



**OPINION 6**  
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THOSE  
HARMING OUR INSTITUTIONS

**WORLD 8**  
PPP, PML-N STRIKE DEAL:  
SHEHBAZ TO BE PM AGAIN

**MONEY 10**  
TAKE MORE STEPS TO CURB  
ILLEGAL LENDING APPS: FM

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EXPECTATIONS LEFT  
ME DISAPPOINTED,  
SAYS GILL  
12 SPORTS

## Modi Marches Towards Sandeshkhali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Amid widespread complaints of sexual offences against women allegedly committed by members of the ruling Trinamool Congress in Sandeshkhali, the BJP has intensified its campaign efforts in West Bengal even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged unwavering support to the women of Sandeshkhali. Modi's visit to West Bengal to address an all-women rally on March 7 is poised to deliver a resounding response to the TMC in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, effectively addressing the concerns raised by the victims in Bengal. The BJP has been striving to gain ground in West Bengal and managed to secure its symbol on 18 out of the total 42 Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 general elections, while holding 70 legislators in the 294-member Assembly. However, in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had only two MPs, but in 2024, with the clarion call of securing 370 plus seats, the party hopes to win over 25 seats in the State. The Opposition bloc of the Congress, the TMC, and Left parties has nearly disintegrated in Bengal.

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government of exceeding the erstwhile CPI(M) administration in subjecting the people of West Bengal to atrocities. Raising the issue of alleged sexual harassment of women in Sandeshkhali, senior BJP leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad



criticised the Congress and other constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc, questioning their silence on the matter. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that Sandeshkhali would be the "downfall" of his Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee and her party. West Bengal DGP Rajeev Kumar visited Sandeshkhali on

Wednesday afternoon to assess the situation in the area, which has been marked by protests following allegations of sexual abuse of women by TMC leaders. In his first visit to the area since the protests began, Kumar, accompanied by senior police officers, including ADG South Bengal Supratim Sarkar, went to Sandeshkhali police station and

held meetings there, according to a police source. Meanwhile, a row has erupted after Sikh IPS officer Jaspreet Singh retaliated after being called "Khalistani" while he was speaking to a group of protesting State BJP leaders and workers led by Opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari on Tuesday. Singh is part of a special team deployed by the

West Bengal Police to maintain law and order and investigate complaints by villagers in Sandeshkhali. While the senior police officer has maintained that he will lodge a case, the BJP has dismissed the claim and sought to prove when the Khalistani slur was used against the officer on duty. On the other hand, West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has

"opened the doors" of the Raj Bhavan for the victimised women of the trouble-torn Sandeshkhali region who feel unsafe in their homes. "The Sandeshkhali issue is becoming very serious. The blatant assault, humiliating treatment, and sexual assault on women are a shame on our society and democracy," Ravi Shankar Prasad said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters in the national capital. The BJP leader also criticised West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "defending" such incidents in the State, questioning her conscience and that of other Opposition parties. "When Mamata Banerjee struggled (in the past) against the CPI(M)'s atrocities and sat on an indefinite agitation against it, we all became her fans and lauded her struggle. Today, her atrocity and police repression have surpassed that of the (then) CPI(M) rule," he charged. "It's a shame. Where is her conscience?" Prasad asked, adding, "Mamata ji, you will have to give a reply. Mamata ji, you will have to pay for it. People will give a political reply to you." Sources within the BJP have indicated that the Prime Minister is planning to address a women's rally in Barasat, West Bengal, on March 7, a day before International Women's Day. The riverine Sandeshkhali area, situated on the borders of the Sunderbans about 100 kilometres from Kolkata, has been witnessing protests after local women accused absconding Trinamool Congress

(TMC) leader Sheikh Shajahan and his supporters of land grab and sexual assault under coercion. West Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said the Prime Minister is likely to visit Barasat on March 7 to address a women's rally. Majumdar had to be hospitalised with injuries last week as BJP workers clashed with police personnel after being stopped from going to Sandeshkhali. A senior BJP leader said it is very likely that the visit by the Prime Minister will occur in early March, before the announcement of General Elections, as the model code of conduct will be enforced. "PM Modi will visit West Bengal shortly as several projects are lined up. Most importantly, the PM is concerned about the incident in Sandeshkhali, and the party is planning a first-ever all-women rally as the NDA government has been specifically working for the welfare of women and related schemes. The final tour program will be known shortly," said the party leader. While Sheikh has been missing since January 5, when a mob attacked Enforcement Directorate (ED) officers during a raid at his residence in connection with an alleged ration scam, TMC supreme and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has blamed the BJP for orchestrating an incident in the area along with the ED and the media. Senior BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya, who was the BJP incharge of West Bengal, claimed a strong nexus exists among groups, police, and politicians in West Bengal.

### Bhishma Pitamah of Indian judiciary passes away

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Legal luminary Fali S Nariman passed away here on Wednesday at the age of 95. He was suffering from multiple ailments, including cardiac issues. Tributes poured in for him from across the country as Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla condoled the death of the veteran advocate, often referred to as the "Bhishma Pitamah" of the Indian judiciary. Born on January 10, 1929, Nariman was enrolled as an advocate at the Bombay High Court in November 1950 and was designated a senior advocate in 1961. He practised law for more than 70 years, initially in the Bombay High Court and since 1972 in the Supreme Court. Nariman is survived by his son and former Supreme Court judge Rohinton Nariman, daughter Anaheeta and daughter-in-law Sanaya. His wife Bapsi Nariman died in 2020. Nariman was appointed as the additional solicitor general of India in May 1972. He resigned from the post a day after the imposition of Emergency on June 26, 1975.

Continued on Page 2

### EC readies poll machinery



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With political parties gearing up for their campaigns as the Lok Sabha polls are likely to be announced between March 10 and 15, the Election Commission (EC) has directed the Railway Board to ensure "smooth and hassle-free" train movement for more than 3.4 lakh security personnel to be deployed for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, with specific instructions to avoid the recurrence of delays noticed in the past. Additionally, the Bengaluru-based Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd had been tasked with providing over 26 lakh vials of indelible ink, which leaves a deep indigo-coloured mark

on a voter's left forefinger, to various States for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. As the countdown begins, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to chair a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers on March 3, days before the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections schedule. According to officials, the meeting of the Council of Ministers is scheduled to be held at the Sushma Swaraj Bhawan in the Chanakyapuri diplomatic enclave. In 2014, the Election Commission had announced the schedule for the nine-phased Lok Sabha elections on March 5, and the results were declared on May 16. In 2019, the poll panel had announced the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on

Continued on Page 2

### Farmers pause Delhi march after violence

RAJESH KUMAR ■  
NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

The "Delhi Chalo" protest march by farmers from Punjab has been suspended for two days after a protester was killed and about 12 police personnel were injured in clashes at Khanauri, one of the two protest sites on the Punjab-Haryana border. "We will hold discussions regarding the incident that occurred in Khanauri. Our march towards Delhi will be on hold for two days. We will provide further clarification on our future actions later," farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher, head of the Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, stated at a press conference. The farmers' announcement comes after the Centre appealed to them for another round of discussions. This marks the second time the farmers' march has been put on hold. Previously, it was halted before the fourth round of talks between the farmers and the Central Government. Earlier, a 21-year-old farmer was killed, and several others were injured following a clash between security personnel



Smoke rises from tear gas being fired upon the protesting farmers during their 'Delhi Chalo' march, near the Punjab-Haryana Shambhu Border in Patiala district on Wednesday

and protesting farmers at Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border. A farmers' leader said the victim has been identified as Shubh Karan Singh, a resident of Baloke village in Punjab's Bathinda district. This incident marks the first casualty of the second round of farmers' protests, known as the "Delhi Chalo March", which began on February 13. The Haryana Police has alleged that the farmer protesters surrounded the police from all sides by pouring chili powder in the stubble, and attacked the policemen using sticks, maces, and stone pelting at the Khanauri border. Around 12 policemen were seriously injured. The police appealed to the protesters for peace. Meanwhile, it has denied that any farmer has died yet in the clash on the Shambhu border, contrary to claims made on various platforms, as the farmers protesting against the Centre intensify their defense against the Haryana Police.

Continued on Page 2

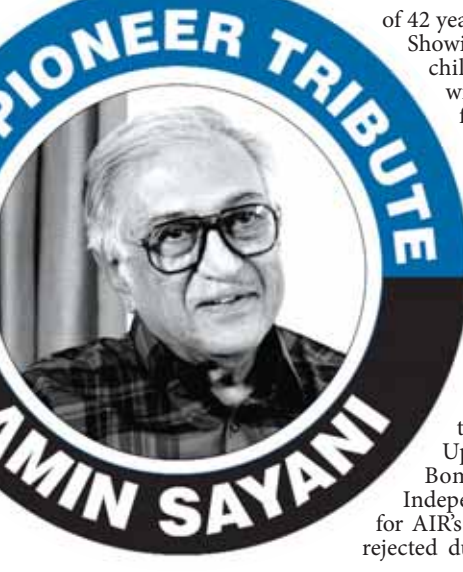
## A Golden voice silenced by Mortality

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

The greeting "Behno aur bhaiyon", which has been a tradition for more than five decades, will never again resonate with millions of avid radio listeners as its iconic voice, Amin Sayani, has fallen silent. The most recognised voice of radio passed away at the age of 91 due to a heart attack in Mumbai. His last rites will be held on Thursday. Generations of Indians grew up listening to Sayani on his immensely popular weekly radio programme, Binaca Geetmala, aired every Wednesday, featuring the most popular Hindi film songs and rating them accordingly. Almost all playback singers, music directors, and even actors anxiously awaited the

broadcast to assess their ratings in an era devoid of television. More than just an announcer, Sayani was an institution in the world of radio, spanning generations. His popularity and credibility can be measured by the fact that radio listeners and the film fraternity remained devoted to him for nearly 40 years. "Namaste behno aur bhaiyon, main aapka dost Amin Sayani bol raha hoon." This familiar greeting, in his iconic voice with its thick timbre, resonated through countless homes every Wednesday on Radio Ceylon from 1952 to 1988, still evoking strong nostalgia among listeners. After 1988, Binaca Geetmala moved to All India Radio's Vividh Bharati, where it continued to dominate the charts until 1994.

Sayani interviewed the who's who of Hindi filmdom, including Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, Raj Kapoor, and Amitabh Bachchan, among many others. His distinctive style of presentation, delivered in easy-to-follow Hindustani, became the benchmark for aspiring radio announcers. In fact, many attempted to emulate Sayani, but failed to captivate audiences in the same way. Born in Mumbai into a multilingual family on December 21, 1932, Sayani hosted, presented, and voiced over 50,000 shows over the course



of 42 years. Showing creative talent since childhood, Sayani began writing for his mother's fortnightly journal, Rehbar, at the age of just 13. He also became proficient in English during this time, participating in children's programmes on the English service of All India Radio Bombay. He later left Bombay to study in Gwalior. Upon his return to Bombay post-Independence, he auditioned for AIR's Hindi service but was rejected due to a slight Gujarati

accent. In 1952, then Information and Broadcasting Minister BV Keskar banned Hindi film songs on AIR. Around that time, Radio Ceylon, founded by the British, began gaining popularity for its programmes in English, Tamil, and Hindi. Broadcasting from Colombo, Radio Ceylon embarked on its journey in 1949. American businessman Daniel Molina saw an opportunity there and established his company, Radio Advertising Services in Mumbai. He hired Sayani's elder brother, former AIR broadcaster Hamid Sayani, to oversee Radio Ceylon's production arm. Both Hamid Sayani and Molina were eager to produce a programme on Hindi film songs, and the elder Sayani selected his

younger brother for the task. The rest, as they say, is history. Sayani became a radio presenter in Hindi with Binaca Geetmala, a programme of Hindi film songs sponsored by the toothpaste brand, in December 1952 and never looked back. The first of its kind show, it ran for 42 years to massive popularity. Condoling his death, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the iconic radio presenter "nurtured a very special bond with his listeners." The Editor and owner of The Pioneer, Dr Chandan Mitra, grew up listening in Kolkata to Sayani's programme and became an avid Hindi film music follower. Dr Mitra interviewed the legendary radio announcer for Darpan magazine of The Pioneer.





