana-Champaign and Neel Acharya of Purdue University died apparently due to heavy drinking followed by long exposure to low temperatures at night in January.

Shreyas Reddy Benigeri, an Indian-origin student at the Lindner School of Business in Cincinnati was found dead in Ohio this month.

Indian American community leader Ajay Jain Bhutoria said he was deeply troubled by the tragic deaths of these students in separate incidents and

need for enhanced safety measures for those pursuing education in the US. College authorities, and local police, must address these challenges promptly, he asserted.

understandably parents and families in India, and their concerns are shared. It's crucial to address safety issues to ensure the well-being of Indian students studying in the USA," he said, adding that the Indian American community unites in calling improved measures and

₹30 lakh crore required over next six years to meet NDC goals by 2030: IREDA FARMERS...

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Astaggering investment of ₹30 lakh crores is required over the period spanning next six years from 2024 to achieve India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) goals by 2030. This was stated by Pradip Kumar Das, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) recently.

He explained that this sub-

stantial investment is essential to drive progress in various sectors crucial for meeting India's climate and environmental targets. Such investment would likely be allocated towards initiatives aimed at renewable energy expansion, energy efficiency enhancements, emission reduction measures, sustainable infrastructure development, and other climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, he added..

This investment is crucial for various sectors including manufacturing capacity for Solar, Electrolysers, Wind & Battery, as well as Transmission, Green Hydrogen, Solar, Hydro, Wind, and Waste to Energy," Das said while participating in an international webinar organized by The World Bank. The webinar coincided with the

release of the latest South Asia Development Update titled "Toward Faster, Cleaner Growth" on February 14, 2024. Das also highlighted the significance of the "PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana," a rooftop solar scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024.

This visionary project, backed by an investment exceeding ₹ 75,000 crores, aims to solarize 1 crore households by providing up to 300 units of free electricity every month.

Das emphasised that this initiative will not only provide



substantial benefits but also raise awareness about renewable energy among the populace, contributing to India's ambitious goal of achieving Net-Zero emissions by 2070 and energy independence by

Furthermore, Das also praised India's exemplary role in renewable energy development worldwide, highlighting various government initiatives such Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO), the PM-KUSUM scheme, 'Must-run' status for RE assets, PLI scheme for Solar PV manufacturing, and the allowance of up to 100% FDI under the automatic route for renewable energy. He emphasised that as India strives to become the thirdlargest economy in the next three years and a developed country by 2047, renewable sources are expected to meet approximately 90 per cent of the energy demand.

Besides Das, other notable speakers at the webinar included Special Representative to the UN and the WTO, World Bank, Maria Dimitriadou; Chief Economist, South Asia Region, World Bank, Franziska Ohnsorge; Economist, Prospects Group, World Bank, Philip Kenworthy; and Green Technology and Research manager, WIPO GREEN, Peter

This initiative underscores the collective efforts towards sustainable and cleaner energy solutions for India and the Among the farmer leaders who participated in the

meeting were SKM (non-political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee General Secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher. Pandher stated that a detailed discussion was held on their demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP and a debt "They (Union waiver. ministers) said they need time," said Pandher.

Meanwhile, Meanwhile, protesting farmers will remain at the two borders of Punjab and Haryana over their various

demands as the deadlock persists despite the third round of talks with a panel of

MSP, the farmers are demanding implementation

Union Ministers. Besides a legal guarantee on

Swaminathan Commission's recommendations, pension for farmers and farm laborers, farm debt waiver, withdrawal of police cases, "justice" for the victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and compensation to the families of the farmers who died during a previous agitation in 2020-21.

Tragedy strikes Delhi, 11 killed in factory...

From Page 1 According to Delhi Fire Services (DFS) chief Atul Garg, the blaze broke out at the single-storey factory before engulfing the entire premises. "We received a premises. "We received a phone call about the fire at 5:30 pm from Bhorgarh at Dayalpur market in Alipur," he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakh each for the kin of those killed in the fire in a paints factory.

The Chief Minister also visited the site to take stock of the situation in the aftermath of the blaze. "We have full sympathy for the families of the deceased. We will provide compensation of Rs 10 lakh

each for the kin of the deceased. Two people have sustained minor injuries, and they will be awarded compensation of ₹20,000 each, and those with major compensation of ₹two lakh each," he told reporters.

The Chief Minister said there are allegations that there was a delay in the arrival of fire tenders to the spot. "I will issue instructions for an enquiry into the alleged delay in the arrival of fire engines and how the factory was operating in this area," he said. He also said those whose nearby shops and houses were affected due to the fire would be awarded compensation in line with the Government's policy. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva also visited the site and announced a monetary help of ₹50,000 for the kin of those killed and and ₹25,000 for the treatment of the injured.

Police said the factory was being operated by Akhil Jain

of Sonipat, Haryana. A case under sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) of the IPC has been registered

The DFS official said a call about the fire was received around 5:30 pm on Thursday, and 22 fire tenders were dispatched to the site.

The blaze was brought under control by 9 pm, the DFS official said, adding that 11 charred bodies were recovered from the factory premises. The bodies have been preserved at the Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital, and the process of identifying them underway, police said.

In a post on X, DFS chief Atul Garg said, "Despite the best efforts by DFS, 11 labourers died in a paint factory fire in the Alipur area of Delhi. A fire call was received at 5:30 pm, and 22 tenders were dispatched to the site. However, due to an explosion,

the building collapsed, and workers trapped inside the factory could not be saved. A very unfortunate day."

A police officer said it is suspected that the blast was the godowns.

The four injured have been identified as Jyoti (42), Divya (20), Mohit Solanki (34), and police constable Karambir (35). Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer-north) Ravi Kumar Singh said a police team at the spot saw that the fire had spread to a number of other buildings, including the neighbouring 'Nasha Mukti Kendra', where four-five

people were trapped.
"Our constable Karambir posted at Alipur Police Station rushed to the terrace of the 'Nasha Mukti Kendra' putting his own life in danger and managed to rescue the trapped people. He sustained injuries, including burns and is now admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital," Singh

Major boost for...

Airbus are jointly manufacturing C-295 planes in India. This move aligns with the Government's "Make in India" initiative, aiming to enhance indigenous defence production capabilities while meeting the country's security needs.The Indian Air Force (IAF) recently inducted the first C-295 transport aircraft manufactured in Spain. While the first 16 will come from Spain in fly-away condition, the remaining 40 will be produced in India at a Tata facility in

The latest approval to enhance the Navy and Coast Guard surveillance capabilities will take the Tata Airbus order book to 71 from the existing 56.

gave the go-ahead under the Buy [Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured category for the procurement of a new generation of antisafety features. To enhance

efficiency and domination in engaging targets that are Beyond Visual Line of Sight by the mechanised forces, the nod under the Buy (Indian-IDDM) category was given for procurement of Canister Launched Anti-Armour Loiter Munition System. Further, to strengthen the Air

Defence Systems, especially the capabilities to detect slow, small, and low-flying targets as well as surveillance, detection, and tracking of different targets, the DAC approved procurement of Air Defence Tactical Control Radar under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category.

Bengal on boil over...

From Page 1

Referring to how the poor people's land was grabbed and their women raped by the henchmen of local Trinamool Congress toughies Sheikh Shahjahan, Shibu Hajra, and Uttam Sardar Bhowmik, she wondered as to why "the representatives of other political parties were being stopped from entering Sandeshkhali... what does Mamata have to hide... by her action, it is clear that she is a mischievous person who, despite being a woman, is giving shelter to people like Shahjahan and allowing the Hindu women to be tortured selectively... it is clear that she is unleashing a reign of terror by organising the selective rape of Hindu women... and sending the protesters to jail for no fault of theirs... we were going to the village to stand by these hapless women, but their police have

Her ministerial colleague Annapurna Devi alleged that "the torture on women is taking place with the help of

stopped us."

police," wondering, "why Shahjahan is not being arrested... Mamata claims to be running a Maa Maati Manush Government but in reality, she is tormenting the Mothers, and the Manush or the people of the place... had she arrested Shahjahan before, then this situation had

A Congress team led by its Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury was also stopped from entering Sandeshkhali. He demanded the area to be declared a "disturbed area." Referring to the NCSC reports, he said, "the BJP Government will never impose President's Rule in Bengal as they want to remain politically correct... they have no concern for the people's woes... like in 2019 and 2021, they threatened imposition of NRC and CAA in order to polarise the votes so that only the BJP and the TMC can benefit. This time they are

giving false cries of President's Rule which they will never impose... I will appeal to the Centre to at least declare Sandeshkhali as a 'disturbed

Chowdhury also called Mamata the "queen of cruelty," warning her against "playing with fire." The Trinamool Congress

alleged "drama being scripted in Delhi at the behest of the Bengal BJP leaders," saying "it is the habit of the BJP to bring in tourists from outside the State during the elections and return empty-handed after it." Reacting to the statements issued by Haldar and the BJP delegation, TMC MP Shantanu Sen said, "These are all dramas being scripted in Delhi at the instance of their Bengal leaders and enacted by the visitors they are sending now and then from outside... this is their regular habit during the elections," adding why "if the BJP and the NCSC are so concerned about the scheduled castes they would not go to Manipur where every day members of SC

communities are being killed... why don't they send fact-finding teams there and impose President's Rule in that State." Meanwhile, Bengal

Opposition Leader --- who was on Wednesday stopped from entering Sandeshkhali -moved the Calcutta High Court, drawing its attention promptly reacted to the to how despite a previous court order quashing the police action imposing prohibited areas in the area the administration was stopping the politicians from entering the region.

Sandeshkhali burst national media headlines firstly after the men of Sahjahan on January 5 attacked and injured an Directorate Enforcement team that had gone to raid his house in connection to a ration scam and moneysmuggling, and secondly when hundreds of women came out on the streets and gheraoed the local police station in protest against land-grab, forced labor, land-grab, forced extortion, and not least sexual exploitation of women.

Sources indicated that all 15 aircraft will be built upon C-295 transport aircraft, with the project valued at around Rs 29,000 crore. Tata Advanced Systems and

Vadodara, Gujarat.

As for other approved deals on Friday, officials said the DAC

tank mines having seismic sensor and provision of remote deactivation with additional the Tactical Battle Area for

11 charred to death in paint factory inferno

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The youngest and the only learning member of the family, 21-year-old Brijkishore was saving money for his elder brother's wedding next month. On Thursday, Brijkishore's plans came to a tragic end when he was charred to death in a fire that gutted a paint factory in North Delhi's Alipur. Brijkishore, who hailed from Uttar Pradesh, was among the 11 workers who were charred to death late on Thursday evening after they got trapped in the factory, the shutter of which was locked from inside. "My cousin started working at the factory only a few days ago. He was saving money for his elder brother's wedding next month. I am going to pick up his parents from the railway station. How will I tell them that their son was killed in a fire?" asked Brijkishore's cousin, Asharam, in a choked

Suraj, who recently quit his job at the factory after falling ill due to the hazardous chemicals used there, said, "It was a horrifying scene. People trapped inside the factory were screaming and banging the shutter. The flames were so high that we could not go anywhere near them."

The father of 19-year-old Shubham, who lost his life in the incident, said, "My wife died 14 years ago. Since then I have been taking care of my family. Shubham was my youngest son. I do not want any compensation, just give my son back to me."

According to locals, the fire broke out after more than 30 drums filled with chemicals exploded due to a spark caused by the welding work being carried out at the factory.

"The chemical had flown into

fire spread in the nearby houses and shops," Krishna Kumar, an eyewitness, said.Locals complained that there are many factories in the area that lack proper safety arrange-

A resident of the area said, "We are afraid that such an incident may take place again. There is another factory here that deals with polythene and leather. These factories should not be allowed to function in residential areas."

Meanwhile, relatives of victims of the explosion and fire incident and some residents alleged that several complaints were made about fire safety in Dayalpur market area in Alipur here but "no one paid any attention".

Devendra Saini, a nurse at the drug rehabilitation centre, said the work at the paint factory, where fire broke out, mostly





substances and multiple complaints were submitted by

"By the time police reached the spot, damage was already done. We made several complaints earlier regarding our concerns but nothing happened. This is a place where fire catches easier than petrol. Government always engages in blame game, how can we expect help from them?" he asked.
"Paint work includes mostly

inflammable substances and that factory was situated so close to us. We raised concerns but nobody paid attention, Saini alleged. He further said that when the blast took place, the entire area was engulfed by fire instantly. "We could not do anything about it," he said.

The fire was preceded by a blast and soon it spread to nearby buildings, including the drug rehabilitation centre and eight shops. One of the victims' family members Malti said the bodies were charred beyond recognition.

"My husband's brother was there at the factory when it caught fire. We couldn't even recognise the bodies.

They were charred beyond recognition," she said.

Another family member of a victim said they have not been informed by the police whether their kin has survived or not and they have no information about where the deceased and the injured were

"My nephew is one of the victims. Police didn't even tell us where the injured and deceased have been taken. We asked if he is dead or alive but the police did not even tell us that," Ekta (55) said. A fire official said a call about the blaze was received around 5:30 pm on Thursday and 22 fire ten-

The fire was brought under control by 9 pm, he said.

Rajesh, an eyewitnesses who lives nearby, said she was near the gate of her home when the blast took place and all she could do at that moment was

to run away with her children

and save their lives. "I was sitting outside my house near the gate and suddenly noticed smoke fumes. The fire reached my gate and I alerted my family members and chil-dren to run inside. Who do we file complaint with? Nobody listens to us. We couldn't help others, I ran away with my children. Saving them was my

only concern," she said. Sarala, 58, one of the neighbours who was also present at the spot when the blast took place, said, "We were worried about saving our families. My son had just woken up and he

Kejriwal moves trust vote in Assembly

In a show of strength amid speculation of his arrest, which has ramped up following the sixth summons issued to him on Wednesday in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal moved a trust vote in the Assembly on Friday. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel admitted the motion and it will come up for discussion in the Assembly starting 11 am on Saturday. This is the third time that Kejriwal has sought trust vote from the assembly in the past eight Moving the vote of confi-

motion in the dence Assembly, Kejriwal said two AAP MLAs told him that BJP operatives recently approached 7 of their MLAs, proposing, "in a few days, we will apprehend your Chief Minister. Join BJP, and in exchange, receive Rs 25 crores and election tickets.

"The MLAs were told that 21 AAP legislators have agreed to leave the party and more are in touch with the BJP. They offered the MLAs Rs 25 crore to join the BJP. The MLAs told me they did not accept. When we spoke to other MLAs, we found that they had not contacted 21, but seven.

They were trying to carry out another Operation Lotus. I want to demonstrate through this motion of confidence that once again, the BJP's 'Operation Lotus' has faltered in Delhi. None of our MLAs defected, and all remain steadfastly aligned with us," Kejriwal said.

'So it is clear that the alleged liquor policy scam is not a scam at all but an attempt to break our party and topple the government by filing false cases like they have in other states. Their aim is not to carry out an investigation but to arrest our leaders - and they have already arrested some - in the guise of the because they know they can sides in lieu of cash of up to

never win elections in Delhi," the AAP chief claimed. However, the Chief Minister affirmed that their MLAs unequivocally rejected the enticement. Furthermore, Kejriwal emphasised that the BJP's agenda extends beyond investigating the alleged liquor scam; rather, it seeks to

detain AAP leaders and dis-

mantle the elected govern-

ment, akin to strategies deployed in other states. Last month, Kejriwal had alleged that he was on the brink of being arrested in the liquor policy case as part of a BJP conspiracy to topple the AAP government in Delhi and that the BJP was also liquor policy case. Their aim attempting to contact AAP is to topple the government MLAs, urging them to switch

Rs 25 crore.Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri claimed that Kejriwal, despite having the support of 62 MLAs, was bringing the trust vote motion that showed his confidence was shaken. 'Not only this. Even before the trust vote is presented, they are so afraid of just eight BJP MLAs that they got seven

Bidhuri said it was surprising that Kejriwal was tabling a confidence motion alleging BJP of trying to poach AAP MLAs, but was not presenting evidence of it to the police that has already given him a notice in this regard.

of them suspended," he

alleged.

The motion in Assembly

Enforcement Directorate once again summoned the Aam Aadami Party (AAP) chief for the sixth time, in connection with an ongoing investigation into the now-scrapped liquor policy. The sixth summons follows a Delhi court's response to an ED-filed complaint, instructing Kejriwal to appear, asserting that prima facie, the AAP chief is "legally bound" to comply.

Earlier, the ED had moved the

court after Kejriwal skipped the fifth summons by the probe agency for questioning in a Delhi liquor policy-linked money laundering case. The agency has also issued sixth summons, asking him to appear on February 19. Kejriwal, who has denied any wrongdoing, alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party tried to poach AAP MLAs and topple his government using law enforcement agencies. Kejriwal has been asked to appear before the central probe agency on February 19. Previously, he was summoned on February 2, January 18 and January 3 this vear, and on December 21 and . November 2 in 2023.

Besides, the Delhi police crime branch has also planning to issue a second show cause notice to Kejriwal as he and his minister Atishi has not replied to them.

Seven BJP MLAs suspended for remainder of Budget Session

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

 $S_{\text{pended on Friday for the}}^{\text{even BJP MLAs were suspended on Friday for the remainder of the Budget sess-}$ sion of the Delhi Assembly for interrupting the Lt Governor's address a day before. Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel had on Thursday also sent the matter of disruption to the Privileges Committee. Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that the ruling AAP was "murdering" democracy and trying to stifle the voice of opposition in the House. The BJP MLAs had interrupted Lt Governor VK Saxena multiple times during his address on Thursday highlighting achievements of AAP government, as they sought to attack the Arvind Kejriwal government on a range of issues. AAP MLA Dilip Pandey moved a resolution in the House seeking action on this issue, which was accepted by the Speaker. Pandey said that opposition

members on Thursday acted in an "planned manner" while disrupting the LG's address which lowered the prestige of the House. "It was unprecedented and unfortunate," he said and demanded action while reading out from the



rule book.

Speaker Goel accepted resolution moved by Pandey and directed the matter to be sent to the Privileges Committee. Seven members of the BJP barring Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri will be barred from attending the proceedings of the House till the report is pending.
Goel later asked the seven

members -- Mohan Singh Bisht, Ajay Mahawar, OP Sharma, Abhay Verma, Anil Vajpayi, Jitender Mahajan, and Vijender Gupta -- to leave the chamber of the House. Bidhuri also walked out of the House in protest. "The manner in which seven opposition members were suspended and marshalled out of the House as soon as the House proceedings began on Friday was a well-planned conspiracy by the AAP government,"

He said that as per rules, discussions were to be held on the notices of several BJP MLAs which were supposed to highlight the Aam Aadmi Party government's "corruption and failure" on various fronts.

"Therefore, to suppress the voice of these MLAs, they were expelled in an undemocratic manner," he alleged. Goel had on Thursday asked marshals to escort the BJP MLAs out of the House after

they repeatedly interrupted the Lt Governor's address in the Budget session highlighting achievements of the AAP Seven out of the eight BJP

MLAs in the House, barring Leader of Opposition Bidhuri, were marshalled out by the Speaker for interrupting the LG's address on the first day of the session, Assembly officials had said. Other BJP MLAs alleged shortage of water, non-implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme, poor condition of hospitals, and electricity rates with the LG continuing and concluding his address amid multiple interruptions. The Budget session of the Delhi Assembly has been extended till the first week of March due to delay in budget finalisation.

Talks with farmer organisations | First Meerut Metro train set handed over to NRCTC fruitful, next on Sunday: Thakur

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur on Friday said the Government had invited farmer organisations for talks and several farmer leaders came and very meaningful discussions took place. "We together have scheduled

the next talks for Sunday. I am

confident that there will be a good atmosphere on Sunday also. There will be talks and we will move towards resolving the Thakur, the issues," Information and Broadcasting and Youth and Sports Affairs Minister, said talking to the

media. Responding to the work done by the Centre, Thakur said no government has done more than what the Modi government has done in the last 10 years on fertiliser, water, procurement at MSP, cheap loans

from banks and compensa-"In 2013-14, when the UPA government was in power, the



agriculture budget was Rs 27,663 crore. Now the agriculture budget of the Modi gov-ernment is more than Rs One lakh 25 thousand crore which is almost five times more agriculture budget than the UPA period. At that time there was no Kisan Samman Nidhi, we have transferred Rs 2 lakh 81 thousand crore directly to the bank accounts of more than 11 crore farmers through Kisan Samman Nidhi," Thakur explained. Thakur further while talking on MSP said during the time of previous regime, the total purchase of wheat, paddy, pulses and oilseeds was Rs 5,50,00 crore. Modi government made pur-

chase of Rs 18 lakh 39 thousand crore. That means almost three and a half times more. This shows that we increased the prices and also made purchases more than double," he added. Thakur same time wondered how Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann would respond to the farmer's agitation when the AAP had once demanded that the state governments pick up the tab for giving the MSP.

He reminded the AAP leadership that they wanted the state government to make payments towards MSP when the Congress was in power at the Centre.

