OPINION 6

THE BOYCOTT

AT DOHA

WORLD 8

NETANYAHU SEEKS OPEN-ENDED

CONTROL IN GAZA

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR

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Lok Sabha poll dates likely after March 13



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Commission is expected to announce the dates for the Lok Sabha elections after March 13. As part of the ongoing preparations for the General Elections and concurrent Assembly polls in select States, the Chief Election Commissioner is currently engaged in successive visits to these regions.

States like Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim are gearing up for simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls.

In 2014, the Election Commission 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 announced the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on March 10, and the results were declared on

Sources indicate that senior officials of the Election Commission of India are actively engaged in regular meetings with the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of different States to address potential issues ahead of the elections. The focus is on practical challenges such as transportation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), the deployment of security personnel, and maintaining vigilance along

state borders. Also, sources mentioned that the Central Board of Secondary

(CBSE) Class 10 board examination will end on March 13, freeing up many teachers and school buildings for election duties. A team from the EC is also expected to visit Jammu & Kashmir on March 13

Chief Election Commissioner Raiiv Kumar will meet representatives from as many as nine political parties, including the Dravidian majors, to discuss issues regarding conducting the poll. He will hold a review meeting with the district collector and superintendents of police. The CEC will also meet with the CEOs of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, as well as officials from enforcement agencies, before wrapping up his meetings with the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary and the State DGP. Earlier, a team from the EC reviewed preparations with the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar, the State police chief, and other agencies including Excise Department, DRI, ED, I-T, Forest Department, Postal Department, among others. During the meeting, the EC said that enforcement agencies have been instructed to take strict action against the use of money power during elections.

Continued on Page 2

Modi envisions India in his 3rd term

Prime Minister Narendra Modi rallied supporters in Varanasi on Friday, outlining his vision for the prospective third term of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), promising transformation that would propel India to become the world's third-largest

economy Addressing an enthusiastic crowd at the Banas Dairy Complex, PM Modi pledged to secure all 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, asserting that the NDA's return to power would elevate India's stature across economic, social, strategic,

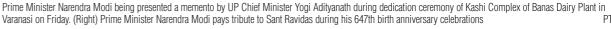
and cultural fronts. Highlighting the strides made during his tenure, PM Modi emphasised India's ascent from the 11th to the 5th largest economy globally over the past decade, with ambitious plans to further climb the rankings in the next five years.

Amid applause, he launched a scathing attack on Opposition leaders, implicitly referencing Congress scion Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks targeting local youths.

Modi condemned what he termed as "frustrated" leaders resorting to divisive tactics due to dwindling political fortunes, accusing them of peddling dynasty, appeasement, and castebased politics. accelerated

Assuring developmental initiatives, PM Modi underscored





India's first and only

expansion of Digital India, Ranchi-Kolkata Expressway infrastructure including modernised railway stations, and the introduction of transformative projects

like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat, and Namo Bharat trains. He pledged to the harness potential of eastern India, envisioning the

region as a vital

engine for national growth. The unveiling of the first phase of the Varanasi-Aurangabad six-lane highway and plans for the Varanasi-

upgrades underscored government's commitment to bolster connectivity and regional development. Reflecting on past promises fulfilled,

> highlighted the success story of Banas Dairy as a beacon of job creation and economic prosperity. He announced plans

to extend benefits to

producers in districts, neighboring unveiling initiatives aimed at fostering agricultural growth and rural prosperity across Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister

Brijesh Pathak, and other dignitaries, PM Modi bestowed a slew of projects worth ₹13,202.07 crore upon Purvanchal. including Varanasi. From infrastructure to cultural initiatives, the Minister's Prime epitomised a blend of developmental zeal and strategic political messaging, resonating with the electorate ahead of the crucial state elections.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister paid homage at the Ravidas Temple, underlining government's commitment to honour the legacy of Sant Ravidas and marginalised communities.

The symbolic gesture, coupled with a focus on inclusive growth and empowerment, served to galvanise support while underscoring the administration's unwavering dedication to social justice. In a culmination of his visit, PM Modi interacted with scholars BHU, underscoring the importance of education and knowledge in India's journey towards

PATANJALI

CAPSULE

SANDESHKHALI

Even as the Sandeshkhali unrest showed all the signs of evolving similarly to the Nandigram movement, the mass protest continued in the North 24 Parganas block, this time spreading rapidly to neighbouring villages. On Friday, Belmajur and Tebhaga More, where hundreds of villagers blocked roads and set fire to wooden blocks after being attacked by armed men associated with Sheikh Shahjahan. Detailed report on P2

Unrly farmers face punitive damages

The Haryana Police has initiated proceedings to seize the assets of farmers who damaged public property during their "Dilli Chalo" protest. However, hours after announcing that action would be taken under the National Security Act (NSA), the Haryana Police said the NSA will not be invoked against the farmers.

Former LS Speaker **Manohar Joshi dies**

Veteran Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi, who had risen from being a corporator of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to the post of Maharashtra chief minister and then went onto become the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, passed away at a private hospital here early hours of Friday.

Detailed report on P2

Centre set to get the show on the road



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $T_{\text{Transport}}^{\text{he Ministry of Road}} \, \& \,$

Highways (MoRTH) is set to achieve a recordbreaking milestone with the construction of the highest-ever four-lane access-controlled high-speed highways, reaching an ambitious road construction target of 13,000 km by the end of

this fiscal year. "In 2020-21, we witnessed the highest-ever road construction of 13,327 km compared to 4,260 km in 2013-14. As of January this year, we have already completed 7,600 km of roads, and we anticipate reaching a level of 12,800-13,000 km by the end of March," said Anurag Jain, Secretary of MoRTH, during a press conference

on Friday The Ministry aims to construct between 12,000 km and 13,000 km of national highways in 2023-24, slightly below the target of 13,813 km. The ministry constructed 10,237 km of National Highways in the 2019-20 financial year, 13,327 km in 2020-21, 10,457 km in 2021-22, and 10,331 km in 2022-23. As of the end of January 2024, the ministry has completed the construction of 7,685 km. "We are optimistic about completing 4,500-5,000 km in the remaining two months, which will help us achieve anywhere between 12,000 and

13,000 km in the current financial year. This will be second-best achievement," Jain said. The Secretary said the current financial year will see the highest-ever construction of four-lane roads and the highestever speed or accesscontrolled highways, with capacity augmentation pegged at 9,500 km, which will be a record for the ministry.

have seen a 10 per cent vear-on-vear growth, while the increase in construction of four-lane highways is 16 per cent," he said, adding that the construction of four-lane and above roads now stands at two-and-a-half the times annua achievement of FY'14. Iain said the ministry is confident also awarding highway projects worth ₹10,000 crore by March end. The NH network increased by 60 percent from 91,287 km in 2014 to 1,46,145 km in the year 2023, government showed. The length of four lanes and above NH increased by 2.5 times from 18,387 km in 2014 to 46,179 November 2023, the secretary said.

"Up to January 2024, we

For BJP, Bullet Train to chug in Modi 3.0 **DEEPAK KUMAR JHA** MUMBA where the tunnelling process was initiated for the 21 km India's $T_{\text{showcase}}^{\text{he BJP}}$ is all set to

Train as the success story of Prime Minister Narendra

Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Modi's third term at the Centre in August 2026 as the party is confident of returning to power. Railway Minister Ashwini

Vaishnaw told The Pioneer that a section of about 50 km of the high-speed corridor will be thrown open to the public in August 2026. Vaishnaw said that the Surat-Bilimora section on the 508km-long corridor between



Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor Photo by Deepak Kumar Jha

Mumbai and Ahmedabad could be operational by July-August 2026.

opened one after the other thereafter," he said. these Vaishnaw made "The other sections will be statements during a site visit

underground/undersea tunnel as part of the bullet train project. He also visited to assess the progress for the underground stations at Bandra-Kurla Complex and Shilphata in Maharashtra. "Challenges involved multiple

controlled blasting with sufficient noise and air pollution prevention measures so as to cause minimal disturbance to the environment and population in the adjoining areas," Vaishnaw said.

Continued on Page 2



PM to start poll campaign in Bengal soon

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to flag off his electoral campaign in Bengal in the first week of March, State BJP sources on Friday said. The Prime Minister who is coming to Bengal amid ongoing rural unrest at Sandeshkhali block in North 24 Parganas will address three rallies at Arambagh, Krishnagar and Basirhat on March 1, 2 and 6

"We have information that the Prime Minister will address three meetings in the first week of March. The rest will be informed formally at a subsequent date," a BJP State leader

respectively.

Earlier State Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari had said that the Prime Minister may visit Basirhat and address a rally there on March six. Subsequently State party president Sukanto Majumdar said that his party would also try to arrange a meeting between the tortured women Sandeshkhali and the Prime

"If the mothers and sisters of



may take them to the Prime Minister for a meeting, Majumdar said.

"If we can bring him here then he will be the first Prime Minister to visit this area since Independence ... it will be a big thing and we have already started our preparations in right earnest ... only the dates are to be obtained... our cadres and the local people are ready to receive him," BJP leader and MLA Agnimitra Paul.

When asked to comment on the Prime Minister's visit TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that unlike in the BJPruled States, democracy prevailed in Bengal and anyone

can come and go. "Unlike the BJP-ruled double-engine States where the farmers are fired at and they are not allowed to travel on the national highways even there is full democracy in Bengal ... anyone can come

and go like they did in 2021 ... why only the Prime Minister let the whole regiment come like tourists but finally it will be the Bengal's own daughter that will win ... because the people know that Mamata Banerjee is not a seasonal bird."

Arambagh is a parliamentary seat in Hooghly district and Krishnagar is a Lok Sabha constituency in Nadia district. Basirhat is in North 24 Parganas. Trinamool Congress' this time round.

MP from Arambagh while for-mer MP and TMC leader Mohua Moitra was elected from Krishnagar in 2019.

She was expelled from Lok Sabha last year in a cash-forquery case. TMC's Nusrat Jahan holds the Basirhat parliamentary seat.

The BJP has a good presence in all the three districts. While party MP Locket Chatterjee holds the Hooghly parliaméntary seat adjacent to Arambagh, the Ranaghat Lok Sabha seat neighbouring Krishnagar was won by the saffron party in

As the Left too has made a considerable progress in all these regions an early rally addressed by the Prime Minister could put the saffron outfit ahead of the Left in these regions where the TMC is known to have suffered a considerable alienation particularly in the wake of recruitment scams. According to sources in the

TMC, Chief Minister Mamata The situation deteriorated soon Banerjee too was not happy with the MPs of Arambagh and Basirhat and could drop them

Sandeshkhali: Mass protest spreads like wildfire to neighbouring villages

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

Even as Sandeshkhali unrest betrayed all the signs of drifting characteristically towards Nandigram movement that catapulted Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011, the mass protest continued in the North 24 Parganas block this time spreading like wild fire to neighbouring villages.

On Friday there were new areas of violence at Belmajur and Tebhaga More where hundreds of villagers blocked roads and burnt wood blocks after being attacked by the armed men of Sheikh Shahjahan. Subsequent to their resistance the police resorted to mild lath-charge and arrested several agitators which further ignited the matter when the women in great numbers blocked the roads and jostled with the

after Director General and Additional Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar and Supratim Śarkar left the area



assuring justice to the villagers, sources said.

'Their senior officers assured us that all the houses that were ransacked and destroyed by the men of Shahjahan would be restored in a couple of days should there prevail peace ... but after they left the island the police swooped down on us arresting our men indiscriminately ... so how do we rely on the police ... we are poor people and Shahjahan and his men have literally looted us of our lands and honour for the past one decade ... instead of arresting them the police are torturing us ... now we have no fear ... we are ready to see the end of it all," the women fumed. The police had clamped Section 144 of CrPC in several villages of Sandeshkhali.

Sandeshkhali hit the national headlines on January 5 when the goons of Shahjahan a TMC strongman and a district board member --- close to jailed Food Minister Jyotipriya Mallick --- attacked and injured team of Enforcement Directorate when they went to search his house in connection to the Rs 10,000 crore ration scam. Even as he went under-

erupted with the locals, gheraoing the police station demanding their usurped lands and seeking justice for their women who had been sexually assaulted for years. Subsequently two henchmen of

Shahjahan Shibu Hajra and Uttam Sardar, both district board members were arrested. However former CPI(M) MLA Nirapada Sardar too was arrested on charges of inciting the locals against the government. Meanwhile, the TMC leadership in Kolkata continued to blame the BJP and the Left for fishing in troubled waters even as State minister Shashi Panja on Friday said, "the BJP and the CPI(M) may try their best to incite the poor gullible people but they will not succeed because the anger of the people is not against the government policies but some local leaders who are being taken care of ... the people will continue to love and vote for Mamata Banerjee."

Modi Government dealt body blow to Maoists: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Narendra Modi gov-ernment has dealt a body blow to the Maoists with a holistic approach to development and security and leftwing extremism is now breathing its last, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on

He also said that due to the visionary policies of the Modi government, left-wing extremism has lost its breeding

Ĭn a series or posts on X with the hashtag #NaxalFreeBharat, the home minister said under the guidance of the prime minister, the Union home ministry has adopted an offensive strategy to curb Naxalism.

"As a result of the hammer blow to left-wing extremism, it is today breathing its last," he said. Shah said the NDA government has won the hearts of the poor living in Naxalism-affected areas by building adequate healthcare and education infra-



"On account of PM @narendramodi Ji's visionary policies, left-wing extremism has today lost its breeding ground," he said. Shah said the Modi government has dealt a body blow to Naxalism with a holistic approach to development and security in the Naxalism-affected regions.

"The Modi govt has won people's trust by taking the state governments along for overall development," he said.

He also posted a few videos giving details of Naxal issues, the destruction and casualties suffered by the people due to the menace and how government is dealing with it.

According to the data of the Ministry of Home Affairs, left wing extremism-related violence has declined by 52 per cent and the number of deaths by 69 per cent from 6035 to 1868 in the decade 2014-23 compared to 2004-14.