# Amrit Bharat stations to get service plazas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on February 26 lay the foundation stone of 550 Amrit Bharat stations to improve facilities at railway stations by developing rooftop plazas and city centres at a cost of ₹40,000 crore.



The prime minister will also lay the foundation stone of nearly 1,500 road overbridges and underbridges across different states during a function that will be conducted virtually at over 2,000 railway stations.

participated in different competitions and about 50,000 prizes will be awarded by divisional railway managers and senior railway officers during the function. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme was launched for the development of stations on Indian Railways.

as per necessity, phasing and feasibility and creation of city centres at the station in the long term.

The scheme envisages a gradual shift to sustainable and environment-friendly solutions, as per availability of funds and condition of existing assets. To ensure smooth access, it also proposes widening of roads, removal of unwanted structures, properly designed signages, dedicated pedestrian pathways, well-planned parking areas and improved lighting.

# North-East region being recognised as growth engine of India: Mandaviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, the North-East region is being recognised as the growth engine of India, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Wednesday, adding that the significant strides made in healthcare accessibility and availability across the entire region has been possible under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



The Prime Minister aims to establish a healthy and developed India where quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare services are equitably distributed to every citizen.

Healthcare today has become accessible and available for this entire region, he said after virtually inaugurating a 'Regional Consultative Workshop on Research Priority for Providing Accessible and Affordable Healthcare for the Northeastern States of India'. Union Minister of State for

Health Bharati Pravin Pawar and Minister of Health in Meghalaya government Dr Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh were also present at the workshop jointly organised by the Department of Health Research, Union health ministry, Indian Institute of Public Health, Shillong, and Indian Council of Medical Research - Regional Medical Research

Centre, Dibrugarh. Addressing the gathering, Mandaviya said, the effort of the government is to ensure that everyone gets access to health facilities in an equal manner without any distinction between rich and poor. "To achieve this objective, the government has worked with policies and various schemes due to which India has created a health model that gives meaning to the spirit of 'Sarva Jan Hitaaya, Sarva Jan Sukhaya,' he said.

Giving examples of the measures initiated for the development of the Northeast region, Mandaviya said in the last 10 years, efforts have been made to bring it into the mainstream of the country by connecting it with all types of connectivity like health, roadways, railways, I-ways, waterways and ropeway.

"In the last 10 years, institutions like RIMS (Regional Institute of Medical Sciences), RIPANS (Regional Institute of Paramedical and Nursing Sciences), NEIGRIHMS (Northeastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences) and Assam AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) have been developed and 23 new medical colleges have been opened in the region. ICMR has also developed various health facilities in the region," he further said.

# Centre creates 24,000 deputation reserve pool in Central paramilitary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Government has sanctioned the creation of a 24,000-personnel deputation reserve within the existing manpower of the five Central Armed police forces and Assam Rifles in a bid to ensure better promotion avenues, fresh recruitment of personnel and ensuring quality manpower for a variety of internal security tasks.



The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an order on Tuesday for creation of a 23,958 'deputation reserve' in the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, SSB and Assam Rifles. These five central armed police forces (CAPFs) apart from the Assam Rifles are deployed for undertaking various internal security duties like counter-terrorist operations, border guarding and conduct of elections and maintenance of law and order across the country.

Officers holding the posts under such reserves perform regular functions of the posts against which they are posted as substitutes and they are only temporary replacements for regular cadre officers who are currently away and as such

# Modi to launch ₹61,000 crore projects in UP, Gujarat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh on Thursday and Friday during which he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than ₹61,000 crore in the two States.



While Modi will inaugurate, lay the foundation stone and initiate work commencement of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 48,000 crore in Gujarat, he will also launch and inaugurate projects worth over Rs 13,000 crore for transforming Varanasi and its adjoining areas, according to a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Wednesday. On February 22 (Thursday), at around 10.45 am in Ahmedabad, Modi will participate in the golden jubilee celebration of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF).

At around 12.45 pm, the prime minister will reach Mahesana and perform 'puja' and 'darshan' at the Valinath Mahadev Temple. Around 1 pm, he will participate in a public function in Tarabh, Mahesana, where he will inaugurate and lay the

foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 8,350 crore. At around 4.15 pm, the prime minister will reach Navsari, where he will inaugurate, lay the foundation stone and initiate work commencement of multiple development projects worth about Rs 17,500 crore. At around 6.15 pm, Modi will visit the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station and dedicate to the nation two new Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs). On February 23 (Friday), Modi will participate in a programme for prize distribution to the winners of Sansad Sanskrit Pratiyogita at Swatantra Sabhagar, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. At 11.15 am, the prime minister will perform 'puja' and 'darshan' at Sant Guru Ravidas Janmashthali. At 11.30 am, the prime minister will attend a public function commemorating the 64th birth anniversary of Sant Guru Ravidas.

In the afternoon, Prime Minister Modi will attend a public function where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than Rs 13,000 crore in Varanasi. At the two public functions in Gujarat's Mahesana and Navsari, the prime minister will dedicate to nation and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects that will encompass important sectors such as road, rail, energy, health, Internet connectivity, urban development, water supply and tourism, among others, in districts such as Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Banaskantha, Anand, Mahesana, Kacheh, Kheda, Bharuch, Tapi, Vadodra, Surat, Navsari, Panchmahal, Valsad, and Narmada. At a public function in Tarabh, Mahesana, the prime minister will dedicate to the nation important projects, including Bharat Net Phase-II - Gujarat Fibre Grid Network Limited, which will provide high-speed Internet to more than 8,000 gram panchayats, multiple projects for rail line doubling, gauge conversion, new broad-gauge line in Mahesana and Banaskantha districts, and multiple road projects. The PMO statement also said since 2014, Modi has focused on transforming Varanasi and its adjoining areas by initiating a number of development projects catering to important sectors such as road, rail, aviation, tourism, education, health, drinking water, urban development and sanitation.

Providing impetus to the famous textile sector of Varanasi, Modi will lay the foundation stone of a National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in Varanasi. The new institute will strengthen the education and training infrastructure of the textile sector, the statement said. Augmenting the health infrastructure in Varanasi, the prime minister will lay the foundation stone of a new medical college. He will also lay the foundation stone of the National Centre of Ageing at Banaras Hindu University.

# Previously unreported genetic variants found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers have discovered more than 275 million previously unreported genetic variants, identified from data shared by nearly 250,000 participants of the National Institutes of Health's All of Us Research Program. Nearly 4 million of the newly identified variants are in areas that may be tied to disease risk.



setting a course for a future where scientific discovery is more inclusive, with broader benefits for all." To date, more than 90% of participants in large genomics studies have been of European genetic ancestry. NIH Institute and Center directors noted in an accompanying commentary article in Nature Medicine that this has led to a narrow understanding of the biology of diseases, and impeded the development of new treatments and prevention strategies for all populations. They emphasise that many researchers are now utilizing the All of Us dataset to advance precision medicine for all. While more research is needed before these findings can be used to tailor genetic testing recommendations for specific populations, researchers believe the difference in the number of these variants may be influenced by past studies' limited diversity and their disease-focused approach to participant enrollment, rather than a difference in the prevalence of the variants.

# India, Greece to firm up migration, mobility agreement soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Greece on Wednesday here reviewed the entire gamut of their bilateral ties and agreed to firm up a migration and mobility agreement soon, besides ramping up their overall cooperation in the areas of trade, defence production and to combat terrorism.

These were the main takeaways from the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Expansion of the overall strategic cooperation figured prominently during extensive talks between the two leaders. Mitsotakis is on a two-day visit to India. It is the first visit to India by a head of state of Greece in 15 years. India and Greece have common concerns and priorities in the fight against terrorism, Modi said in his media statement. "We discussed in detail how to further strengthen our cooperation in combating terrorism," he added. The prime minister said the growing cooperation between India and Greece in defence and security reflects the deep mutual trust between the two sides. We discussed early firming up of the migration and mobility partnership as well, he said. New opportunities are opening



up in defence manufacturing in India, which can be beneficial to both countries, Modi said. "We agree that all disputes and tensions should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," he added. Modi welcomed Greece's active participation and positive role in the Indo-Pacific. "We deliberated extensively on expanding the India-Greece cooperation in the agriculture sector," he said.

The strategic partnership between India and Greece is of "particular" importance and further expansion of their overall ties with a focus on economic engagement is being explored, Prime Minister Mitsotakis said on Wednesday. "For Greece, the strategic partnership between our two countries is of particular importance and we will have the opportunity to discuss a wide range of topics including on strategic partnership, and fostering our economic engagement," he told reporters. Mitsotakis was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan

ahead of his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Greek prime minister began his India visit this morning by paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat. In the morning, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar called on the Greek prime minister. "Delighted to call on Prime Minister @kmitotakis of Greece today. Valued his commitment to enhancing India-Greece ties. Look forward to the strengthening of our strategic partnership," Jaishankar posted on 'X'. India-Greece relations were elevated to a 'strategic partnership' during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Greece in August last year.

# Rahul to take break from Yatra for lecture at alma mater

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will take a break from February 26 to March 1 to enable Rahul Gandhi to deliver two special lectures at his alma mater, Cambridge University, and attend important meetings in New Delhi, the Congress said on Wednesday. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh also said February 22 and 23 will be rest days for the yatra after his Kanpur leg on Wednesday. The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will resume on the morning of February 24 from Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh and thereafter, cover Sambhal, Aligarh, Hathras and Agra districts, before arriving in Rajasthan's Dholpur, Ramesh said. "February 26th to March 1st will be break days to enable Rahul Gandhi to fulfil his long-



standing commitment to deliver two special lectures at his alma mater Cambridge University (UK) on February 27th and February 28th and also to enable him to attend other important meetings in New Delhi," Ramesh said in a social media post. The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will once again resume from Dholpur at 2 pm on March 2, he added. It will then cover

Morena, Gwalior, Shivpur, Guna, Shajapur and Ujjain, among other districts in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress leader added. Ramesh also informed that at 2 pm on March 5, Gandhi will have "darshan" at the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain. The former Congress chief had last had this darshan on November 29, 2022, during the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

# IT Department withdrew ₹65 crore from our accounts undemocratically: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that the Income Tax department has "withdrew" a sum of ₹65 crore from its accounts in different banks "undemocratically" even when the case pertaining to their return for previous years is sub judice. AICC treasurer Ajay Maken has claimed that "democracy will be over if the action of probe agencies goes unchecked" and said the Congress has full faith in the judiciary. "The Income Tax department had written to various banks to withdraw a sum of Rs 65 crore from different bank accounts of the Congress and Indian Youth Congress in view of the demand raised by the Income Tax authorities earlier, despite the appellate authorities hearing the case," Maken said. He said even when the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, which the Congress had moved against the Income Tax department's claim of Rs 210 crore as recovery for "discrepancies" in previous tax returns has been stayed and a lien has been marked, the tax authorities have resorted to "undemocratic action" by taking out the amount from their accounts. The Congress leader said the party had written to its bankers not to withdraw any amount as the case was sub judice and hearing in the case before the I-T Tribunal was still on. "Alarming Update: Concerns rise over the actions of Central Government agencies, potentially threatening the multiparty system in India. If unchecked, democracy in India will be over. Without

intervention of judiciary, our democratic principles will be endangered," Maken said in a social media post. In another post in Hindi, he said, "Since Tuesday evening, Congress has been a victim of the anti-democratic attitude of the government machinery. "We have full faith in the judicial system of India," he said, adding that he would share more information on the issue soon. The Income Tax authorities are hearing the matter on Wednesday. The Congress' main bank accounts were frozen on Friday over an Income Tax demand of Rs 210 crore but an I-T appellate tribunal later allowed it to operate them pending a further hearing next week, a huge relief for the party which said the move had impacted all political activity.