"When there was a Congress government at the Centre, Arvind Kejriwal used to demand that the Punjab government make MSP payouts to the farmers. Bhagwant Mann also used to raise a lot of questions. Now, Mann is the chief minister. Will he respond to this (Kejriwal's) demand?" the senior BJP leader asked.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI The first look of the Meerut Metro train set was

unveiled on Friday and the first Meerut Metro trainset was handed over to the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC)at Savli, Gujarat. With this unveiling, the delivery of the Meerut Metro trainsets has commenced, and the first trainsets will soon arrive at the NCRTC Depot at Duhai.

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri shared his best wishes and compliments for this occasion through video. "Since 2014, the government has laid emphasis on improving the quality of services offered to urban dwellers. Establishing a robust public transportation system in metropolitan cities is a fundamental aspect of our vision for India's urban rejuvenation.

From a meagre 248 km of operational Metro lines in 2014, we have increased India's state-of-the-art Metro network to 905 km today. RRTS & MRTS are vital components of



this ongoing transformation. The tremendous progress made so far has incentivized us to achieve the target of making India the second largest Metro network in the world, even more quickly. It has also spurred many innovations in the industry and propelled us to become self- reliant.

Today, as we roll out the indigenously designed and manufactured MRTS trainset for the Meerut section of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor, we once again demonstrate our capabilities of building world-class infrastructure. This is a matter of great pride and a symbol of the new-age

innovation that India is embarking upon. I congratulate NCRTC & Alstom on this marvelous accomplishment," he said. M/s Alstom (erstwhile M/s Bombardier) was awarded the manufacturing contract, under which they will deliver 10 three-car trainsets for the Meerut Metro, bundled with rolling stock maintenance for 15 years.

The trainsets, with their sleek and modern design, will be energy efficient, lightweight and equipped with a regenerative braking system, compatible with Automatic Train Protection (ATP), Automatic Train Control (ATC), and

Automatic Train Operations (ATO). The Metro train has a maximum operational speed of 120 kmph.

Meerut Metro project aims to provide a safe, fast, and modern transportation solution for the residents of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. With the commencement of Meerut Metro trainset delivery, the trial runs will be started soon.

Meerut Metro design encapsulates a modern aesthetic approach, prioritizing optimized passenger comfort, safety, and security. The trains are air-conditioned, featuring comfortable seating, luggage racks, grab handles, USB device charging facility, and many other new-age facilities required for the convenience of modern-day commuters.

The Meerut Metro will comprise of three (3) Car Train sets. It will have ergonomically designed 2x2 transverse as well as longitudinal seating arrangement. More than 700 passengers can travel in a train. The Metro corridor spans a

length of 23 km with 13 stations including 18 km of ele-

section. 9 stations are elevated, 3 stations are underground, while one station (depot station) will be at grade.

vated and 5 km underground

Construction of the Meerut Metro is progressing rapidly, and all stations are taking shape. Underground tunnel construction has been completed and finishing works are being done at all the underground stations.

Track laying activities are currently in progress on already completed tunnels and viaducts. Out of the 18 km long elevated section, viaduct construction has been completed in about 12 km. More than 10 launching gantries (Tarini) are installed to expedite viaduct construction in the rest of the section.

On October 20, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first Regional Rapid Transit System and flagged off the first Namo Bharat train. With this, the 17kilometer-long priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot was operationalized for the public.

Groundwater samples from city tubewells exceed permissible fluoride limits: NGT informed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has I informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that ground water samples collected from 58 tubewells in the national Capial exceed permissible fluoride limits. În a report submitted to the NGT, the Delhi government said the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) collected groundwater samples from 1,256 tubewells across the national capital following direc-

tions from the NGT. Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Bishweswar Tudu, informed the Rajya Sabha on December 4 last year that

arsenic had been detected in groundwater in parts of 230 districts in 25 states, and fluoride in 469 districts in 27

Observing that the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) acknowledged the presence of high concentrations of arsenic and fluoride in groundwater, but no effective measures have been taken, the NGT issued notices to 28 states, Union territories, CGWA, and the environment ministry in

December. According to the report, groundwater samples were collected from 56 tubewells in Narela and Bawana in north-

Groundwater samples from 11 out of the 70 tubewells tested in Najafgarh Zone and Nangloi contained higher-than-permitted fluoride levels. Fluoride concentration was also found to be high in samples collected from four tubewells in North Delhi and Northeast Delhi, five tubewells in West

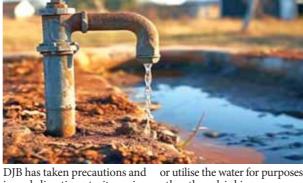
west Delhi, of which 33 exceed-

ed permissible fluoride limits.

None of the samples collected from Central Delhi and South Delhi had fluoride content

Delhi, and four in Southwest

beyond permissible limits. issued directions to its main-The Delhi government tenance divisions to either stop informed the tribunal that the the supply from such tubewells



other than drinking. The city government has also requested additional time from

the NGT to assess arsenic concentration in the samples collected from tubewells in the

Fluoride found in groundwater occurs naturally due to the breakdown of rocks and soils, weathering, and deposition of atmospheric particles. Most fluorides are sparingly soluble and present in groundwater in small amounts. Small amounts of fluoride (less

than 1.0 mg/l) have proven beneficial in reducing tooth decay. However, concentrations exceeding 1.5 mg/l may lead to staining of tooth enamel, while higher levels between 5.0 and 10 mg/l could cause

pathological changes, such as stiffness of the back and difficulty in performing natural movements. Groundwater samples with flu-

oride concentrations exceeding 1.5 mg/l have been collected from various locations in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Delhi, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and

Assam West Bengal. Arsenic contamination is prevalent in several states in India, particularly in the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta region, such as West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam. According to the Bureau of

Indian Standards, the acceptable limit of arsenic is 0.01 mg/l and the permissible limit in the absence of an alternate source is 0.05 mg/l. Long-term intake of arsenic-

contaminated water can lead to arsenic poisoning or arsenicosis, resulting in skin, bladder, kidney, or lung cancer, as well as skin diseases (colour changes, and hard patches on palms and soles) or blood vessel issues in the legs and feet.

Modi to lay down agenda for LS polls at BJP national meet today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to lay down the BJP's agenda for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls at a two-day meeting of its national council, which will begin on Saturday and be attended by nearly 11,500 party members, from elected panchayat heads to party district presidents and Union Ministers.

Party president JP Nadda will inaugurate the meeting and Modi will on Sunday deliver the valedictory address, a speech which is likely to draw the broader contours of the BJP's campaign and exhort its members to go all out to achieve his target for the party to win 370 seats in the elections. The meeting, which will be held at the Bharat Mandapam, is going to be the biggest gathering of BJP delegates from across the country in recent memory, with some leaders recalling the gigantic plenary organised in Mumbai by the party in 1995 in which tens of thousands of its members had participated.

chief ministers, state ministers, state party presidents and its

Senior BJP leaders, including



organisational leaders from across the country, will be attending the meeting. Representatives of the party's district bodies and 'morchas' from across the country will also attend the mega meeting. In the national council meetings held in the last 10 years, including the two organised in the national capital weeks before the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the attendance had generally remained around

If the Mumbai convention, where the then BJP president L K Advani had declared Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its prime ministerial candidate, cleared the path to power for the party, its leaders are hopeful that this national council will galvanise its cadres around Modi's leadership as he seeks to become the first prime minister after

Jawaharlal Nehru to retain the

office for a third straight term. Senior party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad had said on Thursday that two resolutions are likely to be passed by the council. Generally, one resolution highlights the prevailing political atmosphere and the party's stand on germane issue while another is underpinned by the state of economy.

The recent white paper on the economy tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the perceived disarray in the opposition INDIA bloc, the successful G20 summit in 2023, and the country's global standing are among the issues which

speeches of its key leaders at the meeting and in the resolu-

The outcomes of the Modi government's welfare initiatives besides the prime minister's focus on empowering what he has often described the four biggest "castes" of women, youth, poor and farmers may also be discussed, party leaders

Political watchers will also keep an eye on whether the ruling party touches on the issues of electoral bonds, which have been struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional and seized by opposition parties to mount an attack on the BJP, and the ongoing protests by farmers, mostly from Punjáb.

Prasad noted that the BJP won

its maiden majority in the Lok Sabha in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and delivered a bigger win in 2019 following the council meetings held before the two elections, exuding confidence that the convention this time will put it on course to win 370 seats in the 543-member House. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance will also cross 400 seats as asserted by Modi, he added.

Modi lays foundation stone of projects in Rajasthan, Haryana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

head of the Lok Sabha polls, A head of the Lok Sabila Polic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced and laid the foundation stone of a slew of development projects worth several crores for Rajasthan and Haryana where the announcement of setting up of much-awaited Rewari AIIMS, a new rail line, and a metro line were awaited for quite a long time. It is likely that the Prime Minister will dedicate to the nation six such hospitals in Jammu, Rajkot, Bathinda, Kalyani, Mangalagiri and Rae Bareli in the next few days that are already functional.

As Modi unveiled an array of projects estimated at Rs 9,750 crores in Haryana, the State Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar who was also present on the occasion lauded the Prime Minister's transformative leadership, recalling his early campaigns in Rewari and emphasizing the fulfillment of the town's aspirations with the establishment of AIIMS.

In Rajasthan, the Prime Minister inaugurated development projects worth over Rs 17,000 crore in Rajasthan during the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' program, which he addressed via video conferencing. The projects cover vital sectors such as roads, railways,



solar energy, power transmission, drinking water, and petro-

leum & natural gas The event marked the inauguration of several national highway projects totaling more than Rs 5000 crores, aimed at improving connectivity in the region. Additionally, eight railway projects worth around Rs 2300 crores were dedicated to the nation, focusing on electrification and modernization of rail infrastructure. PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for solar projects worth approximately Rs 5300 crores and power transmission projects exceeding Rs 2100 crores.

The Prime Minister thanked the people of Rajasthan for their participation in the program and praised Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma for utilizing technology to engage all beneficiaries. He highlighted Rajasthan's significance, recalling the recent visit of French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the positive reception

received nationally and internationally.

Modi stressed the importance of developing a vibrant Rajasthan for a prosperous India, emphasizing rapid progress in crucial sectors like rail, road, electricity, and water. He mentioned the record allocation of Rs 11 lakh crores in the Union Budget for infrastructure development, indicating the government's strong commitment to strengthening the nation's infrastructure. The event showcased government initiatives to provide clean drinking water through the Jal Jeevan Mission and meet the LPG needs with the inauguration of Indian Oil's LPG bottling plant in Jodhpur.

Regarding the proposed AIIMS in Rewari in Haryana, a senior official said that in December 2023, the Union cabinet had approved the change of location for the establishment of the hospital in the State from Manethi to Majra Mustil Bhalkhi. The total cost incurred by the Centre

on these seven hospitals is more than Rs 10,000 crore, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had said on Thursday.

'Till 2014, the nation had six AIIMS in seven decades and in the next 10 days, the country will get seven AIIMS," he said. To be built at a cost of about Rs 1,650 crore, the AIIMS-Rewari will be developed on 203 acres of land in Majra Mustil Bhalkhi village having a hospital complex with 720 beds, a medical college with 100 seats, a nursing college with 60 seats, an AYUSH block with 30 beds, residential accommodation for the faculty and staff, hostel accommodation for undergraduate and post-graduate students, a night shelter, a guesthouse etc.

Established under the Pradhan

Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY), the AIIMS-Rewari will provide comprehensive, quality and holistic tertiary-care health services to the people of Haryana. The facilities include patient-care services in 18 specialities and 17 super specialities, including cardiology, gastro-enterology, nephrology, urology, neurology, neurosurgery, medical oncology, surgical oncology, endocrinology, burns and plass tic surgery. It will have 16 modular operation theatres, diagnostic laboratories and a blood

Panel recommends law to curb fraudulent NRI marriages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Describing as a "worrisome trend" the "rising" cases of fraudulent marriages between NRIs and Indian citizens, the Law Commission has recommended a comprehensive law to deal with the situation and compulsory registration of such alliances.

While presenting the report "Law on Matrimonial Issues Relating to Non-Resident Indians and Overseas Citizens of India" to the law ministry, panel chairman Justice (Retired) Ritu Rai Awasthi said the commission is of the opinion that the proposed central legislation should be comprehensive enough to cater to all facets involving marriages of NRIs as well as foreign citizens of Indian origin with that of Indian citizens.

"The rising occurrence of fraudulent marriages involving Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) worrisome trend. Several reports highlight an increasing pattern where these marriages turn out to be deceptive, putting Indian spouses, especially women, in precarious situations," Justice Awasthi said in his covering letter to Law

Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Thursday.

Such a legislation, the panel said, should be made applicable not only to the NRIs but also to those individuals who come within the definition of 'Overseas Citizens of India' (OCIs) as laid down in the Citizenship Act, 1955.

'It is further recommended that all marriages between the NRIs/OCIs and Indian citizens should be made compulsorily Awasthi said.

He said the comprehensive central legislation should also include provisions on divorce, maintenance of spouse, custody and maintenance of children, serving of summons, warrants, or judicial documents on the

NRIs and OCIs.

Further, it is recommended that requisite amendments need to be introduced in the Passports Act, 1967 in order to mandate the declaration of marital status, the linking of a spouse's passport with the other and mentioning of the marriage registration number on the passports of both the spouses," he told the government.

The commission recalled that in order to deal with the emergof Marriage of Non-Resident Indians Bill, 2019, was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 11, 2019.

Initially, the 16th (previous) Lok Sabha referred the bill to the Committee on External Affairs. Subsequently, the same

Committee on External Affairs after the 17th (present) Lok Sabha was constituted, for further examination.

As deliberations continued, the Law Commission received a reference on the NRI Bill, 2019 from the Ministry of External Affairs, conveyed through the law ministry last

In its report, the law panel said registration of NRI marriages serves as a "valid piece of evidence", while at the same time it helps maintain a record in the form of registry of marriages. "If the marriages are compulsorily registered, then all the records pertaining to the spouses would be available with the concerned government department, preferably, the Ministry of Home Affairs. The information regarding the same shall be accessible by the Ministry of External Affairs and available on an online portal," it said.

uations where a citizen may become NRI or OCI after his or her marriage, it pointed out. The only difficulty with making registrations compulsory only for NRIs or OCIs is that the earlier marriages of such persons may not be registered because currently there is no comprehensive or uniform law governing registration of marriages in India, the report suggested.

"Therefore, instead of making registration of marriages compulsory in specific cases, it should be done generally for all cases. Alteratively, it may be provided in the legislation (the pending NRI marriages bill) that if any married Indian citizen subsequently becomes an NRI/OCI, it shall be mandatory for him/her to get his mar-riage registered...," the report said. The Law Commission also recommended that the definition of NRI under the proposed central legislation dealing with all aspects relating to NRI marriages should be made comprehensive and all encompassing.

It has to be considered that the object of such a definition is "to protect the deserted spouse in the eyes of law against the erring spouse," it said.

succeed in fulfilling its aim and objectives unless the people are widely aware of it, the panel said to prevent cases of fraudulent marriages, , the government should create awareness by engaging with the Indian

CBI extradites absconding murder convict from UAE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

n absconding murder An absconding material convict with an Interpol Red Notice against him was extradited from the United Arab Emirates (UAE)on Friday in an operation coordinated by the CBI using Interpol channels, officials said ĥere.

He was identified as Narender Singh, who was wanted by the Haryana Police in a case of murder registered on December 26, 1994 at Tohana police station. He had allegedly hacked to death one Swaran Singh using a machete. He was acquitted by the trial court in 1998 but the Punjab and Haryana High Court awarded him life term in 2009, they said.

The state police had approached the CBI seeking against him suspecting that he had gone missing, they said. "The CBI had got a Red Notice issued against him from the Interpol General Secretariat on November 07, 2023 on a request by the Haryana Police. The notice



member countries for location and arrest of accused," a CBI spokesperson said. Using Interpol channels, the

CBI managed to locate him in the UAE, he said. "The Global Operations Centre of the CBI coordinated with Interpol NCB Abu Dhabi, Haryana Police, Embassy of of External Affairs and a Red Notice subject was returned today from the UAE to India with a security detail from the STF of Haryana Police," the spokesperson said.

The CBI is the designated National Central Bureau for

responsible for coordination of Indian law enforcement agencies with the international police cooperation body. "Due to close coordination and follow up with foreign law enforcement agencies via Interpol channels, as many as 29 criminals wanted by Indian law enforcement abroad in 2023.

many as 100 Red Notices through Interpol on criminals and fugitives wanted by Indian law enforcement agencies in 2023," the spokesper-

The CBI has got published as

Food handlers in Government Bhawans to get training

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

In the bustling kitchens of Government Bhawans and office canteens across the National Capital, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has embarked on a mission to provide rigorous training to food handlers to ensure a safer and healthier culinary delight to the hundred of visitors who hails from various walks of life.

These training programmes are aimed at enhancing food safety standards across State/UT Bhawans and canteens of Government Office Buildings, said an official on Friday here. He added, this initiative is in line with the announcement of "Training of 25 lakh food business operators by FSSAI in the next 3 years" made by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on the occasion of World Food Safety Day.

"We are providing training to food handlers at all State/UT Bhawans and canteens of government offices located in the National Capital as part of the organisation's endeavor to enhance the Food Safety Ecosystem nationwide through its Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme, said an official from the top food



already been conducted at four State Bhawans including Karnataka, Maharashtra and Sikkim, wherein all the food handlers of these Bhawans were imparted with the necessary

In addition, training has also been conducted in the Department of Personnel and Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), North Block. Training sessions are planned at Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Manipur Bhawans in the coming days. Further, training under the FoSTaC programme will be conducted in all canteens in conducted in all canteens in

government offices. Under FoSTaC, a flagship iniimpart training to food handlers involved in the food business. The training pro-

and canteens of government offices cover a wide array of topics including food safety rules and regulations, personal hygiene, allergen management, food operation and control, documentation and records, labelling, training methodologies and emerging trends in the food indus-'The objective is to instill a

culture of continuous learning and improvement within the food sector. Participants who successfully complete the training will be conferred with the Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) certificate, recognized across India. In FY 2023-24, a total of 3,58,224 tiative of FSSAI, is designed to food handlers have been trained under the FoSTaC programme across the country," said the official.

MoU inked to enhance semiconductor design skills



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Software startup Logicknots on Thursday said it has collaborated with the National Skill Development Council (NSDC) and Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati to elevate semiconductor design and verification education.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed on Thursday in the presence of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. According to the statement, the partnership aims to launch online courses to skill the nation's future semiconductor design engineers

Amidst a booming global semi-conductor market, expected to surpass USD one trillion by 2030, Logicknots' initiative promises to fill the critical skill gap in the industry, it stated. Logicknots' Founder Hemant Vats said "our collaboration is set to redefine semiconductor edu-

conductor powerhouse."

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI The Centre has constituted a tribunal headed by a Delhi High Court judge to adjudicate whether there is sufficient cause for declaring

Centre forms tribunal to

adjudicate if SIMI should

the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as a banned group under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

On January 29, the central government had extended the ban imposed on the SIMI for five more years.

"Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by subsection (1) of section 5 read with sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), the Central Government hereby constitutes the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal consisting of Justice Purushaindra

Kumar Kaurav, Judge, High Court of Delhi, for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an unlawful association," the home ministry said in a notification.

While extending the ban on cation, making it more accessible and aligned with industry SIMI, the government had needs, thereby contributing to said the group has been India's positioning as a semiinvolved in fomenting terrorism and disturbing peace and



communal harmony in the

As many as 10 states -- Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh -- have recommended declaring SIMI as an "unlawful association" under the provisions of the UAPA. The SIMI was first declared outlawed in 2001 when the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government was in power and since then the ban has been extended periodically.

The SIMI has been continuing its subversive activities and re-organising its activists who are still absconding, it is dis-rupting the secular fabric of the country by polluting the minds of the people by creating com-munal, disharmony, propagating anti-national sentiments and escalating secessionism by supporting militancy and undertaking activities which are prejudicial to the integrity and security of the country, the home ministry said.

One in five cities under national clean air programme lacks infrastructure to monitor air

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

One in five cities covered under India's National Clean Air Programme do not have infrastructure i.e. continuous ambient air quality monitoring station (CAAQMS) to monitor air quality is missing, as per a new analysis.

The report by the independent research organisation Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) also said that Delhi was the most polluted city in the country in January with a monthly average PM2.5 concentration of 206 micrograms per cubic metre, surpassing the daily National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) each day of the

month. The daily average permissible limit (or NAAQS) for PM2.5 and PM10 is 60 micrograms per cubic metre and 100 micrograms per cubic metre, respectively

Among India's top 10 polluted cities in January, two were in Bihar, two in Rajasthan, two in Uttar Pradesh, one in Assam, one in Haryana, and one in Himachal Pradesh. The analysis by CREA showed that only 101 of the

installed as of January 2024, leaving 30 other cities without any transparent information on real-time pollution levels. The 30 cities which do not have a CAAQMS include Ranchi, Jammu, Guntur, Nellore, Jammu, Vadodara, Madurai, and Raebareli, among others. The NCAP, initiated in 2019,

aims for a 20-30 percent reduction in PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations by 2024 in 131 cities that had not met prescribed air quality standards from 2011 to 2015. The government has now set

a new target of achieving a 40 percent reduction in particulate matter concentration in these cities by 2026. The combination of low

wind speed and cooler temperatures in northern India led to the formation of stable atmospheric conditions, hindering the rapid dispersion of emissions and resulting in the accumulation of pollutants near the ground, elevating ambient air pollution levels," said Sunil Dahiya, analyst at CREA.