Similarly, the incidents of leftist extremism have reduced from 14,862 to 7,128. The number of deaths of security forces due to left wing extremism has declined by 72 per cent from 1750 in 2004-14 to 485 during 2014-23 and the number of civilian deaths has declined by 68 per cent from

NSA not being invoked against agitating farmers: Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Haryana Police has initiated proceedings to seize the assets of farmers who have damaged public property dur-ing their 'Dilli Chalo' protest march. Hours after announcing that action would be taken under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980 against farmer leaders who are protesting along the state's border with Punjab, the Haryana Police on Friday morning said the NSA will not be invoked against them. Officers added that the police had not yet invoked NSA against the farm leaders and had only initiated the process for the same. In a statement Friday morning, Inspector General of Police (Ambala) Sibash Kabiraj said, This is to clarify to all concerned that the matter of invoking provisions of the National Security Act on a few farm union leaders in Ambala district has been reconsidered

and it has been decided that the same will not be invoked." The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) observed a "black day" on Friday and burnt effigies of



BJP leaders in protest against the Haryana Police's action against agitating farmers camping at two of the state's border points. The Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan), which is a part of the SKM, said it held demonstrations at 47 places in 17 Punjab districts in protest against Singh's death.

Meanwhile, a 62-year-old farmer died of heart attack in Khanauri at the Punjab-Haryana border. The deceased identified as Darshan Singh, a native of Amargarh village, Bathinda district. This is the third death during the Delhi Chalo March, started by Punjab farmers unions on February 13. Meanwhile, farmer leaders on

Friday refused the cremation of Shubhkaran Singh who died amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers on Wednesday, saying the last rite will not be perform till the Punjab government registers a case against those responsible Punjab Chief Minister

Bhagwant Mann on Friday announced a compensation of Rs 1 crore and a government job for the sister of farmer Shubhkaran Singh who died at the Khanauri border point. Before Shukaran's death, a 73 year old farmer, part of the same agitation, had earlier died of cardiac arrest. In a statement, the Haryana

Police said that it would move

to recover damages through the seizure of properties and bank accounts of protesters. The damage caused to properties was being assessed, it said. In a statement, police said continuous efforts were being made by the farmers to break the barricades put up at the Punjab-Haryana border and impair law and order by pelting stones at the police. Before the farmers had kicked off their protest on February 13, the Haryana Police had sent notices to the unions threatening to seize their assets if they damaged public property during their agitation.

The notice said that if public property was damaged during the protests, bank accounts would be frozen and assets seized to compensate for the losses.

The police had initially said it would take action against the protesting farmer leaders under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980. The order was later revoked.A press release issued by the Ambala Police stated there had been persistent efforts by farmers to dismantle the barriers erected at the Shambhu border as part of the

The agency said in a post on X that action will be taken against 'liquor kingpins'. Directions have

The EC is also planning to use Artificial Intelligence for the smooth conduct of polls this year.

According to officials, the poll body has decided to deploy Artificial Intelligence technology for the free and fair conduct of the Lok Sabha polls, scheduled to be held before May. A dedicated

division for Artificial Intelligence has been created within the EC to identify and remove false

According to the EC, nearly 96.88 crore Indians are enrolled to exercise their franchise to choose

the next government at the Centre in the forthcoming general election. Over 2.63 crore new

electors have been included in the electoral roll, with about 1.41 crore being women, surpassing

the newly-enrolled male voters (1.22 crore) by over 15 percent, according to the EC. There has

been a six percent increase in registered voters since 2019, when the last Lok Sabha polls were

held. According to data shared by the EC, 1.85 crore voters have been identified as above 80

years of age, while the total number of "centenarians" stood at 2.38 lakh. The poll body considers

those who are 80 years and above as senior citizens. As of February 8, Uttar Pradesh has the

maximum number of voters at 15.30 crore, while Lakshadweep has over 57,000 registered voters.

Of the total voters, 49.72 crore are male and 47.15 crore are female. Over 10.64 lakh advance

applications were received from those above 17 years of age for enrollment in the voters' list.

been given to dry up the inflow and distribution of liquor, cash, freebies, and drugs.

Lok Sabha poll dates...

information on social media and digital platforms.

'Dilli Chalo' march.

The police reported incidents of protesters throwing stones at officials, destruction of public and government property, and attempts to disrupt peace and order.The press release also highlighted concerns over the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram by some farm leaders to spread provocative content aimed at disturbing harmony.

The Police has also used tear gas to disperse Haryana farmers heading towards Khanauri on Punjab's border with the state where farmers, mostly from Punjab, have been camping since last week after their 'Delhi Chalo' march was halted by security forces. A few protesters threw stones at police personnel when farmers from Kheri Chopta village were stopped from going to Khanauri. A clash between police personnel and farmers ensued, forcing Haryana security personnel to fire tear gas shells.Some police personnel and farmers were injured in the clash, officials said, adding some farmers have been

turha symbol to Sharad faction of NCP

TN RAGHUNATHA

fter it recognised the Abreakaway faction led by Ajit Pawar as the "real' Nationalist Congress Party (allotted) it the original "clock" symbol, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has allotted a 'Man Blowing Turha' (Man Blowing Trumpet) poll symbol to the Sharad Pawar-headed NCP for the Lok Sabha elections in the state.

Alluding to a Supreme Court order dated February 19 and the list of symbols in order of preference submitted through a letter by NCP president Sharad Pawar, the ECI has allotted the symbol "Man Blowing Turha" to his party. The symbol has been allotted to the NCP (Sharad Pawar) for use in all Parliamentary constituencies in the state. Welcoming the allotment of

'tutari' (traditional trumpet), the NCP (Sharad Pawar) said that the symbol granted to it "enjoys great relevance for all important or auspicious or military events Maharashtra and is a wellrecognised musical instrument across the state since times immemorial". They said that they were now fully ready to blow the trumpet for the

the clock ticks away. "The Tutari, in the form of great valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, had once deafened the emperor of Delhi. It is a great honour for our party to get Tutari (Man Blowing Turha) as our symbol for upcoming elections.

Lok Sabha 2024 elections, as

Our Tutari is now ready to shake Delhi's throne under the leadership of Sharad Pawar," the NCP (Sharad Pawar) said in a post on X.



Welcoming the ECI's order allotting it Man Blowing Turha" symbol, State NCP (Sharad Pawar) president by saying: "Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji, while state party general secretary Jitendra Awhad said: "Let's go to Lok Sabha polls by blowing the trumpet and vowing the bury the trai-tors (the rival Ajit Pawar-led

राष्ट्रवादी कॉग्रेस पक्ष

शरदचंद्र पवार

The allotment of symbol "Man Blowing Turha" to the NCP (Sharad Pawar) little over a fortnight after the ECI recognised the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the "real NCP" and gave it control over the party's name and "clock" symbol, on February 6 2024.

It may be recalled that on July 2, 2023, senior NCP leader and then leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra Ajit Pawar rebelled against his uncle and his party chief Sharad Pawar, walked out of the party with a sizeable number of supporters and took oath as deputy chief minister in the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP alliance government in the state.

On its part, the NCP (Sharad Pawar) has moved a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the ECI's order of February 6, 2024, recognising the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the "real NCP" and giving it control over the party's name and "clock" symbol.

ECI allots Man blowing | STF busts fake call centre duping people, 8 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fake call centre duping people on the pretext of providing loans was busted here and eight people, including a woman who was running the operation, were arrested, officials of the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) said. They said the gang had been operating from a rented office space in the industrial area of sector 63 in Noida for the past six months and is estimated to have duped over 300 people of crores of rupees.

"Eight accused, including the gang's mastermind, have been arrested from Noida for involvement in duping people on the pretext of getting them an online loan from India Bulls Consumer Finance using forged documents that were sent to loan-seekers through Whatsapp," the STF said in a statement.

The gang was busted by the Lucknow unit of the STF under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police Vishal Vikram Singh on Thursday.

The STF seized five mobile phones, 17 ATM/credit cards, three laptops, two tablets, 13 pre-activated SIM cards, 13 accounting registers, '5 fake documents and data of more than one



lakh customers from the call centre, the officials said.

The forged documents included ID cards issued in the name of India Bulls, loan approval letters and loan confirmation letters, the statement said, adding that loan-seekers were duped in the name of charges for registration, processing fees, GST

and insurance against loans among others.
Those arrested have been identified as the gang's mastermind Chhaya Singh, Priya Shukla, Aanchal Chaudhary, Sulekha, Ankit Singh, Vijendra Pratap Singh, Archana Prajapati and Shivani Thakur, according to the statement. An FIR has been lodged in the case at the local Sector 63 police station in Noida under Indian Penal Code sections 419, 420 (related to cheating), 467, 468, 471 (all related to forgery) and provisions of the Information Technology Act and an investigation is underway, it added.

For BJP, **Bullet train...**

From Page 1

The method includes the preparation of shafts in areas with high population density and adjoining utilities like various pipelines, electrical installations, and other infrastructure projects such as Metro and highways.

The tunnel will be a single tube tunnel to accommodate twin tracks for both up and down tracks. Thirty-nine equipment rooms will also be constructed adjoining the tunnel location as part of the package.

To construct this tunnel with a diameter of 13.1 metres, Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) with a cutter head of 13.6 meters in diameter will be used. Usually, 5-6 meter diameter cutter heads are used for urban tunnels used in Mass Rapid Transit Systems (MRTS) such as the Metro system.

Three Tunnel Boring Machines will be used to create about 16 km of the tunnel portion, and the remaining 5 km will be constructed using the New

Austrian Tunnelling Method

This tunnel will be about 25 to 57 metres deep from ground level, with the deepest construction point being 114 metres below the Parsik Hill. Vaishnaw asserted that the high-speed line will usher in economic growth.

The bullet train corridor will

have 'limited stop' and 'all stop' services. While the limited-stop trains will cover the distance between Mumbai and Ahmedabad in just two hours, the other service will take about 2 hours and 45 minutes. A total of 12 stations have been planned for the project, which is being implemented by the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL).

"Had the (then) Uddhav Thackeray government given all the permissions faster, this project might have progressed much further by now," Vaishnav said.

He said as soon as the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis (Shiv Sena-BJP) government came to power in the state, permissions were given in 10 days. The Maha Vikas Aghadi government under Thackeray fell in 2022 after Shinde split the Shiv Sena with his rebellion. Shinde then aligned with the BJP to form the

government and became the chief minister, with Fadnavis taking the deputy CM's post. The railway minister said that the 284-km-long bullet train corridor viaduct is ready in Gujarat, where work has progressed swiftly. To speed tunnel construction, innovations have been made and work was started from four points at a time. Of the four points two are shafts, one ADIT (additionally driven intermediate tunnel) and one final point at BKC (Bandra-Kurla Complex) station. The bullet train corridor has a

21-km-long tunnel, including a 7-km undersea stretch, he said, calling the work challenging. The deepest point of the tunnel is 56 metres and it will also be very wide with a width of 40 feet. Inside the tunnel too, the trains will run at the speed of 300-320 kmph, Vaishnaw said.

Work on the tunnel is underway at BKC, Vikhroli and Ghansoli. NHSRCL said they are facing multiple challenges at these shaft construction sites, which have high population density and several utilities like pipelines, electrical installation and infrastructure including the Metro and

DDA to hold e-auction offering 257 flats on March 5

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

rhe Delhi Development ▲ Authority(DDA) will on March 5 hold an e-auction for Phase III of its Diwali Special Housing Scheme, offering 257 flats in various categories, officials said on Friday. This phase of the scheme was

launched on February 19. It offers 257 flats in the penthouse, high-income and middle-income group categories in different sectors of Dwarka. According to a February 16 official circular on the e-auction of flats, two penthouses and 123 high-income group category flats are in Sector 19B while 132 middle-income group category flats are in



The tentative reserve prices for them will be Rs 5 crore, Rs 2.02 crore to Rs 2.19 crore and Rs 1.25 to Rs 1.42 crore, respectively. The last date to register for the

e-auction and submit an

online earnest money deposit

(EMD) is February 28. The e-

penthouses Rs 25 lakh. Participants will have to get

auction will be held on March

The deposit for middle-

5, the DDA said.

income group category flats is Rs 10 lakh, high-income group flats Rs 15 lakh and themselves registered on the e-auction portal by paying Rs 2,500 (including GST) for each flat they wish to bid for. This amount is non-adjustable and non-refundable. The DDA on last November

approved the launching of 'Festival Special Housing Scheme 2023, with more than 32,000 flats of different categories at various locations such as Dwarka, Lok Nayak Puram and Narela.

he pioneer NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 24, 2024

Historical markets to regain prestine glory

¬he historic colonial era market at Kashmere Gate in front of St. James Church, the iconic Kamla Market, in front of New Delhi Railway Station at Ajmeri Gate and Station at Ajmeri Gate and ShraddhanandMarg cutting across the medieval Sadar Bazar, Naya Bazar and Khari Baoli areas up to Tis Hazari, will soon get a facelift and restored to their past glory. Delhi Lt Governor(LG)V K Saxena gave orders for restoration, beautification and refurbishment of these sites after visiting them on Thursday, officials said here

He visited the three locations, lying decrepit and crumbling due to years of neglect and apathy and instructed accompanying officials of concerned agencies and departments to take up the restoration of these with the local Market Trader

Church at Kashmere Gate, designed originally as a semicircle with uniform façade of wrought iron jaali work, common covered passage and segregated shops of uniform dimensions, has been crumbling due to disrepair, encroachments and mindless construction.

The LG noted that the neglect on part of civic agencies had been such that the entire his-torical complex had lost its original design and devel-oped into a hazard bunch of shops. Encroachment on the common passage of shops and parking was another issue that he flagged.

He instructed for immediate repair of the crumbling structures, restoration of the original façade and find solutions to the parking problem in consultation with the shopkeepers and MTA.