Notice is hereby given that my client Bassari is in process to avail the LAP from Pramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd against the Plot No. 3, in Block-G area measuring 100 Sq. Yds. part of Khara No. 2529, situated in the area of Village Dasna, Pargana Dasna, Tehsil & District Ghazalabad (U.P.) purchased the same from Mr. Wasim Sale Deed dated 30-12-2020 (Doc. No. 7576), whereas she has lost an Original Sale Deed dated 13-03-2018 executed by Mr. Shailendra Yadav on behalf of Mrs. Dhanshawari in favour of Mr. Wasim (Document No. 1520) pertain to the said property, an FIR has already been lodged for that on dated 21/2/2024.

India, China reiterate resolve to maintain peace along LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI



friendly and cordial atmosphere.

India and China reiterated their resolve to maintain peace and tranquility on the ground in border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh during the 21st round of talks between Corps Commanders of the two armies. The talks were held at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on February 19, Ministry of External Affairs(MEA)said here in a statement on Wednesday.

The two sides are engaged with each other at the military and diplomatic levels to resolve all outstanding issues including continuing tension at the some friction points at the LAC in eastern Ladakh since May 2020.

While the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintain peace at the border, there was no clear forward movement at Monday's talks in resolution of the more than three-and-a-half-year lingering row in a number of friction points, it was learnt. The MEA statement said "the 21st round of India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on 19th February 2024. The discussions built on the previous rounds, seeking complete disengagement in the remaining areas along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh as an essential basis for restoration of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas. The two sides shared their perspectives on this in the talks held in a

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mohd Imran S/o Mohd Idrees R/o K-166/31, Gali No-7, Near Khaddey Wali Masjid, Gautam Vihar Delhi-110053 declare that my father's name mentioned in my passport as Mohd Idris instead of Mohd Idrees, hence Mohd Idris and Mohd Idrees both are same and one person.

PD(283)C

IRIS PLAZA PVT. LTD. "Terra Lavium" SECTOR-75, FARIDABAD (HR)

DEFALTER LIST (Under Haryana Government affordable housing scheme)

LIST OF DEFAULTERS

For any queries please contact: 9971502333, 9971089333 CORPORATE OFFICE

PUBLICATION FORM NO. 3 (See Regulation- 15 (1)(a)/16(3) DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II CHANDIGARH (RT 2)

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.

WHEREAS, OA/1487/2023 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on 29/01/2024. 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. 42,65,666.71/- (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed).

BSES TENDER NOTICE BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi Date: 21.02.2024



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM PUBLIC WORKS ROADS DEPARTMENT O/O THE CHIEF ENGINEER (EAP)

ARRTI CAMPUS, FATASIL AMBARI, GUWAHATI - 25, Email-id: as-ce.asbip@assam.gov.in

REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB) E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE - Open Competitive Bidding (Two-Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)

The Government of Assam through Government of India has applied for financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the Assam Resilient Rural Bridges Program (ARRBP) and intends to apply part of the proceeds to the eligible payment under the contract. Bids are invited online from the eligible bidders from India for the following works as detailed in the table below.

Table with columns: Sl. No., Package no., Name of the work, Approx. Estimated Amount (Rupees in Lakh), Bid security (Rupees in Lakh), Tender Processing fees (INR), Completion Period (month). Contains 18 entries for various bridge construction projects.

The bidding documents are available online on http://www.assamtenders.gov.in from 27/02/2024 to 27/03/2024. Bidders will be required to register on the website which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). Bids must be submitted online on http://www.assamtenders.gov.in on or before 14:00 Hours on 27/03/2024.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, देवास ( म.प्र. )

क्रमांक/259/स्व.भा.नि./2024 देवास, दिनांक 16.02.2024 // निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना //

Table with columns: क्र. (No.), टेंडर क्र. जारी दिनांक (Tender No. Issued), कार्य का नाम (Name of Work), कार्य की समाप्ति एवं लागत (Completion & Cost), निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य एवं EMD (Bid Form Value & EMD), निविदा का अंतिम तिथि (Final Bid Date).

नोट :- निविदा से संबंधित किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन का प्रकाशन ऑनलाइन https://mptenders.gov.in को वेबसाइट पर ही किया जावेगा, पृथक से समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जावेगा।

उपायुक्त नगर पालिक निगम, देवास ( म.प्र. )

CORRIGENDUM ICICI Bank

DEMAND NOTICE PUBLICATION UNDER SARFAESI ACT FOR LOAN ACCOUNT NO. 00215023126, 00215500039 & 00215500045 NAME OF THE BORROWER TECHNOCRAT & TOILING PRIVATE LIMITED, UMESH KUMAR SINGH DIRECTOR, PRAVEEN RAO DIRECTOR, SPS TECHNOLOGY, UMESH KUMAR SINGH, REENA SINGH, VINOD KUMAR DHAHYA & VIJAY SHARMA WERE PUBLISHED IN DEMAND NOTICE DATED December 01, 2022 AND PUBLISHED DATED 24 February, 2023 AT THE PIONEER (HINDI), & THE PIONEER (ENGLISH) RESPECTIVELY AND SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE DATED MAY 04, 2023 IT'S PUBLISHED DATED MAY 09, 2023 AT PIONEER (ENGLISH) and PIONEER (HINDI), MAY 10, 2023 published at INDIAN EXPRESS (ENGLISH) and PRATAHKAL (HINDI), & MAY 10, 2023 published at ODISHA TODAY (ENGLISH) and UTKAL MAIL (ODI), and Physical possession notice, pre-sale notice, Inventory, inventory list & Panchnama dated NOVEMBER 30, 2023 & Post possession to borrower & Police and Vacation notice borrower dated DECEMBER 01, 2023, published dated DECEMBER 06, 2023 AT PIONEER (ENGLISH) and PIONEER (HINDI), DECEMBER 06, 2023 published at INDIAN EXPRESS (ENGLISH) and PRATAHKAL (HINDI), & DECEMBER 06, 2023 published at ODISHA TODAY (ENGLISH) and UTKAL MAIL (ODI) and Corrigenum published dated DECEMBER 21, 2023 AT THE PIONEER (ENGLISH) and PIONEER (HINDI), DECEMBER 22, 2023 published at INDIAN EXPRESS (ENGLISH) and PRATAHKAL (HINDI), & DECEMBER 21, 2023 published at ODISHA TODAY (ENGLISH) and UTKAL MAIL (ODI) under the securitization, reconstruction of financial asset and enforcement of Security interest Act 2002 and in exercise of the power conferred under section 13(2) the entire sarfaesi notices missed to sent to the guarantor PRAVEEN RAO one address at G 6 ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-3, PALAM VIHAR ROAD, NEAR SAMRAT GARDEN, GURGAON- 122001 & VINOD KUMAR DHAHYA ADDRESS AT PLOT 505-506 SECTOR 8 MANESAR GURGAON-122015 & VINOD DHAHYA ADDRESS AT DHANVANPUR DAULATABAD(53) GURGAON HARYANA- 122006 & VIJAY SHARMA ADDRESS AT PLOT 505-506 SECTOR 8 MANESAR GURGAON-122015 AND 227 URBAN ESTATE SECTOR- 4 GURGAON HARYANA- 122001 & VIJAY KUMAR SHARMA ADDRESS AT 5/18 INDUSTRIAL AREA, HUDA, DHARUHERA, REWARI, HARYANA- 122100, respectively. We Wish to Mention That Inadvertently And Unintentionally The Said notices are missed to sent to the above borrower addresses but all these information are activity wise captured in our all notice publications. The information regarding entire physical possession activities are dispatch to the above borrowers like physical possession notice, Pre-sale notice, post possession intimation & Vacation notices are dispatched dated 24 January 2024 to above missing borrower's addresses also only.

PUBLIC NOTICE My client Mr. Dharamender Gaur and Mrs. Sunita Gaur intends to purchase First Floor without roof rights part of Property No. B-97, land measuring 62.5+40.00 = 102.5 Sq.Yards, out of Kharsa No. 1976, in the area of Village Tihar, Colony known as Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064 from Mrs. Shashi Kaur (present owner) who had lost/misplaced the Original Sale Deed dated 05.06.2008 Registration No. 13377 in the name of Mrs. Devender Kaur and my client is mortgaging the same to LIC HFL. If anybody including Bank, Financial Institutions, persons, relative has any claim, right, interest whatsoever in the said property shall inform within 15 days to the undersigned with documentary evidence. In the event of no response to this notice, then our client shall presume that title of the said property is unencumbered and clear.

BSES Yamuna Power Limited, Delhi NOTICE INVITING TENDER Date: 22.02.2024 Sealed tender under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for the following work:

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE BOLANGIR e-Procurement Notice

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM O/O THE CHIEF ENGINEER (EAP), PWRD, ASSAM ARRTI COMPLEX, FATASIL AMBARI, GUWAHATI - 25



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Fair play

### Rules forcing women out of job for marriage or family unconstitutional, SC has ruled

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has declared regulations mandating the dismissal of women from jobs upon marriage as "archaic, discriminatory and in violation of constitutional principles." The judgment marks another significant step towards gender equality and the protection of women's rights. For decades, countless women across job sectors have faced the harsh reality of being forced out of employment solely because of their marital status or family obligations. Such discriminatory practices not only perpetuate gender inequality but also hinder women's economic independence and professional growth. The Supreme Court's decision to strike down these rules is a resounding victory for gender justice and workplace equality, besides reaffirming the constitutional guarantee of equality before the law and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender. It is also a stride towards ensuring a society that typically takes the fair sex as unreliable and untrustworthy who would leave their work midway to tend to their families. The repercussions of such regressive rules extend far beyond individual women; they contribute to a culture of inequality and reinforce harmful stereotypes. By dismantling these barriers, the judiciary has taken a significant step towards dismantling systemic gender discrimination and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society. Of course, changes that stand the test of time must come from within a society but legal protection is also necessary to ensure a progressive society.



The judgment underscores the importance of upholding women's right to work and pursue career opportunities without facing arbitrary restrictions. Women should not have to choose between their personal lives and professional aspirations; they deserve the freedom to navigate both spheres on their own terms. Besides, the economic implications of depriving women of employment opportunities are profound. Gender equality at the workforce is not just a matter of principle but also a crucial factor in promoting economic growth and social development. By harnessing the talent and potential of all individuals, irrespective of their gender, societies can foster innovation, productivity and prosperity. Additionally, efforts to combat gender-based discrimination must extend beyond legal frameworks to encompass broader societal attitudes and norms. Education, awareness campaigns and advocacy are essential tools in challenging deep-rooted biases and promoting gender equality. While the apex court's decision represents a significant milestone in the fight for women's rights, it is only the beginning of a broader movement towards gender equality. Sustained efforts from all stakeholders, including Governments, employers, civil society and individuals, are necessary to create a truly inclusive and equitable society. For the moment, however, we can cherish that one more glass ceiling has been breached and the court deserves a round of applause.

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## PICTALK



J&K's first electric train during its flagging off ceremony, at Srinagar railway station, in Jammu & Kashmir

## India to dominate the global solar industry

### The solar manufacturing sector in India is at a critical juncture, teeming with potential for high growth and an abundance of employment opportunities

The solar manufacturing sector in India stands at a pivotal moment, presenting significant potential for growth and employment opportunities. Historically, India has been a laggard in the manufacturing landscape of the solar industry, relying heavily on imports and expertise from foreign markets. Consequently, this dependency has led to a scarcity of skilled manpower and a deficiency in indigenous technological capabilities. From an HR perspective, the solar manufacturing sector offers a unique set of challenges and opportunities. The spillover effect of manufacturing is particularly noteworthy, creating employment not only within the industry but also generating a ripple effect across related sectors. As the global demand for solar products rises, the necessity for skilled workers in manufacturing, project planning, and execution becomes increasingly pronounced. India's reliance on imports has impeded the development of a robust solar manufacturing ecosystem.