"While natural atmospheric conditions are beyond human control, it is the baseline emissions that primarily contribute to the escalation of hazardous air pollution levels

131 cities covered under the NCAP have a CAAQMS

Nitish sought forgiveness for past betrayals: Tejashwi

leader Tejashwi Yadav on Friday claimed that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had "begged for forgiveness for past betrayals" before his parents, party supremo Lalu Prasad and ex-CM Rabri Devi, before they allied with the JD(U) president in 2022. Yadav, who lost the Deputy CM's chair last month when Kumar abruptly went back to the BJP-led NDA, made the claim at a rally in Mohania, in the state's Kaimur district, which was organised as part of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Breaking into the local dialect Bhojpuri, the young RJD leader said, "Nitish ji had, after begging for forgiveness, told my parents his MLAs".

Kumar dumped the BJP and the RJD-led joined Mahagathbandhan in 2022. The RJD leader added: "We were initially not very inclined towards trusting him again. But there were talks with leaders across the country, all of whom were of the opinion that in the larger interest of the fight against BJP, we should agree. So we made a sacrifice".

Calling his ex-boss "a tired Chief Minister", the RJD leader said he is proud that in 17 months the Mahagathbandhan made him give government jobs on an unprecedented scale.

"He (Kumar) had earlier mocked me by asking whether I would use my father's money to pay them



salary. But I had told him that support to his government would require him to help us fulfil the government jobs that I had promised to the people ahead of the 2020 assembly polls," Yadav said.

claimed Mahagathbandhan would have won the assembly polls, but for manipulations by the that its candidates were shown defeated by margins of as low as 12 votes. Fishing in troubled waters of

the NDA, which Kumar has joined claiming he was there "for ever" even as the BJP has made it clear that it will not give up its ambition to form its own government in Bihar, Yadav said, "Now that Nitish ii is back with the BIP, there is no guarantee that he will not make a flip-flop again".

Cries of "palturam (Mr turncoat)" emanated from the crowds, even as the RJD leader added that he had said in the assembly that Prime Minister Narendra Modi prides himself on his guarantees, but even he cannot guarantee that Nitish Kumar will not do another

Subscribe to economic nationalism: Dhankar

 $V^{
m ice}$ President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday called Indian upon enterprises to desist from importing non-essential items and exporting raw material and become "nerve centres" of inculcating the spirit of economic nationalism, asserting that it was imperative for India's prosperity and sovereignty.

Speaking at an event here, he said, "we need to import only that item which is unavoidably essential", and drew India Inc's attention to the ill effects of export of raw material in terms of drain of foreign exchange and loss of potential job opportunities. "Nationalism is important,

paramount. We have to subscribe to it. Time for us to subscribe to economic nationalism as well. We need to be vocal for local," Dhankhar said.

The vice president emphasised that a fiscal benefit can never be the premise to compromise national interest or economic nationalism, observing that export of raw material needs to be "discouraged" and the discouragement has to emanate from sensitisation by trade, industry, commerce and business associations

and chambers. Highlighting that world over, trade and industry fuels and research (R&D), development Dhankhar said: "While it is good to give heavy financial assistance to universities

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concern that the name of my clients Sh. TAQI KHAN (Aadhar No. 456663509592) son of Late Sh. Wasi Khar & Mrs SHAHWAR KHANAM (Aadhar No 623979526923 wife of Sh. Tagi Khan both r/o A-14, HIG Duplex, Sanjay Nagar, Sector 23, Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad is recorded with some important document as TAKHI KHAN, & Shahwar Khan while their true & correct name and its spelling are TAQI KHAN & SHAHWAR KHANAM for all purposes. Hence this publication to rectify any confusion, if any, before any Government - Semi Government Statutory Authority, Bank etc as the case may be.

Place- Sahibabad Sunil Bhatnagar Date: 16.02.2024 Advocate Shri Kartikeya Associates, Law firm A-48, Lajpat Nagar, Sahibabad Ghaziabad, M -9810243568

GNAZIBDAO, M -9810243508

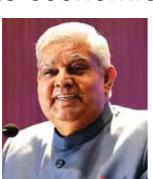
TUBLIC NOTICE

Industrial Unit Plot of area measuring 350.00 sq.mtrs, situated at Plot No 1689 Sector F, Narela Industrial Park, Delhi- 110040 and Plot of area measuring 350.00 sq.mtrs, situated at Plot No 1690 Sector F, Narela Industrial Park, Delhi- 110040.; hereinafter referred to as the "said property"

Notice is hereby given to the general public including Banks, Financial Institutions, etc. that as informed by Mis. LDM Agraf Foods Pvt. Ltd., having its Registered office at F -1689, DSIIDC, Narela, Delhi - 110040, thru its Directors Mr. Harish Goel and Ankit Mittal (Our Clients) that the said property was purchased by Our Clients virtue of ATS dated 21.08.2002 executed by Mr. Ram Avtar Gupta in favour of Mr. Dharam Raj (Father of Mr. Ankit mittal)as Doc No. 16323, Book No. 1, Vol No. 3968, Page Nos. 77-83, dated 21.08.2002 in the office of Sub-Registrar, (Delhi) in respect of Plot of area measuring 350.00 sq.mtrs, situated at Plot No 1689 Sector F, Narela Industrial Park, Delhi-110040 and virtue of ATS dated 14.09.2013 executed by Mrs. Krishna Devi & Mrs. Nisha Goel in fevour of Mrs. Laxmi Devi (Grandmother of Mr. Ankit mittal) as Doc No. 4749, Book No. 1, Vol No. 3132, Page Nos. 105-112, dated 14.09.2013 in the office of Sub-Registrar, (Delhi) in respect of Plot of area measuring 350.00 sq.mtrs, situated at Plot No 1680, Sector F, Narela Industrial Park, Delhi-110040. Since then Our Clients are Owner in Possession of the said properties without any objection/s or claim/s by any person in general. Now, Our Clients intend to mortgage the said properties with Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd, New Delhi for availing loan facility. We have been further informed by Our Clients intend to mortgage the said properties with Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd, and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pendingexcept ICICl Bank Ltd.

If any person, society, bank, financial institution or other institutions have any objection against the absolute ownership of Our Clients in the said properties with Kota PUBLIC NOTICE

shall be mortgaged by our clients in favour of with Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd and no objection shall be cceptable against such mortgage. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate) Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahaluxni Metro Tower Sec-4, Vaishali, Gzb., U.P., Mob. 9810063351



outside, also bestow attention communities, on local universities, focus on our academic institutions also", and urged the industry to accord priority to R&D. Startups and MSMEs are the birthplace of groundbreaking ideas

technologies, pushing the boundaries of what is possible. By providing local solutions, creating jobs, and promoting regional development, they play a crucial role in empowering

president said Let us all commit to supporting the growth of startups and MSMEs, to fostering an environment where innovation thrives, and and to working together towards a future that is prosperous, sustainable, and equitable, he added.

The vice president was addressing PHDCCI's Bharat Startup & MSMEs Summit

Municipal Corporation, Bhopal



CHANGE OF NAME I, Vinay Kanta W/o Ravinson Mohan Sadh R/o House No

A-1/708, Tower No-2, Silver City-2 Sector PI-2, Greater Noida have changed my name from Kumari Vinay Kanta to Vinay Kanta for all future purposes. PD(278)C

			IERN RAII	WAY	75=				
		I	ENDER NOTICE		Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav				
		Invitation	of Tender through	IREPS					
Ν	.I.T. No.	09/23-24 dated 16.0	2.2024						
1 Name of operation and maintenance of 200 KLD combined sewage treatme work with plant and effluent treatment plant with online data monitoring system for three years at Northern Railway Central Hospital New Delhi in t									
2	Approx.	Cost of work	Rs. 50,96,490.03						
3	Earnest I	Money	Rs 1,01,900						
4	Completi	on period of work	03 Years						
			f Upto 15:00 hrs on 15.03.2024 Opening of tender r at 15:00 hrs. On 15.03.2024						
Website particular notice board I details of tender can be seen and from where the tender form can			address of the office		e.				

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL **Water Work Department** Municipal Corporation Rest House, Shyamla Hills, Bhopal

Ph. No. 0755-2701669

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER Online tenders are being invited for the following works. The bidder can obtained detailed information and ender documents on website https://mptenders.gov.in.

128-W/269/OET/23-24/NRCH/NIT 09 Dated: 16.02.2024

Corrigendum for this NIT shall not be issued separately in newspapers. Corrigendum regarding correction

car	n be seen on the	e website <u>ht</u> t	tps://mptenders.gov.in	•	•	-
S. No.	NIT No.	Tender ID.	Details of Work	Estimated Cost (INR)		Bid Submission End Date
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.			Augmentation, Renovation and Extended Area Coverage of Water supply System in	379.62 Crore	1.90 Crore	29.02.2024

Bhopal City under AMRUT 2.0 Tender document conditions is amended as per MP UADD Order no. 10413/2023. Dated 01.09.2023. Superintendent Engineer (WWD)

T.N.1623/023/24

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE



WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-mail: ceworldbankprojects@gmail.com Bid Identification No. CE-W.B.P. (O) - 55 / 2023-24

1. The Chief Engineer (World Bank Project), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road & Bridge work as detailed below:

Bridge work No. of work

Rs.10,000.00 (on-line) Class of Contractor A/ Special Class Contractor

Available of bid document : From 10.00 AM of 13.02.2024 to 5.00 PM of 27.02.2024

Dt.28.02.2024 at 11.30 AM Date of opening of Bid

The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tenderodisha.gov.in . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of Engineer-in-Chief tender can also be seen in the said website. (I/C) Chief Engineer (Bridges), WBP, OIPR-34174/11/0003/2324 Odisha, Bhubaneswar

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road,

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation and

Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) R/w Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the borrower, to repay the amount mentioned in

the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Number (Loan Account Number (DHFL Old LAN & ICICI New LAN)	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)		
	Dhan Bahadur/ Sharda Basnet/ (07100001192 & QZRWI00005034679)	Plot No 39 Fourth Floor Sector 34, Pocket 1, Block B15 Rohini Delhi/ Feb 13, 2024	October 04, 2023/ Rs.13,60,250/-	Delhi/ NCR	
	Sandeep/ Jitender Gulati/ (1400004422 &	Property No- F-3614 , Upper Ground Fir Old Plot No310, Kh No- 41/7/2, Village Shakupur, Raja	July 08, 2021/ Rs.	Delhi/ NCR	

QZDEL00005035784) Park Shakurbasti, Delhi/ Feb 13, 2024 The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

विक्रम विश्वविद्यालय, उज्जैन

दिनांक:16.02.2024

क्रमांक/गोपनीय/भण्डार/2024/774 OMR SHEET क्रय करने हेत ई-निविदा विज्ञप्ति

विक्रम विश्वविद्यालय, उज्जैन की विभिन्न परीक्षाओं हेतु OMR SHEET क्रय की जाना है। OMR SHEET क्रय किए जाने हेतु ई-निविदा www. mptenders.gov.in पर आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदाओं का विस्तृत विवरण विक्रम विश्वविद्यालय, उज्जैन की वेबसाइट www.vikramuniv.ac.in पर

APPENDIX IV-A

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable 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 Immovable Property mortgaged to **Indiabuli**s

Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor")

the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whateve there is" basis on 19.03.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of

Rs. 28,09,844/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Forty Four only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLRHN00422249, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest in 08.02.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other

elated loan document(s) w.e.f. 09.02.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from SUMEET SONI and SARITA SONI @

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 17,65,000/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakh Sixty Five Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposi ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,76,500/- (Rupees One Lakh Seventy Six Thousand Five Hundred only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

RESIDENTIAL FLAT NO - F-4 (L. I. G), REAR LHS ON 1ST FLOOR, HAVING COVERED AREA 421 SQ. FTS. I. E. 39.11 SQ. MTRS. CONSTRUCTED UPON PLOT NO - II-A-141 SITUATED IN VAISHALI, TEHSIL & DISTT. GHAZIABAD, GHAZIABAD - 201012, UTTAR PRADESH.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com. For

म.प्र. माध्यम/113835/2024

bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

कुलसचिव

TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)

RTUs and improvement of power supply arrangements in interlocked LC gate under ADSTE/ROK and ADSTE/PNP section of Delhi Division

App. Cost of the work: Rs. 2,08,48,092.54/- only

Address of the office: Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northe ailway. 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.

16.02.2024 / closing date & time- 11.03.2024 up to 15.00 hrs. Website particular & notice board location where complete details of

No.: 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1416 Dated: 16.02.2024

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever Rs. 17,99,814/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Fourteen only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLRHN00390324, by way o outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest til 08.02.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 09.02.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from AVNEESH SHARMA, RAJU SHARMA and

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 16,50,000/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Fifty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,65,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Sixty Five Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

PLOT NO. 15/22, BLOCK-D, DLF ANKUR VIHAR, LONI, GHAZIABAD - 201102 UTTAR PRADESH, ADMEASURING 36 SQ. YDS. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provide

on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans

Date : 12.02.2024 Place : GHAZIABAD

Authorized officer Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Authorized officer Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

PICICI Bank | Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Date: 12.02.2024

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general

that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

No.	Loan Account Number	Date of Symbolic Possession	Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	of Branch
	Tej Prakash Sharma/ Goodiya Rani- LBBWD00005802978/ LBGUR00002053376	Flat No. 19, 4th Floor, Tower-J, Hill View Garden, Near Ashiana Town Beta, Bhiwadi, Alwar, Rajasthan, Bhiwadi- 301019/ February 14, 2024	September 18, 2023 Rs. 16,52,664.00/-	Bhiwadi/ Bhilwara/ Gurgaon

the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: February 17, 2024

Name of the Borrower/

Authorized Officer

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Road, Kolkata 700020CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLC021012, www.icicibank.com

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is beauty continued as the said and the public in general is beauty and the said and the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Description

No.	Loan Account Number	of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	in Demand Notice (Rs.)	of Branch
	Suprakash Pradhan/ Gayatri Patra/ Santanu Kumar Pradhan/ Girija Kumari Pradhan/ S/O Subash Chandra Pradhan Mandiapalli Karapalli Rangeilund Orissa Ganjam- 760001/ LBBBS00005607971/ LBBEP00005412657	Plot No. 435, Khata No. 1459, Village Sankar Newly Named As Badabazar Mouza, P.S. Badabazar, S.R.O. Berhampur-1, Dist: Ganjam, Orissa. (Admeasuring an area of Area of Ac. 0.092 Decimal/ Date of Symbolic 13.02.2024	September 30, 2023/ Rs.83,06,390/-	Delhi

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: February 17, 2024 **ICICI Bank Limited**

7

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/P.S., Delhi Division, Northern Railway, Nev Delhi invites e-tender for 5 (five) General Minor Units (GMUs) of A1 Category Station Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) Railway Station over Delhi Division, Northern Railway for a period of 5 years, details of which are as under

S N	Tender No.	GMU No.	Station Name, Code & Category	Location of Stall	Contract Period	Minimum Licensee Fee per Annum	Earnest Money Deposit	Cost of Tender Document Including GST
1	CtgGMU01- 2024	GMU ANVT-01/2024	Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) A1	PF-1 (Pillar No. L11-L12)	5 Year	23,59,500	12,27,000	5,900/-
2	CtgGMU02- 2024	GMU ANVT-02/2024	Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) A1	PF-2/3 (Pillar No. LR9-LR10)	5 Year	12,72,920	6,62,000	5,900/-
3	CtgGMU03- 2024	GMU ANVT-03/2024	Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) A1	PF-2/3 (Pillar No. LR25-LR26)	5 Year	12,72,920	6,62,000	5,900/-
4	CtgGMU04- 2024	GMU ANVT-04/2024	Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) A1	PF-4/5 (Pillar No. LR15-LR16)	5 Year	12,00,320	6,25,000	5,900/-
5	CtgGMU05- 2024	GMU ANVT-05/2024	Anand Vihar Terminal (ANVT) A1	PF-4/5 (Pillar No. LR25-LR26)	5 Year	12,00,320	6,25,000	5,900/-

 Interested bidders may please visit official website for e-tendering i.e. <u>www.ireps.gov.in</u> for futher details such as detail of locations, reserve price, EMD & Tender Cost and submitting tender, Date of bidding close on 11.03.2024 at 15.00 Hrs. Interested bidder for any query; please come at Commercial Branch, DRM's Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.

2. Bidders who wish to participate in the e-tendering will have to procure class-3 valid Digital Security Certificate (DSC) as per Information Technology Act, 2000. Bidders can procure this certificate from any of the certifying authority of Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA), Government of India. Details of certiying authorities can be obtained from www.cca.gov.in.

3. The bidder has to register, if not registered earlier, with www.ireps.gov.in using DSC to participate in tender proce Detailed procedure for registration, system requirements and bidding are also available on www.ireps.gov.in. No.: 23AC/Ctg./Blueprint/A/18 Dated: 15.02.2024 527/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SC AGROTECH CIN: L01122DL1990PLC042207 Regd Address: RZ-1484/28 Ground, Floor Tughlakabad Ext New Delhi-110019

Email: sheel102@gmail.com, Web: www.scagrotech.com Extract From The Unaudited Standalone Financial Results For The Quarter Ended On 31.12.2023

S. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended on 31st Dec 2023	Quarter ended on 31st Dec 2022	ended on 31st March 2023
		Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited
1	Total Income From operation	28.62	91.59	307.49
2	Total Expenses	17.80	22.69	108.72
3	Net profit/(loss) for the period (before tax, Exceptional and /or Extraordinary items	10.82	68.90	198.77
4	Net profit/(loss) for the period (before tax, Exceptional and /or Extraordinary items	10.82	68.90	198.77
5	Net profit/(loss) for the period (before tax, Exceptional and /or Extraordinary items	10.82	68.90	198.77
6	Total comphrensive Income for the period (Comrising profit/loss) for the period (after tax) and other comphrensive (after tax)	10.82	68.90	198.77
7	Paid up equity Share capital(face value of Rs 10/- each)	599.50	599.50	599.50
8	Earning per share (of Rs 10/-Each)			
	BASIC and Dulited Earning per share (in Rs)	0.02	0.11	0.33

 The above is an extract of the detailed format of financial results filed with Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI LODR 2015. the full format of the Financial result are available on the Stock Exchange website. (www.bseindia.com) and on the Company website (www.sc agrotech.com) 2.The result of the Quarter ended on 31st Dec 2023 were reviwed by the audit committee and approved by the Board of

Director at its meeting held on 14th Feb 2024. For SC AGROTECH LTD Place: New Delhi Date: 14.02.2024

Vijay Shankar Thakur Executive Director; DIN::9720062

Name of work with its location: Provision of ELB in place of MLB, provision of

Bid Security: Rs. 2,54,300.00/- only

Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender : Tender uploading

the tender can be seen etc. : See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

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

PUSHPA DEVI.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

PUBLIC NOTICE I **Smt. Renu Kaul** W/o Late Sh. Vijay Bhushan Kaul R/o 36, Compton Avenue, Sudbury

Middlesex HA0 3FD, United Kingdor (UK) have lost the original Plo Buyer's Agreement of G-15/2, DLF City Phase-I, Gurugram, Haryana. ny person would find the above said lot Buyer's Agreement dated 24.02.1984, Kindly contact Renu Kaul (Owner Mob:9810546455 W/o Late Sh. Vijay Bhushan Kaul

R/o 36, Compton Avenue, Sudbury Middlesex HA0 3FD United Kingdom Form No. 3 See Regulation-15 (1)(a)]/ 16(3)
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
CHANDIGARH (DRT 2)
1st Floor, SCO 33-34-35,
Sector-17 A, Chandigarh
(Additional space allotted on
3rd & 4th Floor also)

Case No.: OA/1647/2023 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.: 21950 ICICI BANK LIMITED

VS. ERN PRASAD

(1) DEFENDANT NO. 1. (1) DEFENDANT NO. 1.
1-ERN PRASAD SON OF SHRI
ERLA VENKANTESWARLU
RESIDENT OF HOUSE NO P-37,
RASHTRIYA INDIAN MILITARY COLLEGE, GARHI GATE DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND -248 003. PAN NO. AEAPP5516A

ERN PRASAD SON OF SHRI ERLA VENKATESWARLU RESIDENT AT HOUSE NO. 41-42, SCHEDULE- B, PRESIDENTS ESTATE NEW DELHI-110 004. (2) DEFENDANT NO. 2-

Also At-

(2) DEFENDANT NO. 2-ANURADHA TALWAR WIFE OF SHRI ERN PRASAD, RESIDENT OF HOUSE NO. P-37, RASHTRIYA INDIAN MILITARY COLLEGE, GARHI CANTT, DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND-248 003 PAN NO ADOPT 2235D 248 003. PAN NO. ADQPT2235D Also At-ANURADHA TALWAR WIFE OF SHRI ERN PRASAD, RESIDENT

AT HOUSE NO. 41-42, SCHEDULE- B, PRESIDENTS ESTATE, NEW DELHI- 110 004. NEW DELHI, DELHI- 110 004 (3) DEFENDANT NO. 3-M/S AGRANTE DEVELOPERS
PRIVATE LIMITED (FORMERLY
KNOWN AS ESTATES PRIVATE

LIMITED) 522-524, FIFTH FLOOR, DLF TOWER-A, JASOLA, NEW DELHI- 110 044. SUMMONS WHEREAS, **OA/1647/2023** was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on **07/02/2024**.