At Kamla Market, designed on lines of Gole Market and Connaught Place that was

first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the LG was faced with squalor, hanging wires, crumbling walls, unauthocrumbling walls, unauthorized storage over rooftops, covered passage in disrepair and open urination. This iconic market that should have been a delight for any passenger entering the city after de-boarding at New Delhi Railway Station, had turned into an eyesore, turned into an eyesore, obstructed by encroachments. The Clock Tower atop the market had become nonfunctional laden with dust and grime. Even the marble plaque commemorating its inauguration by President Rajendra Prasad was lying broken. Saxena directed for immediate cleaning, sanitation and restoration works. Travelling through the Shraddhanand Marg that runs from the New Delhi Railway







es commercial hubs like Khari This broad street, that could Baoli, Sadar Bazar and Naya lack of sanitation, disrepair of pavements and gross traffic

serve as an alternate boulevard between Old and New Delhi, and reduce time as well as distance substantially, needed a comprehensive redevelopment plan, the LG stressed. He asked for cleanliness to be taken up immebe chalked out by concerned agencies in consultation with all stakeholders to decongest

Federal agencies planning to arrest Kejriwal: AAP

Station to the Old Delhi

Railway Station and further

towards Tis Hazari and hous

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday cited "reliable information" and claimed the federal agencies are planing to arrest Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as the party's imminent national poll pact with the Congress has rattled the BJP and disturbed its political call culations while the Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva rejected the AAP claims as baseless and said they reflected Kejriwal's frustration.

While the AAP leaders did not say in which case Kejriwal is likely to be arrested, they claimed that this was being done to prevent the AAP from stitching an alliance with the Congress for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections as the BJP is scared of the two parties coming together. While there was no immediate response from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to the AAP's claims, the BJP said AAP leaders are trying to create confusion and generate sympathy for Keiriwal

Addressing a press conference here, Delhi cabinet minister

and senior AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj said as soon as reports of finalisation of seatsharing talks between the Congress and the AAP started coming in, the ED sent a seventh summons to Kejriwal in the excise policy case. "We have learnt from reliable sources that the CBI is planning to arrest Kejriwal. The CBI will also serve a notice to Kejriwal either this afternoon or by the evening," Bharadwaj said. Kejriwal will be arrested in the next two to three days, he

"We are getting messages that if the AAP-Congress alliance is formed, Arvind Kejriwal will be arrested. The BJP is scared

The polls will be held period-

ically in all 12 zones of the

MCD and the union which

gets the maximum number of

votes will be given recognition

by the corporation for a tenure

of five years until it is re-elect-

ed for representing the concerns of the staff in their

respective zones. In each zone,

the corporation will set up

polling booths which will be

guarded by a team of polling

assistants and police person-

nel to avoid canvassing or

influencing votes within 100

metres of the polling station.

press and information

department of MCD:

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

 $B^{\text{JP councillor and Leader of}}_{\text{Opposition in the AAP-led}}$

municipal House in Delhi,

Raja Iqbal Singh on Friday

claimed that a plan was afoot

to "shut" the press and infor-

mation department of the

MCD, even as a top official of the civic body rejected the

allegation. Singh, a former

mayor of North Delhi, made

the allegation at a press con-

ference held at the Civic

He said the Municipal

Corporation of Delhi is plan-

ning to "shut the press and

information department and

bring in a private agency". Singh also claimed that many

employees will be "removed" as

a result of shutting down the

department. However, a top

official of the MCD said "there

is no such move". "All the employees (of the P&I depart-

ment), both permanent and

contractual, will continue to

discharge their duties," he said

on condition of anonymity.

BJP councillor

Plan afoot to shut

You can arrest Kejriwal if you want, but the alliance will be forged," he said.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak said people will take to the streets if Kejriwal is arrested. "There will be a tsunami. Their (BJP) political calculations will go wrong. We are not scared of being arrested. We are forging this alliance for the country," he said.

Delhi minister Gopal Rai on Friday lashed out at the BJP and alleged that the Centre has been planning to arrest AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal by serving him a notice through CBI. Addressing a press conference here, Rai alleged that the CBI has been preparing a notice under CrPC 41A (notice of appearance before police officer) for Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal. "BJP has government, Sachdeva said. The BJP won all the seven seats in Delhi with 51 per cent votes in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and 59 per cent in 2019. In the 2024 Lok been frustrated ever since the opposition formed the INDIA bloc. The BJP-led central government has been planning to arrest Arvind Kejriwal by serving him a notice through CRI Sabha elections, the people of Delhi will give 70 per cent votes to the BJP, he asserted.
Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri slammed the AAP

ing him a notice through CBI.

We got to know that a notice is

being prepared under CrPC

41A and thereafter, they plan to arrest him," he alleged.

Delhi BJP president Virendra

Sachdeva said Kejriwal knows

that the talks on the AAP's

alliance with the Congress are

failing but AAP leaders have

been spreading rumours since

Thursday and are trying to gen-

erate sympathy for the chief

minister. "Kejriwal may delay his

punishment with the help of

lawyers but ultimately, the peo-

ple of Delhi will punish him

harshly in the coming elec-

tions," the BJP leader said. The

AAP and Kejriwal should

remember that Congress leader

Ajay Maken had submitted the

first written complaint to the

lieutenant governor regarding the liquor "scam" under his

Bidhuri slammed the AAP leaders saying they are trying to set a different narrative ahead of the Lok Sabha polls that Kejriwal will be arrested after seat sharing agreement in Delhi. First, they propagated that ED will arrest Kejriwal. Now, they are making noise that CBI will arrest Kejriwal for making seat sharing deal in Delhi. Actually AAP leaders want to see him (Kejriwal) behind the bar," Bidhuri said. The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh summons to Kejriwal asking him to appear before it for questioning in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case on February 26, sources said on Thursday. This is the seventh summons issued by the ED to the chief minister, who skipped the previous six.

Atishi sitting on CAG files, ask her to clear fast: LG to Kejriwal India are constitutionally man-

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has written a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal regarding five Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India (CAG) reports "pending" with Finance Minister Atishi since August, 2023.

Saxena has requested the chief minister to advise the finance minister to "expeditiously process" the important reports concerning state finances so that they can be tabled in the ongoing budget session of the Delhi Assembly. "Since the budget session of the assembly is underway, the chief minister may advise the finance minister to expeditiously process these important reports so that the same can be laid before the House, added the letter.

The reports mentioned by the LG include the ones on State Finance Audit Report for the year ended 31st March, 2022; State Finance Audit Report for the year 31st March, 2021; Performance Audit on Prevention and Mitigation of Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi for the FY 2021-22; Revenue Economic, Social and General Sectors and PSUs for years ended 31st March, 2020 and 2021; and Performance Audit Report on Children in Need of Care and Protection for the year ended 31 March, 2021. Apart from this, the Finance Accounts and Appropriation Accounts for the years 2021-2022 along with audit certificates have also been pending since August, 2023, he

The reports of Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) are constitutionally mandated independent and impartial assessment of the performance of the government and in many ways are a guidance document for assessment of its financial performance, said the LG in his let-

"You will appreciate that the reports of Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) of

dated independent and impartial assessment of the performance of the Government and in many ways are a guidance document for governments to assess their financial performance. the gains obtained through revenue and help the Government invoke corrective measures where necessary. It is an obligation of the Government of the day to share with the people, through the House, an objective account of its performance - revenue and expenditure of public

funds." he noted. The letter stated that the LG secretariat received copies of communications from controller of accounts to the finance minister's secretary, pursuant to a letter by principal accountant general audit, Delhi, requesting for consideration of the five CAG reports and one Delhi government accounts to be cleared by the finance minister and sending it to the LG for it to be laid before the legislative assembly.

MCD plans proposal in House to hold polls to recognise staff unions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation ▲ of Delhi (MCD) is likely to present a proposal in the House to recognise employee unions and associations in all of its 12 zones by holding elections through secret ballot for representing staff concerns. The civic body is expected to table the proposal in the House meeting on February 26. A secret ballot election committee will be constituted for holding the polls, MCD officials said.

The civic body has recently notified that it does not recognise several unions and associations after their members staged protests for the regularisation of contractual workers and alleged non-payment of salaries. It barred its employees from participating in protests staged by such unions or criticising a department on social media or in front of the press and warned of disciplinary action. However, the MCD has now passed a resolution that outlines the code of discipline and criteria for recognition of unions and associations that will be eligible to contest the polls, sources said.

The labour welfare department of the MCD will work on the proposed guidelines to identify major stakeholder unions and associations that come under the jurisdiction of the civic body. The department will also prepare a centralised voter list of all eligible employees who can participate in the election process. This list will be uploaded on the official website of the

civic body.
As per the guidelines, only regular group C and D employees and regular daily wagers will be able to cast votes for electing the unions. The contesting unions can choose from a list of 16 free election symbols to represent Man arrested for posing as wing commander of IAF **STAFF REPORTER** ■ NEW DELHI

39-year-old man was Aarrested for allegedly entering the Palam Air Force Station in the Delhi Cantonment area posing as a wing commander of the IAF, police said on Friday. The suspect, identified as Vinayak Chadha from Delhi's Malka Ganj area, was caught by Air Force personnel on February 21 while trying to enter the station using a fake identity card. According to police, he wanted to get his father treated at the dental hospital of the air force station.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena said police were informed about the incident on Wednesday. "A PCR call was received on February 21, regarding the unauthorised entry of one person into the premises of Air Force Station Palam, 3 Wing Camp Area, Near Sadar Bazar Metro Station, Delhi Cantt," the Delhi Police said.

The accused was held by the air force staff while he was trying to enter the restricted



area, the DCP said.

He said the man entered the air force dental hospital on Thimmaya Road by posing as a wing commander. He breached the first layer of security using a forged identity document but was caught later by air force security staff, Meena said.

Chadha was then handed over to the police, he said, adding that a forged identity card and a few other liquor cards in the names of several defence personnel were found on him. Liquor cards are given to defence personnel to acquire liquor at subsidised rates in cantonment areas.

A case under Indian Penal Code sections 419 (punishment for cheating by personation), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record) and 474 (having possession of document knowing it to be forged and intending to use it as genuine) was registered at Delhi Cantt police station, officials

During an investigation into the source of the forged documents, police have apprehended another person from Sultanpuri. Further probe in the matter is underway, police

42 years old man gored to death by stray cattle in Tigri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

42-year-old man, waiting for school bus for Ahis child, died in a stray cattle attack in south Delhi's Tigri area here, police said on Friday. Footage from a CCTV camera showed the animal goring Subhash Kumar Jha, a resident of Khanpur, and pound him with its hoofs as he lay on road.

In the video, Jha's son could be seen screaming for help. The cow stomped on Jha's chest and head a number of times after goring him. The people standing nearby tried to save him by trying to hit the animal with sticks, the video showed.

The incident took place near Jaspal Mart in Devli Mor around 8 am Thursday when Jha was waiting for a bus for his son to go to school, a police

officer said. The victim, who worked as a financier, is survived by wife and two sons, aged 7 and 13. "He had gone to drop his younger son to school and was waiting for the bus when he was

attacked by a stray cow," Manoranjan, a cousin

of the victim, said He said Jha was a native of Bihar's Araria district and had been living in the locality since 2000. His older son studies in class 9. Manoranjan said.

He said that similar animal attacks have happened in the past in the area, with several people getting injured, but no death.

Locals attributed the stray cattle problem to the illegal dairies operating in the area. A police officer, admitting the problem of stray



animals in the locality, said that they have relayed the information to the municipal corporation. "We are yet to ascertain whether it was a cow or a bull and also finding out it was owned by

Another police officer said, after the incident, Iha was taken to Batra Hospital where he succumbed during treatment on Friday morning. His body was handed over to his family after post mortem, police said.

Dr Balraj, department of forensic, senior resident, said that Jha had received multiple fractures in his ribs and injuries to his head, heart and lungs. Some bleeding also occurred in his abdomen, he said.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi in a statement said that a team of veterinary department has captured nine animals in the southern zone of Khanpur area.

It said it will cut the electricity and water connections of illegal dairies being operated in the locality and seal them.

Electricity linesmen to be felicitated by CEA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tn a step to acknowledge the I dedication of men who risk their lives to facilitate electricity to our homes, industries or any facilities, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) in collaboration with Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd (Tata Power-DDL) would be honouring and felicitating 'Linesmen' for their tireless efforts in ensuring seamless and round-the-clock elec-

To be celebrated 'Linesman Diwas' a special event has been planned for March 4 which will bring together representatives of several power

distribution companies from across the country at one place. This will be fourth anniversary year of Lineman Diwas which was started in peak of pandemic.

It is estimated that the country has more than 50,000 linemen who work tirelessly across more than 100 power distribution companies. From attending emergency calls for repairing and maintenance of the power line, to providing new connections etc, the frontline warriors perform

every duty meticulously. The occasion promises to be a pan-India affair, with Discoms from Delhi, Gujarat, Odisha, Assam, Bihar,



Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh showcasing their commitment to honoring their linemen. "As we celebrate the fourth

edition of Lineman Diwas, we honor the dedication and resilience of these linemen, whose dedication ensures that we get uninterrupted power supply, even in challenging situations, natural calamities and unpredictable weather conditions. Over the past three years, this day has gained national importance, with participation from more and more transcos and discoms across the country," said

Ganesh Srinivasan, CEO, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd. During the programme, several linesmen will be recognized and honored for their exemplary contributions. "The theme, "Seva, Suraksha,

Swabhiman", perfectly captures the dedication, safety, and self-reliance of these individuals who work day and night to ensure 24*7 electricity supply," said a CEA official for the occasion. Their meticulous work makes them the unsung heroes and

the true backbone of power distribution. Their contributions are invaluable, yet often overlooked, said spokesman of a discom.