However, there is a positive shift underway as both Central and State governments emphasise manufacturing. Initiatives like "Make in India" and incentives for the solar industry are expected to foster a conducive environment for skill development within the nation. A primary challenge has been the limited pool of skilled workers and a lack of project planning and execution experience in the solar manufacturing domain. To address this, cross-industry resources must be mobilised to fill existing gaps. With the improving demand situation and concerted efforts by the Indian government to boost manufacturing, the solar sector is poised to observe significant expansion. Also, once industrial manufacturing picks up

historical challenges in skill shortages and limited technological expertise, concerted efforts from both government and industry stakeholders are driving significant progress. Initiatives like "Make in India" and incentivization schemes are propelling the growth of a robust manufacturing ecosystem. However, challenges persist, particularly in addressing the shortage of skilled workers and enhancing project planning and execution capabilities. Collaboration across industries and continued government support will be crucial in overcoming these hurdles. As India aligns itself with global standards in scale and technology, the solar manufacturing sector is poised to become a cornerstone of employment, economic growth, and sustainability. With the implementation of effective HR strategies and sustained Government backing, India is well-positioned to emerge as a key player in the global solar manufacturing landscape in the years ahead. (The writer is an energy expert; views are personal)



VAISHALI MEHTA

scale, it will take the R&D sector along, adding high-level technological inventions and innovations from Indian institutions. As India aligns itself with global competitors in both scale and technology, the solar manufacturing sector is positioned to be a major contributor to employment, economic growth, and sustainability. With the implementation of the right HR strategies and government support, India has the potential to emerge as a key player in the solar manufacturing landscape in the coming years. In conclusion, India's solar manufacturing sector is undergoing a transformative phase, marked by a shift from dependency on imports to fostering indigenous capabilities. Despite

## Accountability for those harming our institutions

### Loyalty, courage and sacrifice hold great significance within the institution, while long-standing customs and traditions are revered as sacred



DEEPAK SINHA

In 1927, the French intellectual and philosopher, Julien Benda, published his classic 'La Trahison des Clercs', or "The Treason of the Clerks". He used the term 'treason' to imply betrayal, and "clerks" to refer to writers or members of the intelligentsia; journalists, academics, commentators and other professionals. His book was an attack on how the intelligentsia of the period had betrayed the legacy of the Age of Enlightenment; the fruits of the Revolution, by descending into extreme nationalism and racism, a phenomenon that seems to have raised its ugly head again, the world over. We have not been immune either, given the existing state of affairs within our society, though religion and caste may have replaced race to some extent.

In our case, it is not about any particular political party or group suborning our democratic institutions, in its efforts to push through its ideology, or about the unconscionable actions of some within institutions of supinely kowtowing before the powers that be for self-aggrandisement. That kind of behaviour is not unknown from the past, though probably was not as overt or extensive as prevalent today. The problem with all of this is, as Ayn Rand so perceptively observed, "each individual has the power to suspend, evade, corrupt or subvert his perception of reality, but not the power to escape the existential and psychological disasters that follow." In essence, we may avoid facing reality, but its adverse consequences will always catch up with us. Take the military for instance. As an institution given its exacting selection process, emphasis on discipline and accountability it is relatively devoid of many ills that plague our society in general. It has always been seen as a reputable and trustworthy institution within the country, and even internationally, a fairly unique phenomenon in the developing world, including in our neighbourhood. Primarily because of its apolitical nature of functioning and the professionalism it has always displayed, whatever the task. Moreover, its senior leadership is also greatly



respected and given unquestioned loyalty by the rank and file, because of their competence and integrity and for having the interest and well-being of their troops in mind at all times. Moreover, loyalty, courage and sacrifice are greatly valued, and long-standing customs and traditions are treated as sacrosanct, which greatly strengthens the foundations of the institution itself. Its members are fully aware of the onerous responsibility on their shoulders to maintain the reputation of the institution itself, which calls for utmost dedication, discipline and self-sacrifice. All of this adds to esprit-de-corps, comradeship and morale, instilling in each of its members a strong sense of what is right and wrong. It is an environment that needs proper nurturing to flourish if it is not to be found wanting even in the most difficult of circumstances. This is not to suggest that there are no deviations from the norm. Far from it, but these are relatively few and far between. Moreover, such egregious behaviour is not condoned and corrective steps are initiated at the earliest possible time to prevent recurrence. More importantly, those involved, invariably face social opprobrium within the community, both from serving



THERE HAS BEEN A GRADUAL DETERIORATION IN ETHICAL STANDARDS. INCREASING CORRUPTION AND A BLATANT DISREGARD FOR SOCIETAL NORMS THAT HAVE INFECTED OUR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, ESPECIALLY THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, HAVE IMPACTED THE MILITARY AS WELL

and veteran colleagues. Unfortunately, there has been a gradual deterioration in ethical standards, as increasing corruption and a blatant disregard for societal norms that have infected our society as a whole, especially the political establishment, have impacted the military as well. In the earlier days, most aberrations at the highest levels were more like sins of omission than of commission. This changed from the time the late General Bipin Rawat was appointed Army Chief. Since then, questionable initiatives have been undertaken, that appeared more geared towards pleasing the political leadership and fulfilling their ideological aims than enhancing our capabilities or protecting institutional integrity. The best example of this was when General Rawat acquiesced to the stopping of funding for the Mountain Strike Corps midway through its implementation, because the present dispensation did not perceive its need as a priority. Indubitably, the contemporary adverse situation in Eastern Ladakh would never have occurred, if this short-sighted step had not been taken. Truly a case of being pennywise but pound foolish! Similarly, seniority and laid down service rules were arbi-

trarily ignored while appointing the Chief of Defence Staff, following General Rawat's tragic demise. With the sanctity of such appointments compromised, we not only see greater interference by politicians in purely military matters but also a blatant disregard of all prevailing norms by senior officers in vain attempts to push personal agendas. The invitation to the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister as the Chief Guest for a Regimental Reunion, with which he has no affiliation, and the ridiculous initiative underway to change uniforms and badges of rank of one service as they reek of colonial influence are examples of such perverseness. While such behaviour has come to be increasingly normalised, its adverse impact on the rank and file cannot be wished away. Sooner rather than later, we will all pay a very high price for our obvious unwillingness to condemn such reprehensible behaviour that is destroying the very foundations of one of our most cherished institutions. (The author, a military veteran, is a visiting fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a senior visiting fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai, views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MSP GUARANTEE IS CRUCIAL

Sir — Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that "lies" are being spread that the MSP guarantee is not feasible under the government's budget. Legal guarantee for MSP will not make Indian farmers a burden on the budget but ensure that they become drivers of GDP growth. Gandhi claimed that ever since Congress resolved to provide a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), "Centres' propaganda machinery and media friendly to him have spread a barrage of lies on MSP". According to CRISIL, giving MSP to farmers in 2022-23 would have resulted in an additional burden of Rs 21,000 crore on the government, which is only 0.4 per cent of the total budget. In a country where bank loans worth Rs 14 lakh crore have been waived and corporate tax exemption of Rs 1.8 lakh crore given, why is even a little expenditure on farmers irking the government? With the legal guarantee for MSP, investment in agriculture will increase, demand will increase in rural India and farmers will also get confidence in growing different types of crops, which is a guarantee of the country's prosperity. Those who are spreading confusion on MSP are insulting Dr Swaminathan and his dreams. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### CJJI'S CONCERN OVER SURGE IN CASES

Sir — Expressing concern over the growing number of cases while addressing the inauguration ceremony of an arbitration centre inaugurated by him, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud wants to pay attention at trial courts to reduce the burden of a growing number of cases. The Chief Justice opines that the solution to problems lies in trial courts. He also says that the problems that can be solved in trial courts are coming to the Supreme Court. Naturally, the apex court is worried about the increasing number of cases knocking at its door. He advocates for constructive friction between the judiciary and executive, believing it maintains checks and bal-

## Shaping tomorrow's democracy



Propos of 'The implications of Supreme Court ruling (Feb 20). In a landmark decision that reverberates through the corridors of power, the Supreme Court of India has dismantled the Electoral Bond scheme, branding it "unconstitutional" "arbitrary" and violative of Article 14. With an eloquence rooted in democratic principles, the court articulated that the scheme's secretive nature undermines the essence of transparency essential for informed voter participation. While the

Government championed Electoral Bonds as a bulwark against black money, the court resolutely rebuffed this narrative, asserting that the scheme fails to pass the litmus test of curbing corruption. However, as the gavel falls on Electoral Bonds, the path forward beckons with possibilities. Embracing transparency as the cornerstone of electoral integrity, policymakers must heed the clarion call for reform. Reforms should include stringent disclosure requirements for all political contributions, regardless of size, ensuring that citizens have access to information about the sources of campaign funding. Additionally, measures should be implemented to regulate corporate donations and prevent undue influence in politics. By enacting reforms, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable democracy, where the voices of all citizens are heard and respected. Sagar Gambhir | Ludhiana

ances. Timely justice would boost public trust, as many endure injustice rather than face prolonged court processes. Advocates seek excessive adjournments, shielding aged clients. Political criminals contest lower court rulings, exploiting the lengthy appellate process. Justice delay becomes a curse for victims, a boon for offenders, as some die before judgment. Revamping the system is crucial; no case should surpass 2-3 years, ensuring timely punishment to curb crime rates. KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

### ADIEU, MIKE PROCTOR

Sir — Mike Proctor, a cricketing icon, passed away on February 18, 2024, at the age of 77. Born in Durban in 1946, Proctor's legacy in cricket is unparalleled, marked by his exceptional prowess as an all-rounder and his enduring influence on the game. From his early days in Natal to his storied career with Gloucestershire, Proctor consistently showcased his formidable talent, amassing over 20,000 runs and taking more than 1,300 wickets in first-class cricket. Despite the interrup-

tion of his international career due to South Africa's isolation, he continued to excel, leaving an indelible mark with his performance, including a remarkable feat of six consecutive centuries for Rhodesia. Beyond his playing days, Proctor's impact extended to coaching and administration, where he further shaped the cricketing landscape. As the inaugural coach of South Africa's national team post-isolation, he guided them to the semi-finals of the 1992 World Cup, highlighting his strategic acumen and leadership. His subsequent roles as an ICC match referee and South Africa's convener of selectors underscored his commitment to the sport's governance and development. Proctor's legacy as a true legend of the game is defined not only by his on-field achievements but also by his integrity, sportsmanship, and enduring influence on cricket worldwide. Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### FINDING SOLACE IN DIVINE SHELTER

God is there for us, but we must qualify to get His help through spiritual practices



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

As smallness is a comparative term, we must ascertain compared to whom. The answer is God, who is so big that He is immeasurable. Imagine God being spread over uncountable galaxies, of which our Earth planet is a very small part. Now imagine how small we are. But this shouldn't bother us too much because God being very kind helps out wherever our smallness is an handicap. Let me start with getting a measure of our smallness. The count of human beings on this planet has gone beyond eight billion. Where do we normally live? In a room, which is part of a building, which itself is a part of a small locality. Many of such localities constitute a town, and we can go on till we get to the entire world. As regards our ability to exist, it has been estimated that we need the help of about twenty-five persons daily simply to exist. Our knowledge is severely limited in the larger sense even with the internet being available to us. Combined with our forgetfulness, we are not self-sufficient in this aspect. Consequently, we generally don't know what to do. Aren't we meditating endlessly on what concerns us? To achieve anything of substance like in a business venture, we need many to help us. We can get proof of our smallness whenever we look. Let us see how big God is. He is omnipotent, which means that He has unlimited power. He must have created uncountable galaxies. Compared to God, what power do we have? God is omnipresent also; He must be to do what He does. Lord Krishna confirms in the Bhagavad-Geeta, "This entire world is spread by Me by My unmanifest form." (9.4) He is watching all of us all the time. God is omniscient, which should not cause any surprise. And He is very different from us, which should also be obvious. God is very much involved in running of the Creation; He is very much here as should have been clear from the information provided earlier. God controls everything.