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. 3288712.64/- (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:-(i) to show cause within thirty days why relief prayed for should not be

(ii) to disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by he applicant under serial numbe 3A of the original application (iii) 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; (iv) 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; (v) 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 deposisuch sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 30/05/2024 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:

Signature of the Officer Authorised to issue summons

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PAPER WITH PASSION-

Reaping unrest

Farmers' standoff with the Centre persists; it is time for a meaningful dialogue to thrash out a solution

The ongoing standoff between protesting farmers and the Union Government continues to rivet the nation's attention, highlighting deep-rooted issues concerning agricultural reforms, livelihood and the role of the State. This year has witnessed a resurgence of farmer protests, reminiscent of the 2020-2021 protests. Referred to as Farmer Protest 2.0, this agitation was ignited on the morning of February 13 as farmers across the country mobilised to demand the Government's assurance on assured floor prices or Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crop production. The farmers, undeterred by past challenges and experience, converged on Delhi's borders and set their sights on marching into the Capital. The preceding negotiations between farmers' leaders and the Government on February 12 failed to yield any tangible results, thus fuelling the resolve of the protesting farmers. As the protest gained momentum, with hundreds of thousands of farmers making their way towards the Capital, the authorities respond-



ed by sealing the borders and erecting barricades to prevent their entry. Teargas canisters and water cannons were deployed at some border points to disperse the gathering crowds, comprising farmers arriving on tractors, trucks and on foot. Formidable barriers, including huge cement boulders with spikes, barbed wire and metal blocks, were set up to block access. Additionally, Section 144 was imposed for a month, prohibiting the assembly of four or more persons.

The backdrop of this protest is rooted in the aftermath of the 2021 agitation, which prompted the Government to repeal all three controversial farm Acts. These Acts, namely the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce

(Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020, had been passed by Parliament in September 2020

Despite this concession, the farmers claimed that their grievances remained unaddressed, leading to the resurgence of protests in 2024. As the standoff between the farmers and the Government persists, it underscores the urgent need for meaningful dialogue and concrete solutions that address the concerns of the farming community while upholding the principles of democracy and social justice. The Government would do well to talk to the farmers rather than blocking their way. Any highhandedness on the Government's part can be counterproductive at this juncture as it would only invite farmers' wrath. Moreover, there is a need for greater empathy, understanding and solidarity from all stakeholders, including the broader society and the media. The voices of protesting farmers must be heard and their demands for justice, dignity and empowerment respected. Only through dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect can we pave the way for a more prosperous future for Indian agriculture and its farmers. Farmers with genuine grievances need to be heard, like anyone else.



A 'chunari' being offered to the Narmada river on the occasion of 'Narmada Jayanti' in Jabalpur

A monumental gesture of interfaith harmony



In a display of interfaith unity, Islam embraced Hinduism as a grand Hindu temple was inaugurated in Abu Dhabi, symbolising a momentous shift in religious dynamics

n the Vasant Panchami of the year 2024, on the desert plane of Abu Dhabi, history performed what can arguably be called its first dance in the realm of faith, religion and God. Never before has Islam shaken hands with the idol-worshipping Hindus. The religion of Prophet Mohammad has accepted the Jews and Christians as Ahl-e-Qitab, meaning, People of the Book, whether of the Torah or Bible. Muslims have also obeyed and strictly adhered to the third of Prophet Moses' Commandments: "Thee shall not make any gravel image of thy Lord the God".

That is why idols or statues of any kind were abandoned by all three religions originating from the credo of Prophet Abraham, whose inspiration Prophet Moses followed. No act by their followers to even attempt to have a glimpse of God can ever be countenanced by these faiths. The synagogue, church and mosque have been limited to being only prayer halls, unlike the Hindu temple, which is looked upon as a residence of the divine where the worshipper or follower is free to seek or meet the divine. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami

Vivekananda and Maharshi Aurobindo, for example, confessed to having seen the divine. Until now, this has been a fundamental difference between the Hindu and Abrahamic faiths; the latter have preferred to destroy idols rather than allow them to distract the devotion of their adherents. This fundamental gulf of faith explains the catalogue of iconoclasms that litters Indian medieval history.

That is why it appears incredible to believe that any human being can achieve two victories in the course of only two years—the first at Ayodhya and the other now at Abu Dhabi. Ayodhya represents the correction of the history of iconoclasm while the event at Abu Dhabi reveals the nobility of King Zayed, the monarch of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in viping oil some of the tears of blood dripping from Hindu eyes, who, over the course of a millennium, lost thousands of their temples to iconoclasm.



King Zayed has shown the courage that perhaps no monarch in history has. There have been many kings who have made history, have invented systems and legislated path-breaking laws. It is, however, difficult to think of a monarch who has reversed history and turned his back on the past with such ease. For a thousand years now, Islam has chosen the path of taqlid (orthodoxy)—minimal change—and has done its best to avoid ijtihad (reinterpretation)—embracing new ways when necessary. The objective was to conserve the strength and unity of Islam and not allow it to dissipate.

When it came to numbers, therefore, Islam has been an expanding torrent. What King Zayed has done is to pick up a hitherto untouchable aspect, reinterpretation, and in doing so, has touched the hearts of 140 crore Indians, as Prime Minister Modi has said. How many Muslim hearts might have been irritated by this remains to be seen. But the notes emanating from this seminal event are likely to be less than pleasant to a lot of ears, around the Islamic world. Pockets are easier to open; hearts are far more difficult to persuade, which is what King



THE TEMPLE, WHICH

OF COURSE HAS THE ICONS OF DEITIES, IS ALSO RICH WITH CARVINGS, SCULPTED IMAGES AND BASS RELIEFS, INCLUDING THOSE OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS; ONE COULD ALSO LIKEN IT TO A VERITABLE MUSEUM-

CUM-ZOO OF STONE

ever, be sure that most Hindus will pray for his happiness as long as history is written. The opening of the grand Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi also has the potential to trigger schisms in the Abrahamic faith world, particularly Islam. However, this need not be necessarily an unwelcome development. Not only will millions of Hindus flock there, but their inflow will also bring in

billions of dollars as revenue

from tourism and the business

that flows from it.

Zayed has done. He can, how-

The Muslim world, which has been negligent towards commerce, as Prof. Timur Koran of Duke University has explained, will have a chance to rectify this lacuna. This marvel of sculpture, which is also a live and functioning museum of the most exquisite carvings consecrated by the confluence of the holy waters of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati (represented by white light) specially brought from India is precisely the edifice, platform and opportunity for that.

Prime Minister Modi's inauguration and worship of this sprawling and breathtaking Hindu temple at Abu Dhabi is in a sense, not only the rise of Sanatana Dharma in the desert

but also a reversal of centuries of crusades and Ghaznavism. The temple, which of course has the icons of deities, is also rich with carvings, sculpted images and bass reliefs, including those of animals and birds; one could also liken it to a veritable museum-cum-zoo of

Most important though, is our Prime Minister's centrality in the act of worship through his performance of the main aarti in the temple's sanctum sanctorum. Modi is a practising and worshipping Hindu, something that comes through clearly, whether at Kathmandu, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Rameshwaram or Abu Dhabi. Bhakti is visible and convincing only when it emanates from the heart; otherwise, it is nothing but the enactment of a ritual without devotion. In Modi's case, it is a phenomenon that needs no evidence or convincing, a fact I have been fortunate to witness first-hand in my own humble dwelling when a much younger Modi had graced an occasion where holy figures

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

Al to combat auditory impairment



PTI

SARIKA JHA

Around 63 million individuals grapple with significant auditory impairment in India; AI intervention offers a ray of hope for them

n India, the prevalence of hearing impairment is a ▲ significant concern, affecting millions across various age groups. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 63 million people in India grapple with significant auditory impairments, emphasizing the critical need for effective interventions and solutions. Furthermore, with India's ageing population expected to double by 2050, surpassing the number of children, the incidence of hearing impairment is anticipated to escalate, highlighting the urgency for proactive measures to tackle this pressing health issue. According to the 75th National Sample Survey (NSS) report of 2017-2018, hearing disability was estimated in 0.3% of the Indian population, with nearly half of them reporting an inability to hear anything or only loud sounds. The objective should be to mitigate preventable deafness, decrease the burden of deafness to less than 1%, and empower individuals with hearing impairments to lead economically and socially productive lives.

The introduction of Genesis Dr Achin Bhowmik, Chief the speed of its predecessors.

AI to patients and hearing care professionals in India heralds a significant advancement. This technology expands the functionalities of hearing aids remarkably, transforming them from mere listening enhancement devices to discreet, multipurpose health and communication tools. "With Genesis AI, we have greatly expanded the capabilities of hearing aids beyond expectations. It is the largest leap forward ever in hearing technology, transforming hearing aids from single-function listening enhancement devices into discreet, multipurpose health and communication tools," says Brandon Sawalich, President of Starkey. AI intervention in hearing technology marks a quantum leap, offering unparalleled sound clarity, advanced health-tracking capabilities, and person-

alized user experiences.

underscores the significance of Genesis AI, which reflects years of research and innovation dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals with hearing loss. The advanced features and cutting-edge technology of Genesis AI establish a new standard for excellence in hearing care. With a sophisticated Neuro Processor boasting six times the transistors and four times the speed of previous generations, Genesis AI delivers unparalleled sound processing and clarity. Enhanced sound processing facilitates improved speech understanding in diverse environments, t. Besides, new AI devices have fall alerts in them. If a patient wearing the device falls an immediate alert goes to his near and dear who can come for help. The AI-powered devices are indeed communication devices, they would be translating the audio signals in the chosen language enabling people to communicate seamlessly. Genesis AI introduces a cutting-edge Advanced Neuro Processor, boasting six times the transistors and four times

Technology Officer of Starkey,

This innovative processor mimics the function of the central auditory system, delivering unparalleled sound processing and clarity. Coupled with a Long-Lasting Rechargeable Battery providing up to 51 hours of usage on a single charge, users can enjoy uninterrupted usage throughout their day. Furthermore, integrated Health Tracking Sensors monitor activity levels, detect falls, and track overall health metrics, empowering users to proactively manage their wellbeing. With enhanced sound processing capabilities, Genesis AI optimises speech understanding and reduces background noise, ensuring clear communication in any environment. Its innovative features and advanced capabilities address the urgent need for effective solutions in mitigating the challenges posed by hearing loss, thereby empowering individuals to engage fully in social and economic activities. AI is offering hope for a future where accessibility and inclusivity are paramount. (The writer is an editor of a

monthly magazine; views are

MUTE SPECTATORS IN PARLIAMENT Sir — Reports about some of the Lok

Sabha representatives remaining mum throughout and not taking part in any of its debates and discussions are dismaying and eyebrow-raising. They are the people's representatives, chosen by the people for the people to voice their constituency and do the needful. They are simply not elected to become parliamentarians or just to increase the member tally of any party but are people's representatives in whom the common man has hopes, aspirations and wishes to be fulfilled. The same representative who wags his tongue with promises and assurances during the election remaining mute once he reaches the main platform where he's supposed to articulate and fulfill the needs of his constituency is a matter of con-

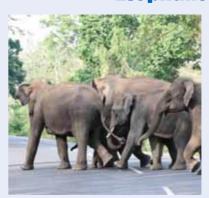
Parties, national and regional, nominating election candidates have to look into this matter earnestly. Leaders who can intertwine ideologies with the practical day-to-day life of the masses and voice for them should be given opportunities to stand as members. It is high time major and minor parties shun such 'mute spectators' and those who use the post just for selfish benefits.

M Pradyu | Kannur

AI TRANSFORMS EDUCATION Sir — As AI advances, its impact on the supply and demand sides of higher education becomes more evident which leads to a significant shift in the sector. AI-powered online learning platforms are reshaping access to education by offering affordable and adaptable alternatives for conventional brick-andmortar universities. As technology reshapes the job market, the adage "a degree opens doors" is losing its lustre. Nowadays, employers are more interested in individuals with real-world experience instead of those with tradition-

al academic credentials. Many universities are redesigning their those from the National Commission

THE EDITOR **Elephant crossing**



∎ild elephants have begun entering residential areas in Mananthavady, Kerala leading to dangerous man-ani-

mal conflict situations. More and more attacks by elephants are taking place in villages and towns adjoining forests. Tranquillising and capturing rogue elephants in one place and releasing them in another is no solution. It is a question of time before such translocated animals resume their activities.

were present.

We have swung from one extreme of mindless destruction of wild animals to the other extreme of, stretching the concept of conservation. It is easy for those in armchairs in urban surroundings to wax eloquent in defence of rogue elephants and man-eaters. For helpless, poor people who eke out a living in terrain near jungles, it is a matter of life and death. Instead, a permanent remedy has to be found

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

curriculum with an emphasis on industry partnerships and real-world skills. Although the future of higher education is enigmatic, one thing remains sure: those who fail to adapt will be left high and dry.

Sambhav Jain | Ujjain

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sir — Due to criticism over the allegations of sexual harassment of women by absconding Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Sheikh Shahjahan and his associates at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, the state's ruling party on Wednesday questioned the timing of levelling such allegations. Raising this question, TMC spokesman Kunal Ghosh also alleged that this "sudden outburst" of angst by the local women is actually part of a conspiracy hatched by the BJP, even if it is accepted that the women were silent for so many years out of fear, why didn't the local BJP leadership raise this issue earlier?"Neither the members of the West Bengal Commission for Women nor

for Women were able to get any specific complaint from any victim alleging

sexual harassment. Hence the allegations are nothing but part of negative propaganda to deliberately tarnish the image of the state TMC government. Women at Sandeshkhali took to the streets complaining of sexual harassment soon after Sheikh Shahjahan, the accused mastermind behind the attack on ED (Enforcement Directorate) and CAPF (Central Armed Police Force) personnel on 5 January, went underground. Even when Governor C.V. Ananda Bose visited Sandeshkhali earlier this week, several women were seen and heard on camera complaining to him about sexual harassment at the hands of Shahjahan and his associates. However, a huge police contingent imposed section 144. With this, all is not well between TMC and BJP in

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN

EMBRACING THE WISDOM OF THE DAWN

The Hindu scriptures stress the profound significance of waking up early



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

n the serene hours before dawn, when the world is enveloped in a tranquil embrace, Hindu scriptures whisper the profound significance of rising early. Rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Vedas and echoed through the teachings of saints and sages, the practice of waking at dawn holds profound importance in Hindu culture, offering a pathway to spiritual growth, physical vitality, and mental clarity.

In Hinduism, the day is divided into various segments called "Yamas" and "Nakshatras," with each having its own unique energies and influences. The pre-dawn period, known as "Brahma Muhurta," is considered especially auspicious for spiritual practices and selfreflection. It is believed that during this time, the atmosphere is charged with divine energy, making it conducive for meditation, prayer, and introspection.

One of the primary scriptures in Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita, emphasizes the importance of disciplined living and self-mastery. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna, "One who is disciplined in his habits, including eating and sleeping, can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system." (Bhagavad Gita 6.16). Waking early is seen as a foundational aspect of this discipline, setting the tone for the day and allowing individuals to align their actions with higher prin-

Furthermore, the concept of "Brahmacharya," often translated as celibacy or chastity, encompasses more than mere abstinence from physical indulgence. It entails the conservation and channeling of vital energies towards spiritual growth and self-realization. Waking early aids in this endeavor by providing precious moments for focused sadhana (spiritual practice), fostering a deeper connection with one's inner self and the divine



The ancient seers and rishis, who delved into the mysteries of existence, recognized the profound relationship between the rhythm of nature and human consciousness. By synchronizing with the natural cycles, individuals can attune themselves to the harmonious flow of life, experiencing enhanced well-being and clarity of mind. From a practical standpoint, waking early offers numerous benefits for physical and mental health.

Ayurveda, the ancient system of medicine, advocates for a daily routine ("Dinacharya") that aligns with nature's rhythms to promote balance and vitality. Rising with the sun allows for exposure to natural light, which regulates the body's internal clock and promotes healthy sleep-wake cycles.

Moreover, the early morning hours provide an opportunity for solitude and reflection, free from the distractions of the bustling world. It is a time for setting intentions, planning the day ahead, and cultivating a sense of inner peace. By starting the day mindfully, individuals can navigate life's challenges with greater resilience and

In the Hindu tradition, waking early is not merely a ritualistic practice but a sacred endeavor that encompasses physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It is a testament to the reverence for life and the pursuit of higher truths. As the world awakens to the gentle embrace of dawn, may we heed the timeless wisdom of Hindu scriptures and embrace the transformative power of rising with the sun. (The writer is a spiritual guide, views are personal)

Skill development: Key to India's shifting job market -



Skill-based education is paramount to bridging the gap between potential and realisation in a job market increasingly favouring specialised technical skills



n today's rapidly changing job market, skills development is of paramount importance. The job market is constantly evolving due to technological advancements, economic developments, and shifting client preferences. To excel in this dynamic environment, people must adapt and develop new abilities. The future of work will not only revolve

around hard skills but also encompass holistic skills. India, with over 808 million young workers below the age of 35, needs to reflect seriously on the correlation between skills and employability, potential versus realization, and ambition versus support. The current skill deficit of only 5% being formally skilled, and a focus on formal learning, leaves graduates unprepared for the competitive job market. Therefore, the shift towards holistic skill-based education, as outlined in National Education Policy 2020, is imperative for success.

The primary goal of skill development is to enhance sustainable employability transition unskilled workers into formal employment, and improve job quality and livelihoods. The evolving job market demands skills that align with business productivity. The impending job landscape in India requires a blend of advanced technical skills and softer, transferable skills. It is crucial to provide early exposure to these skills during high school to ensure that young individuals are adequately prepared for the future job market.

According to a World Economic Forum report, by 2027, 69 million new jobs will be created, while 83 million will be eliminated. The era of generalists is giving way to an era of specialists. The next few years will witness significant demand for Artificial Intelligence (AI) professionals, sustainability specialists, business intelligence analysts, and information security specialists.

In today's highly competitive job market, there are still plenty of opportunities for those with the right skills. To stay



TODAY, TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS ARE **ESSENTIAL FOR**

EMPLOYMENT ROLES. **PROGRAMMING** LANGUAGES, DATA ANALYSIS, CLOUD **COMPUTING AND** CYBER SECURITY

EXPERTISE ARE CRITICAL AS DATA-DRIVEN **BUSINESSES** MUST PROTECT THEIR DATA FROM

CYBER THREATS

ahead of the competition, even many traditional skill-based businesses are now actively seeking out AI and automation experts. Professions are being transformed by automation and artificial intelligence, with certain jobs becoming obsolete and new opportuni-ties emerging in growing industries. As machines take over repetitive tasks, there is now a greater demand for specialized technical skills. Currently, data science, artificial intelligence, robotics, and machine learning are the leading job creators. This means that job seekers must possess a différent set of skills to remain competitive.

Today, technology and digital literacy skills are essential for most employment roles. Programming languages, data analysis, cloud computing, and cyber security expertise are critical as data-driien dusinesses must protect their data from cyber threats.

Moreover, in this digital age, soft skills are more crucial than ever. Communication skills, problemsolving, creativity, and critical thinking are all essential to navigating an automated world successfully.

Those who can combine technical skills with these soft skills will have a significant advantage in today's job market.

In the current Asian job market, candidates with adaptable skills are the most sought-after. Employers demand individuals who can rapidly acquire new skills and apply them effectively in a dynamic work environment. Given the dynamic nature of the job market, many job roles become obsolete over time, and new ones emerge

ability to reskill and upskill have isfaction and overall well-being.

become highly valued and critical for both employees and employers to remain competitive and relevant. As technology continues to reshape job creation and the

implementation of AI and automation, deep data analytics across functions are driving these changes. The introduction of new technologies has compelled businesses to reskill their workforce. With over 54% of India's workforce requiring reskilling, traditional jobs in manufacturing, administration, and retail become obsolete due to automation, and the workforce in these fields must reskill to find new oppor-

Upskilling, on the other hand, is the process of enhancing existing abilities to meet the changing needs of a job function to be more effective and reliable. Hence, a salesperson, for example, may need to upskill in digital marketing to remain compet-

Sustainable Employability: Lifelong learning is an absolute necessity for adapting to the ever-evolving job market. It is imperative to understand that learning should not be confined to formal education, as it holds greater significance than ever before. Continuous learning is the key to remaining employable and excelling in a career.

Furthermore, businesses highly value individuals who can embrace change and seek out new learning opportunities. Adopting a mindset of constant improvement is an invaluable asset in a job market that values adaptation and creativity. Additionally, lifelong learning can significantly Therefore, adaptability and the improve an individual's job sat-

It is the prime responsibility of individuals to take charge of their skill development and always adapt to the changing landscape of today's job market. As India approaches a transformative era, rethinking education and prioritizing on-the-job training are crucial.