Jaishankar cautions against China mind games

As tension persists at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for the last three years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday here cautioned against Beijing's "mind game" to restrict India-China issues under the bilateral framework and said New Delhi must not forgo its rights to harness other factors in the world to get better terms on an "equilibrium" in the rela-

He said arriving at an equilibrium and maintaining it is going to be one of the "biggest challenges" for India-China ties even as he asserted that the immediate issue at hand was Beijing's departure from laid down norms triggering the border row in eastern

Making this point in an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue, Jaishankar cautioned against China's "mind



work and said India must not forgo its rights to harness other factors in the world to get better terms on an equi-

On the economic front, the external affairs minister said there would be a period when the Chinese economy will be flattening out and India will be growing and referred to projections by Goldman Sachs that suggested that by 2075, both countries could end up as USD 50 trillion plus economies. Jaishankar said India should be confident enough to "leverage" the

international system to create the "best possible outcome". His remarks came when asked whether there would be a settling point between China and India and would the two countries finally find an equilibrium or a balance in their

frosty relations. "Here is the immediate issue which is: From the late 1980s, we had an understanding on the border precisely because it suited both of us. Now there was a departure after almost 30 years. A departure on their side in terms of how they behaved on the border. And there was a pushback

"I think arriving at an equilibrium, then maintaining those and refreshing those is going to be one of the biggest challenges for both countries. It is not going to be easy," he

The external affairs minister said "mind games" will be played which would be that it is "just between the two of us". The other 190 odd countries do not exist in our relationship. That will be the mind game which will be played. I do not think we should play it," "Because if there are other fac-

tors out there in the world

which can be harnessed by me o get better terms on an equilibrium, then why should I forgo that right," he said. 'Today, when I say think through your own solution, do not give another country, which is clearly a competitive

country, a veto over our poli-

cy choices. Unfortunately, in

the past that has happened

from time-to-time," he said.

economies, Jaishankar said the Chinese started off "earlier and much more intensively and robustly" than India "But it is in the nature of

things that at some stage everybody flattens out. So there will be a period when they will be flattening out and we will be growing," he said. "I am not in denial of what the numbers today suggest. But if one looks for an example in Goldman Sachs predictions which is that we will both really by around 2075 end up as USD 50 trillion plus

economies and will be the two closest to each other," he said. "The international version of that issue will be -- if both of us are moving vis-a-vis each other and vis-a-vis the world, how do we construct an equilibrium; that There will be occasions when one or the other would want to do something to press home a particular advantage and the other

would resist it," he said.

President, PM condole demise of Manohar Joshi

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday condoled the death of former Maharashtra Chief Minister Manohar Joshi. He was also Lok Sabha Speaker from 2002 to 2004.

In her condolence message, President Murmu said Joshi endeared himself to people and was loved by leaders cutting across party lines.

"Sad to learn about the demise of Shri Manohar Joshi, a veteran leader who had served as Lok Sabha speaker and Maharashtra chief minister. In his long public life, Shri Joshi endeared himself to people, earned admiration for his sharp wit and intellect and was loved by leaders cutting across partyline. My heartfelt condolences to his family members and fol-



lowers," the President wrote on

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed pain at the death of former Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi and recalled his contribution in various capacities. He will be remembered for his diligence as a legislator too, the prime minister said.

Modi wrote on X, "He was a veteran leader who spent years in public service and held various responsibilities at the municipal, state and national level. As Maharashtra CM, he worked tirelessly for the state's progress. He also made noteUnion Minister."

During his tenure as the Lok Sabha speaker, Modi said, Joshi strove to make parliamentary processes more vibrant and

participative. Manohar Joshi Ji will also be remembered for his diligence as a legislator, having had the honour of serving in all four legislatures. Condolences to his family and supporters. Om

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said Joshi established the best parliamentary traditions during his tenure as Speaker.

Shanti," he said.

"I express my condolences on the demise of former Lok Sabha Speaker and senior politician Shri Manohar Joshi. Enriching democratic values, he established the best parliamentary traditions," Birla said

Due to his distinctive and fair style of running the House, he had the respect of leaders of all parties, Birla recalled.

Talking for early discharge of Indians working as Russian Army support staff, says MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Amid reports that some Indians are working as support staff for Russian forces in the ongoing Ukraine conflict zone, India on Friday said it was in touch with Moscow for early "discharge" of Indians working as support staff to the Russian Army, and urged its nationals to stay away from the conflict zone in Ukraine.

The comments by Ministry of

External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came following a report that some Indians are working as support staff to the Russian Army in the conflict zone. "We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian Army," Jaiswal said. He said the Indian embassy in Moscow has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their "early discharge".

"We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," he

This reaction came after reports indicated that dozens of Indians were allegedly duped into military service in Russia. The unsuspecting Indians were promised support jobs but were ultimately enlisted in the Russian army, receiving misleading translations of documents and undergoing military training against their initial understanding.

'We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian army. The Indian Embassy has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their early discharge. We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," said Jaiswal. The family of one of the men, Sufiyan from Hyderabad, along with All India Majlis-E

Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi, on Wednesdy sought the intervention of the Centre and the External Affairs ministry to secure the safe evacuation of the trapped Indian nationals and take stringent action against the fraudulent agents responsible.

Imran, Sufiyan's brother,

revealed the deceptive tactics

employed by agents associated with Faisal Khan, who runs a YouTube channel named 'Baba Vlogs'. The unsuspecting men were allegedly promised support jobs but were ultimately enlisted in the Russian army. With nine Indian men reportedly within the Ukrainian borders, facing danger and injuries, the distressed families seek help from the Centre. Owaisi formally wrote to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, seeking intervention to bring back the affected

Russia a power with enormous tradition of Statecraft: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $R^{ussia \ is \ a \ power \ with \ an}_{enormous \ tradition \ of \ statecraft \ and \ it \ is \ turning}$ more towards Asia or non-West parts of the world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday, delving into current geopolitical developments and their fall-

Jaishankar's comments came days after he said India has had a "stable" and "very friendly" relationship with Russia, and that Moscow never hurt New Delhi's interests.

In an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue here on Friday, Jaishankar, replying to a question on Moscow's growing proximity with Beijing, said it makes sense to give Russia multiple options and that railroading it into a single option and criticising it for that would be like a self-fulfilling



"I think it makes sense to give Russia multiple options. If we railroad Russia into a single option and say that's really bad because that's the outcome, then you are making it a self-fulfilling prophecy," he

"Today it is important for other countries, especially in Asia to engage Russia," Jaishankar said. "Russia is a power with an enormous tradition of stateput themselves into a single relationship of an overwhelming nature. It would go against their grain," he said.

The external affairs minister

was asked to comment on intensification of ties between Russia and China and whether India was uncomfortable with it. "What's happened today with Russia essentially is that a lot of doors have been shut to Russia and the West. We know

ing more to Asia or to parts of the world which are not West," he said.

The external affairs minister suggested that policies of the West are bringing Russia and China closer

"It's kind of funny -- on the one hand you have people who set policies (and) bring the two together and then you say beware of them coming together," he said. Jaishankar's comments came

days after he said India has had a "stable" and "very friendly" relationship with Russia, and that Moscow never hurt New Delhi's interests. The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding the ongoing Ukraine

India's import of Russian crude oil has gone up significantly despite increasing disquiet over it in many Western countries. In his remarks, Jaishankar also highlighted India's G20 presidency and how it ensured induction of the African Union as a permanent member of the grouping. He noted that if the G20 could be expanded, the permanent membership of the UN Security Council can also be increased.

"When the sort of smoke clears and people look back on this G20, it will surely be recognised for the fact that the African Union's membership was agreed upon," he said.

The external affairs minister also highlighted India's foreign policy priorities including combating terrorism and attempting to ensure inclusive global welfare.

It could be millets, it could be yoga, it could be solar energy, it could be combating terrorism, it could be black money. You today see an India, which is really pushing and trying to get itself and its ideas on the global stage, he said.

Modi to inaugurate world largest grain storage plan in cooperative sector pilot project today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Aligning with the Centre's Avision of "Sahakar se Samridhi," Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday will inaugurate "World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector" pilot project at 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across 11 states at an event here, a move aimed to fortify food security and fostering economic development

in the country.
Additionally, the Prime
Minister will also lay the
foundation stone for 500 more PACS nationwide for construction of godowns and other agri infrastructure such as warehouses, custom hiring centers, PUs, and fair price shops among others under the mega grain storage scheme. The aim is to ensure farmers



get modern grain storage facilities at the block level through PACS, which will strengthen food security, and empower the farmers by enabling them to realize better crop prices.

The monumental project which has been approved with a financial outlay of more than Rs 2,500 crore, is supported by NABARD and

spearheaded by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), an autonomous financial institution for cooperatives in the country.

The scheme is being implemented through convergence of various existing schemes like the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Agriculture Marketing Infrastructure (AMI), etc. to lion tonnes, despite an annuenable PACS participating in al food grain output exceedand interest subvention benefits for undertaking infrastructure development, the statement said. NABARD has developed the

National Level Common

Software for this project, tailored to meet the diverse needs of PACS across the country. Onboarding of 18,000 PACS on ERP software has been completed, marking a significant milestone in the project's implementation, according to the statement. A senior official from the Ministry said that over the next five years, India is poised to enhance its storage capacity to 215 million tonnes with the establishment of a widespread network of grain storage facilities at the PACS level. Currently, India's stor-

age capacity stands at 145 mil-

shortfall in storage infrastructure leads to significant food grain losses each year due to inadequate storage facilities.

At the same time, modernizing PACS through comprehensive computerization will foster multipurpose PACS, Producer Organizations (FPOs), and

retail outlets. Already, a trial run of the ERP software has commenced in 15,783 PACS spanning 27 States and Union Territories (UTs), marking a significant milestone in the project's implementation. This trial phase serves to assess the functionality and effectiveness of the software in realworld settings, paving the way for its full-scale deploy-

Nation must become industrially strong, self reliant in aerospace: IAF Deputy Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■

U tance of aerospace sector, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit said here on Friday a nation has to become "industrially strong" and full spectrum self-sufficiency is required in defence, especially in the aerospace

Delivering a keynote address at an international conference, he also said it is being seen that 'atmanirbharta' (selfdependence) is becoming more and more important after the "two wars" happening around us in the world. The conference, titled 'Energising Indian Aerospace Industry: Challenges for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and hosted at Manekshaw Centre in Delhi Cantonment, is being attended by many other senior officers of the Indian

Scientists engineer synthetic human antibody

to neutralise deadly neurotoxin in snake venom



Air Force and representatives of various leading defence industry firms.

"Every nation wants to self-reliant, become 'atmanirbhar'. And we are seeing that... After these two wars happening around us in the world, it is becoming more and more important, Air Marshal Dixit said. His remarks come in the

He emphasised the need for

Sunagar, Associate Professor at

backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel-Hamas conflict.

and the challenges that the force faces at present as it "We have to become industrially strong, full spectrum

'atmanirbharta' in the IAF

self-sufficiency is required in defence, especially in the aerospace sector," the deputy chief of the air staff said. He also shared a historical aspect of manufacturing of IAF aircraft in India in the 1950s and the force's journey

in the realm in the decades that followed. "Today, the situation has become such that if a user

doesn't come forward and drive this whole gamut of ʻatmanirbharta', I don't think it is going to be successful," he added. Society of Indian Defence

Manufacturers (SIDM) and air force think-tank Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) are also co-organisers of the

India, Oman agree to cooperate in field of archives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

India and Oman have "agreed to cooperate" in the field of archives during a visit by a delegation of the National Archives of India to the Gulf country on February 21-22, the Culture Ministry said on Friday.

In a statement, the ministry said the members of the Indian delegation, led by NAI Director General Arun Singhal, were shown around various sections and divisions of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman. In bilateral discussions with NRAA chairman Hamad Mohammed Al-Dhawyani, Singhal dwelt upon the historical ties between India and Oman and informed him about the existence of a large number of records pertaining to Oman in the NAI as well as in other



cials said.

As a gesture of goodwill, Singhal handed over "a list of 70 select documents pertaining to Oman" that are available in the NAI in Delhi. These documents cover a period from 1793 to 1953 and deal with a wide range of subjects, they said. Also, 523 pages of copies of records were handed over to the NRAA chairman, covering several important subjects such as "change of Omani Flag from

of Sayyid Faisal bin Turki as ruler of Oman after the death of Sultan Sayyid Turki (1888); official visit of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman to the Viceroy in India (1937); and the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Republic of India and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman signed on the 15th March 1953 at Muscat (English, Hindi and Arabic versions)",

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

n a groundbreaking devel-Lopment having potential to significantly benefit India which is grappling with a high number of snakebite cases, scientists have engineered a synthetic human antibody capable of neutralising a deadly neurotoxin found in the venom of over 200 dangerous snake species worldwide.

This achievement, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, marks the first application of a strategy previously used for screening antibodies against HIV and COVID-19 to create a venom-neutralizing antibody for snakebite treatment.

Senji Laxme, a PhD student at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, emphasized the novelty of this approach, which was conducted in collaboration with scien-



Research Institute. The goal is to develop a universal antibody solution that can provide broad protection against venom from various deadly snakes, including cobras, king cobras, kraits, and black mambas.

Snake venom, a potent mixture of compounds targeting nerve cells and tissues, causes thousands of deaths annually and disables many more world-

methods, such as antivenom sourced from animals injected immune reactions.

annual average of 58,000 fatal-

with venom, face challenges due to variations in venom compositions and adverse India bears the brunt of snakebite incidents, with an

ities, comprising over half of

the global total of 81,000

-138,000 deaths. Kartik

IISc and joint corresponding author of the study, highlighted the limitations of current antivenom production methods, which involve injecting snake venom into equines and collecting antibodies from their blood. However, this process yields antibodies against microorganisms, which are not therapeutically relevant, with less than 10 percent of antiven-om vials comprising antibodies targeted towards snake venom toxins.

However, the synthetic anti-body developed by the research team targets a conserved region in the core of a major toxin called the three-finger toxin (3FTx) present in elapid venom. Despite variations among 3FTxs produced by different elapid species, the antibody strongly binds to various

Extensive testing identified an

strongly to various 3FTxs, including those from the Taiwanese banded krait, monocled cobra from Eastern India, and black mamba from sub-Saharan Africa. Animal experiments demon-

antibody capable of binding

strated the efficacy of the synthetic antibody, with mice injected with the toxin-antibody mixture surviving beyond the 24-hour observation window and appearing completely healthy. In India, Karnataka govern-

ment has become the first state to declare snakebite a notifiable disease across all its 31 district health facilities in the wake of increased incidents of snakebite in the State.