God balances our free will with what cannot be permitted. It is a tough task, but God, as He is, strikes a balance such that we can keep our free will more or less intact. In short, God will not allow an all-out nuclear war, which will cause premature annihilation of the world. God is for our benefit. He is not like a regular big, who is bent upon gathering everything for himself or herself. Why should God do that? Isn't He the owner of everything in the first place; God is complete in all respects. Wise persons advance themselves by taking God's shelter. They control their egos, because that is the main hindrance in getting guidance and help from God. The only bigness allowed is to become a big devotees of God like Adi Shankaracharya or Swami Vivekananda. Then, we can endear ourselves to God by aligning our free will with God's plan for us. What does God want from us? We should contribute to the smooth running of the Creation; we should have a net positive effect on it. For that, we must follow 'dharma' - sound moral principles. We can seek guidance from God by sincerely praying because God can guide us perfectly; He knows what will transpire in future. Why be confused or swim in darkness; get the right knowledge from God, and avoid making expensive mistakes. We can get a lot from God, but we must qualify to get such help. It is best done by doing spiritual practices. There are very simple acts like doing 'namaskar' to God, chanting His name, thanking Him for all the help received and having 'darshan' of God in His Deity or photo form. After all, there must be some way to determine who deserves such help. The conclusion is: that we are very small and helpless. This should be an accepted fact, but the Creation is based on sound principles. We can get all needed help from God by taking His shelter; our smallness need not be a handicap. What will you do? I, on my part, am trying to remain in God's shelter more and more.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Preserving the symphony of voices

We must strive to preserve languages, as the disappearance of a language is not merely the loss of words but the erosion of culture and tradition



SANTOSH MATHEW

International Mother Language Day is celebrated on 21st February, under the auspices of UNESCO. This international observance was first proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1999 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. It started being observed annually in 2000. Each year they come up with a theme. The theme for the International Mother Language 2024 is "Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning". The date holds historical significance as it commemorates the sacrifices made by students of East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) during the Language Movement of 1952, who bravely protested for the recognition of their mother tongue, Bengali, as one of the official languages of Pakistan. 54.1% of the population of the then East Pakistan spoke Bengali. Apart from the identity of Islam, there were many linguistic, cultural, ethnic and geographical contradictions between West Pakistan and East Pakistan. Amidst this cultural clash, the rulers of Islamabad declared Urdu as the official language, totally neglecting the Bengali language which the population held close to their hearts.

Thousands of students gathered in Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal, and launched an agitation. West Pakistan was trying to brutally suppress the protests by students at Dhaka University and Dhaka Medical College. Student leaders Abdul Salman, Rafiquddin Ahmed, Abdul Balkhad and Abdul Jabbar were also martyred in the military operation which claimed several lives. This language movement, which took place on 21st February 1952, finally succeeded and Bengali along with Urdu became the mother tongue of undivided Pakistan.

Mother language is not just a means of communication; it is the cradle of our cultural identity, the keeper of our heritage, and the bridge that connects us to the wisdom of generations past. However, today, many languages are disappearing with time. It is estimated that every two weeks a language disappears in the world. About 43 per cent of spoken languages may disappear in the future. The day, organised by UNESCO, is especially meant to emphasise the need to preserve languages. There are about 6000 languages in the world, both with script and without script. Chinese or Mandarin is the most widely spoken language in the world, with 16 per cent of the world's population using it as their mother tongue. English and Hindi occupy the second and third positions respectively.

People who speak multiple languages are called polyglots. Proficiency in as many languages as possible is considered to be a great skill in the present globalised society. Former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, who was fluent in 17 languages, is a good example of a polyglot. More than 3000 languages are endangered. After 1950 alone, 230 languages that existed in the world disappeared from the face of the earth. Under the leadership of Irina Bokova, the former Director-General of UNESCO, several projects had been formulated for the conservation of endangered languages. One of them is the International Mother Language Institute established in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

With the aid of the United Nations, several schemes have been put together for the protection of the mother tongue. 2008 was celebrated as the International Year of



MORE THAN 3,000 LANGUAGES ARE ENDANGERED. SINCE 1950, 230 LANGUAGES THAT EXISTED IN THE WORLD DISAPPEARED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH

Languages and efforts are being made to preserve the vanishing languages. The fourth item in the UN-led Millennium Development Goal is to provide better and more inclusive education through the mother language. According to UN estimates, half of the approximately 7000 languages spoken in the world are not guaranteed to last for another generation. Of these 96 percent of the languages are currently used by only 4 percent of the world's population. Linguists have documented that among some societies in Asia and Africa, there are languages that are spoken only by women. The Dakkhini language, which is still popular in Gulbarga in Karnataka and Solapur in Maharashtra, is one such language. According to the 2011 language census, the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution contains 22 languages, including 121 mother tongues. 52.8 crore individuals, i.e. 43.6% of the population, speak Hindi. Bengali is the mother tongue of the next largest number of people—8%. Out of the 2.6 lakh English speakers (who have their mother tongue as English) more than one lakh are in Maharashtra. As a second language, English is preferred over Hindi in the North-Eastern parts. In 2011, of the 17.6 lakh people whose mother tongue was Manipuri, 4.8 lakhs declared English as their second language. While English, along with Hindi, is one of the two official languages of the Central Government, it is not among the 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule; it is one of the 99 languages that are not scheduled.

In terms of mother tongue, the number of English speakers in India in 2011 was just 2.6 lakh — a small fraction of the 121 crore people estimated in that census. In Fiji, Hindi is the official language spoken by 44 per cent of the population. In percentage terms, Fiji has more Hindi speakers than India. In India, a land of linguistic diversity, apart from Hindi and English, 22 regional languages also occupy

official status through the Eighth Schedules of the Constitution. However, Sanskrit, the heritage language, can be seen fading in the society. Less than 15,000 people use Sanskrit as a spoken language. While the central and state Governments have launched several schemes to promote Sanskrit, there is only one daily newspaper in the world in this language which is Sudharma. Uttarakhand is the only Indian state to have included Sanskrit in its official languages. According to the 1961 census, there were 1,652 languages in India classified as 'mother tongue'. However, according to the 2011 census report, the number of mother tongues in India is 234. More than 800 mother tongues have disappeared in the last fifty years. Nihali is still considered the mother tongue of more than 15,000 people in about 15 villages in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, similarly around 1,000 Portuguese-speaking people in a village in Maharashtra. Arunachal Pradesh, where the population is much smaller, yet has the highest level of linguistic diversity. The multilingual tribes and regions are the identity of Indian culture. In India, 220 languages have recently become extinct due to a lack of adequate care. As many as 197 Indian languages have been listed by UNESCO among the most likely to be alienated. According to the 2011 census, 96.71 per cent of the population speaks 21 languages recognised by the Constitution of India. English, Spanish and French are languages that have not developed their own script. These languages borrowed from the Latin script for writing. Hindi is a language which does not have its own script. Devanagari is the script used by Hindi today. Arabic is a language that is precisely convinced that language is a culture. Arabic is the spoken language of about 422 million people and the mother tongue of 24 countries in the world and is a perfect example of how one of the oldest languages developed strongly and

has become one of the leading modern languages. Amar Sonar Bangla, the national anthem of independent Bangladesh, was composed by Rabindranath Tagore in 1905 in the backdrop of the first partition of Bengal. Ananda Samarakoon, a disciple of Rabindranath of Visva-Bharati, composed the national anthem 'Namo Namo Matha' of Sri Lanka in Sinhalese. Ten decades before the Sri Lankan civil war that ended in 2009, Tamil, along with Sinhalese, was recognised as the official language of Sri Lanka. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was held in Barcelona in 1996, but hundreds of languages are still fading away from time to time. It is doubtful whether writing will have any significance fifty years from now. The technology to turn sound into text is already in vogue. Of the 6,000 languages in use in the world, at least 4,000 are likely to be extinct. According to language researchers, 90 per cent of the languages currently in use will disappear from the earth's surface by 2050. Less than 10,000 people use one-third of the world's existing languages. According to the Central Government, more than 200 Indian languages have disappeared since 1961. Most of these are languages used by tribals, including Adivasi communities. After the 1961 census, the Government decided to do away with the national status of languages used by less than 10,000 people. We must recognise that the disappearance of a language is not merely the loss of words but the erosion of culture and tradition. As put by Noam Chomsky "A language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all embodied in a language." Allowing languages to become extinct is a sin being committed to our ancestors and future generations.

(The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

# Influence of AI and digital media on general elections

Laws and moral standards governing the application of AI to political campaigns ought to be developed to reduce the possibility of abuse and guarantee openness

Nowadays, national, and international interests are entwined with technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and nanotechnology. As it progresses, it creates several dependencies, power conflicts, rivalries, risks, and opportunities, in addition to posing economic, political, and cultural issues. It has the power to completely change the electoral environment, offering both benefits and difficulties for Indian democracy.



POOJA KAPOOR

Informational bubbles that limit their exposure to opposing ideas and could influence their voting decisions and preferences. Deepfakes, or videos that have been altered to look authentic, can be used to spread untrue stories and defame opponents. Social media bots can amplify messages and create fake trends, which might be used to influence people who aren't sure what to vote for. The complex-

ity of AI-driven disinformation makes it harder and harder to separate fact from fiction, which poses a serious risk to making well-informed decisions during elections. Because AI technologies are becoming more sophisticated, it is becoming more challenging to identify and link illicit activities to foreign actors (terrorist organisations or sleeper cells). This may make it more difficult to hold them responsible and stop meddling in the future. AI-powered bots were deployed by foreign Governments and the troll farms they were associated with to flood social media platforms with a network of fictitious identities and deceptive information intended to sway public opinion. These bots propagated negative stereo-

types and conspiracies against other candidates, amplified some communications, and gave the impression that a particular candidate was receiving broad support. A few months ago, when the Indian Prime Minister's deepfake video went viral on social media, we got a sneak peek of this. This poses a severe risk to democracy since it can be used to influence voters' decisions and actions. For example, the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica created comprehensive psychometric profiles of voters by using information that was accumulated from billions of Facebook accounts. Using this data, they were able to target these individuals with customised social media messages and advertisements,

which might have an impact on how they voted in the US presidential elections of 2016 and 2020 as well as the Philippine midterm elections. Looking at the Positive Side On the positive side, social media and artificial intelligence can support and enhance democracy. The capacity of AI to precisely micro-target voters is among its most important effects. This entails creating comprehensive profiles of each voter utilising a plethora of data, including demographics, social media activity, and internet conduct. AI-powered applications provide customised tactics that are more likely to sway voters than traditional mass campaigns. Sentiment analysis techniques, for instance, can detect emerging issues and

measure public opinion, enabling campaigns to modify their messaging and concentrate on the issues that matter most to voters. AI-driven chatbots can answer common questions and inform voters around the clock, freeing up human resources for more important work. Data-driven models improve campaign efficacy and affordability by forecasting voter turnout and allocating resources optimally. AI and social media can be used to raise awareness, reach a larger audience, and resolve complaints. The electoral commission can share pertinent information on social media. To answer the complaints, the Election Commission's website can deploy an AI-based chatbot.

AI algorithms can separate the true news from the false one with the use of fact-checking tools. In a nation the size of India, it is nearly hard to govern and regulate social media usage. Therefore, if we are unable to solve the issue, we ought to search for a solution. Considering how AI will probably affect our elections, we need to take urgent action on several fronts. To prevent assaults on electoral infrastructure and voter data, strong cybersecurity measures are first and foremost required. Second, to recognise and reject disinformation and propaganda, voters need to hone their media literacy and critical thinking abilities. Third, to prevent foreign meddling in elections, we need to

improve information exchange and international collaboration among democracies. Fourth, the Government needs to sensitise its employees regarding the handling of data. They should undertake capacity enhancement programmes like data science and decision science. Lastly, laws and moral standards governing the application of AI to political campaigns ought to be developed to reduce the possibility of abuse and guarantee openness. Besides, All election content should also be distinctly watermarked with authenticated political parties, candidates, or registered media.

(The writer is an Associate Professor at Bennett University, India; views are personal)





Navalny's mother moves court for son's body

AP ■ MOSCOW

The mother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has filed a lawsuit at a court in the Arctic city of Salekhard...



where he is," a black-clad Navalnaya, 69, said in the video, with the barbed wire of Penal Colony No. 3 in Kharp...

still unknown and refused to release his body for the next two weeks as the preliminary inquest continues...

seen Navalny as a rare hope for political change amid Putin's unrelenting crackdown on the opposition...

UK sanctions heads of Russian penal colony

London (PTI): Those in charge of the Arctic penal colony where Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny was detained and later died will be banned from the UK and see their assets frozen under new sanctions announced by the British government on Wednesday...