Embracing apprenticeships can shape a workforce equipped not only with theoretical knowledge but also practical tech-based skills, essential for gaining a competitive edge and thriving in the dynamic economic landscape. Lifelong learning is paramount in adapting to the evolving job market, where adaptaility and creativity are highly valued. Individuals must take charge of their skill development to remain employable and excel in their careers. The future of work demands a blend of technical proficiency and soft skills, under scoring the necessity for continuous self-improvement and adap-

In conclusion, as India stands on the brink of an era of transformation, it is vital to rethink education, give priority to on-the-job training, and embrace apprenticeships to shape a workforce that not only possesses theoretical knowledge but also has the practical tech-based skills necessary to gain a competitive advantage and thrive in the dynamic landscape of the country's economy.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres (an initiative of GoI). Views

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund: A catalyst for India's agri-future

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund aims to improve India's agricultural infrastructure by providing incentives and financial support for medium to long-erm debt financing

ndia's agriculture sector, a cornerstone of its economy, ■affects the livelihoods of over 55% of its population, making it pivotal for national socio-economic development. Despite being the world's second-largest agricultural producer after China, the sector has faced challenges, particularly in post-harvest manage ment and market accessibility. Recognizing these challenges, the Indian government, under the leadership of Hon. Prime Minister Modi, launched the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) in July 2020, aiming to revolutionize the sector by enhancing infrastructure, reducing losses, and promot-

ing innovation. The objectives of the AIF scheme were clear and compelling: to mobilize medium to long-term debt financing, to



enhance farm gate infrastructure, to diminish post-harvest losses, and to drive investment and innovation in the agriculture and allied sectors. The AIF was not just an investment; it was a commitment to change. With a targeted sanction and disbursement spanning from FY 2020-21 to FY 2025-26, the scheme was designed to offer a blend of financial support mechanisms, including a 3% interest sub- a myriad of projects sprouted,

vention and credit guarantee coverage, thereby laying a fertile ground for growth and development. With an ambitious financial outlay of Rs. One Lakh Crore, the scheme offered interest subvention, credit guarantees, and the convergence of benefits, opening new horizons for farmers, cooperatives, and agricultural entrepreneurs. As the wheels of the AIF

began to turn, the agricultural landscape of India started to witness a remarkable transformation. The fund sanctioned Rs.37,653 Crore for 52,671 projects till February 15th, 2024, while disbursing Rs.23,000 Crores mobilizing an investment of Rs 63,580 Crore in the sector. From the lush fields of Punjab to the vibrant farms of Tamil Nadu,



including custom hiring centers, warehouses, and cold storage facilities, each a testament to the country's commitment to agricultural revitalization. The AIF facilitated the

and community farming assets, including 11,434 Custom Hiring Centres, 11,284 Warehouses, and 1,549 Cold Store projects. This infra-

structure development was instrumental in reducing postharvest losses and improving market accessibility for farmers, contributing to an estimated annual savings of 11 LMT of food grains and a reduction of 2.7 LMT in post-harvest losses of horticulture produce. Further, it is estimated that farmers can get 11-14% more price for their produce due to infrastructure created by AIF. The impact of the AIF has been profound. In the villages, where the granaries began to fill and the cold storages preserved the fruits of labor, post-harvest losses dwindled. Farmers, armed with better infrastructure, found their produce fetching higher prices, their incomes swelling like the monsoon rivers. The creation of over 5.1 lakh employment opportuni-

perity, sowing the seeds of over 24,000 agri-entrepreneurs. Behind the scenes, a symphony of strategies played out. The AIF's online portal became the digital soil where applications germinated and flourished. Awareness campaigns blossomed across social media, while conclaves and exhibitions spread the word far and wide. Each initiative, like a carefully tended crop, contributed to the scheme's burgeoning success. The AIF portal led to the integration of approximately 0.99 lakh bank branches and has 1.27 lakh registered applicants, the portal stands as a unified platform for beneficiaries, lending institutions, and other vital stakeholders involved in the scheme. It fosters transparency and streamlines the loan

ties heralded a season of pros-

application process, ensuring that all parties have access to a smooth, efficient mechanism for their financial interactions. As the story of the AIF unfolds across India's agricultural tapestry, it weaves a narrative of hope and progress. The scheme's legacy, marked by enhanced infrastructure, reduced losses, and empowered farmers, promises a future where agriculture in India is not just a means of survival but a thriving, vibrant sector. And in this future, as the sun rises over the fields, it illuminates a land transformed, a testament to the enduring spirit of India and its farmers, nurtured by the waters of the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. (The writer is an agriculture

economist a serial entrepreneur and investor; views are

Alexei Navalny has died, authorities say

Alexei Navalny, the fiercest foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests, died in prison Friday, Russian authorities said. He was 47. Navalny, who was serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism, felt unwell after a walk, according to the Federal Penitentiary Service, and lost consciousness. An ambulance arrived to try to revive him, but he died. It said the cause of death was "being established."

spokesman Kremlin Dmitry Peskov said Putin was informed of Navalny's death and the prison service would look into it in line with standard procedures.

Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, that the politician's team had no confirmation of his death so far and that his



lawyer was travelling to the town where he was held. Navalny had been behind

bars since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin.

Before his arrest, he campaigned against official corruption, organised major anti-Kremlin protests and ran for public office. He had since received three prison sentences, all of which he rejected as politically motivated. Shortly after Navalny's death was social media channel shared images of the opposition politician reportedly in court yester-

In the footage, Navalny is seen standing up and is laughing and joking with the judge via video link.

Navalny was moved in December from a prison in central Russia to a "special regime" penal colony — the highest security level of prisons in the country — above the Artic Circle.

His allies decried the transfer to a colony in the town of Kharp, in a region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow, as yet another attempt to force Navalny into

In Putin's Russia, political opponents often faded amid factional disputes or went into exile after imprisonment, susheavy repression. But Navalny grew consistently stronger and reached the apex of the opposition through grit, bravado and an acute understanding of how social media could circumvent the Kremlin's suffocation of independent news out-

He faced each setback whether it was a physical assault or imprisonment with an intense devotion, confronting dangers with a sardonic wit. That drove him to the bold and fateful move of returning from Germany to Russia and certain arrest.

Navalny was born in Butyn, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) outside Moscow. He received a law degree from People's Friendship University in 1998 and did a fellowship at Yale in 2010. He gained attention by

focusing on corruption in Russia's murky mix of politicians and businesses; one of his early moves was to buy a stake in Russian oil and gas companies to become an activist shareholder and push for transparency. By concentrating on

had a pocketbook appeal to Russians' widespread sense of being cheated, and he carried stronger resonance than more abstract and philosophical concerns about democratic ideals and human rights.

He was convicted in 2013 of embezzlement on what he called a politically motivated prosecution and was sentenced to five years in prison, but the prosecutor's office later surprisingly demanded his release pending appeal. A higher court later gave him a suspended sen-

The day before the sentence, Navalny had registered as a candidate for Moscow mayor. The opposition saw his release as the result of large protests in the capital of his sentence, but many observers attributed it to a desire by authorities to add a tinge of legitimacy to the mayoral election. Navalny finished second, an impressive performance against the incumbent who

political machine and was popular for improving the capital's infrastructure and aesthetics.

Navalny's popularity increased after the leading charismatic politician, Boris Nemtsov, was shot and killed in 2015 on a bridge near the Kremlin.

Whenever Putin spoke about Navalny, he made it a point to never mention the activist by name, referring to him as "that person" or similar wording, in an apparent effort to diminish his importance.

Even in opposition circles, Navalny was often viewed as having a overly nationalist streak for supporting the rights of ethnic Russians — he supported the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Moscow in 2014 although most nations viewed it as illegal — but he was able to mostly override those reservations with the power of investigations conducted by his Fund for Fighting

Egypt building wall near Gaza Strip



Egypt is building a wall and is levelling land near its border with the Gaza Strip ahead of a planned Israeli offensive targeting the border city of Rafah, satellite images analyzed Friday by The Associated Press show. Egypt, which has not publicly acknowledged the construction, repeatedly has warned Israel not to forcibly expel the over 1 million Palestinians now displaced in Rafah across the border into its territory while it battles the militant group Hamas for a fifth month.

However, the preparations on the Egyptian side of the bor-der in the Sinai Peninsula suggest Cairo is preparing for just that scenario, something that could threaten its 1979 peace deal with Israel that's been a linchpin for regional security.

The Egyptian government did not respond to requests for comment Friday from the AP. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry on February 11 issued a statement warning Israel over its possible Rafah offensive and its "displacement of the Palestinian

people."

The satellite images, taken

Mayar Thursday by Maxar Technologies, show construction ongoing on the wall, which sits along the Sheikh Zuweid-Rafah Road some 3.5 kilometres (2 miles) west of the border with Gaza. The images show cranes, trucks and what appear to be precast concrete barriers being set up along the road. Those satellite images correspond to features seen in a video released by the London-based Sinai Foundation for Human Rights on February 12. The video shows

a crane lifting concrete walls into

The construction "is intended to create a high-security gated and isolated area near the porders with the Gaza Strip, in preparation for the reception of Palestinian refugees in the case of (a) mass exodus," the foundation said. Nearby as well, construction crews appear to be leveling and clearing ground for an unknown purpose. That can also be seen in imagery from Planet Labs PBC of the area. The Wall Street Journal, quoting anonymous Egyptian officials, described "an 8-square-mile (20square-kilometer) walled enclosure" being built in the area that could accommodate over 100,000 people.

Homes and farmland in the area previously had been razed during Egypt's war on an affiliate of the Islamic State group in the area. Hard-line officials within Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government have raised the possibility of pushing Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip, something strongly opposed by Israel's main ally, the United States. The Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank are lands the Palestinians hope to have for their future state. The Israeli military referred questions regarding Egypt's construction to Netanyahu's office, which did not respond. A report by Israel's Intelligence Ministry, drafted just six days after Hamas October 7 attack from the Gaza Strip that killed 1,200 people and saw over 250 others taken hostage, included a proposal of moving Gaza's civilian popula-

Indian-origin man suspect in US family murder

New York (PTI): Anand Henry, an Indian-origin former Meta software engineer is suspected of killing his wife and twin sons before turning a gun on himself in a gruesome murder-suicide in the US state of California, according to authorities. Henry, 37, and his wife, Alice Benziger, 36, were found dead in the bathroom of their home in Alameda de las Pulgas on Monday morning, according to the San Mateo Police Department.

A 9mm handgun registered to Henry was lying on the bathroom floor by their bodies. "Our investigation shows Benziger succumbed to multiple gunshot wounds, while Henry suffered from a single shot," police said in a statement on Thursday.

The 4-year-old twin boys, meanwhile, did not die from gunfire. They showed no signs of trauma, and authorities have not yet determined their cause of death. Police allege that Henry was responsible for all four deaths. According to his LinkedIn profile, Henry used to work at Meta as a software engineer and before that for Google in a similar role. Meta did not immediately respond to Angeles Times reported.

He was working in artificial intelligence at the time of his death, according to his profile. Benziger worked for Zillow as a data scientist, according to her profile on LinkedIn.

The couple, hailing from Kerala, both attended Carnegie Mellon University Pittsburgh. Police said there was no history of violence at the home — the only time they came to the house was when the family reported seeing a mountain lion in the backvard. According to court records, the husband filed for divorce in December 2016 but apparently did not go through with it. But when people who knew the family could not get in contact with them over the weekend, police responded to the scene to do a wellness check, according to the department.

5 patients die as oxygen runs out in Gaza hospital

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

 F^{ive} patients in intensive care died after their oxygen cut off in southern Gaza's main hospital that was stormed by Israeli troops, causing chaos for hundreds of staff and wounded inside, health officials said on Friday. Troops were searching the complex where the military said it believes the remains of hostages abducted by Hamas might be located. The raid came after

troops had besieged Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis for nearly a week, with staff, patients and others inside struggling under heavy fire and dwindling supplies, including food and water. The Israeli military said Friday it had detained dozens from the facility, including some it alleged were involved in Hamas' October 7

After suffering two heavy blows to his leadership

ahead of a general election

Minister Rishi Sunak on Friday

blamed "low voter turnout" as

a reason for the Opposition

strong Conservative majori-

ties to win by-elections in

outcome in two previously

Tory-held seats, the 43-year-old

said they were "particularly

challenging" by-elections.

However, he stressed that the

results did not reflect "enthu-

"Midterm by-elections are

always difficult for incumbent

governments, and the circum-

stances of these by-elections

were of course particularly

challenging," he told reporters

[there was] very low turnout,

and it shows that we've got

"If you look at the results

during a trip to Essex.

Reacting to the disastrous

England.

Labour Party.

Negotiations over a ceasefire in Gaza, meanwhile, appear to have stalled, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday pushed back hard against the US vision for after the war — particularly its calls for the creation of a Palestinian state. After speaking overnight with President Joe Biden, Netanyahu wrote on X that Israel will not accept "international dictates regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians".

He said that if other countries unilaterally recognise a Palestinian state, it would give a "reward to terrorism". Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected creation of

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive and expand it to the Gaza city of Rafah, near Egypt, until Hamas is destroyed and scores of hostages taken dur-

Sunak blames 'low turnout'

UK by-election results deliver double trouble

ing the militants' October 7 attack are freed. In their phone call, Biden again cautioned Netanyahu against moving forward with a military operation in Rafah before coming up with a "credible and executable plan" to ensure the safety of Palestinian civil-ians, the White House said.

Two Israeli airstrikes on Rafah overnight killed at least 10 people, including seven members of the same family, according to hospital offi-

With the war showing no sign of ending, the risk of a broader conflict grew as Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group had deadliest exchange of fire along the border since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. Israel launched airstrikes into southern Lebanon for a second day on Thursday after killing 10 civilians and three Hezbollah fighters on

Wednesday in response to a rocket attack that killed an Israeli soldier and wounded several others.

SCENES OF PANIC IN **HOSPITAL** Nasser Hospital was the latest in a series of hospitals Israeli forces have besieged and stormed during the war, claiming Hamas was using them for military purposes. The assaults have gutted Gaza's health sector as it struggles to treat a constant stream of people wounded in daily bombardments. The military said Thursday it had "credible intelligence" that Hamas had held hostages there and that the hostages' remains might still be inside. On Friday, the military said its troops were continuing to search the hospital but did not report finding any bodies.

It said they arrested 20 people on suspicion of participating in the October 7 attack, and that dozens were

taken for questioning. It also said troops found grenades and mortar shells, and that militants had fired mortars from inside the hospital a month ago. The claims could not be independently confirmed. A released hostage told The Associated Press last month that she and over two dozen other captives had been held in Nasser Hospital.

As they searched, troops ordered the more than 460 staff, patients and their relatives to move into an older building in the compound that isn't equipped to treat patients, the Gaza Health Ministry said. Six patients were left in the ICU with no one to watch over them, along with three infants in incubators, the ministry said.

On Friday, the ministry said five of those patients had died because electricity was cut, stopping oxygen sup-

House approves Quad bill to facilitate closer cooperation between US, Australia, India & Japan

PTI WASHINGTON

The US House of Representatives has overwhelmingly passed the Quad bill which instructs the Biden administration to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer cooperation between the US, Australia, India and Japan. Quad is a plurilateral framework comprising India, Australia, Japan, and the US, with a shared commitment to upholding a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, amidst China's aggressive behaviour in the strategically vital South

China Sea. Passed by a roll call vote of 379 to 39 votes, the 'Strengthen US-Australia-India-Japan Cooperation' Ouadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) bill says that the joint cooperation between the US, Australia, India and

Japan should be strengthened. It directs the State Department to submit to Congress, within 180 days of the bill's enactment, a strategy to increase engagement and cooperation with the Quad, and within 60 days of its enactment, to enter into negotiations with Japan, Australia and India to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer coopera-

It also would establish a US group, which would have a maximum of 24 members of Congress, to represent the US in the working group. It also would establish guidelines for annual meetings and group leadership. Under the bill, the group would be required to submit an annual report to the congressional foreign affairs committees.

Two Democratic lawmakers voted against the bill. One of them being Congresswoman Ilhan Omar from Minneapolis. Introduced by Congressman Gregory Meeks, the bill requires the State Department to report to Congress a strateand cooperation with the

The strategy shall address cooperation on issues including (1) preparing for the next pandemic, (2) co-developing new innovative technologies, and (3) deepening economic

engagement and integration. Meeks, Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India has been integral to promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific and advancing the US interests in the region.

China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea.

"I am proud to have advanced my legislation, the Strengthening the Quad Act, through the House of Representatives with strong bipartisan support. The Quadrilateral Dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India has been integral to promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, advancing US interests in the region, and bolstering our national security," Meeks

"My legislation works to ensure the Quad's success and longevity by calling on the State Department to develop a strategy on bolstering democratic coordination in the Indo-Pacific region, and establishes a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate greater engagement and cooperation among the four legislatures," Meeks said in a statement."With the rise of authoritarianism around the world, it is vital our democracies work together to showcase the success of open societies and markets, promote democratic governance and international rules, and deliver real results," he said.

'Americans divided on TikTok ban'

Washington (AP): President

Joe Biden's campaign is

tion to tent cities in the north-

ern Sinai, then building perma-

nent cities and an undefined

humanitarian corridor.

embracing TikTok to court younger voters ahead of the presidential elections, but US whether the video-sharing app should even operate in the country. A new poll by The Associated Press and NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research finds a three-way split when it comes to banning the app, with 31 per cent of US adults saying they would favour a nationwide ban on TikTok use, while 35 per cent say they would oppose that type of action. An additional 31 per cent of adults say they neither favour nor oppose a ban on the social media platform, which is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance. Talks of a TikTok ban reached a fever pitch in the US early last vear after a series of . Western lawmakers, governments and regulators raised concerns that a set of Chinese laws could force the company to share user data with the country's authoritarian government. Specific evidence of such an incident hasn't been provided by the US government or TikTok critics, who also posit the platform could be used to spread propaganda beneficial to the Chinese government's interests or be used

TikTok has vigorously defended itself, saying in part that it has never shared data with the Chinese government and won't do so if asked. The company also has promised to wall off US user data from its parent company through a separate entity run independently from ByteDance and monitored by outside observers. TikTok says new user data is currently being stored on servers maintained by the software company Oracle.

to bury or amplify certain

The White House reaffirmed this week there is an ongoing review of the platform by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US, which last year reportedly threatened to widely ban the app if its Chinese owners don't divest their stakes.

7 held by HK customs for USD 1.8 bn money laundering case Beijing/Hong Kong (PTI): At

least seven persons were arrested by Hong Kong customs authorities on Friday in connection with the territory's biggest money-laundering case involving a whopping HKD 14 billion (USD 1.8 billion) some of it was linked to a mobile app scam case in India. The syndicate used "stooge" bank accounts and shell companies to transfer the largest amount linked to a single case recorded in the city, the Customs and Excise Department of Hong Kong said. The operation was linked to a mobile app scam in India and two jewellery companies in the country, which allegedly handled about HKD2.9 billion (USD 371 million) of the funds, Suzette Ip Tung-ching, the head of customs' financial investigation bureau told the media in

Ip described the amounts laundered as "astonishing" with one of the accounts receiving as much as HKD100 million (USD 12.8 million) a day and carrying out as many as 50 daily transactions. Some of those arrested were non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, she said without giving details. Law enforcement in Hong Kong, India, and elsewhere cooperated in carrying out the operation, enabling its success, Ip

She said the suspects were accused of laundering the cash through transactions involving gemstones and electronics, with the group, including a 34year-old man, believed to be the mastermind, the Hong Kongbased South China Morning Post newspaper reported.



orities. That's what I am determined to do," he said.

"It also shows that there isn't a huge amount of enthusiasm for the alternative in Keir Starmer and the Labour Party, and that's because they have no plan. If you don't have a plan, you can't deliver real change,' he added. Labour's Dan Egan Kitchen won Wellingborough, in the East Midlands region of double trouble for the British-Indian leader as the Conservatives had won both seats by decisive margins in the last general election under Boris Johnson in December

won the House of Commons

seat of Kingswood, south-west

England, and the party's Gen

Another emerging trend saw the far-right Reform UK the re-organised anti-immigration Brexit Party - coming third, ahead of the Liberal Democrats and Green Party, piling further pressure on the Conservatives on contentious issues such as migration.

Sunak asserted that the "actual choice" at the next general election will be "between me and him", referring to Starmer.

"A vote for anyone who isn't the Conservative candidate, whether that's Reform or anyone else, is just a vote to put Keir Starmer in power," Sunak

said when asked about the performance of Reform UK. The latest results from this week's polls are the ninth and

10th by-election defeats for the 2019 general election. The by-poll in Kingswood was held after Tory MP Chris Skidmore resigned as an MP in

protest over Sunak's green policies. Labour's Egan managed to overturn his majority of more than 11,000 in the seat. In Wellingborough, the vote followed Tory MP Peter Bone being recalled by his constituency over claims of bullying and sexually inappro-

priate behaviour, which he denies. Labour's Kitchen overturned his majority of more than 18,000 to win the seat with a swing of 28.5 per cent - the second highest of all time.

"The Kingswood and Wellingborough results show that people want change and are ready to put their faith in a changed Labour Party to delivsaid Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer.

Margrethe Vestager said in a press release. "This is a big

EU expands digital crackdown on toxic content available online

The European Union is expanding its strict digital rulebook on Saturday to almost all online platforms in the bloc, in the next phase of its crackdown on toxic social media content and dodgy ecommerce products that began last year by targeting the most popular services.