The World Health Organization (WHO) desig-Health nated snakebite as a neglected tropical disease in 2017 and set a goal to reduce its global impact by 50 percent by 2030.

Modi to inaugurate Gujarat first AIIMS in Rajkot on February 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Gujarat's first All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rajkot on February 25, state Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said on Friday. This will be one of the five AIIMS to be dedicated to the nation by the prime minister from Rajkot on February 25, the minister said.

out-patient department (OPD) of the super-speciality hospital near Para Pipaliya village on the outskirts of Rajkot city is already operational, Modi will inaugurate the in-patient department (IPD), Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar. Modi laid the foundation stone

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Friday said

campaign theme should be

understand, conveying to the people that the DMK regime protected all the people, and that this should be articulated

through the achievements of

Stalin, also the president of the ruling DMK, exuded

confidence that his party and allies would emerge victorious

in all the 39 Lok Sabha

constituencies in the state and

also in the lone segment in

neighbouring Puducherry. Addressing DMK's district

secretaries and constituency

observers virtually, Stalin said

the party's election related

work is going on in a fast-

constituency-wise meetings,

titled 'Stalin's voice to retrieve

rights', have been a big success,

he said, and lauded office-

urged

functionaries to conduct the

poll campaign in a simple

manner after understanding

every single scheme of the state

The campaign should be in an

letting people understand that

it is our (state) government

that is protecting all members

The reference is to a string of

welfare schemes including the

fare-free bus travel for women

and the achievements made by

the DMK regime which Stalin

said should be articulated in

 $round\,450\,employees\,of\,the\,state-run$

A Rajasthan Financial Corporation are

yet to start getting money under the Old

Pension Scheme even after 7-8 months

of the retired employees had deposited

a lump sum amount each by September

first week — the last deadline given by

the government for inclusion in the OPS

that allowed one to get a retrospective

The first deadline for depositing the

"Even after seven months, most of the

files are stuck due to the lackadaisical

approach of officials involved in process-

PTI CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Water scarcity is a major problem in Latur and elected representatives

must take all efforts to come up with a

solution, Union minister Nitin Gadkari

He was speaking at an event in

Ahmedpur for inauguration and

launching of nine projects in Dharashiv

These comprise six highway projects

costing Rs 3,946 crore in Latur and

three costing Rs 122 crore in Dharashiv.

Latur. Elected representatives must take

up issues related to it on priority. While

"Water scarcity is a key problem of

said on Friday.

and Latur districts

pension from April 2023.

money was July 2023.

of depositing the required money. According to a departmental order, most

of a family," he said.

the campaign.

bearers for their work.

Parliamentary

and

the party's Lok

the government.

paced manner

government.

LS campaign message

regime protects all: Stalin

should convey DMK



for Rajkot AIIMS through video-conferencing

December 2020. 'Spread across 201 acres, Rajkot AIIMS is a world-class hospital with 720 beds, including ICU and superspeciality beds. On February 25, the prime minister will inaugurate 23 theatres, 30-bed AYUSH block and 250 beds of IPD. The remaining beds will be made available gradually," Patel said. The hospital was built at the cost of Rs 1,195 crore, he said, adding that the OPD has already served nearly 1.44 lakh As per a government release. the prime minister will arrive at Raikot AIIMS on Sunday afternoon and address a rally at the Race Course ground in the city later in the evening.

He will take part in a kilometre-long roadshow from the old airport to the venue of the public rally, it stated. During the function, the prime minister will also virtually

inaugurate four other newly-built AIIMS, located in Mangalagiri (Andhra Pradesh), Bathinda (Punjab), Rae Bareli (Uttar Pradesh), and Kalyani (West Bengal), Patel said.

The five super-speciality hospitals, including the one in Rajkot, have been built by the Centre at a cost of Rs 6,300

inaugurate and perform ground-breaking for projects of Rs 48,000 crore of different state and Central departments, such as NHAI, Railways, Energy and Petrochemicals, Road and Building, Ports and Health and Family Welfare, the minister said.

Of these, projects of Rs 35,700 crore are for Gujarat, while the remaining are for other states,

The prime minister will launch key projects, including power generation projects in Kutch, ground-breaking for the new Mundra Panipat crude-oil pipeline project, hospital cardiology Vadodara and doubling of the Rajkot-Surendranagar railway line, among others, Patel said.

In a first, Assam Assembly conducts ballot voting on resolution

voting with ballot paper while deciding the fate of a private member's resolution brought in by Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi.

The resolution on irrigation system was rejected by just nine votes.

Out of 77 MLAs in the BJP-led alliance, the government garnered 39 votes. On the other hand, 30 votes were polled in favour of the resolution from 47 opposition MLAs, including five Congress members with allegiance to the government.

Earlier, the resolution was put to voice vote and Speaker Biswajit Daimary said the resolution was rejected.

Gogoi and other opposition members, including Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia, however, claimed that the ruling party did not have the numbers during the voice vote and demanded proper

Daimary then adjourned the House for 10 minutes, saying that voting would take place and the Assembly Secretariat would require time to prepare for the polling on the resolution.

However, the House resumed after 30 minutes. During this half-an-hour, BJP MLA Diganta Kalita was seen doing a headcount of the ruling side on a piece of paper. Gogoi was also seen going to almost every member with folded hands. As soon as the House met, the

Speaker again conducted a voice vote with a higher number of treasury bench this time and

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that MI
Manol Kumar and Mr. Sanjeev Kumar are the owne
of PROPERTY LAND AREA 500 SQ. YDS.
KHASRA NO.15 MIN. SITUATED AT MOJ.
NARAYAN NAFAR URF RAMPUR, TESHIL LON
INST GHAZ/RABAD/II Pydde Beristered (GPB Dater

NARAYAN NAFAR URF RAMPUR, TESHIL LON DIST GHAZIABAD (U.P.) vide Registered GPA Date 09.08.2023, regd. as Vide Documents No. 17.1 Book No. 4, Volume No. 0/3, On pages No. 29.25/44.5, Registered on dated 09.08.2023, in the SF Faridabad and same to be sold to Mr. Jitendé Kasana and same mortgaging the said property wit SMFG India Credit Company Limited (Former Fullerton India Credit Company Limited), if anybod has any charge/interest/title in the said property any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned i writing on the below mentioned address within 0 days of the present.

SGA Associates (Law Firm

days of the present. Mrs. Prasoon Lata, Advocate SG Associates (Law Firm) F18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Valbax Khand, Indiputania, Charles HE. Henall: spassociatespi@mail.com, Ph: 7011172764, 813020837

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Mr. Ramesh Kumar S/o Mr. Amir Singh is
the owner of Plot No. 42-8, Ground Floor First
Floor area measuring 110.36 sq. mtrs. out Chasra no.135/14, situated in the area of Village
Bawana, Abadi known as Block-A Indraj Colony
Bawana Delhi-110039 vide registered
authorization Slip executed by POI Vide Regd.
no.25, dated-04.01.2022 SR-VI B New Delhi. The

above-mentioned property is going to be mortgage with Fed Bank Financial Services Limited. If any

with red bank financial services Limited. If any person/bank/financial Institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to the above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with the property of the propert

documentary evidence under address through registered Advt. within 15 days from the date of

publication of this notice failing which any claim, ien or objection shall be deemed to have been

announced rejection of the resolution.

However, the entire opposition protested this and said that Daimary had already announced a vote and the decision should not be altered. The Speaker then accepted their demand, ordered locking of the House doors and asked Assembly Principal Secretary Hemen Das to conduct the poll. Das then explained the process to the legislators.

Accordingly, the House staff distributed ballot slips to every member, who ticked in their choices and deposited the same in the ballot box.

Deputy Leader of Congress Legislature Party Rakibul Hussain appealed to the Speaker to allow the Chief Whip of the parties to see the votes of their MLAs according to the Anti-Defection Law. Immediately after

Congress MLAs Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha and Basanta Das, who recently announced to "support the government" without leaving the grand old party, silently walked out of the House while the voting was undergoing.

The Principal Secretary and his colleagues counted the votes on his table inside the House and submitted the result to the

sheet, aves received 30 votes. nays got 39 and there was zero abstain. As nays received higher votes, the resolution is

rejected," Daimary said. The resolution sought to make Assam a 12-month cultivating state by supplying water to the

fields at all times. When contacted, three retired principal secretaries of the Assam Assembly told PTI that neither government nor private resolutions have gone to the extent of ballot voting deciding acceptance or rejection.

'In most of the cases, it is decided by a simple voice vote. On some rare occasions, some resolutions have seen raising of hands by the members while deciding their fates. However, ballot voting never took place in case of rejection of a resolution," a former principal secretary said. Officially, the BJP's strength in

the 126-member Assam Assembly is 61, while its allies UPPL has seven MLAs and AGP has nine.

In the opposition camp, the Congress strength is 27 AIUDF has 15 members, BPF has three and CPI(M) has one There Independent legislator also.

INTINISSION OF INDIA HON'BLE COMMISSION ERAL ELECTION TO LOK SABHA, 2024

CEC begins review of preparedness for Lok Sabha polls in Tamil Nadu

regime's welfare initiatives. "In the 39 constituencies in hief Commissioner Tamil Nadu and in the lone segment of Puducherry, only we are going to win and there is not even an iota of doubt about it. That victory must be on a grand scale," he said. The meet decided to launch from February 26, the party's Sabha elections.

door-to-door poll campaign voice in every old' (Illanthorum 'Stalin's household' Stalinin Kural). Party workers will visit every house to trounce the BJP and the AIADMK, which has an 'indirect alliance' with the saffron party and ensure that

d in Delhi a resolution

ing the applications. Forget about arrears, so far, only 60 pension payment orders have been issued," RFC Pensioners

Association President Narsi Lal Meena

"For the last two months, not a single

pension payment order has been issued,

Meena said that most of the retired

employees had a tough time arranging

after years of retirement. Some had to

break their FDs and empty their savings

to deposit the money to get the pension,

he said. An official familiar with the

development said that the top manage-

ment has issued instructions for speedy

processing of the applications, especial-

coming here, I saw a river that had gone completely dry. If embankments or

small weirs were made with empty

fertiliser bags, it would have supplied

water all day to nearby wells," he

Latur is known for its sovbean

cultivation and good roads will help

farmers take the produce to markets

easily, he said. The projects that were

inaugurated include the four laning of

Chakur-Ausa and Chakur-Loha

The length of the national highway in

Latur was 124 kilometres till 2014,

while it was now 510 kilometres, he

Place: Gurugram

Date: 23-02-2024

ly those who have genuine reasons.

money — around Rs 30-40 lakh each -

The Chief Minister has often

said that every person has been

benefited in one way or the other by way of the DMK

said. The focus area of the campaign will be the achievements of the Dravidian model governance in three years (2021-24), the highlights of the Tamil Nadu budget 2024-25 and the BJP-led Centre's 'injustice' to Tamil Nadu, the Tamil language and the Tamil

Over 400 retirees in Rajasthan yet to get

OPS benefits after a year of paying dues

Water scarcity key issue of Latur, elected

representatives must work on it: Gadkari

pointed out.

sections.

said.

Election (CEC) Rajiv Kumar, accompanied by senior officials of the Election Commission of India, on Friday commenced his twoday review of Tamil Nadu's preparedness for the Lok is set to meet representatives of as many as

nine political parties, including the Dravidian majors, discuss issues related to conducting the elections and also hold a review meeting with district collectors and superintendents of police later in the day. The the party chief Stalin's voice is | CEC will also be meeting the electoral officers of Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala besides officials from the enforcement agencies, before wrapping up his meeting with the Tamil Nadu chief secretary and state DGP. DMK

Organisational Secretary R S Bharathi, who represented the ruling party at the meeting today, told reporters that the party

expressed concern and doubts over the sequencing of the VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) in the EVM (Electronic Voting Machine) as this may lead to errors. The DMK's ally, CPI(M), too expressed concern that the VVPAT could be manipulated if it is connected to the control unit. The party's State Secretary K Balakrishnan demanded the re-sequencing of the three units of electronic voting machines, namely the control unit, the ballot unit

must be ensured that voters' choice exercised in the ballot unit went into the control unit of the EVM where it is recorded, and only then routed to the VVPAT. In a release here, Balakrishnan said he favoured a single-day poll. AIADMK leader and former state minister D Jayakumar told reporters here that his party sought the deployment of additional central forces for the smooth conduct of the election in Tamil Nadu

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Tender No.: 2021-Museum-SouvenirShop dated 23.02.2024

Name of work: Operation and Management of Souvenir Shop of National Rai

Estimated Cost : Rs. 17,09,548.80/ Earnest Money: Rs. 34,200/-

Cost of tender document: Rs. 2,950/- (Non-refundable) Completion period of the work: 3 Years

Bid End Date/Time: 18.03.2024, 15:00 hrs Bid Opening Date/Time: 18.03.2024, 15:30 hrs

Website perticulars where complete details of tender can be seen : Above

tender is available on www.ireps.gov.in website SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SRF LIMITED

Regd. Office: The Galleria, DLF Mayur Vihar, Unit No. 236 & 237, 2nd Floor. Mayur Vihar Place, Noida Link Road, Mayur Vihar Phase I Extn, Delhi-110091 Corporate Office: Block-C, Sector 45, Gurugram, Haryana-122 003 Tel. No (Regd office): (+91-11) 49482870; Fax: (+91-11) 49482900 E-mail: cs@srf.com, Website: www.srf.com; CIN: L18101DL1970PLC005197

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Share Certificates pertaining to shares of the Company detailed below have been reported lost and request(s) for issue of duplicate Certificates in lieu thereof have been SI. Folio No. Name of the Share Holder / Cert-No.