Those responsible for Navalny's brutal treatment should be under no illusion - we will hold them accountable," he added. The FCDO said the UK is the first country to impose sanctions in response to the death of Navalny, a political prisoner who dedicated his life to exposing the corruption of the Russian system...

ried repeatedly to silence him," said UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron. "FSB operatives poisoned him with Novichok in 2020, they imprisoned him for peaceful political activities, and they sent him to an Arctic penal colony. No-one should doubt the oppressive nature of the Russian system. That's why we're today sanctioning the most senior prison officials responsible for his custody in the penal colony where he spent his final months," he said.

Russia has no intention of putting nukes in space: Putin

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared on Tuesday that Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear weapons in space, claiming that the country has only developed space capabilities similar to those of the US. Putin's statement follows the White House confirmation last week that Russia has obtained a "troubling" anti-satellite weapon capability...

The treaty signed by more than 130 countries, including Russia, prohibits the deployment of "nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction" in orbit or the stationing of "weapons in outer space in any other manner."

"Our position is quite clear and transparent: we have always been and remain categorically opposed to the deployment of nuclear weapons in space," Putin said. "Just the opposite, we are urging everyone to adhere to all the agreements that exist in this sphere."

Speaking during a meeting with his defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, Putin noted that Russia has only developed space capabilities that "other nations, including the US have."

"And they know it," he added. "We haven't deployed any nuclear weapons in space or any elements of them to use against satellites or to create fields where satellites can't work efficiently," Shoigu said.

Shoigu alleged that the White House could have made the allegations of a new Russian space capability in order to force Congress to support aid for Ukraine and also encourage Moscow to reenter nuclear arms control talks that Russia has suspended amid the tensions with the US over Ukraine.

"The US and the West, for one thing, are calling for Russia's strategic defeat, while, on the other hand, they would like to have a dialogue on strategic stability, pretending that those things aren't connected," he said. "It won't work."

Patanjali Bhartiya Ayurvygyan Evam Anusandhan Sansthan, Haridwar-249405, Uttarakhand

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ELECTION PROGRAMME

Table with 5 columns: Sr.No., Particular, Date, Times, Place. Details the election process for the Managing Committee of The S.P. Majri Primary Agriculture Co-operative Society Ltd.

Trump again compares his criminal indictments to imprisonment, death of Putin's top rival

AP ■ GREENVILLE

Donald Trump doubled down on comparing his criminal indictments to the circumstances of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny, the top political opponent of Russia's autocratic leader Vladimir Putin who died in a remote arctic prison after being jailed by the Kremlin leader...

uation and he's very brave, he was a very brave guy," Trump said in response to a question from Fox News Channel's Laura Ingraham. "He went back, he could have stayed away, and frankly probably would have been a lot better off staying away and talking from outside of the country...

so ridiculous." He extended the comparison to his loss in a civil fraud trial last week, in which a New York judge ordered Trump to pay USD 355 million in penalties after finding he lied about his wealth for years. With interest, Trump owes the state about USD 454 million.

House Republicans have refused to provide more funding to Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion and as many in the Republican Party grow more accepting of Russian expansionism. Putin recently suggested he preferred Biden in the White House to Trump. US intelligence assessments of both the 2016 and 2020 elections found that Russia was behind influence operations to boost Trump at the expense of his Democratic Party opponents.

EU countries agrees on new sanctions against Russia

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union countries on Wednesday agreed on a new package of sanctions against Russia to target individuals and businesses suspected of assisting Moscow in its war against Ukraine, including Chinese companies. The decision coincides with the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, which began on February 24, 2022, and comes days after the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Belgium, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the 27-nation bloc...

vided help to Russia, have been sanctioned. Details of the entities targeted will be revealed when the sanctions are published in the EU's legal journal. The EU has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine. The measures have targeted the energy sector, banks, the world's biggest diamond mining company, businesses and markets, and made Russian officials subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

More than USD 400 mn needed for Af to recover from Oct quake: UN

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

More than USD 400 million is needed for western Afghanistan to recover and rebuild after a devastating earthquake last October that killed around 2,000 people, the United Nations said Wednesday. The magnitude 6.3 quake on October 7, one of the most destructive in the country's recent history, flattened entire villages in Herat province and also left thousands injured and homeless.

oritise restoring access to basic services and building earthquake-safe housing, especially for the most affected families. It said its assessment of the urgent needs relied on field data, publicly available information and remote analytics. The report represents the first joint assessment since August 2021 and showcases an international resolve to address the needs of disaster-affected communities and support their recovery.

only addressing the immediate needs but ensuring a sustainable and resilient recovery for those affected by the earthquakes," stated Indrika Ratwatte, the UN chief's deputy representative and humanitarian coordinator. This tragedy presents an opportunity to rebuild stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient communities," Ratwatte added.

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE. Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems). Details work on heavy repairs to roof, wall plaster, replacement of deteriorated doors, windows and other allied works...

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. I, on behalf of my clients Mr. Ratnesha Gupta s/o Late Shri Rajghubar Dayal Gupta and Mr. Raju Gupta s/o Late Shri Rajghubar Dayal Gupta...

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to inform the general public that Mr. Puneet Kumar Bhatia (having 25% share), s/o Late Promod Kumar Bhatia, resident of UTG-042, DLF Ultimea Sector 81, Gurugram, Mr. Udit Bhatia (having 25% share) s/o Late Promod Kumar Bhatia resident of Tower-17/1202, Vipul Greens, Sector-48, Sohna Road, Gurugram and Mr. Nishu Bhatia (having 50% share) s/o Sh. Suresh Chander Bhatia R/o WZ-49, Ramesh Nagar, Ratan Park, New Delhi are joint owners of J-1/25, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi...

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences. Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203. Ph: 01639-266232, 256236. E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following Machinery on turnkey basis upto 07-03-2024.

NOTICE. Notice is hereby given to the public at large that the property more particularly described in schedule hereunder written, Shri Praveen Gupta is the current owner and in possession of the subject property. The original documents as mentioned in Annexure below have been lost of which FIR Dated: 29.06.2018 has also been Lodged in Police No.24 Sector-49, Gauram Buddha Nagar. The owner Shri Praveen Gupta mortgaging the subject property with DBS Bank India Limited, New Delhi against the credit facilities available by the M/s. Medifil Healthcare Private Limited. By this notice, All Person are being informed that if any one having any claim/interest in respect of the scheduled property are requested to inform the same in writing to the YOGESH PACHAURI Advocates 23, Lawyer's Chambers, Supreme Court of India, New Delhi-110001, M.9811895298 E-mail: yogeshpachauriadvocates@gmail.com within 14 days from date of hereof failing which the claims if any of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and succession shall be completed in the name of Shri Praveen Gupta.

S Korean govt warns striking doctors to return to work or face legal action

AP ■ SEOUL

The South Korean government on Wednesday warned thousands of striking doctors to return to work immediately or face legal action after their collective walkouts caused cancellations of surgeries and disrupted other hospital operations. About 7,800 medical interns and residents in South Korea have walked off their jobs this week to protest the government's push to recruit more medical students. Officials say they want to increase the nationwide medical school admissions cap by 2,000 from next year to brace for South Korea's rapidly aging population. But doctors' groups have refused the plan, saying universities aren't ready to offer quality education to that many students. They argue the government's push to have more doctors would lead to increased public medical expenses because physicians locked in competition could perform unnecessary treatments. The 2,000 additional admissions

"is a nonsensical figure", the Korean Intern Residents Association said in a statement Tuesday. "We hope the government will rethink its plan and formulate a policy that reflects the voices of trainee doctors." Junior doctors typically support senior doctors during surgeries and deal with inpatients. Their joint walkouts, mostly regarding indefinite delays of surgeries and cancellations of other medical treatments. "A collective action taking the lives and safety of the people hostage cannot be justified for whatever reason," Interior and Safety Minister Lee Sang-min told a news conference with other top officials. Lee said the government issued an official order for striking doctors to return to work. He said the government will sternly deal with the doctors' walkouts in line with the medical law and other regula-

tions. South Korea's medical law allows the government to issue such back-to-work orders to doctors and other medical personnel when there are grave concerns about public health. If they refuse to abide by the order, they could face up to three years in prison or 30 million won (USD 22,480) in fines, a punishment that would also lead to the revocation of their medical licenses, according to the law. Justice Minister Park Sung-jae accused some doctors of seeking to protect "their vested interests". He said that if they refuse to return to work, authorities will file legal charges against them and arrest others who had led their walkouts. Trainee doctors said the government's return-to-work order was intimidation and must be withdrawn immediately. The Korea Medical Association, which represents 140,000 doctors, said it supports the trainee doctors' walkouts but hasn't decided whether to join their walkouts.

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SPAG CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED (CIN: U71440HR2002PTC11793). Notice is hereby given by SPAG DIGITAL PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferor) that a scheme of merger or amalgamation is proposed to be entered with SPAG CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED (Transferee Company) and in pursuance of sub-section (1)(a) of Section 233 of the Companies Act, 2013, objections or suggestions are invited in respect of the scheme.

By order of the Board of Directors For SPAG CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED (AMAN GUPTA, DIRECTOR) DIN-02053713. Dated this 16th February, 2024. Place: Haryana

# Take more steps to curb illegal lending apps: FM

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday asked financial sector regulators, including the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to take further measures to check spread of unauthorised lending through online apps.  
Addressing the 28th meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) here, Sitharaman also asked regulators to maintain constant vigil and be proactive towards detecting emerging financial stability risks, given the domestic and global macro-financial situation. The FSDC deliberated on issues related to macro financial stability and India's preparedness to deal with them, an official statement said after the meeting.



effects of unauthorised lending through online apps and

measures to curb their further spread. The government in December informed Parliament that Google has suspended or removed over 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store between April 2021 and July 2022. The objective is to remain proactive, maintain cyber security preparedness with constant vigilance, and take appropriate and timely action to mitigate any such vulnerabilities in the Indian financial system. Fraudulent loan apps have defrauded many gullible borrowers of their money, leading to distress in many cases. The FSDC members also decided to strengthen inter-regulatory coordination to further develop the financial sector so that it continues to provide the requisite financial resources for inclusive economic growth. The FSDC also took note of the activities undertaken by the FSDC Sub-Committee chaired by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das and the action taken by members on the previous decisions of the FSDC. Besides Das, Securities and Exchange Board of India Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Chairman Debasish Panda, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Chairman Ravi Mital, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Chairman Deepak Mohanty, and International Financial Services Centres Authority Chairman K Rajaraman also attended the meeting.



## Zee Entertainment shares settle 15 per cent lower

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Shares of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) settled 15 per cent lower on Wednesday amid reports that Sebi has found financial discrepancies in the accounts of the company. On the BSE, the scrip of the company tumbled 14.77 per cent to close at Rs 164.50 apiece. ZEEL shares nosedived 14.02 per cent to end at Rs 165.65 apiece on the NSE. During the day, the stock hit a low of Rs 163.75 and Rs 164.10 -- its lower circuit limit -- apiece on the NSE and the BSE. In volume terms, 10.68 crore equity shares were traded on the NSE, while 1.46 crore equity shares changed hands on the BSE during the day. On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 434.31 points, or 0.59 per cent, to settle at 72,623.09, while NSE Nifty slipped 141.90 points to close at 22,055.05. As per the reports, during Sebi's probe into Zee's founders, the regulator discovered that approximately Rs 2,000 crore (equivalent to USD 241 million) may have been diverted from the company. However, the company spokesperson clarified that the reports related to accounting issues are "incorrect and false".

The report suggested that the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has been in conversation with senior Zee officials, including its founders Subhash Chandra and his son Punit Goenka, and some board members to explain their stance. Further, the report noted that the amount found missing is not final and may change after Sebi reviews the responses from the company executives. A ZEE spokesperson said, "The reports and rumours pertaining to accounting issues in the company are incorrect and false." "Pursuant to the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) order, which granted relief to the current Key Managerial Personnel (KMP), the company has been in the process of providing all comments, information or explanation requested by Sebi, and has extended complete co-operation on all aspects," the spokesperson said. On Tuesday, shares of ZEEL settled 8 per cent higher amid reports that Zee and Sony Pictures Networks (India) are working to salvage their USD 10-billion merger. ZEEL shares have seen a massive downfall after the collapse of its merger with Sony Group Corp's India unit.