The EU's trailblazing

Digital Services Act has already kicked in for nearly two dozen of the biggest online platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Amazon and Wikipedia. The DSA imposes a set of strict requirements designed to keep internet users safe online, including making it easier to report counterfeit or unsafe goods or

flag harmful or illegal content

like hate speech as well as a

dren. Now the rules will apply to nearly all online platforms, marketplaces and "intermediaries" with users in the 27nation bloc. Only the smallest businesses, with fewer than 50 employees and annual revenue of less than 10 million euros (USD 11 million), are exempt. That means thousands

more websites could potentially be covered by the regulations. It includes popular ones such as eBay and OnlyFans that escaped being classed as the biggest online platforms requiring extra scrutiny. "Users, Member States and platforms can now use

the tools under the DSA to

shape a safer and more transparent online world,"

European Commission

Executive Vice President

milestone that reflects our fundamental EU values and principles." Under the DSA, platforms must also be transparent about digital ads, including informing users why they're being shown a specific advertisement and who paid for it. Ads can't target users based on "sensitive data" such as political or religious beliefs and sexual preferences. Platfoms must explain content moderation decisions, and will have to tell users why their post was taken down or account suspended. The EU has already started investigating Elon Musk's social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, over suspicions it infringed the DSA's provisions including not doing enough to curb the spread of illegal content.

Imran's party calls outcome of Pak poll as 'biggest voter fraud'

PTI ISLAMABAD

Claiming that at least 85 seats won by it in Parliament were snatched by rigging, jailed former prime minister Ímran Khan's party on Friday said the outcome of Pakistan's elections would be remembered due to the "biggest voter fraud" in the country's history against it and its successful candidates.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founded by the cricketer-turned-politician also deplored the February 8 polls, saying the elections would be remembered in the country's history due to the scale of vote rigging.

A week after the polling took place for the general elections, there is no sign of a government in cash-strapped Pakistan. Independent candidates backed by Khan's PTI won the lion's share in the 266member National Assembly even when none of the other parties won a clear majority.

Counting of votes was suspended on the night after the polling prompting the PTI to claim the polls were rigged. Ever since the party has regu-

ment followed incorrect procedures to declare PTI's rivals as winners. On Friday, a fresh round of crackdown, allegedly by the Pakistan Army, was launched against Khan's party in a bid to put pressure on the winners in the elections to change their loyalties to parties backed by the powerful military. The crackdown came amid a possibility of a coalition government by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and four smaller parties.

Later in the afternoon, addressing a largely attended press conference here, PTI's Central Information Secretary Raoof Hasan said: "According to our estimates, out of 177 [National Assembly] seats, which were supposed to be ours, only 92 have been given to us. And 85 seats have been taken away from us fraudulently." The party was taking constitutional and legal steps, Hasan said, adding that the party has verified data for about 46 seats and it is being compiled for another 39 seats.

Describing in detail that the party had three ways to

ascertain the alleged rigging, the PTI leader said, "There were discrepancies between Form 45 and Form 47; there was also a huge difference in the numbers of votes polled for National Assembly and provincial assembly seats and the number of rejected votes, in certain cases, exceeded the margin of victory."

For a press conference, the setting was unusual and looked more like a pandal for some event. Almost 70 candidates sat along with the main leaders, each showcasing his or her Form 45 with a claim of victorv. Form 45 is collected from polling stations in a constituency while Form 47 shows the consolidated result of a constituency.

A presentation detailing seat-wise statistics too was shown during the press conference. Soon after this, party leader Seemabia Tahir took to the stage and played a video of the alleged rigging in the February 8 polls. She also men-tioned PTI senior leader Yasmeen Rashid's defeat against PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif in the NA-130 seat and claimed that Rashid was leading till

winner the next morning. The allegations made during the press conference were the same that Khan and PTI have been making in the run-up to, and even after the general elections. One of the allegations was that the polls were "not free and

One of the prominent leaders, Salman Akram Raja, who had contested from the NA-128 seat, lambasted the electoral authorities, claiming that "rigging took place from polling stations to the Returning Officers' office."

"What the people voted for was changed in the dark of night," The News International said quoting Raja.

Meanwhile, throughout the day, the party's official X and other social media handles kept posting updates about protests from across the country. "Countrywide peaceful protests are ongoing against the massive rigging in elections 2024. In Sindh, PPP and MQM benefitted of this rigging and mandate of the public is not being respected!," said one such post, which also had a

Fresh crackdown against PTI leaders

dented violence that broke out

after Khan's arrest in an alleged

corruption case on May 9 last

year. Similarly, the Punjab

police raided the factories, mills and godowns of PTI-backed

MNAs-elect from Gujranwala -

Mobeen Arif Jutt and Ehsanullah Virk - and sealed

them. The authorities continue

to use the May 9 violence as a

weapon to pressure the PTI-

backed winners of the February

fresh warrants for PTI leader

for Punjab chief minister

against PML-N's Maryam

Nawaz who is the daughter of

former prime minister Nawaz

Sharif. Khan, the PTI founder,

has been in jail since August last

year and just before polls, he

Islamabad (PTI): Jailed former

Ex-PM challenges cipher,

Toshakhana sentences

Aslam Iqbal in May 9 cases.

The Punjab police issued

Iqbal is the PTI candidate

8 polls to change loyalties.

fresh round of crackdown Ahas been launched allegedly by the Pakistan Army against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party in a bid to put pressure on the winners in the elections to change their loyalties to parties backed by the powerful military.

The confrontation between Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the military establishment comes after the party won the lion's share in the general elections in Pakistan on February 8. Police arrested successful independent candidates backed by the PTI, and conducted raids on their properties across Punjab province, party

Arrest warrants have been issued for the PTI-nominated candidates for the slot of chief minister in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Besides, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has summoned Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan for inciting the public

Minister candidate Omar Ayub on Friday secured a pre-arrest bail from a local court to anticipate his possible arrest in any unknown case to stop him from going to Parliament to compete against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz-led six-party alliance candidate Shehbaz Sharif for the coveted

slot of prime minister. Omar said that PTI-backed MNA (Member of the National Assembly) from Sialkot, Aslam Ghumman had been abducted by unknown people, referring towards intelligence agencies.

"Ghumman is being forced to leave PTI and join PML-N. Condemn this rigging process and enforced disappearances in the strongest words possible," Ayub said on X (formerly Twitter). In Lahore, police have arrested PTI-backed MPA-elect Ahmar Rasheed Bhatti from Raiwind in connection with the May 9 riots cases. The police's post-election action came when the PTI was celebrating his vic-

state buildings, including the term in three cases. In total, he is facing over 200 cases. Army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, were torched and vandalised by many PTI activists during the unprece-

Meanwhile, the PTI said that it had won 180 National Assembly seats out of a total of 266 in the elections while the "mandate thieves PML-N" has got only 17 National Assembly seats across Pakistan.

"Let the world know that

according to original, signed, legally binding Form 45s, Imran Khan's PTI has won 180 seats in the National Assembly while Nawaz Sharif's PMLN won only 17 seats," the PTI said and added half of PTI's won seats were stolen by the illegitimate regime in the late hours of the night of February 8 and following days, "through unprecedented, massive and brazen rigging, in an attempt to cut down PTI's two-thirds majority." It further said neither PT nor the people of Pakistan will accept this daylight robbery of their mandate. "Make no mistake, the will of the people will reign supreme," Khan's party said.

JUI-F leader accuses top military leaders of toppling Imran govt

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Aleading but disgruntled right-wing Pakistani politician has accused the top military leaders of toppling the government of Imran Khan in 2022. Maulana Fazlur Rehman of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) claimed during a Samaa TV talk show on Thursday night that the "former army chief Gen (rtd) Qamar Javed Bajwa toppled the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government."

Recalling the no-confidence motion against the PTI founder, Rehman said: "The PPP was moving the no-confidence motion against the PTI. Gen Bajwa and Faiz Hameed were in touch with us at the time of no-confidence motion."

"Gen Bajwa, Faiz Hameed asked all parties to do this (bringing a vote of no-confidence motion)," he claimed.

The channel reported on its website that Rahman told the host in response to a question: "Someone should stand up to the establishment and say it is doing wrong".

The protest will continue until things are settled, as the establishment has nothing to do with politics. As a result of this protest, there will be a revolution," Rehman maintained.

Rehman said, "The state institutions are respectable, but why come into politics?"

"If the establishment thinks that the elections were transparent, then the narrative in line with the May 9 mayhem is buried," Rehman added. Speaking about talks with the PTI, Rehman said: "There is a difference of mind with the PTI that can be resolved."

He also criticised the PML-N for announcing its plan to form a coalition government with the help of other parties, including the Pakistan Peoples

Party. "The present parliament has no future, as the decisions and policies in the parliament will come from somewhere else," he said.

Rehaman had traditionally been close to the establishment but has become weary after suffering a devastating defeat in the elections. His opponents allege that being a seasoned politician, Rehman may be in search of some role in the future government by attacking the Army.

On February 10, 2022, Pakistan's then-Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted from power after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership. The vote was held after opposition parties brought a motion against him, following days of high drama. The vote took place after the country's Supreme Court ruled in favour of opposition parties and said that 71-year-old Khan had

acted unconstitutionally

diers — most wearing Russian

uniforms - lying scattered

along tree lines where they

sought cover. However, the

Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said

that taking Avdiivka would be

more of a symbolic win for the

Kremlin and would not bring

significant changes to the

1,500-kilometre (930-mile)

front line that has barely

budged in recent months. "The

potential Russian capture of

Avdiivka would not be opera-

tionally significant and would

likely only offer the Kremlin

immediate informational and

political victories," the institute

said in an assessment late Thursday. "Russian forces

would be highly unlikely to

make rapid operationally sig-

nificant advances from Avdiivka if they captured the

settlement, and the potential

Russian capture of Avdiivka at

most would set conditions for

further limited tactical gains,

Pakistan PM Imran Khan has challenged in the Islamabad secrets. The controversy first emerged on March 27, 2022, High Court his sentences in the cipher and Toshakhana corrupwhen Khan — less than a month before his ouster in April 2022 tion cases. Separate petitions have been filed before the while addressing a public rally, waved a letter before the crowd, Islamabad High Court through claiming that it was a cipher from Barrister Ali Zafar against Khan's a foreign nation that had consentences in the Toshakhana spired with his political rivals to and cipher cases. The petition on have his government overthe cipher (secret diplomatic thrown. Khan did not reveal the cable) case made the state and contents of the letter, nor did he Interior Ministry Secretary mention the name of the nation Yousaf Naseem Khokhar responit came from. But a few days later, dents in the case. It urged the he accused the US of conspiring high court to set aside the conagainst him and alleged that viction and sentence and acquit Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Affairs

Donald Lu had sought his

वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक (वि.) प्रथम उ.प्र.रा.औ.वि.प्रा., कानपुर

court for leaking sensitive state



him of the charges. On January

30, Khan, 71, was sentenced to

10 years in prison by a special

उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

एतट द्वारा सचित किया जाता है कि दिनांक 08.02.2024 को समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित औद्योगिक क्षेत्र बहेर्डी ुरार कुमर पूचरा परचा जाता है। या प्रताय 60.2.2.2024 जो तमारा रचान क्यांगरारा जानाचार क्षेत्र बहुड़ जनपद बरेली में विद्युत कार्यों से सम्बन्धित निविद्या संख्या 2024 SIDC _ 892229 _ जो हो होत 08.02.2024 से दिनांक 15.02.2024 तक अपलोड की जानी थी एवं दिनांक 16.02.2024 को खोली जानी है, अपिरहार्य कारणों से अब उक्त आमंत्रित निविदा में निविदा प्रपत्र अपलोड करने की अवधि दिनांक 24.02.2024 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। यह निविदा अब दिनांक 26.02.2024 को सायं 16:00 बजे खोली

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR Tender Notice Reference No.916/DR Coreldraw Graphics Suit 2023

For details log onto: www.eproc.puniab.gov.ir Note: Any conigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only Director of Research Guru Nanak Dev University

92NA/12/1/2023/32541 Dated CHD :- 2/16/2024

Amritsar-143005 (Punjab) India

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No.SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/140 Date: 16.02.2024 The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam invites bids for design, fabrication, supply, installation and commissioning of passenger lift (8 person) including civil & structural works for construction of New Lift Structure at the State Mission Office (G+4) storey), Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, from registered eligible Class-II & above contractor as per Govt. notification No. DA5R.132/2018/2 dtd.20/07/2018 under PWD (Bldg), Assam having experience of similar nature of work in Assam.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 17-02-2024 upto 23-02-2024 (1400 hrs).

The bidder must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Janasanyog/CF/5609/23/17/Feb/24

Sd/-Mission Director 🎎 Samagra Shiksha,Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Russia tightens noose on Ukraine's city of Avdiivka falling to Russia, a develop- said: "Poisonous smog spreads Russia's staggering losses, with

Ukrainian troops in Avdiivka struggled Friday with severe ammunition shortages as Russian forces tightened the noose around the strategic eastern city in an intense Kremlin push for a battlefield win. The timing is critical as Russia is looking for a morale boost ahead of the second anniversary on February 24 of Moscow's fullscale invasion of Ukraine and the March presidential election in Russia.

The four-month battle in Avdiivka appeared to be coming to a head as Ukrainian Volodymyr President Zelenskyy on Friday made another trip to Europe, hoping to press his country's Western allies to keep providing military support. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said on Thursday that Russian forces are beginning to overwhelm Ukrainian defences in the eastern city. He said Avdiivka is at risk of part" on the fact that Ukrainian forces are running out of artillery ammunition.

The United States is Ukraine's biggest single supporter but some USD 60 billion for Kyiv is being held up by political disagreements among American lawmakers. Street fighting was underway in the bombed-out city, where Ukrainian troops are outnumbered 7-to-1, according to Oleksandr Borodin, press officer of the 3rd Assault Brigade of the Ukraine Armed Forces.

The 3rd Brigade said on its social media account Friday that its soldiers are holding out at the huge Avdiivka Čoke Plant. Russian warplanes have been dropping about 60 bombs a day, relentlessly shelling the area and launching assaults with armor and infantry, the brigade said.

A video showed dense black smoke over the factory, said to be caused by burning

Russian troops conducted 33 assaults in Avdiivka over the previous 24 hours, Ukraine's General Staff said Friday. The Russians have been trying to capture the city since last October but made only incremental progress before a recent push. The Ukrainian defenders prepared for "any possible scenarios," according to Brig. Gen. Oleksandr Tarnavskyi, head of the Ukrainian forces in Avdiivka.

Ukrainian officials have not ruled out a withdrawal from the city. Heavily fortified with a web of tunnels and concrete fortifications, Avdiivka lies in the northern suburbs of Donetsk, a city in a region of the same name that Russian forces partially occupy. Capturing Avdiivka could be a timely boost for Moscow and serve as a possible springboard for Russia to drive deeper into the region.

Fewer than 1,000 people fuel oil reservoirs. The post remain in the city, according to



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, right, welcomes Ukrainian President Volodymy Zelenskyy in front of the chancellory in Berlin, on Friday

the Donetsk regional governor, Vadym Filashkin. The city, with a prewar population of about 31,000, is today a

bombed-out shell of what it apocalyptic scene and hinted at

Aerial footage of Avdiivka obtained by The Associated Press last December showed an

Compact entities. Member

"Such concerns have been exacerbated by the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, given

it added.

Office of the Superintending Enginee 3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh Email: sepwdpth@rediffmail.com



Period

Letter No.: 796 / 208C-03(Yata 'D')/2024

Name of Work

Contractor's

Very Short Term National Competetive E-Bidding (RFP/TOR)

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" invites tender for Consultancy Services with Quality and cost based selection system (QCBS) for the following works. The RFP/TOR document will be available from date 17-02-2024 at 5.00 Pm onward on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in.

Earnest Cost of Validity

No.		(in Lac)	Tender (in Rs.)	of Tender (day)	of Completion (months)	Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	DPR preparation work of 32 meter span at Netra Gad in km 04 chainage 3.250 of Ghat Netra Salan motor road and 32 meter span at km 05 chainage 4.600 cow jula and 44 meter span motor bridge at km 07 chainage 6.550 Ghediagad under the state plan (All work as per IRC SP-54-200 Project Preparation Manual for bridge)		2000.00 +18% G.S.T.	60	06	Experience with similar work in NH/NHAI/PSU and any department of State Govt.

Terror groups enjoy freedom in Af: UN SG report paign that seized 33 of 34 approaching 4,000 following

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

There are no recent signs I that the Taliban, which seized power in Afghanistan in 2021, has taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the war-torn country, according to a report by UN chief Antonio Guterres.

The report also voiced member nations' concern that terrorist groups enjoy "greater freedom" in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan than at any time in recent history, especially noting the spike in the strength of the dreaded ISIL-k terror group which has nearly doubled from earlier estimates of 2,200 fighters following the release of several thousand individuals from prison.

"The security landscape in Afghanistan changed dramatically on August 15, following a Taliban military cam-

provincial capitals, including Kabul," according to the '14th report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat'. The report said that there

are no recent signs that the Taliban has taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country. "On the contrary, Member States are concerned that terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom in Afghanistan than at any time in recent history," it said. Member States assess that the strength of the Da'esh affiliate in Afghanistan -Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) has increased from earlier esti-

mates of 2,200 fighters to now

the release by the Taliban of several thousand individuals from prison. According to the Secretary

General's report, one Member State assessed that up to half the individuals are foreign terrorist fighters. While Daesh controls limited territory in eastern Afghanistan, it is capable of conducting high-profile, complex attacks such as the August 27, 2021 bombing at Kabul airport, which killed over 180 people, and several subsequent attacks, in particular against the Taliban and members of the Shia community. The report further said that Da'esh in Afghanistan continues to be led by

Sanaullah Ghafari, an Afghan

national. The group is taking

advantage of the turmoil in the

country, including by recruit-

ing fighters from the Eastern

and the Turkistan Islamic Party, among other foreign terrorist groups. Da'esh in Afghanistan

"aims to position itself as the chief rejectionist force in Afghanistan and to expand into neighbouring Central and South Asian countries and is viewed by the Taliban as its primary armed threat. Member States are concerned that, if Afghanistan descends into further chaos, some Afghan and foreign violent extremists may shift allegiances to Daesh," the report said.

The report was prepared by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in close collaboration with other United Nations Global Counter-

States also remain concerned about the glut of weapons, especially small arms, that exists in the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan, to which Daesh, its affiliates and other terrorist groups could gain access

the large quantities of weaponry and other military equipment in the country," the report said. With Afghanistan facing a severe economic, financial and humanitarian crisis, there is a risk that tradable commodities such as arms and related materials could be acquired by organised criminals and terrorists inside Afghanistan and even that they could find their way into neighbouring countries, it said.

RBI gives 15 more days to **Paytm to stop transactions**

■he RBI on Friday gave 15 days more till March 15, 2024 to Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) to stop deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer wallets, accounts, FASTags, keeping in view the customers, including merchants.

As per a January 31 order of the central bank, PPBL was asked to stop further deposits, credit transactions, or top-ups in any customer accounts,

FASTags, National Common Mobility Cards, after February 29.

The RBÍ said this is being done keeping in view the interest of customers (including merchants) of PPBL who may require a little more time to make alternative arrangements and the larger public interest. 'Further, it is directed that the bank shall facilitate a seamless

withdrawal of customer

deposits that are parked with

partner banks under the

automatic 'sweep-in sweep-

any inconvenience to such customers," the Reserve Bank of India said

The central bank has taken action against PPBL for persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank, warranting further supervisory action.

On Friday, the RBI also released a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), for the convenience of customers of PPBL, and the general public at large.

Markets extend winning run

Equity benchmark indices marched higher for the fourth straight session on Friday, with Nifty closing above the 22,000 level, tracking gains in index majors L&T, Infosys and M&M, amid a firm trend in the global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 376.26 points or 0.52 per cent to close at 72,426.64. The index touched a high of 72,545.33 and a low of 72,218.10 during intraday

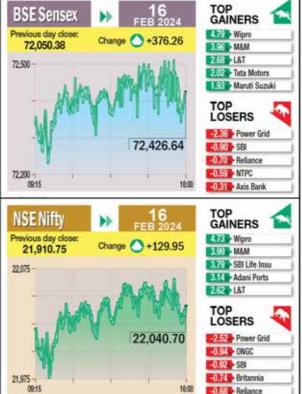
The broader NSE Nifty also climbed 129.95 points or 0.59 per cent to end at points

Wipro was the biggest gainer in the Sensex chart, rising 4.79 per cent, followed by M&M, per cent, followed by MaNI, L&T, Tata Motors, Maruti, Infosys, Nestle India and IndusInd Bank. Shares of M&M shot up 3.96 per cent to finish at Rs 1,835.55 priece after it approunced its

apiece after it announced its agreement German automotive major Volkswagen Group for electric vehicle components under their joint vision for electric mobility collaboration.

In contrast, PowerGrid, SBI, Reliance, NTPC and Axis Bank were among the laggards. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei, Hong Kong's Hang Seng and South Korea's Kospi settled with significant gains. China's financial markets are

closed for the Lunar New Year



The US market closed higher in the overnight trade on

Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude slipped 0.83 per cent to USD 82.17 a barrel.