No.	100000000000	Legal Heir (Claimant)	07530T T030V		Shares
1	M 0006609	MEENA RELAN	1124594	307972302-501	200
		RAJIV KUMAR RELAN	90112676	8717036-85	50
2	K 0000360	KIRON PRAVIN SHETH	918895	5233898-915	18
			918896	18567561-96	36
			918897	309159094-309	216
3	SRF0102575	M S RAGHAVENDRA	51593	2745851-75	25
			51680	2748326-50	25
			1130004	310010242-441	200
4	K 0000081	K L JHANJI	90143529	6721442-91	50
			90143530	3369215-34	20
			90143530	6721492-521	30
			90160151-3	12125625-774	150
5	S 0007404	SHAKUNTALA RANI	48106-8	2650151-275	125
			80857	3627228-68	41
			141304	5725619-68	50
			146463-4	5845501-83	83
			90040029-33	7593026-193	168
			90238864-7	7434586-735	175
			90238867	2650501-25	25
			90238867	3559460-66	7
			90238867	7434736-53	18
			90238868	3559467-500	34
			90238868-9	5725669-701	33
6	SRF0032028	SURYAKANT MADHAVRAO SHIROLE	368664	17024169-218	50
			517664	25043961-4010	50
			1128544	309492074-873	800
			90255993-4	8991366-465	100

Any person having any claim /objection in respect of the above requests should lodge such claim/ objection with the company at its Corporate Office within 15 days of the publication of this notice, failing which the company will consider to give effect to the above requests.

RAJAT LAKHANPAL Sr. VP (Corporate Compliance) & Company Secretary

M.P. POWER GENERATING COMPANY LTD. OFFICE OF THE Addi. C.E. (P&W), SHREE SINGAJI THERMAL POWER PROJECT, Dongalia Distt. Khandwa (MP) E-mail ID: sepnw.sstpp16 No. 515-1700/SSTPP/MPPGCL/P&W/12888 **NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER** Last date and time fo & EMD in Rs.

11.03.2024 vstem for 2X660 MW. Super critical units at up to 15:30 Dongalia Disti No. T-2024_MPPGC_317089_2) 19.03.2024 expert services at 2X660 MW, Stage-II, SSTPP, MPPGCL, Dongalia, Distt.-Khandwa for the periods of 24 months. (Tender No. T-2024 MPPGC_328419_1) For extension & other details, the bidders are requested to please visit e-portal of

SAVE ELECTRICITY M.P. Madhyam/113954/2024

TENDER NOTICE

The Dy. Chief Engineer/TMC/Line, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delh

lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived. Adv. Vishal Mehan , E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092; Mobile no. 9811215181		or and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E- tender under one acket System for the under noted work -		
PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given that my client Pankaj Sharma	1.	Name of work and location	OH and Major repair of track machines at TMMD/KKD BTI under jurisdiction of Dy.CE/TMC/Line/New Delhi.	
is in process to purchase the Freehold Industrial Third Floor with roof Rights Property Municipal no.	2.	Completion per	iod of the work	06 Months
307/1/136, area measuring 105 Sq. Yds., Situated	3.	Approx cost of	vork	Rs. 51.22 Lakh
at Shahzada Bagh Industrial area, Old Rohtak Road Delhi-110035 (availing loan from Piramal Capital &		Earnest Money amount (to be deposited online)		Rs.102500.00
Housing Finance Ltd) from Mohd. Zaif and Mohd.	5.	Cost of Tender I	Rs. Nil	
	7.	Date & Time for Submission of E-tender and opening of tender Detalled Tender Notice & Tender Document	Tender document (to be deposited Online) Tender document remain available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 23.02.2024 upto 15:00 Hrs or 14.03.2024 Tender Bids may be uploaded from 29.02.202. & upto 15:00 hrs on 14.03.2024 on IREPS web site The tender will be opened soon after 15:00 hrs on 14.03.2024 The detailed tender document is available or www.ireps.gov.in Above tender document will be available for online submission of offer on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.li from 23.02.2024 to 14.03.2024. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tender are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office	
been waived and/or abandoned. Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)	Tender Notice No. 1-W-Dy.CETMCL-IOH-23-23-24 Dated: 22.02.2024			
Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahaluxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vaishali, Gzb., U.P., Mob. 9810063351		SER	VING CUSTOMERS WITH	A SMILE 574/24

B-1827

WORKS DEPARTMENT **Short Tender call Notice**

E-mail: rbcirclekhurda@gmail.com Bid-Identification No. CCE-Khordha (R&B) Circle-43/2023-24 Memo No - 527

The Chief Construction Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting

Building Works

e rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for building works as detailed

No of Work Tender Cost

Class of Contractor

Rs.10000.00 (On-Line)

B ,& A Class & Original Equipment manufacturer (OEM)/ Regd. Farm From 10.00 AM of Dt.26.02.2024 up to 05.00 PM of Dt.04.03.2024 up to 5.00 PM

Date of opening of Bid : Dt 06.03.2024 at11.30 AM

The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website:

https://tenderodisha.gov.in . Any Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the OIPR-34127/11/0054/2324 Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL



Ph. No. 0755-2701669 **NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER** Online tenders are being invited for the following works. The bidder can obtained detailed information

and tender documents on website https://mptenders.gov.in. Corrigendum for this NIT shall not be issued separately in newspapers. Corrigendum regarding correct ion can be seen on the website https://mptenders.gov.in

Details of Work Money Estimated Submission (EMD) Cost (INR) **End Date** 25/Store/W.W.D. 2024 UAD Road Restoration and building 14.03.2024 2 Crore 1 lakh maintenance work on rate First Call contract Basis under WWD

Executive Engineer (H) Municipal Corporation, Bhopal

T.N.1663/023/24

Public is hereby cautioned against dealing with the aforesaid share certificates

for SRF LIMITED

nion 06

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PAPER WITH PASSION-

Religious apartheid

Karnataka's proposal to tax several Hindu temples smacks of discrimination

■ n a move reminiscent of the historically partisan practice of jizya, the Congress Government in Karnataka has proposed a plan to collect funds from Hindu temples as a form of tax. Understandably, the move has sparked a controversy and reignited debates over the treatment of Hindu places of worship and whether these are being unfairly targeted. While some argue that the move is a necessary step to ensure the upkeep of Hindu religious institutions and support the livelihoods of the priests involved, others see it as discriminatory and belonging to a regressive era when non-Muslims were subjected to jizya, a special tax. While the proposed tax is not explicitly religious in nature, its resemblance to jizya has not gone unnoticed and critics view it as a form of economic discrimination. One of the primary concerns raised by the move's opponents is the selective targeting of Hindu places of worship as similar demands are not being made of other religious institutions, such as mosques or churches. This asymmetry has led



to accusations of bias and favouritism on the part of the Government. If the aim is to genuinely improve facilities at religious places, it should be even-handed and not selective. Our Constitution is clear about religious freedom and equality and all Governments across the country must comply with that. Arguing that it is a matter of fiscal responsibility, however, the tax proponents point to the vast wealth accumulated by some temples. They reason that it is only fair for these temples to contribute to the broader welfare of society. Additionally, they contend that the funds collected will be used for the benefit of the community, including the preservation of cultural heritage and the support of reli-

gious practitioners. The proposal has sparked widespread outrage among certain segments of the Hindu population, which sees it as an encroachment on their religious freedoms and an attempt to undermine their heritage.

For many Hindus, temples are not just places of worship but symbols of their cultural identity. Any attempt to impose financial burdens on these institutions is viewed as an attack on their way of life. Moreover, the Government's involvement in the financial affairs of temples raises broader questions about the separation of religion and State. By exerting control over the finances of Hindu religious institutions, the Govt risks overstepping its boundaries. In this light, it is essential for the policymakers to tread carefully and consider the implications of their actions. While temple maintenance and priest welfare are undoubtedly important issues, these must be addressed in a manner that respects the rights and sensitivities of all citizens. Ultimately, the debate over the temple tax in Karnataka raises fundamental questions about religious freedom and the role of the State in religious affairs. Meanwhile, it is crucial for all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and seek solutions upholding the principles of fairness; only then can we ensure that our society remains true to its values of pluralism and tolerance.



The Maitreya Buddha statue, coming up at Buri, in Itanagar,

The boycott at Doha



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The Taliban's obscurantist mindset and their harbouring of terrorist organisations pose a serious threat to Muslim countries

iven the obscurantist and misogynistic mindset of the Taliban, it is hardly surprising that they boycotted the conference, hosted by the United Nations, to discuss the humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan, and cooperation on the human rights issue. They spurned the UN's invitation say ing that they would attend only if they alone were officially representing Afghanistan, as inclusion of other groups would jeopardise progress. This exclusivist mindset, which reflects their intolerance of the existence of any organisation that does not share their obscurantist Islamist worldview, and does not owe allegiance to them, is at the core of their rejection of democracy, and advocacy of an Islamist theocracy manifest in their designation of Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate, run according to the diktats of mullahs.

The Taliban are unlikely to have realised that they have shot themselves in the foot by boycotting the conference held in Doha on February 18 and 19 under the chairmanship of the UN secretary-general, Antonio Gutteres. Besides the special envoys of 25 countries, members of Afghanistan's civil society and women's groups, it was attended by representatives of the European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

By not attending the conference, the Taliban have only perpetuated their isolation in the world. They obviously do not seem to mind that since humanitarian assistance continues to come in for the sake of the country's people suffering from natural disasters like floods and earthquakes as well as the violence stalking the country. The OIC's role was outlined by Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, special envoy of organisation's secretary-general. During his interventions, Bakheet recalled his organisation's commitment to support Afghanistan and engage in a constructive that could be adopted by leg-dialogue with the country's de islative bodies and human facto authorities [Taliban] "on rights organizations in memissues and topics included in the

Council of Foreign Ministers. In this regard, he reviewed OIC efforts in providing humanitarian assistance, sending scholars delegations, and holding a conference on women's rights in Islam hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi

Ambassador Bakheet was referring to the international conference on "Women in Status Empowerment" (November 6 to 8, 2023), organised by the OIC's general secretariat and hosted by Saudi Arabia. It included in its Final Declaration 20 recommendations highlighting the rights that Islam gave to women and the status of women in Islam. These also addressed the challenges and opportunities pertaining to the realisation of women's rights and enhancement of their role across all fields and at all levels of soci-

The conference also produced 'The Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam" which, as stated by OIC's secretary-general, Hissein Brahim Taha, in his address at the conference's closing session, would serve as an intellectual and practical reference document ber states and all Muslim socirelevant resolutions of the [OIC's] eties when considering the



IF THE OIC AND THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THEY MUST WORK **OUT TOUGH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL** SANCTIONS THAT WOULD COMPEL THE TALIBAN TO CHANGE THEIR POLICIES IN THIS REGARD

rights of Muslim women. It will be submitted for adoption at the forthcoming Islamic Summit, scheduled to be held in Gambia at the end of this year, and subsequently presented to all relevant international fora. He hoped that those doubting Islam's fairness toward women would consider women's rights as set out in this document, and not on the basis some isolated social practices in some Muslim societies that in no way reflect the sublime vision and universality of

Islam and its teachings.

Taha's not-so-veiled rejection of the Taliban's views on women's rights in the last sentence above, will not please the mullah's running Afghanistan. Nor will they be amused by his affirmation that women's empowerment issues would remain high among the OIC's priorities, and that the OIC would launch and support numerous efforts and initiatives to elevate the status of women in Muslim societies. Taha's words carry a special significance as he spoke in Saudi Arabia where, under the leadership of the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, significant steps have been taken to improve women's position. Women can now attend sporting events, need not wear the abayah, a long, loose-fitting, garment covering the entire body,

except the face, hands and feet, in public, and can get driving licenses and can go to work, study or run errands without male escorts. While women demanding more freedom are treated harshly and much more remains to be done, the gains have been considerable compared to the situation ear-

One can be certain that the Taliban would not change their views. Bigots dig their heels deeper and deeper the more people reject their creed. If the OIC and the Muslim countries are serious about women's rights, they must work out tough economic and political sanctions that would compel the Taliban to change their policies in this regard. They must also take measures to compel the Taliban to act against terrorist outfits like a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) active in Afghanistan. The former is targeting Pakistan and the latter Iran. Given, however, their obscurantist creed, and determination to impose their version of sharia law globally, there is no reason why they will not strike other countries in future, particularly the Muslim ones they con sider as apostatic.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

THE EDITOR

Youth employment: From seekers to innovators



Active participation in Govt schemes and emphasis on entrepreneurship offer promising avenues towards a brighter future for India's rural youth

n 2023, India experienced a notable surge in unemployment rates, impacting both rural and urban areas. Particularly concerning was the rise in urban unemployment, escalating from 8.5% in October to 9.3% in November and further climbing to 10.1% in December, mirroring levels from a year prior. This surge has undeniably heightened stress among the younger generation, actively seeking job opportunities, with thousands applying for each available position. In the age of technology, however, a paradigm shift is encouraged from job seekers to job providers

The youth grappling with unemployment challenges are urged to redefine their goals and leverage their potential and skills. Sayyed Toiba Kousar, a 22-year-old resident of the border district Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasises the transformative role technology can play in the employment landscape. Through the strategic use of technology, the younger generation can not only secure employment but also venture into dren's interests to inspire



becoming job providers. Azhar Ali, a 24-year-old

cricket enthusiast, underscores the importance of effective facilities for skill enhancement. He believes that with the provision of adequate facilities, the youth can excel in their respective fields, significantly contributing to societal and national development. Azhar contends that timely access to essential facilities is crucial for the younger generation to play a more impactful role in the country's progress. Muhammad Waqar, a 22year-old, advocates for a

focus on sports activities at the school level to divert youth from addictive behaviours and guide them towards establishing selfemployment opportunities. Ajaz Hussain, aged 27, emphasises creating opportunities aligned with chil-

self-reliance, benefiting both the individual and the country. Rashid highlights the importance of parental involvement in identifying and nurturing their children's interests, guiding them towards the numerous opportunities available today in areas such as sports, the internet, singing, dancing, art, painting, photography, and sculpture.

In the current scenario, various skill-related schemes are being implemented by both central and state governments across India. Notably, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), operated by the Ministry of Rural Development, stands out as one of the most effective projects. This initiative focuses on promoting selfemployment and supporting rural individuals, especially economically disadvantaged young men and women. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihood Mission (JKSRLM) oversees the implementation of NRLM, aiming to integrate the poor

into self-help groups and

connect them with self-

employment opportunities.