## Stock markets snap six days rally

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty broke their six-day winning run on Wednesday and settled with a steep fall amid fag-end selling triggered by a rush for profit booking and mixed global cues. The 30-share benchmark Sensex stayed mostly firm during intra-day but settled 434.31 points or 0.59 per cent lower at 72,623.09 points. It touched the intra-day low of 72,450.56, down 0.83 per cent from the previous closing level of 73,057.40 points. Similarly, the broader Nifty also paired all its intraday gains before closing 141.90 points or 0.64 per cent down at 22,055.05 points. The 50-share barometer had hit a lifetime peak of 22,196.95 points on Tuesday and remained mostly in the upward trajectory on Wednesday. In the Sensex pack, 20 stocks ended in the red while 37 of the Nifty constituents closed the session with losses. NTPC was the biggest loser among the Sensex constituents, ending with a loss of 2.71 per cent. It was followed by PowerGrid, Wipro, HCLTech, L&T and Tech Mahindra. In contrast, Tata Steel, SBI, JSW Steel and IndusInd Bank closed in the positive territory. Tata Steel gained 1.99 per cent and SBI ended 1.51 per cent higher. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said the Indian market is facing stiff resistance at higher levels and the valuation of a broader index is at a significant premium, leading to an unfavourable risk reward, which influences investors to book profits. "Global markets treaded cautiously awaiting the US Federal Reserve (meeting) minutes while Chinese markets were buoyed by policy interventions. "Concerns lingered since investors were heavily betting on a US Fed rate cut, which is put at risk by January's higher-than-expected inflation," he noted. The BSE Midcap index declined sharply by 1.27 per cent and Smallcap by 0.84 per cent. The fall in the large cap index was contained at 0.59 per cent. Analysts attributed the steep decline in midcap and smallcap indices to investors' concern about volatility ahead of the release of US Fed minutes.

## IT-tech firm plans growth

New Delhi: Leveraging a robust partnership with Microsoft, Embee Software has outlined its strategic expectations and initiatives, positioning itself as a front-runner in Cloud Services, Analytics, AI, Cybersecurity, and managed IT services. It aims for 30-40 per cent growth, with an ambitious 60-70 per cent surge in services revenue as it aims to adapt to industry shifts by developing expertise in emerging technologies, ensuring it remains a dynamic force in the ever-evolving tech landscape. We are propelling the firm towards a future where innovation and strategic partnerships result in exceptional growth and to aim for a 30-40 per cent increase, we are leveraging our expertise in AI, cybersecurity, and cloud services to surpass market expectations, said Sudhir Kothari, CEO & MD, Embee Software.

# India negotiates trade, investment deals with fairness, open mind: Goyal

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said India negotiates trade and investment agreements with fairness and open mind and takes care of the interest of people. He also said countries that are negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and investment pacts with India should keep in mind that New Delhi offers a huge market to them in terms of demand and business opportunities. "I can assure you that India negotiates with fairness, with an open mind... India also takes care of its wider and larger interest in the long run," he said at the CII India-Europe conclave. FTAs or Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), or agreements on geographical indications, will have to stand the test of



fair, equitable, and balanced agreements as the level of economic developments varies, he said. "We will have to respect the very different opportunities that are offered by India vis-a-vis the offer on the table from other countries," he said, adding that India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world. The young population, demand for goods and services, opens up huge opportunities for businesses across the globe, the minister added. The remarks assume significance as India is negotiating such agreements with countries such as the UK, Oman, and the European Union. Speaking at the conclave, the UK's minister Lord Ahmad of

Wimbledon said that British businesses are major investors in India and bilateral trade is growing between the two countries. He also said the two nations are working on an ambitious free trade agreement and bilateral investment treaty. "This will boost our trading partnership further... And (would) show the world that India and the UK are serious about trade and very much committed to prosperity at a global level," Ahmad said adding huge business opportunities are there for Indian firms in the UK. With the negotiations for the proposed India-UK free trade agreement reaching its last leg, a high-level Indian official delegation is in London to iron out the differences on remaining issues. India and the UK launched the talks for a FTA in January 2022.

# Liquidity deficit tightening financial conditions: CRISIL

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**  
Financial conditions have tightened the economy with liquidity going into a deeper deficit putting upward pressure on short-term rates, according to a research report by CRISIL Market Intelligence and Analytics.

The report released during the month also said that foreign portfolio investors turned net sellers further aggravating the tight liquidity conditions. With tightening of the liquidity, the transmission of interest rates improved across lending and deposit rates in

January. However, the cumulative rise in most deposit and lending rates remained lower than the 250 basis points of repo rate increase by the RBI since May 2022, the report said. This incomplete transmission of monetary policy prompted the Reserve Bank of India to

keep the interest rates unchanged, the research body said in the report. "We believe that the central bank will be active in liquidity management and adopt regulatory measures to prevent excesses in credit growth. We foresee the RBI cutting rates from June 2024,"

it said. According to the report, the deficit in domestic systemic liquidity almost doubled in January compared with December. This has led to a net infusion of Rs 2.07 lakh crore into the system, which is one per cent of net demand and time

liabilities (NDTL) by the RBI. The report said that liquidity has been in deficit in the economy since September 2023. Due to a crunch in liquidity, money market rates are under pressure with the call money rate hovering above 6.75 per cent, the report said.

## AI to save more time for chartered accountants: ICAI

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Artificial intelligence will provide a helping hand and free up a lot of time for chartered accountants to focus on analytical work, ICAI President Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal said on Wednesday and highlighted that there is a huge demand for chartered accountants. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) expects there will be a need for around 30 lakh chartered accountants in the next 20 to 25 years and last year, around 22,000 students cleared the chartered accountants examination. At a briefing in the national capital, Agarwal, who took charge as the president on February 12, said a committee will be coming out with a roadmap in the next two months on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the Institute of Chartered



Accountants of India (ICAI). He emphasised that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a tool and is saving a lot of time. "This will give you (chartered accountants) more time for application of mind, analytics... I believe AI is going to be a helping hand for the profession of chartered accountants so that they can focus more on other analytical areas. "AI taking away the compliance part from the chartered accountants and

giving them more scope to work on bigger areas... AI cannot overtake human intelligence," Agarwal said. In the audit profession, for instance, to check a 700-page annual report of a listed company, one can make a PDF and put it in Chat GPT. Now, one doesn't have to read the 700 pages as an auditor. "You have to ask the questions like what is the profitability, what is the adverse comment... Whatever you ask, Chat GPT will answer," Agarwal said. Amid instances of chartered accountants coming under the regulatory scanner, Agarwal said the institute has self-developed "so many checks and balances". The target is to have "lesser anomalies", he said, adding that efforts are made to continuously enhance the skills of the chartered accountants.

## Motilal Oswal secures ₹1,250 crore in first close for new AIF real estate fund

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**  
Motilal Oswal Alternates (MO Alts), the alternative investments arm of Motilal Oswal Financial Services, on Wednesday said it has successfully closed the first tranche of its sixth real estate fund, India Realty Excellence Fund VI (IREF VI) and has secured commitments of approximately Rs 1,250 crore in this first close. The company said it is a significant milestone for MO Alts, achieving the largest and fastest first close for any of their real estate funds to date. The fund will scout for opportunities in real estate in Kolkata and seven other top cities of India including Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Pune, Bangalore and Chennai. IREF VI strategically focuses on early-stage investments, primarily targeting mid-

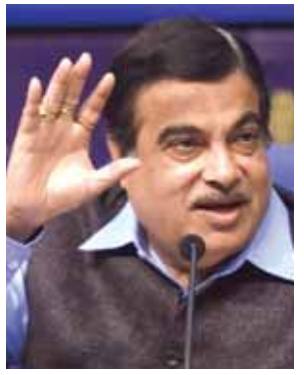
income/affordable residential projects across India's top eight cities. "This successful fundraising, even amidst a buoyant equity market, underscores the unwavering trust our investors have placed in our capabilities," MO Alts, MD & CEO, Vishal Tulsyan said. MO Alts said it boasts a strong track record, having invested in over 150 real estate projects, funding Rs 7,500 crore across 50 developers, and successfully exited over 85 investments with an impressive return exceeding 20 per cent over pre-approval bets. The fund, structured as an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF Category-II) the first close (which is commonly referred to as an initial offer) saw participation from high net-worth individuals, non-resident Indians, and family offices/corporates.

## ABB India shares rise 11 per cent; hit 52 weeks high

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Shares of electrification and automation major ABB India surged 11 per cent on Wednesday after the company posted a rise in profit in the December quarter. The scrip of the company zoomed 10.60 per cent to close at Rs 5,003.95 apiece on the NSE. On the BSE, shares of ABB India soared 10.33 per cent to end at Rs 4,989.30 apiece. During the day, ABB India stock hit a 52-week of Rs 5,134 and Rs 5,019 apiece on the NSE and the BSE. In volume terms, 44.04 lakh equity shares were traded on the NSE, and 1.48 lakh on the BSE during the day. In broader markets, the 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 434.31 points, or 0.59 per cent, to settle at 72,623.09, while NSE Nifty slipped 141.90 points to close at 22,055.05.

# Need research on ways to reduce fossil fuels dependence: Gadkari

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI,**  
Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said research work needs to be done on ways to cut down the dependence on fossil fuels as that will also help in reducing ecological and environmental issues. Research works also have a huge potential to make sustainable life for socially, economically and educationally backward



classes, the Minister for Road, Transport and Highways said. "The research we need is going to (be to) reduce our import (of fuels), research which is going to help people socially, economically and educationally backward, and the research where we can use waste to reduce problems of ecology and environment," Gadkari said while addressing the 14th Edition of Aegis Graham

Bell Awards. By using different technologies, one day India will be in a strong position, he said and added that a day will come in 5 years when the country will be an exporter of bio-aviation fuel. Using bio-mass from bamboo wheat straw and rice straw, ethanol can be made and from ethanol, bio-aviation fuel can be made, the minister said. According to him, research

works will also help in the development of smart villages, water conservation and diversification of agricultural practices. "I will request you to give priority to your research for agriculture, rural... There is a huge potential by which we can make a sustainable life for people who are socially, economically, educationally backward," he said. He also mentioned about an ongoing research work to

## International Conference on Bioengineering held at SRM

The School of Bioengineering at SRM Institute of Science and Technology organised a three-day international conference on "New Horizons in Bioengineering: Fostering Academia-Industry Partnership". The inauguration ceremony of the conference was graced by Prof Rakesh Kumar Mishra, Director of the Tata Institute for Genetics and Society, Bangalore. It was presided over by SRMIST Vice-Chancellor Prof C Muthamizhchelvan.



WTT TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

Indian men, women paddlers move to pre quarterfinals

**PTI ■ BUSAN (SOUTH KOREA)**  
 Harmeet Desai won the decisive fifth rubber to steer Indian men's team to pre-quarterfinals while the women's team strolled into the last-16 stage of the World Table Tennis Team Championships with an easy 3-0 victory, here Wednesday.  
 The men's team had to toil hard to edge Kazakhstan 3-2 but the women's team had an easy day out as it blanked Italy 3-0 to move to the next round.  
 The men's team will now compete against the powerful South Koreans while the women will take on Chinese-Taipei, later on Wednesday. Harmeet lost the opening match 2-3 to Kirill Gerassimenko (9-11, 12-10,



11-8, 7-11, 11-8) before senior teammate and Commonwealth Games gold medallist Sharath Kamal brought India on level terms with a come-from behind 3-2 victory over Alan Kurmangaliyev.  
 The age-defying 41-year-old Sharath Kamal dug deep into his reserves after being two games down to turn the tide against his Kazakh opponent.  
 Sharath Kamal finally won 6-11, 7-11, 11-7, 13-11, 11-9. G. Sathyan then gave India a 2-1 lead after a minor lapse of concentration in the second game, finally notching up an easy 3-1 victory.  
 The two-time CWG gold medallist in team event, Sathyan won the opening game 11-6 but lost the next game tamerly 5-11. He

Indian Paddle Festival to be held in Mangalore from March 8, 10

**PTI ■ MANGALORE**  
 Japanese world champion J Shuri Araki, the youngest to win the title, will be the cynosure of all eyes in the India Paddle Festival, the country's first-ever international stand-up paddling event, which will take place at the Sasihithlu Beach here from March 8 to 10.  
 Araki was 16 when he won the world title.  
 With this event the Association of PaddleSurf Professionals World Tour (APP) will mark its entry into the country.  
 The event will be conducted prior to the launch of the 2024 APP World Tour.  
 Some top athletes from the APP World Tour, as well as other aspiring professionals from the region, will participate in the event, presented by Karnataka Tourism and organised by Surfing Swami Foundation.  
 India No.1 Sekar Patchai and the 17-year-old Japanese Araki will be seen in action among others.  
 "We are extremely pleased to make our first entry into India with the Surfing Swami Foundation and Karnataka Tourism.  
 We hope that the India Paddle Festival will help the sport get the much-needed push to expand in the region," CEO of the APP World Tour, Tristan Boxford said in a statement.  
 "This championship will also provide an opportunity for the athletes to experience an international competition."