In the previous session, the 30share index climbed 227.55 points or 0.32 per cent to close at 72,050.38 points, while NSE Nifty gained 70.70 points or per cent to end at 21,910,75

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they sold shares worth Rs 3,064.15 crore, according to exchange data.



UP top State in vehicle sales: SIAM

Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of vehicle sales in October-December followed Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, according to Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.

As per data from Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), Uttar Pradesh clocked a total sales of 8,22,472 units across passenger and commercial vehicles; and two and three-wheeler categories.

Maharashtra was second with 6,88,192 units across the four categories followed by Guiarat with 4,21,026 units and Tamil Nadu 4,19,189 units in the quarter. Uttar Pradesh witnessed the

highest number of threewheelers sold in the quarter at 23,859 units, followed by Maharashtra (20,495), Gujarat (19,743) and Bihar (14,955). Similarly, in the two-wheeler category, Uttar Pradesh topped the list with a total of 6,73,962 units sold in the state, followed by Maharashtra (5,15,612), Madhya Pradesh (3,35,478) and Tamil Nadu (3,24,918). However, in passenger vehicle sales, Maharashtra clocked the highest sales with 1,21,030 units, followed by Uttar Pradesh (1,01,568), Gujarat (85,599) and Karnataka (71,549). In the commercial vehicles category Maharashtra topped the list with 31,055 units, followed by radesh (23,083), (20,391) and Pradesh Uttar Gujarat Karnataka (16,966).

CCPA seeks feedback on norms to curb misleading coaching advertisements



Consumer protection regulator CCPA has sought public comments by March 16 on draft guidelines for prevention of misleading advertisements in the coaching sector.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has prepared draft guidelines with all stakeholders including coaching institutes, law firms, government and voluntary consumer organizations, an official statement said

comments/ "Public suggestions/feedback solicited and may be provided to the Central Authority within 30 days (until 16th March

The draft defines "coaching" and lays out conditions that fall under misleading advertisements. coaching

instance,

2024)," it added.

institutes are not allowed to conceal information related to name of the course (whether free or paid) and duration of course opted by successful candidate or any other important information which can influence consumers' decision to choose their

They should refrain from

making false claims regarding success rates, number of selections, or rankings of students in any competitive without providing verifiable evidence.

They should not falsely represent that students' success is solely attributable to the coaching, acknowledging the individual efforts of the students.

Among other condition CCPA said that the coaching centres should clearly state the extent of the coaching involvement in their success. They should not create false sense of urgency or fear of missing out that may heighten anxieties amongst students, or parents. They should not engage in any other practices that may mislead consumers or subvert consumer autonomy and choice.

The CCPA said the objective of the guidelines is to protect consumers from misleading advertisements in the coaching sector and would be applicable to every person engaged in coaching.

Misleading advertisements by the coaching sector will be governed as per the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the proposed guidelines will bring clarity to the stakeholders and protect consumer interests.



Gold rises ₹180; silver rallies ₹900

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 180 to Rs 62,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid strong cues in international markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the pre-

cious metal had closed at Rs 62,270 per 10 grams. Silver also rallied Rs 900 to Rs

75,500 per kilogram, while it had ended at Rs 74,600 per kg in the previous close Spot gold prices (24 carats) in

Rs 62,450 per 10 grams, up by Rs 180, taking a positive trend from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities,

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,003 per ounce, up by USD 10 from the previous close.

Silver was also trading higher at USD 22.97 per ounce, while it had finished at USD 22.50 per ounce in the previous trade. Gold prices gained after softer US economic data pushed the dollar and Treasury yields lower. Traders shifted their focus on the US Producer Price Index (PPI) data and commentary from Federal Reserve officials for more cues on the timeline for monetary policy interest rate cut, Navneet Damani, Senior vicepresident of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.



India has initiated an anti-dumping Aprobe into imports of certain solar glass from China and Vietnam, following a complaint by domestic players. The commerce ministry's investigation

arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is probing the alleged dumping of 'Textured Tempered Coated and Uncoated Glass' made or from China and Vietnam.

The product is also known by various names such as solar glass or solar photovoltaic glass in the market parlance. An application has been filed by Borosil Renewables Ltd on behalf of the domestic industry for the probe and the imposition of appropriate anti-dumping duty on

On the basis of the duly substantiated



India begins anti dumping probe

into solar imports from China

application by the domestic industry, and having satisfied itself, on the basis of prima facie evidence submitted by the applicant substantiating the dumping and consequent injury to the domestic industry, the authority hereby initiates an anti-dumping investigation into the alleged dumping," the notification said. If it is established that the dumping has caused material injury to domestic players, DGTR would recommend the imposition of anti-dumping duty on the imports. The finance ministry takes the final decision to impose duties. There is sufficient evidence that the

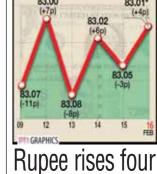
product is being dumped in the domestic market of India by the exporters from these two countries

Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports. As a countermeasure, they impose these

duties under the multilateral regime of the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO). The duty is aimed at ensuring fair trading

practices and creating a level-playing field for domestic producers vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters.

India has already imposed anti-dumping duty on several products to tackle cheap imports from various countries, including



RUPEE vs DOLLAR

paise to settle at 83.01 a dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose 4 paise to settle at 83.01 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, amid positive sentiment in the domestic equity markets and softening crude oil prices.

Forex traders said a strong American currency and outflow of foreign funds, however, domestic currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.03 and touched the intraday high of 83.00 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 83.01 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 4 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee settled 3 paise lower at 83.05 against the US dollar. According to Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the Indian rupee appreciated on

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was 0.07 per cent higher at 104.36. "US dollar index recovered on declining expectations of a rate cut by the US Fed in March and May 2024. Economic data from the US was slightly disappointing for the greenback," Choudhary said.

Young Indians take to SIP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $E_{\text{the digital mode, rising dis-}}$ posable incomes and increased financial literacy are prompting young Indians to venture into mutual funds' Systematic Investment Plan (SIP), a top official of WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund said

WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund, which has 3.33 lakh investors and manages assets worth Rs 8,400 crore since its began operations one-and-half-years ago, said GenZs and Millennials account for 56 per cent of their investors

Millennials, also known as Gen Y, are typically defined as those born between 1981 and 1996. Generation Z, or GenZ, are those born between 1997 and



2012.

The data shared by the fund house showed that 28 per cent each of its 3.33 lakh investors belong to the 18-35 years and 35-45 years age groups.

The majority of its investors – 51 per cent — came through digital channels at the age of 18-35 years.

"As' millennials and GenZ are digital natives, it is quite natural for them to prefer technologically centric financial service providers," Prateek Pant, Chief Business Officer of WhiteOak Capital, said. He further said features such as

reasonable returns, professional fund management, lesser investment threshold, wide array of investment schemes and easy withdrawal facility are drawing young investors to the SIP route. The analysis showed that the average investment or ticket size for the investors belonging to the 18-35 years age group is lower compared to older investors.

This could be due to the fact that the very young investor segment may be investing out of their pocket money or through income generated via part-time jobs and internships. Due to lower pay-checks, their investment amounts are also lower. Pant said Most of them in the age group

of 18-35 years are in the early to mid-stages of their careers and hence are in the wealth building mode. Even though their earning capacity is lower than the older age cohorts, it is likely to go up as they advance in their careers. "Even though the investment

amounts are lower, if they continue to stay invested for longer time horizons and invest regu larly through facilities like SIPs, the power of compounding will work wonders for them in creating sizable wealth," he said. Overall, Indian mutual funds currently have about 7.92 crore SIP accounts through which investors regularly invest in mutual fund schemes

positive domestic markets.

LOK ADALAT ON POWER THEFT SETTLEMENT ON SUNDAY PIONEER NEWS SERVICE: A Lok Adalat of TPDDL discom for mutually agreed settlement of power theft cases will be held at Venkateshwar Global School in Rohini Sector 13 on February 18 from 10 am to 4 pm, a spokesperson of the company said on Friday. The Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL), which supplies electricity in North Delhi. is holding the Lok Adalat in association with Delhi State Legal Services Authority. The litigant consumers can take part in the court proceedings by dialling the number 19124 or the official mail of the discomeac.Care@tatapower-ddl.Com. They need to carry their photo IDs and a copy of their theft bill for the settlement of cases, he said.

HI TECH REFRIGERATION SOLUTIONS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE: Aligning with the 'Make in India' initiative, WIKA India, a leading global measurement technology company, showcased its technologically advanced HVAC and refrigeration solutions. from intelligent monitoring systems to energy-efficient controls addressing the pressing need of efficient and sustainable solutions during the three-day ACREX India 2024 held at Greater Noida. These solutions have been designed to cater to the global and national demands for a wide range of industries seamlessly.

WIPPA CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY

NEW DELHI: New Delhi: The Wind Independent Power Producers Association (WIPPA) celebrated its 11th Foundation Day Conference on Fridav in New Delhi. As WIPPA continues to play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration between wind energy developers, Independent Power Producers, and Government stakeholders to fortify India's wind sector, the event brought together distinguished RE industry stakeholders, including BS Bhalla. Secretary of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, senior government officials, and leaders from the wind industry

Centralised process of filings under companies law starts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has operationalised the central government has processing centre processing filings under the companies law and LLP Act in a "time-bound and faceless manner" as part of efforts to further improve the ease of doing business. Initially, 12 forms and

applications under the companies law will be processed at the Central Processing Centre (CPC). From April 1 onwards, other forms and applications will be processed through the centre. "As of now, 4,910 forms have been received by CPC after commencing operations. The forms shall be processed a time-bound and faceless manner," the corporate affairs ministry said in a release on Later, forms/applications filed under Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) Act are also proposed to be centralised. Based on filing trends, the ministry said it is expected that about 2.50 lakh forms will be processed through CPC

annually, once it is fully operational. With the establishment of CPC, the ministry noted that jurisdictional Registrar of Companies (RoC) will have to focus more on their core functions of inquiries,

inspection and investigation for ensuring robust corporate governance. which ministry, implements the companies and LLP laws, has already operationalised the Central Registration Centre (CRC)

for Accelerated Corporate Exit (C-PACE).

CRC, C-PACÉ and CPC will ensure speedy processing of applications and forms filed for incorporation, closure and for meeting regulatory requirements so that the companies are incorporated, closed, can alter and raise capital, and are able to complete their various compliances under the corporate laws with ease, it said. A total of 1,02,063 companies and LLPs were incorporated in FY 2013-14 and the count rose 92 per cent to 1,95,586 in FY 2022-23.

The ministry said that incorporation of companies and LLPs till February 14 of the current financial year has been the highest as compared to any of the previous and Centralised Processing financial years.

Tech industry revenue to touch \$254 billion this fiscal: Nasscom PTI MUMBAI

The domestic technology industry's revenue is projected to grow 3.8 per cent to USD 254 billion this fiscal, industry body Nasscom said on Friday. Excluding hardware, the revenue is expected to touch USD 199 billion, a growth of 3.3 per cent over FY23

The Engineering Research & Development (ER&D) sector alone contributed 48 per cent to the total export revenue addition in FY24, Nasscom said in its annual review. The projected 3.8 per cent growth is despite a 50 per cent slide in tech spending and 6 per cent decline in tech contracts in 2023 globally. This means the industry has added USD 9.3 billion incremental revenue in the fiscal, Nasscom said.

India has great growth potential: Sony after Zee merger collapse

PTI NEW DELHI

With the proposed merger of its Indian arm with Zee terminated, Sony will seek various options, including finding another opportunity to replace the plan and organic growth opportunities in India, which has great potential in the long term, according to a top company official. In an earnings call, Hiroki Totoki, president, COO & CFO of Sony said India is a very appealing market where it would continue to invest.

"India on a long term basis has a great growth potential. It's a very appealing market. Therefore, we will try to seek various opportunities and if we can find another opportunity that would replace this type of plan," Totoki said when asked about the company's strategy in India after the termination of the proposed merger. On the investment which Sony had commit-



ted as part of the deal, he said:"Well, that investment is not going to change a capital allocation or it will not change our behaviour in our investment. So at the moment, we do not have any concrete plans." The earnings call was held on

February 14. As per the merger conditions, which was agreed upon between Sony and ZEEL, the Japanese giant was also supposed to invest USD 1.5 billion in the merged entity.

The group will also continue to pursue organic growth as per its strategy in India, where it operates through Culver Max Entertainment (earlier known as Sony Pictures Network India), he said in the investors call.

he pioneer

SMOOTH SAILING ACROSS A CALM RIVER

While we have had a plethora of first time novelists who burst on the literary scene, only to fade away over time, Lakshmi Murudeshwar Puri is clearly here to stay, says KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

This fact is evident in the innumerable number of novels authored by writers from India inside as well as outside. However, the truth is that a huge majority of these works end up in waste paper baskets because of their readability, or rather the obverse, factor. The truth is nobody can be trained as a novelist or a dramatist or a poet unlike vocations like doctors, engineers or lawyers.

There are eminent singers like Jayachandran, Kishore Kumar, Mohd Rafi, Mukesh or Jagjit Singh and Pankaj Udhas who to this day elevate us to a celestial world with their mellifluous tone and tenor. All share the inherent qualities that of a singer which they are born with. Kishore Kumar, an untrained musician, reigned supreme for decades because he could captivate the listeners with his voice, diction, pronunciation and modulation. The songs rendered by him echo even now despite the fact that he lived in an era when satellite TV channels and FM radio stations were alien. Although there are music colleges across the globe, one simply cannot graduate as a singer; one has to be born to it.

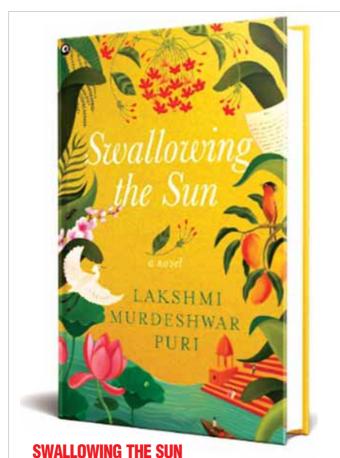
The same stands for the field of literature. One cannot train a person to be a writer or poet or a dramatist by simply attending a degree or diploma course in novel writing. One should have a flair for writing and words should flow out of the creator's mind like a river meandering through the valleys reminiscent of the way the great

o one can deny the role novels play across various genres deemed literature.

streams cascade. This has been proved right by Manoranjan Byapari, the school drop-outturned-rickshaw puller who created a sensation with his book Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit. Reading this book was an experience of a different kind and Byapari showed the world that one need not have a PhD in English or even a formal education to write a story or novel. It is another thing that he ended up as the chairman of Dalit Sahitya Academy but that is part of a political journey. Interestingly, there are PhD holders in English who are incapable of speaking or writing even one sentence in the language without an error.

The works of Kalidas, believed to date back to the third or fourth century is unique and he stands out in history as a first of a kind author. All one could say about Kalidas is that he was born with the blessings of Vaag Devatha (Goddess of Letters). Whatever he wrote remains as divine and sublime as they were when they were first penned.

All of us have a story buried deep in our subconscious, in some corner of our mind. Our own life, the place where we were born and brought up, our parents, siblings, relations and people with whom we interacted, the school and college we attended, the village or town square we frequented, the tea vendor selling garam tea and vadas are all storehouses of narratives. If each of us were write our reminiscences, the world of literature would be enriched, and may even open up avenues for



AUTHOR: LAKSHMI MURDESHWAR PURI

PUBLISHER: ALEPH | ₹899/-It is little wonder that the works of

Kalidasa like Raghuvamsam, and

literature. Fyodor Dostoevsky

wrote Crime and Punishment in 1866 yet the novel retains its Megha are major benchmarks in charm and relevance, 157 years

India can so easily empathise with the anguish and agony of Rodion Raskolnikov, almost as their personal pain and distress. The narrative, the style and the smooth flow of the storyline make the work eternal. It is almost like a sculptor carving out a figurine from a solid lifeless stone or metal. The work he crafted has beauty and style is eternally alive. One need not look for more secrets behind the success of some novels while others misfire and evaporate from the mind of the readers.

This prelude was necessary to explain the significance of Swallowing The Sun, a novel by Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri, a former career diplomat. understand this is her first foray into the world of novels and she deserves to celebrate the fact that

she has crafted such a beautiful piece of work. Ambassador Puri, almost unveiling her own life, places her narrative in an era when India was under colonial rule and but there were still some remnants of the Maratha dynasty in the region where she was born. The protagonist is not necessarily the author but she weaves her story around three sisters, Surekha, Malati and Kamala, who were born in a typical Maratha village in Ratnagiri and their fights against all odds.

While the elder sister Surekha is married off to an aristocrat in one of the princely States, the grow into younger sisters adulthoods starting from the Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar Ashram at Indore to Bombay (now Mumbai) at a time when the movement against British

THIS PRELUDE WAS NECESSARY TO EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SWALLOWING THE SUN, A NOVEL BY LAKSHMI MURDESHWAR PURI, A FORMER CAREER DIPLOMAT. I UNDERSTAND THIS IS HER FIRST FORAY INTO THE WORLD OF NOVELS AND SHE DESERVES TO CELEBRATE THE FACT THAT SHE HAS CRAFTED SUCH A BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF WORK. AMBASSADOR PURI, ALMOST UNVEILING HER OWN LIFE, PLACES HER NARRATIVE IN AN ERA WHEN INDIA WAS UNDER COLONIAL RULE AND BUT THERE WERE STILL SOME REMNANTS OF THE MARATHA DYNASTY IN THE REGION WHERE SHE WAS BORN

colonialism was at its peak. The trials and tribulations of Malati and Kamala have been portrayed poignantly as the author draws the readers into the pathos of the three sisters' lives, their sorrow and their joys. What stands out in this novel is

the descriptive power of the author. My friend Dr Prajesh Panicker says Puri's language is honest and is not pretentious. I cannot agree more with his observation that the writer has truly spoken from her heart and has not tried to impress any literary critics or fancy theorists. We have had many one-book wonders in the past who remain darlings of the media, particularly one unconventional writer who managed to get an international award with her first novel but failed miserably in repeating the feat again as her second work fell flat and vanished from public

Eventually, readers decide the quality of a literary work and not those who sit in their ivory towers sipping scotch. In Swallowing The Sun, the author has a lot to tell the readers and that job she has perfected with an ace. I am not competent enough to call this work an eternal classic but the is that Lakshmi Murudeshwar Puri is here to stay, stay as a leading literary figure of our times because of her articulation and honesty. Swallowing the Sun is a great read as you feel you are sailing smoothly across a river with no swirls or undercurrents. Waiting to read more of Lakshmi Puri'S narratives in the days to come.

Writing is most satisfying for me

KAREN ANAND is widely regarded as one of India's first food gurus. A prolific writer, she has published numerous books including the bestselling Good Food GoodLiving and Simple Cooking for Smart Men, and co-authored The Penguin Food Lovers Guide to India and Nepal. Her twelve-book series entitled Simple Cooking was nominated for the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris. Anand continues to write extensively about food, with a regular column in the *Sunday Telegraph*. She is the recipient of the Trophée de l'Esprit Alimentaire (Food and Spirit Award) for Culture from the French Government and the winner of the French Ambassador's Travel Writer Award. She also runs a successful gourmet business and consults for luxury hotels and restaurants. Between all this, she ensures there is always time to cook! **SHARMILA CHAND** met up with her at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2024. Here are excerpts of the interview.

mong the various roles Awou undertake, which one brings you the most joy and satisfaction, and why? Well, I wear many hats, so

I've been entrepreneur, I've been a writer, I've been a cook chef. I've developed recipes and developed menus for people. I've done all sorts of things in the corporate sector. What gives me the most satisfaction is probably writing; it gives me the least money, but it certainly gives me the most satisfaction. What I love about writing is that you don't have to wax your upper lip or bother about your hair, or what you look like you can do it at three in the morning and wake up and I go to my desk, which is thankfully in my house and write in my pajamas. And I love the flexibility of that. However, as a profession, I loved the two restaurants I worked with in London that are hugely successful. I think success drives gratitude, and it drives what you do. For example, I developed Nimbooz for PepsiCo, and I've done lots of work for, for corporates in India, for other restaurants, and I love it when that product succeeds.

And it's very gratifying as a woman when you make money out of something. Because it's tough for a woman to do all of this. To run a home with children and to be successful in a career. It is tough, the whole nine yards is not easy. So, when you are successful and when it is monetarily also gratifying, it's great. But if you're asking me about the one, I enjoy most, it's writing.

Could you share insights into your latest project and what inspired you to embark

on it? Masala Memsahab is my 20th book. I realised that I wanted to do a book on India that

reflects my journey in India for the last 30 odd years. I am of course Indian, but I came back to India in my 20s. I sort of look at it with both eyes, sometimes a foreign eye in an Indian eye. It's really stories, stories of people that I came across their great dishes, some were just housewives, some were

restauranteurs but they're mostly great characters who produce great food and that for me is really important the fact that it's a culinary memoir. So, it features socioeconomic aspects of India, culinary aspects of India, the diversity of our regional cuisines, which I think is very important and still not brought out to the extent it should be. I think the French and Europeans are very good at marketing what they have and

journey?

acting or like anything, either As long as my books get published, and people want to read my books, I will do it.