The primary goal of JKSRLM is to reach 66% of the rural population in 125 blocks of Jammu and Kashmir, providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to uplift them from poverty and enhance their standard of living. The Indian government has initiated various poverty alleviation schemes to improve the quality of life for the poor. It is crucial for the youth to actively engage with and benefit from these government schemes, fostering selfreliance in employment matters and contributing to societal development.

To ensure the success of these schemes, relevant departments should actively provide information and guidance, encouraging their 100% implementation and timely achievement of goals. By embracing the shift from job seekers to job providers, youth can play a vital role in shaping a more prosperous and self-sufficient future for themselves and the nation.

(The writer is from the Poonch district of J&K. He writes on socio-economic development challenges of his community; views are personal. Charkha features)

DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT?

Sir — As per a report the Congress Party on Thursday alleged that democracy is being "murdered" in the country after microblogging platform X voiced disagreement with the Centre's order to block accounts and posts related to the ongoing farmers' protests. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi claimed the public knows that the government has "murdered democracy" and will give a strong answer. Rahul Gandhi asked "If farmers ask for MSP, shoot them. Is this the mother of democracy? When the youth ask for appointments, refuse to even listen to them this is the mother of democracy? If a former governor tells the truth, send the CBI to his house.

Is this the mother of democracy?" Freeze the bank account of the most prominent opposition party. Is this the mother of democracy? Section 144, internet ban, sharp wires, tear gas shells is this the mother of democracy? Be it media or social media, suppressing every voice of truth — is this the mother of democracy?" the Congress leader Gandhi said. According to sources The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had ordered social media platforms to temporarily block 177 accounts linked to the farmers' protests at the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Farmers from across the country have been protesting to press the Centre for their demands, including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm loan waivers. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

PASSPORT OFFICE WOES

Sir — It is observed that a huge gathering above five hundred applicants including aged and mothers carrying just born babies are standing in queue, outside the office on Thursday i.e. open day, to get solve the problems of passports to be issued at RPO, Secunderabad. Moreover over the area traffic police lift the vehicles parking outside the said office. The

Two legendary figures depart



ndia has lost two of its most illustrious and influ ential personalities. Fali S Nariman and Ameen Savani, who left behind a legacy of excellence and innovation in their respective fields of law and radio. Fali S Nariman was a renowned jurist and senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India. He was involved in several landmark cases that shaped India's constitutional law and judicial system. He was a champion of civil liberties and the independence of the judiciary. He resigned as Additional Solicitor General to protest against the Emergency in 1975, the only law officer to do so.

office should provide the same facility i.e. open day at all passport offices of Hyderabad to solve the aroused problems instead of a single door at Secunderabad. Thus the applicants can reach their nearest office and the rush at a single door will also be diluted.

The concerned area traffic police should also provide sufficient parking places instead of lifting and imposing huge penalties on applicants. Hope the area Corporator, MLA, Concern Minister and the authorities of passport offices and traffic police will take necessary action soon and will provide mental and phys-

ical relaxation to the applicants. **Arif Hussain** | Secunderabad

ODISHA TO IMPROVE SPORTS INFRA

— The Odisha government has decided to renovate Barabati Stadium in Cuttack. The Barabati stadium is one of the oldest stadiums in the state. This stadium has witnessed many national and international sporting events in the past. concerned authorities of the passport Barabati Stadium is also known to be the

He received several awards and honours, including the Padma Vibhushan, the Gruber Prize for Justice, and a nomination to the Rajva Sabha. He was also an avid reader, writer and speaker on various topics of law, politics and culture.

Ameen Sayani was the iconic radio presenter and host of the popular radio show Binaca Geetmala, which ran from 1952 to 1994 on Radio Ceylon. He revolutionised Indian broadcasting with his signature greeting, "Behno aur Bhaiyo", and his warm and friendly style of hosting. Nariman and Sayani were both Parsis who belonged to Mumbai and made their mark on the national and international stage. They were both respected and admired by their peers and fans for their passion, integrity and innovation. They were both involved in the mission of nation-building and inspiring generations to fight for a just society. They will be dearly missed by their family, friends and fans. May their souls rest in peace

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

hub of cricket in Odisha. To revive Odisha's cricketing history and groom young cricket aspirants in the state, it was necessary to redevelop it. A Sports complex having world-class facilities for other sports will also be built along with the new stadium. A few days back a cricket stadium in Sambalpur was also decid-

ed for renovated. After Hockey and Football, Odisha is now investing in the cricketing ecosystem and infrastructure. This move will assist youths in the state who want to make a career in sports. The developed sports infrastructure will make Odisha a hub for many national and international sporting events. The development of sports in the state will boost the economy as well. Odisha has already hosted the Hockey World Cup and FIFA World Cup and in its way to becoming the sports capital of

Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal

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FIRST COLUMN

THE STRESS BEHIND THE **TEACHING PROFESSION**

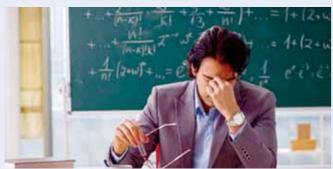
Teachers have alarming rates of burnout and attrition worldwide



nollege degrees, good education and satisfying jobs are all things that people generally strive for. Teaching is one of the most visceral jobs most people will ever experience. Teachers since ages have proven to be vital because they shape the lives of students and help them develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the world.

It is interesting to note that many people today believe the stereotype that teaching is a stress-free job. It is the only profession that gets summers and weekends off. Moreover, it is typically a job that people only do because they cannot do anything else. The adage those who can, do; those who can't, teach is widely believed. However, the reality is that there is a great amount of stress associated with this type of pro-

There is no denying the fact that the teaching profession is emotionally, physically and mentally exhausting. Many teachers across the world are experiencing teacher shortages. As per the latest survey, it was found that almost 50% of the new teachers who join with super excitement, passion and a dream to take on the world quit within the first five years of teaching, which begs the question: why do so many of them leave after going through years of college for this profession? Without enough teacher, one cannot successfully educate their children. Moreover, the most disturbing part is that the education system relies on massive amounts of unpaid labour. According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the average teacher works for 52.5 hours a week, over 30% more than they are contracted for. Multiple surveys declare uncertainty, workload, negative perception about the job, concern for others' wellbeing, health struggles and playing multiple roles have hampered school teachers' mental health and well-being.



Not only this, research also indicates that burnout contributes to high attrition rates among educators. Making teachers work beyond their contracted hours and not paying for it; giving them five hours or less per week to plan for 30 hours of instructions, grading and providing feedback on assignments for almost 200 students on an average, analysing data, contacting parents, attending meetings, preparing teaching materials, expecting teachers to implement new initiatives, programs and practices without proper training, completing administrative tasks, expecting teachers to differentiate and individualise instructions for a class with 30+ students and above all blaming teachers for all educationrelated issues despite not including teachers in decision making of education-related issues prove out to be a few reasons for teacher burnout. The constant turnover rate of teachers, lack of interest in teaching and lack of commitment to the profession continue to be a major concern for school systems all over the nation. Stress has become a common characteristic of teachers and with the increased amount of accountability, teachers play a significant role in students and schools resulting in poor classroom engagement and ultimately low student achieve-

To be an effective educator, all teachers need to maintain their psychological well-being. For an ordinary human being not related to this profession, a teacher is a person who is working around 1800 hours a year, whereas in reality, they are the ones who are working around 2300 hours a year on average which shows that approximately 550 hours

Remember, the teachers cannot effectively accomplish all necessary tasks only during their contract hours. The growing concern is the psychological well-being of teachers not only at the school level but also at the college level.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Farmers demand MSP protection



The imperative need for a legislation-backed MSP grows ever more urgent, promising stability and prosperity for the backbone of India's economy

he resurgence of protests by farmers has brought attention to their longstanding struggle for sustainable profitability in the agricultural sector. Although their demands are diverse, their primary request is for a legal guarantee for MSP (Minimum Support Prices). Farmers believe that the government has not shown genuine interest in effectively implementing MSP, which has led to dis-trust, frustration, and the need for a legal guarantee. These issues have forced them to leave their homes and farms and take to the highways in protest, resulting in the death of three farmers a couple of injuries, and disruption of normalcy that has affected the commuters and business

In September 2020, the government introduced three controversial farm laws that were met with widespread protests and demands for their repeal. While the laws were eventually repealed in November 2021, there has been no interim report from the Committee on MSP formed to address farmers' concerns. This delay in decision-making perpetuates uncertainties in the agricultural sector and undermines the effectiveness of the present MSP as a stabilizing force.

MSP was introduced in 1966-67 to ensure food security amid food scarcity. Despite broad political support for a legal guarantee for MSP, successive governments have failed to formalize this issue, leaving the agricultural sector in a state of uncertainty. However, it is high time to address the weakening of the decades-old MSP policy, remove the complexities surrounding its legislation, and recognise the potential benefits of legalising MSP to fuel the wholesome growth of the agriculture sector, which is the country's lifeline. The Modi government has demonstrated its commendable ability to revamp decadesold mechanisms with various robust reforms such as the amendments to Indian Penal Codes and the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, and now they must take bold steps to address this pressing

Why farmers asking for legal guarantee: The MSP is an administered advisory price for 23 crops and is determined annually by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) as a key government intervention to insulate farmers from rice volatility when the market prices fall below the MSP as well as of consumers against corrupt manipulative market inflation and maintains food security. It has been in existence in India for more than five decades. Why, then, are farmers asking for a legal guarantee? Only 6% of farmers benefit from MSP, and it procures just 11% of total agricultural output in the country, according to the latest available NITI Áayog data.

Over 90 % of crops are sold at prices that are 20-30% lower than the declared MSP, leading to average losses of Rs 20,000 per acre and about Rs 10 lakh crore annually for farmers. A study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that Indian farmers have been suffering losses since 2000 due to ineffective policies. The report revealed that Indian farmers lost Rs 45 lakh crore during 2000-2017 due to low prices.

Misconceptions in legalising: The legalisation of MSP has been hindered by exag-



To make MSP a legal guarantee, necessary amendments are needed in the Agricultural Produce & Livestock Market Committee (APMC) Act by incorporating a clause that 'auction of farm produce in APMC's markets is legally not permitted below the declared MSP prices. The apprehensions on the operation of MSP legal guarantee are that most of the sales of farm produce are not in APMCs, and traders may boycott the purchases of farm produce. The government does not have physical and economic resources to purchase, store, and market the procured farm produce, which is an irranonal argument. Government intervention is necessary only when market prices fall below MSP, and it does not require the procurement of the entire marketable surplus.

The potential boycott of farm produce in places MSP legal regimes by the traders is an irrational argument because the commodity's supply is tight against the demand for farm produce. First, this was also evident from the fact that the government could manage to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat at MSP against the target of 44.4 million tonnes fixed for the 2023 season. Second, the government's expenditure on procurement and imports of farm produce like edible oil and pulses, and on procurement of food grains on MSP in 2022-23, has already surpassed Rs 5 lakh crore and Rs 2.28 lakh crore, respectively.

India are baseless. According to government estimates, the MSP values of the total production of the 23 crops worked out to be around Rs 17 lakh crore, and some studies worked out to be around Rs 10 lakh crore. Furthermore, only 70% of the farm produce comes to markets as a marketable surplus, and farmers' families consume the rest for household purposes. The MSP legal guarantee will cost the government about Rs 5 lakh crore if traders or big corporations engaged in processing boycott the APMC's markets, which is an unlikely scenario. It is time to dismiss the misconceptions surrounding the legalisation of MSP and focus on the merits of providing a legal guarantee for MSP. Merits of legalising MSP: Farming is inherently risky, influenced by factors such as weather conditions, pest attacks, and market dynamics. By establishing a legally binding framework for minimum floor prices across all s, will mitigate the current challenges and safeguard farmers from unpredictable fluctuations

tee will create fiscal disasters for

in the prices of their produce. However, the government has proposed buying cotton, maize, tur, urad and Masur for five years directly from the farmers at the MSP without any quantitative limit. Notably, these crops are grown outside Punjab and Haryana, the home states of the protesting farmers. From this, can it infer that small pulses growing farmers all over the country stand to benefit? Legalising MSP for a wider variety of crops ensures that the benefits of price stability are not limited to specific segments of the farming community.

Small and marginal farmers cultivating diverse crops can access the protective shield of MSP, contributing to inclusive agricultural growth, and playing a pivotal role in ensuring food security for the nation by maintaining a stable production environment for key staples, contributing to the overall food security of the country.

A legal framework enables the government to conduct strategic operations in domestic and international markets. By selling procured produce at minimal markups during times of higher market prices, the government can manage inflation surges, ensuring price stability for consumers.

MSP reduces the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations, ensuring a minimum income for their produce. Farmers can navigate uncertainties more confidently, knowing that the government is legally bound to intervene when market prices fall below the MSP. A guaranteed MSP leads to increased rural income. This, in turn, stimulates the rural economy by boosting demand for goods and services, creating a positive ripple effect in various sectors.

The way forward: Policymakers can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for farmers by dispelling misconceptions and addressing concerns. Replacing the decades-old and inefficient MSP policy with a legislatively guaranteed MSP offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. It not only ensures consistent implementation but also promotes diversification, inclusivity, and economic resilience, contributing to the wholesome well-being of farmers and the prosperity of the rural economy. This will help to fuel the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

(The author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are per-





LEGALISING MSP FOR A WIDER VARIETY OF **CROPS ENSURES** THAT THE BENEFITS OF PRICE STABILITY ARE NOT LIMITED TO SPECIFIC SEGMENTS OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY

Claims that the MSP legal guaran-

The enduring legacy of Ameen Sayani, the radio icon

Sayani's influence extended far beyond the confines of the studio, earning him a place in the hearts and minds of millions

n the melodic realm of post-independence, India Lemerged a captivating voice that transcended mere broadcasting to become a cherished companion for countless listeners for almost four decades. With the resounding greeting, "Namaskar bhaiyon aur behno, main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon," Ameen Sayani forged an indelible connection through the airwaves, beckoning listeners to join him on a journey of music and camaraderie. This golden voice of radio passed into eternity on February 21, 2024, in Mumbai. He was 91.