India win against Estonia



**PTI ■ ALANYA (TURKEY)**  
 The Indian football team withstood a late charge by Estonia to pick up a hard-fought 4-3 win in the Turkish Women's Cup on Wednesday, the side's first victory against an European nation.  
 Striker Manisha Kalyan scored a brace and the Chaoba Devi-coached side created a piece of history as the Indian senior women's team had never before triumphed over a team from the UEFA confederation in an official outing.  
 The teams were locked 1-1 at half time.  
 Manisha struck in the 17th and 81st minutes while Indumathi Kathiresan (62'), and Pyari Xaxa (79') scored the other goals for India.  
 Lisette Tammik (32'), Vlada Kubassova (88') and Mari Liis Lillemae (90') found the target for Estonia.  
 Played at the picturesque Gold City Sports Complex, the Blue Tigresses made a perfect start when they shot into the lead through a Manisha goal.  
 After Estonia drew level off a strike by Lisette Tammik, a rampaging India struck thrice through Indumathi, Xaxa and Manisha to take a commanding 4-1 lead.  
 Just as it appeared that the Indian women were on their way to a resounding victory, Estonia made a last-ditch effort to equalise, scoring twice through Vlada Kubassova (88') and Mari Liis Lillemae (90').  
 However, the Indian defence did a fine job to see out the rest of the time and secure a memorable win.  
 At the start, India began with an intent to hit Estonia on the counter, using their speedy wingers while letting the opponents drive deeper into the box.  
 This played into the hands of the Blue Tigresses from the start, as Karthika's interception on the right allowed Pyari to rush into the space behind the Estonian defence.  
 The India striker laced her shot past Estonia keeper Karina Kork, but it struck the upright and was eventually cleared.  
 Pyari often acted as the focal point of the counterattacks for India, and she created a great opportunity for the Blue Tigresses in the eighth minute when she made a swift turn to leave her marker stranded at the halfway line and played a through ball to Manisha on the left with acres of space.  
 However, the latter scuffed her shot.

Horner with Red Bull team at start of F1 testing in Bahrain

**AP ■ SAKHIR (BAHRAIN)**  
 Team principal Christian Horner was with Red Bull as Formula 1 preseason testing began Wednesday even as he faces an ongoing investigation by the team's parent company into an alleged claim of misconduct.  
 Horner was alongside the team's chief technology officer, car designer Adrian Newey, as Max Verstappen drove the team's new car at the start of Wednesday's morning session. It is the start of the Dutch driver's campaign for a fourth consecutive world title.  
 The Red Bull parent company said Feb. 5 it was investigating allegations of misconduct toward a team employee.  
 Horner denies any wrongdoing and has continued in his role as team principal during the investigation.  
 On the track, Red Bull still had the fastest car in Wednesday's first session. Max Verstappen set the pace with a time that was 0.699 seconds faster than Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, and also overtook his rival on track near the end of the session.  
 Williams was the only team with obvious reliability issues as Alex Albon's car stopped on the track with a technical fault.  
 There are three days of preseason testing from



Wednesday through Friday ahead of the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix at the same venue next week.  
 Each day is split into two sessions, and teams can only have one driver on track in each. That meant Lewis Hamilton, who is leaving Mercedes at the end of the year to join Ferrari, was sitting out the first day as his teammate George Russell drove.  
 McLaren driver Lando Norris said he would wear a helmet with the design used by 2003 Indianapolis 500 winner Gil de Ferran, who died in December. De Ferran was McLaren's sporting director when Norris first raced in F1 in 2019 and had more recently been an adviser to the team.  
 "We lost someone really special to us at the end of last year, he was a dear friend of mine and he'd been with me pretty much since I came into Formula 1. Someone who I not only had many laughs and great times with, but someone who helped me out on and off the track whenever I needed it," Norris posted on social media.  
 "This is the design he won the Indy 500 with, and I'll be wearing it today as my little way to say thank you for everything and to let him know we're thinking of him and he's still very much part of McLaren."

Nagal drops out of top-100



**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 India's top singles player Sumit Nagal dropped out of top-100 after losing 16 points from his kitty, resulting in him sliding three spots to 101 in the latest ATP rankings.  
 Last year in the same week, Nagal had earned 41 ranking points by reaching the semifinals of the Chennai Challenger as a qualifier. He was defending those points and could earn only 25 in Bengaluru last week.  
 Nagal had become one of the few Indian tennis players to

crack the top-100 following his tremendous show in Chennai where he won his fifth Challenger level title.  
 India's next best singles player, Ramkumar Ramanathan, gained 42 places to get to 420 and was followed by Sasikumard Mukund (457, -20), S D Prajwal Dev (595) and Digvijay Pratap Singh (623, -11).  
 Nagal is competing in the Pune Challenger this week. He is scheduled to take on Niki Poonacha in the second round on Thursday.  
 In the doubles, Rohan Bopanna continued to be world number one player and was followed by Yuki Bhambri (60, +1), N Sriram Balaji (80, -1), Vijay Sundar Prashanth (81, +1), Saketh Myneni (89, +16) and Anirudh Chandrasekar (94, -4).

Real Madrid in good shape

**AP ■ MADRID**  
 Signing Kylian Mbappé likely will not be a problem for Real Madrid financially, as it remains the Spanish club with the highest spending limit at 727 million euros (\$786 million).  
 Barcelona's financial struggles continue, though, with its cap being reduced to 204 million euros (\$220 million), the Spanish league club has a different spending limit based on factors such as revenues, costs and debts. It is proportional to roughly 70% of a club's revenues. The limits denote the maximum amount

each club can spend on players, coaches, youth systems and other areas.  
 Clubs that are overspending need to find ways to either reduce costs or attract new investment.  
 Barcelona's cap, which was at 270 million euros after the summer transfer window, has been gradually reduced after it had been boosted by financial maneuvers that helped the club restructure its debts and gain space to sign new players.  
 If it can't restructure its finances again, the club will be in danger of not being allowed to register its players to compete.  
 Madrid has a much brighter outlook, with enough cap space to add Mbappé and possibly others. The club hasn't made many blockbuster signings in recent seasons and is free to spend now if it wants to.  
 Mbappé told Paris Saint-Germain last week that he will leave the French club at the end of the season, opening the door for another attempt by Madrid to sign him. Madrid made a big push to sign the France star in 2022, with one of its offers rejected by PSG reportedly reaching nearly 200 million euros (\$216 million).

US women defeat the Dominican Republic 5-0



**AP ■ CARSON (US)**  
 Olivia Moultrie scored twice in her first national team start and the United States defeated the Dominican Republic 5-0 in the inaugural CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup tournament.  
 Moultrie, 18, making just her third appearance with the national team, scored her first goal in the seventh minute on Tuesday night when she stretched to tap the ball across the goal line.  
 Lynn Williams added a goal off a pass from Midge Purce in the 30th minute to make it 2-0 in the US team's first game of the year.  
 Purce also fed Moultrie for her second goal in the 59th minute. Moultrie, who plays for the Portland Thorns in the

United States under interim coach Twila Kilgore, who took over when coach Vlatko Andonovski departed the team following the Americans' disappointing finish at the Women's World Cup last summer.  
 Kilgore will coach the United States until May, when Emma Hayes, currently coach of Chelsea, takes over.  
 Korbin Albert, who plays for Paris Saint-Germain, also made her first start.  
 Veteran defender Becky Sauerbrunn, the captain for the match, was also a late addition to the roster because Alana Cook sustained a minor knee injury. It was Sauerbrunn's 216th cap.  
 The Dominican Republic clinched a spot in Group A with a 1-0 victory over Guyana on Saturday.  
 Kathryn González scored the lone goal early in the second half.  
 González, a Pennsylvania native, came in as a second-half substitute against the United States.  
 Earlier Tuesday at Dignity Health Sports Park, home to Major League Soccer's LA Galaxy, Argentina and Mexico played to a scoreless draw to open Group A play.  
 There are three groups of four teams in the tournament, with matches in Carson, San Diego and Houston.



Ivo officially announces his retirement from tennis

**AP ■ ZAGREB (CROATIA)**  
 Ivo Karlovic has officially announced his retirement from tennis after having not played a tournament match in 2.5 years.  
 The 2.11-meter (6 foot, 11-inch) Croatian said in a post Wednesday on X, formerly Twitter, that "I've had a very gratifying, unorthodox and long career coming from extremely humble beginnings, especially for a tennis player."  
 The 44-year-old Karlovic - he will turn 45 next week - played his last ATP match in a second-round qualifying loss at Indian Wells, California in October 2021. His last Grand Slam tournament match was a first-round singles loss at the US Open about six weeks earlier.  
 He finished his 25-year career with eight singles titles and a record of 371

Alcaraz retires hurt from his Rio Open match



**AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO**  
 Two-time major winner Carlos Alcaraz retired hurt from the Rio Open on Tuesday after two games due to a right ankle injury.  
 The retirement at 1-1 meant Brazil's Thiago Monteiro advanced to the second round. He will face his compatriot Felipe Meligeni Alves for a place in the quarterfinals.  
 Alcaraz twisted his ankle in the first game after only two points. He received medical attention, broke Monteiro's serve, but after the Brazilian pulled level he shook his rival's hand and left the court walking as his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero looked concerned.  
 The Spanish player said his doctors said the injury was not serious.  
 "These things happen, even more so on clay," Alcaraz said, "It was not a problem of the court, I got injured as I switched direction. That happens in this kind of surface."  
 Alcaraz said he does feel pain when he walks and that he will have medical scans on Wednesday.  
 "I came back to the game to see whether I could carry on or not. I spoke to the physio on the court and we decided together I should continue to see if this would get better. It



didn't happen, so we chose to be careful and abandon due to precaution," he said.  
 Monteiro said it was strange to go through after playing so little time against Alcaraz.  
 "On the court it didn't look so serious, but then I saw it in the big screen and it was a bad twist. Now I can only cheer for him to recover, he is a star, a dominant one in the new generation," the Brazilian said.  
 Alcaraz was the runner-up at the clay court tournament in Rio de Janeiro last year, and its winner in 2022.  
 The injury adds to Alcaraz's below-par performances at the Argentina Open last week.  
 The 20-year-old, who won the title in 2023, was eliminated by Chile's Nicolás Jarry in the semifinals in Buenos Aires.  
 Earlier, three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka was beaten 7-5, 6-4 in the first round by Argentina's Facundo Diaz Acosta. The 23-year-old Diaz Acosta beat Jarry in the final to win his first title on Sunday at the Argentina Open.  
 Tuesday's match was delayed for almost two hours due to rain in Rio de Janeiro. Diaz Acosta's next opponent will be his compatriot Sebastián Bætz.  
 The 38-year-old Wawrinka won the 2014 Australian Open, 2015 French Open and 2016 U.S. Open, where he defeated the world No. 1 player in the final on all three occasions.  
 Diaz Acosta played in Argentina as a wild-card entry with a career-high ranking of 87. He rose to No. 59 on Monday.