What sparked your interest

have three careers in mind. Food was one and of course, international relations was another. When I came back to India, in mid 80s, I discovered I really couldn't do International Relations because of language and

writing down what they have. We in India are less good at all

With a notable repertoire of books, particularly in the realms of food and travel, what continues to motivate and inspire your writing Well, I think writing is like

you love it, or you hate it, and I love it. And that continues.

in the world of food, leading you to delve into its nuances and share your experiences? Somebody told me many years ago, you should always

various things. So, I jumped



to food and I was the right place at the right time. I was talking about European food because that's where I came from and that's what I knew and I grew up with. It wasn't because I thought it was trendy, or it was just something I knew how to do. So, I think, as I said, I was in the right place at the right time. Success spurs you on, as you get more successful with one salad bar, second salad bar, being on the cover of magazines, it's all very exciting. So, I continued down that road.

Reflecting on your journey thus far, could you share some key moments and lessons that have shaped your path?

don't think negatively at all. think when things happen, they happen for the best I do believe in the universe, giving you signs. I've never had any problems really, in my career. I think people have been very kind of open doors, then of course, I had to prove myself,

anything negative in my career. Personally, I've had my ups and downs, of course, and you just have to battle and, muddle your way through it. But in my career, I've been extremely lucky. There have been times when I did three TV series and then there was nothing. I was disappointed because all of a sudden TV was sort of going was taking on a change and it became the OTT platforms and I think also they didn't want older women, they wanted younger women. I thought that was a bit foolish, but that's the way TV was going and wanted younger men. It became more about Hindi. So, I can understand but I was disappointed for a while then I got more into corporate work which came my way and obviously because I was successful in my corporate work, I got

more work in the corporate

field. So, you know when one

door closes another one

When it comes to culinary experiences, destination holds a special place in your heart, and what

makes it your favourite? I don't know, nowadays I'm less into traveling to new places for the sake of it. I go where I have friends, or I go where I have work. I go a lot to Italy because I have lovely friends there. I love Italy and Venice where I go often. I love Paris and France, but I have less friends there. France is wonderful for me because I speak French so it's always gratifying to go there. Now I'm learning Italian now because I go so often. UK is a second home used to be a first home. I don't have the same longing and passion for it, but I do enjoy the British sense of humor. I enjoy seeing friends there. In the East there's no place that I love returning to so much but I do like exploring.

your various projects, which one stands out as your favorite, and what makes it memorable for you? Well, I think Deshaun in London, which has been a very successful restaurant, a Bombay Cafe in London is something that I'm very excited about. It is so successful; the owners have kept to the original vision we had and the inspiration. That makes it very exciting. And of course, my own company and the foodstuffs we do and the products we do. I'm very excited about the way it's going. One more thing I should also talk about is the years. By recognising luminaries such as Keshav farmers' market, we were the Malik and Bandyopadhyay, Gupta pays homage to the enduring first people to do big events like that. It was amazing to see so many products in India, legacy of poetry while coming together and the kind nurturing a new generation of voices. At the recent Poetry of work that is happening in India in the field of natural Readings session at the India food, organic food. Small Habitat Centre, vendors doing that. It was distinguished guests including amazing. I hope we can do it Dr Yogendra Narain, a former

Of poets, poetry, and poetic justice

"Poetry is the lifeblood of our shared humanity, flowing through the veins of culture and society, stirring the depths of our souls with its timeless resonance."

GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Poetry In a world often defined by its frenetic pace

and digital distractions, the timeless art of poetry stands as

empathy and connection. As Rumi, the celebrated 13th-Persian poet, eloquently reminds us, poetry serves as the lifeblood of our shared humanity, coursing through the annals of history and resonating across cultures and civilisations. In the heart of India's rich literary tapestry, the Poetry Club of India emerges as a champion of this venerable tradition, revitalising and nurturing the art form for a new generation. With a commitment to fostering cultural appreciation and cultivating talent, the Poetry Club of India stands as a testament to the enduring power of poetry to inspire, enlighten and unite. Founded in 1994 by eminent poet Manohar Bandyopadhyay and joined by leading figures such as Keshav Malik and Rakshit Puri, the Poetry Club of India has served as a lighthouse of literary excellence for nearly three decades. Originally conceived as a serious forum for multilingual poetry, the Club has evolved under the stewardship of Manav Gupta, who have recognised the importance of adapting to changing times while preserving the essence of poetic expression. After the pause button pushed by the pandemic, Manav Gupta's leadership has revitalised the club, elevating Poetry Readings to new heights of quantity and quality. A hallmark of Gupta's initiative is honouring veteran poets whose contributions have enriched the art form over the



Through poetry, we gain insights into the human experience, fostering empathy, understanding connection. It challenges us to pause, to contemplate, and to delve into the depths of our own emotions and experiences. In doing so, poetry cultivates mindfulness and awareness, fostering personal growth and resilience in the face of adversity. Through the

lens of poetry, we confront

pressing issues, grapple with

emotions and

alternative

complex

reminder of our shared

barriers of language,

nationality and ideology.

transcending

humanity,

Manohar

Delhi,

injustice, conventions and strive for a more equitable and compassionate Central to the Poetry Club of India's mission is the cultivation of good poets and the promotion of poetry sessions throughout the country. By providing a platform for established and emerging poets to share their work, the Club nurtures talent, fosters creativity and a sense of community among poetry enthusiasts. The revival of poetry through organisations like the Poetry Club of India is not merely a cultural endeavour but a civic imperative. In an increasingly fragmented and polarised world, poetry has the power to bridge divides, inspire empathy and positive change. By embracing poetry as a vital component of our cultural heritage, we reaffirm our commitment to the values of compassion, tolerance and understanding that define us as a civilised society. In these tumultuous times, when reality often feels stranger than fiction, the need for poetic justice becomes even more pronounced. As we grapple with uncertainty and upheaval, we cling to the belief that there is meaning and purpose behind the chaos that there is a greater cosmic justice at play. Poetic justice becomes a source of comfort and reassurance, reminding us that there is still beauty and fairness to be found in the world, even amid its surreal twists and turns. Of course, to appreciate poetic justice, one needs to understand poetry!

perspectives. In this way,

poetry becomes a catalyst for

dialogue and social change,

inspiring us to confront

DUCKETT 100 TAKES ENGLAND TO 207/2

Ben Duckett's power-packed hundred overshadowed R

Ashwin's monumental feat as England thrived on their belligerent Bazball tactic to reach 207/2 at stumps on day two and put India under pressure in the third Test here on Friday.

Ashwin dismissed Zak Crawley (15) in the final session to join Anil Kumble as the second Indian, and fifth overall, to take 500 wickets in Test history.

But India's struggles to contain fearless England's enterprising batters persisted as Duckett raced to his third Test hundred off only 88 balls. England have already wiped off a chunk of their first innings deficit and trail India by 238 runs going into day three. India ended up with 445 in their first innings.

At one stage, Duckett even flirted briefly with the prospect of breaking Gilbert Jessop's record from 1902 for fastest Test ton (77 balls) for

his country. Duckett peppered the field with powerful strokes all around the ground, hitting 21 fours and two sixes to reach 133 not out from only 118 balls. Joe Root was at the other

end on nine. Ashwin struck immediately after his introduction into the attack to send Crawley packing, with the batter giftwrapping his wicket to help the Indian spinner complete

INDIA SCORES 445 IN FIRST INNINGS



his milestone.

On an innocuous delivery from around the wicket, managed connection that ballooned towards Rajat Patidar at short

Patidar only had to make a few paces on his left to grab the ball over his shoulder as each of Ashwin's teammates rushed to celebrate the feat.

England The diminutive opener Duckett, who looked a

tad tentative outside the offstump before the tea break, came out all guns blazing to bring up his first fifty of the tour, in just 39 balls with 11

The introduction of spin did slow down Duckett's pace for a short while, but he hit the top gear quickly to keep the Indian bowlers under pressure.

hits to the fence.

A pivotal moment came in the 21st over from Bumrah in his second spell with the Indian spearhead nailing a perfect

With his front foot out of the way, it appeared on the first instance that the ball crashed into the wickets.

However, umpire Kumar Dharmasena was not as convinced as the bowler got his captain to ask for DRS intervention.

The replays showed Duckett had done incredibly well to connect with the ferocious yorker with the bottom of his

Each of the three DRS reviews per innings would weigh in gold if the pitch continues to be as placid as it has been for the first two days, but this was a review which India would not have mind losing.

India took the second DRS against Ollie Pope when Mohammed Siraj, deployed on short-ball tactics, pitched a fuller one to hit the pads. unmoved but he had to overturn his appeal with the replays confirming that the ball was hitting the leg stump, ending Pope's entertaining 39 off 55 balls (5 fours and 1 six). Ashwin returned for the final over of the day to have one more crack. His fourth delivery turned sharply away from Duckett after pitching on leg and Rohit Sharma collected a catch believing

collected a catch believing there was an edge.
However, it culminated with replays showing the ball pitching outside leg and missing the bat completely, with India staring at a long third day in the field with only one DRS appeal left.
Earlier in the day, India's lower order did a fair job of collecting as many runs as

collecting as many runs as possible before being bowled out for 445.

Debutant Dhruv Jurel (46) missed out on a fifty in his maiden outing. The highlight of his knock was an uppercut off Mark Wood's 146 kmph delivery, which sent the ball flying into the stands over a helpless slip cordon.

Jurel partnered with Ashwin (39) to add 77 runs for the eighth wicket which pushed India past the 400-run mark while also steadying the ship after centurion Ravindra Jadeja (112) and Kuldeep Yadav (4) fell early.

Bumrah (28) and Siraj (3) did their best in keeping England out on the park for longer with a quick 30-run stand from 42



Ashwin powers to 500 Test wickets mark

Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Friday became the second Indian bowler after former skipper Anil Kumble to take 500 Test wickets during the third Test against England here. Ashwin also became only the

third off-spinner to achieve the feat and continues to be the second highest wicket-taker for India behind Kumble, who ended his career with 619 scalps. The 37-year-old reached the milestone on day two of the ongoing Test. He needed just one wicket for the feat and that came in the way of opener Zak Crawley, who mis-timed a sweep which landed in the safe hands of Rajat Patidar at short fine leg.

This was after India were earlier bowled out for 445 in their

first innings.
The only other off-spinners who have touched the 500 wickets mark are retired Sri Lanka great Muttiah Muralidaran (800) and Australia's Nathan Lyon

(517), who did it last year. Overall, Ashwin is only the ninth bowler to take 500 wickets in the traditional format, scaling the landmark in his 97th

Having made his Test debut in 2011, Ashwin has come a long

The engineering graduate from Chennai started out as a toporder batter and tried his hand at medium pace bowling before settling for the role of an offspinner, a decision that was forced by a back injury during his teenage years. Following the Kumble and

Harbhajan Singh era, Ashwin had big shoes to fill and he has done that with remarkable consistency.

In his first 16 Tests, Ashwin snared nine five-wicket hauls and became the fastest to the 300 wickets club.

Ashwin has also proved his worth in the shorter formats, having played 116 ODIS for his 156 wickets in the format. He has 72 wickets in 65 T20 International appearances.



Sutherland smashes fastest double ton in women Test history

PTI ■ PERTH

Annabel smashed the fastest double hundred in women's Test history, achieving the feat in 248 balls on the second day of the one-off match against South Africa here.

The earlier fastest double century was scored by Karen Rolton off 306 balls made in 2001 against England in Leeds. The 22-year-old Sutherland eventually got dismissed for 210 off 256 balls but not before helping Australia post a massive 575 for 9 declared in their first innings at the WACA, the highest total in women's Test cricket.

South Africa, who were shot out for 76 in their first innings, were 67 for 3 in their second essay at stumps on the second day, still trailing by 432 runs. Sutherland was three runs shy of Ellyse Perry's Australian

 $R_{ ext{get}}^{ ext{eal Madrid}}$ and Kylian Mbappé may get a second chance to make it

Less than two years after what seemed

to be a done deal fell apart, the Spanish

powerhouse and the France star could

have another opportunity to join forces. Mbappé reportedly told Paris Saint-

Germain on Thursday that he will leave

the club at end of the season, opening

the way for another run by Madrid to

sign one of the world's best soccer

players. There could be a bidding war

among several clubs to sign the former

World Cup winner, but Madrid is

widely considered to be in the front

Mbappe's arrival would give Madrid

one of the top attacks in soccer, with

work.

highest individual record of 213 not out made in 2017.

Coming on to bat at No. 6, off her first 35 balls but later toyed with the South African bowlers as she struck 27 fours and two sixes in her imperious

Only three women have hit higher Test scores — Pakistan's Kiran Baluch (242) in 2004, India's Mithali Raj (214) in 2002 and Perry

Sutherland also became the youngest Australian woman, and second youngest overall, to hit a double century and just the ninth woman ever to reach the milestone.

Sutherland consumed 149 balls to reach to her hundred, just one short of her own record for fastest Test ton by a woman.

Before this match, Sutherland has scored 213 runs from four Tests after making her debut in

years old.

would the oldest of the four at just 25

Madrid made a big push to sign Mbappé in 2022, with one of its offers

rejected by PSG reportedly reaching

Mbappé never hid his dream of one day

playing for Madrid, but decided at the

time that it was best to continue his

It would be a much cheaper deal for

Madrid now, as Mbappé will be a free

agent after seven years with PSG. He

informed the French club last year that

he would not trigger an extension to the

Madrid had failed to secure Mbappé

even before that debacle a few years ago

when the player visited the club's

facilities at age 14 but instead decided to

200 million euros (\$215 million).

"adventure" in Paris.

contract he signed in 2022.

join Monaco's youth academy.

Kiwis clinch first ever series win over Proteas

AP ■ HAMILTON (NEW ZEALAND)

Kane Williamson made 133 in an unbroken partnership of 152 with Will Young to lead New Zealand to a seven-wicket win over South Africa on the fourth day of the second test Friday and to its first-ever series win over the

Williamson scored centuries in both innings of the first test which New Zealand won by

South Africa took a 31-run first innings lead in the second test and extended that to 267 when it made 235 in its second

New Zealand reached 40-1 before stumps on day three, setting up a fourth day on which it needed a further 227 while South Africa needed nine wickets to win the match and save the series. New Zealand's tota

PTI BUSAN (SOUTH KOREA)

Ayhika Mukherjee and Sreeja Akula stunned the

world's top two players, Sun

Yingsha and Wang Yidi, in their respective singles matches to rattle the mighty

China before the Indian

women's table tennis team

narrowly fell short in the

World Team Championships

Mukherjee played the match of

her life to pull off a stunning 12-10 2-11 13-11 11-6 win over

world number one Sun in the opening singles of the group

Real Madrid free to make another run for Mbappé

lowly

155.

here on Friday.

Ranked a

was its fifth-highest in a successful fourth-innings run

The South Africa team is considerably under-strength as most of its leading players remained at home to play in a domestic Twenty20 league. Six Proteas players including captain Neil Brand made their debuts in the first test and the debuts in the first test and the second test lineup had only 51 tests in total compared to New Zealand's 436.

The South Africa bowlers made New Zealand grind its way to a victory. The winning runs finally came in the 95th over, about 20 minutes before the end of play on day four.

Williamson's played almost a lone hand at first as he built his 32nd test century from 203 deliveries. He put on 64 for the third wicket with Rachin Ravindra who made 20 from 72 balls. He then



partner in Young who stayed with him and was 60 not out at

New Zealand was under pressure when Young came out to join Williamson at the fall of Ravindra's wicket, still needing 150 to win. Runs came slowly for him at first as Williamson approached his century but Jacques Kallis or Brian Lara,

reached his 50 from 118 balls. Williamson is one of only two active players along with Australia's Steve Smith to reach 32 centuries and has done so faster, in 172 innings, than Smith, Ricky Ponting, Sachin Tendulkar, Younis Khan, Sunil Gavaskar, Kumar Sangakarra, He brought to bear all of his powers of concentration in difficult batting conditions Friday with the ball turning and bouncing, occasionally spitting off a length.

Williamson is the No. 1-ranked batter in tests and showed why with three centuries in four innings in the series and a total of 403 runs at an average of 134. He batted almost 18-1/2 hours in total in the series.

"Coming into today on a wearing surface we knew we were going to have to string together," partnerships Williamson said. "Credit to South Africa. Certainly for the first couple of days they outplayed us I thought.

"We had to fight hard to get out of that position and change momentum and with the partnerships and seeing off the new ball were able to give

cross court forehand. Sun netted a forehand for 11-10

and the Indian came up with a

down the line backhand to

The Chinese took a 6-0 lead in

the second game before going

Ayhika trailed 5-9 in the third

backhand down the line but

she was also not afraid to attack

from the forehand.

pocket the first game.

on to level the contest.



over Hong Kong PTI ■ SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA)

medal after QF win

Indian women shuttlers Lassured themselves of a maiden Badminton Asia Team Championships medal by cruising to a 3-0 win over Hong Kong in the quarterfinals here on Friday. After stunning top seeds China blanked Hong Kong riding on wins from double Olympic-medallist PV Sindhu, Ashmita

Ashwini Ponappa and Tanisha Crasto. India will now face the winner of the other quarterfinal between top seed Japan and

Chaliha and the doubles pair of

China. Returning from a long injury layoff, Sindhu registered a hard-fought 21-7, 16-21, 21-12

win against a lower-ranked Lo Sin Yan Happy. women's The combination of Tanisha and Ponnappa then doubled the lead by getting the better of

world no. 18 combination of Yeung Nga Ting and Yeung Pui Lam 21-10, 21-14 in 35 minutes. Ashmita then wrapped up the tie with a comfortable 21-12,

21-13 triumph over Yeung Sum Yee, assuring the team of at least a bronze. "It is a comfortable result for

the women's team. I am very happy with their performance," former national coach Vimal Kumar, who is with the team, told PTI from Shah Alam.

'There was a little drift, so it was initially difficult to control the shuttle as it was going out. Sindhu was stretched a bit as it was tough from one end due to the drift but it is a good result, we are in the semifinals.'

Up against world no. 77 Lo, Sindhu zoomed to 11-1 in the opening game after her rival found the going tough. The Indian conceded six points after resumption wrapping up the game.

It turned out to be a tight battle after the change of sides as Sindhu and Lo moved neck and neck till 10-10 before the Hong Kong player went into the break with a one-point lead with the help of a cross drop.

Ayhika, Sreeja stun world number one



It was the first ever loss for Sun at the team event of World Championships, summing up the enormity of Ayhika's achievement.

The unexpected win provided a massive boost to Sreeja, who made the day even more memorable for Indian table



tennis by blanking world number 2 Wang Yidi in straight games 11-7 11-9 13-11 in the third singles.

However, star player Manika Batra losing both her singles and Ayhika going down in the fifth and deciding singles meant India lost the rubber 2-3. Nonetheless, it was a red

Mbappé by applauding him at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium when he

played with PSG in a Champions

The inability to close the deal led to

criticism toward Madrid president

Florentino Pérez, and even prompted some backlash against Mbappé. Midfielder Federico Valverde said at the

time that to be a Madrid player was "a

Mbappé would have arrived to play

alongside Karim Benzema, who left a

year later and was never replaced by a

Mbappé could be that replacement, finally giving Madrid a star who could

possibly be on a similar level to former

Mbappé perhaps could also bring the

Portugal great Cristiano Ronaldo.

privilege that not everyone can have."

League match.

top-level forward.

letter day for the game in India with Ayhika and Sreeja doing the unthinkable. "I really feel great to beat Sun

Yingsha. Today was my day, she was doing great and I did very well. I was confident and I iust told myself that I should enjoy the match," said Ayhika, who used her anti spin rubber brilliantly to down the multiple time Olympic and World

in West Bengal trailed multiple times in the match but found a way to comeback.

game before reeling five straight points to turn the tables on Sun. Such was Sun's Championship medallist. The 26-year-old from Naihati state of mind that she opted for a timeout on 8-9. While Ayhika's main weapon throughout the battle was her

She was down 7-10 in the first game but made it 10-10 with a

Alcaraz beats Carabelli in clay court debut

AP BUENOS AIRES

Defending champion and top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz advanced to the quarterfinals of the Argentina Open by beating Camilo Carabelli 6-2, 7-5 in his first clay-court match of the season.

The 20-year-old Alcaraz came from 2-0 down in the second set against his Argentine opponent.

"I started really nervous, I'm not going to lie, with the crowd behind him, supporting him," Alcaraz said. "I think it's normal, obviously,

but really happy with my first



Djere of Serbia 6-4, 7-5. Cameron Second-seeded Norrie, the runner-up last year, lost 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 to Federico Coria of Argentina. Coria will play the winner between another Argentine,

Sebastián Báez, and Italy's

club back to the "galacticos" era that it enjoyed in the 2000s with players such Mbappé joining Jude Bellingham, The most-recent failure was a big blow Luciano Darderi. as Luís Figo, Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham and former Brazil great Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo. It would also give Europe's most successful club a Alcaraz and Norrie are also set to Madrid fans, who felt it was only a about where the young Frenchman match on clay since (the French Open)." would fit in the squad. Madrid to play at the Rio Open later matter of time for the transfer to He will next play Italy's Andrea this month in Brazil. great outlook for the future, as Mbappé happen. The only doubts then were supporters had even "welcomed" Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any

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