His voice, emanating from vintage radio sets, possessed a captivating charm, diverging from the seriousness of his



peers. Ameen Sayani's pioneering radio show, starting as a modest segment on Radio Ceylon, swiftly became a cultural sensation in the 1950s. From Binaca Geetmala to Hit Parade and Cibaca Geetmala, his presentation remained timeless, bridging simplicity and connection, resonating with ordinary hearts. Geetmala transcended borders, captivating audiences new life into its hallowed across Asia and East Africa name.

and fostering unity through Hindi film melodies. With 90 million listeners, it has evolved into a cherished tradition, binding families over enchant-They were not merely a fleet-

ing waltz through the sonic realms; it was a timeless symphony, a melody that lingered in the hearts of generations. With the gentle caress of nostalgia, it continued its melodious journey, spanning the years from 1952 to 1994, a testament to its enduring charm and universal appeal. And like a phoenix rising from the ashes of bygone eras, it experienced resurgences in the dawn of new millennia, revivals in 2000-2001 and 2001-2003, each breathing Beyond the airwaves, Ameen Sayani's unparalleled contribution as a voiceover artist echoes through the annals of time, with over 54,000 radio programmes and approximately 19,000 jingles to his credit — a testament to his lasting impact on the hearts and minds of a nation. Bhajan Samrat, Anup Jalota

while sharing his thoughts with me on hearing the news of Ameen Sahab's demise said that he was one of the pioneers in the field of entertainment in broadcasting media and the texture of his voice captivated many people. "Today many of the anchors try to copy his texture and finesse", he said, adding, "It was almost a miracle that any song that Ameen Sahab would announce in his Binaca Geetmala, would go on to become a hit. Phrases like on my soul. It was truly a mag-"Aawaz ke duniya ke doston", and "Bhaiyon aur Beheno" were introduced by him which people are using today and trying to establish themselves. He was very mild in his behaviour and very gentle.

"Listening to Ameen Sayani's iconic radio show, 'Binaca Geet Mala,' with my siblings was a cherished ritual in our household," reminisces Dr Sumitra Guha, a renowned classical vocalist and recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademy award. "The mesmerising voice of Ameen Sayani filled our hearts with joy, as we eagerly awaited the melodious tunes of legendary playback singers like Lata Mangeshkar. His captivating narration and the golden era of Bollywood

ical time, enhanced by the charm of our beloved host." Writer, social activist and President of the Guild of Services, Meera Khanna shares her memories of growing up listening to Ameen Sayani. She says, "With the passing away of Ameen Sayani it is as if a precious memory of childhood has slipped away. The 'Binaca Geetmala' which he hosted in his amazing voice was an integral part of a childhood when television had not invaded homes. Gathered around the radio or with the transistor stuck to the ear Ameen Sayani invited you to float on the melody or foot tap to the rhythm of the most popular Hindi film songs. Thus, every week Ameen music left an indelible mark Sayani was the friend who vis-

ited with a bouquet of melody rhythm and poetry. Millions in this country will remember with the nostalgia of the times when pleasures were simple and radio hosts made you feel good about our world".

Smita Vats, Founder and President of ITIHAAS (Indian Traditions Heritage and Society) kept it simple when she said, "My memories are just of his voice... diction, and metre while reading and talking. All lost now, as no one speaks well these days."

Throughout his illustrious career spanning decades, Sayani epitomised innovation and authenticity. Amidst evolving media landscapes, he championed radio's timeless ability to unite communities. Beyond the airwaves, Sayani's magnetic charisma

made him a sought-after emcee, infusing every event he hosted with enchantment. Veteran journalist and author, Khushwant Singh eloquently captured Sayani's significance, saying, "Ameen Sayani wasn't just a radio presenter; he was a storyteller whose voice painted vivid images in the minds of his listeners." In the words of the man himself, 'This is Ameen Sayani, signing off with the hope that you'll join me again next week, same time, same station." As we bid farewell to this titan of the airwaves, his voice and legacy will long be cherished. Farewell Ameen

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Netanyahu seeks open-ended control in Gaza

Israel seeks open-ended control over security and civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip, according to a long-awaited postwar plan by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was swiftly rejected Friday by Palestinian leaders and runs counter to Washington's vision for the war-ravaged enclave.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented the twopage document to his security Cabinet late Thursday for approval. Deep disagreements over Gaza's future have led to increasingly public friction between Israel and the United States, its closest ally. The Biden administration seeks eventual Palestinian governance in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank as a precursor to Palestinian statehood, an outcome vehemently opposed by Netanyahu and his right-wing government. Netanyahu's plan envisions hand-picked

cease-fire efforts appeared to gain traction, with mediators to present a new proposal at an expected high-level meeting this weekend in Paris. The US, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches. In Gaza, Israeli airstrikes in the centre and south of the territory killed at least 68 Palestinians, including children and women, overnight and into Friday, health officials and an Associated Press journalist said. Another 24 bodies remained trapped under the rubble. Fidaa Ashour, whose sister was killed in a strike early Friday in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza, said "the world does not feel what we are enduring." At a hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah, relatives wept over bodies laid out in burial shrouds in the



A Palestinian holds the body of a child killed in the Israeli bombardments of the Gaza Strip in front of the morgue to pray over them at Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al Balah on

courtyard, and a man cradled a

The overall Palestinian death toll since the start of the war rose to more than 29,500, with close to 70,000 people wounded, Gaza health officials said. The death toll amounts to tion of 2.3 million.

NETANYAHU'S VISION

Netanyahu's plan, while lacking specifics, marks the first time he has presented a formal postwar vision. It reiterates that Israel is determined to crush Hamas, the militant

Štrip in 2007. Polls have indicated that a majority of Palestinians don't support Hamas, but the group has deep roots in Palestinian society. Critics, including some in Israel, say the goal of eliminating Hamas is unattainable.

Netanyahu's plan calls for freedom of action for Israel's military across a demilitarized Gaza after the war to thwart any security threat. It says Israel would establish a buffer zone inside Gaza, which is likely to provoke US objections.

The plan also envisions Gaza being governed by local officials who it says would "not be identified with countries or entities that support terrorism and will not receive payment from them". It's not clear if any Palestinians would agree to such sub-contractor roles. Over the past decades, Israel has repeatedly tried and failed to set hand-picked local Palestinian governing bodies. The Palestinian Authority,

the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Netanyahu's plan as "colonialist and racist," saying it would amount to Israeli reoccupation of Gaza. Israel withdrew its soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but maintained control of access to the territory. The Biden administration wants to see a reformed Palestinian Authority govern both Gaza and the West Bank as a step toward Palestinian statehood. It has sought to chip away at Netanyahu's resistance by holding out the prospect of the normalisation of ties between Israel

THE WAR DRAGS ON

and Arab powerhouse Saudi

Israel declared war on Hamas on Oct 7, after the militants stormed into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 250 hostages. More than 100 hostages were freed in a weeklong cease-fire in late were killed in Israel's offensive and close to 70,000 were wounded, the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Friday. Two-thirds of those killed have been women and children, said the ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Israel says it has killed at least 10,000 Hamas fighters, without presenting details. It holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties because the group operates and fights from within civilian areas. The United States has repeatedly urged Israel to do more to avoid harm to civilians, but the daily number of deaths reported in Gaza appears to be relatively constant. The Israeli offensive has inflicted immense suffering in Gaza. About 80% of the population have been displaced, infectious diseases run rampant and hundreds of thousands of people are facing

Hamas leader leaves Egypt after cease-fire talks

political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has left Egypt after holding talks with Egyptian officials about a possible cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and an exchange of hostages held by the militants for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The statement released early Friday by Hamas did not say whether Haniyeh's talks with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel about ways of ending the war, a hostage deal and the flow of aid to Gaza were successful or led to a breakthrough. The talks in Cairo came ahead of a high-level meeting expected over the weekend in Paris, where international mediators will present a new proposal. The United States, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches.

Israel seeks a phased deal, including a temporary pause in fighting in exchange for the release of some of the roughly 100 hostages still held by militants since the brutal October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until Hamas is crushed. Hamas initially demanded to end the war, now in its fifth month, before hostages can be released. Hamas has said that it would release the Israeli hostages in return for the all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Israel rejected that demand, and mediators have been working on a new deal.

During Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, militants killed about 1,200 people and took some 250 hostages. Roughly half of the hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

About 100 hostages remain in captivity, in addition to the bodies of 30 others who were killed on October 7 or died in captivity. Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians and driven some 80 per cent of the territory's 2.3 million people from their ĥomes. Most ĥeeded Israeli orders to flee south, and around 1.5 million are packed into Rafah near the border with

4 die, 14 missing after apartment fire in Spain

s firefighters and scientific Apolice Friday began inspecting the interior of two residential towers that were destroyed by fire in the eastern Spanish city of Valencia, killing four people, questions abounded as to how the fire spread so rapidly. Authorities said 14 people were still missing following the blaze at the complex Thursday. Valencia Mayor María José Catalá said that the danger of the 14-story building collapsing and the intense heat from the fire initially prevented emergency workers from getting in to search for possible

survivors. The fire started Thursday evening and quickly engulfed the buildings. Experts said that the building's polyurethane cladding may have contributed to the fire's ferocity. The vice-president of the Valencia College of Industrial and Technical Engineers, Esther

Puchades, who once inspected minum-based material as part the building, told the state news agency Efe that when the material "is heated it is like plastic and it ignites".

She said it was the first fire of its type in Spain, but that other blazes involving the material have been similarly destructive in the United Kingdom and The June 2017 fire at

Grenfell Tower in London, which also had polyurethane cladding, caused more than 70 deaths. Catalá said the cause of the fire was still not known and it was too early to comment on reports that suggested materials used in construction might have contributed. Puchades said polyurethane was no longer widely used in buildings without extra safety measures to offset its flammability. The complex in Valencia was finished in 2009. In a promotional video, the now bankrupt construction company Fbex boasted that it used a new aluof its facade.

Fifteen people were treated for injuries and five remained Friday in city hospitals, including four firefighters. All were said to be stable.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited the scene, promising support for those affected and expressing gratitude to firefighters and military personnel who worked to extinguish the blaze.

It was not immediately known how many people were in the two buildings when the fire broke out, but dozens are believed to have lost their homes and belongings. The complex had some 140 apartments. The Valencia regional government declared three days of mourning and announced financial aid to cover accommodation, clothing and food. Residents were housed overnight in hotels or in the homes of relatives and neigh-

Trump's lawyers call for dismissal of classified documents case

AP WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump urged a Florida judge to dismiss the criminal case charging him with illegally retaining classified documents, claiming in part that presidential immunity protects him from prosecution even as that sweeping argument has so far in failed in federal appeals courts in a separate case

In one of a slew of motions attacking the case brought by special counsel Jack Smith, Trump's lawyers late on Thursday echoed arguments that were roundly rejected by a federal appeals court this month in his 2020 election interference case Washington. Trump has asked the US Supreme Court to intervene in that case as the Republican presidential primary front-runner seeks to delay the trial until after the November election. Trump's lawyers wrote that the classified



documents charges turn on his alleged decision to designate the papers as "personal" records under the Presidential Records Act, and argued that he cannot be prosecuted since that was an "official act" made while he was still in the White House. Washington's federal appeals court in its decision this month was unsparing in its repudiation of Trump's novel claim that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for actions that fall within their official job duties.

But Trump's lawyers argued that the appeals court's decision was wrong, telling US District Judge Aileen Cannon she should not follow the court's "poorly reasoned decision" in the classified documents case. In other court filings late

Thursday, Trump's lawyers argued that Attorney General Merrick Garland's appointment of special counsel Smith to investigate the former president was "unlawful" and grounds for dismissing the documents case. They also are attacking the law Trump is accused of violating as "unconstitutionally vague" as applied in his case.

The case accuses Trump of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate and obstructing government efforts to retrieve them. A June 2023 indictment charging him with dozens of felony counts alleges investigators found boxes of sensitive docu-

ments recklessly stored at Mara-Lago in spaces including a ballroom, a bathroom and shower, his bedroom and a storage room.

Prosecutors have said the documents he stowed, refused to return and in some cases showed to visitors risked jeopardizing not only relations with foreign nations but also the safety of troops and confidential sources. They've also accused Trump of asking a staffer to delete camera footage at his Florida estate in an effort to obstruct the federal investigation into his records.

The case is currently scheduled to go to trial in May, but Judge Cannon has pushed back multiple other deadlines and signaled an openness to revisiting the trial date during a pivotal pretrial conference set for March. It's one of four criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White

Rape, sexual violence in Sudan's ongoing conflict may amount to war crimes: New UN report

AP GENEVA

The UN human rights office I said in a new report on Friday that scores of people, including children, have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the ongoinng conflict in Sudan, assaults that may amount to war crimes. Sudan plunged into chaos in mid-April when clashes erupted in the capital, Khartoum, between rival Sudanese forces — the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and a paramilitary faction known as the Rapid Support Forces, under the command of Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The fighting quickly spread across the African country, especially urban areas but also the restive western Darfur region, and has so far killed at least 12,000 people and sent over 8 million fleeing their homes, the report said.

the fighting up to December documents abuses in a country that has been largely inaccessible to aid groups and rights monitors recently, clouding the impact of a conflict that been overshadowed by wars in places like Gaza and Ukraine.

The report found that at least 118 people had been subjected to sexual violence, including rape — with many of the assaults committed by members of the paramilitary forces, in homes and on the One woman, the UN said,

"was held in a building and repeatedly gang-raped over a period of 35 days." The report also pointed to

recruitment of child soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

'Some of these violations would amount to war crimes," alleged rights abuses and vio-

The report is based on interview of more than 300 victims and witnesses, some conducted in neighbouring Ethiopia and Chad where many Sudanese have fled, along with analysis of photographs, videos, and satellite imagery from the conflict

The ravages of the war, beyond the period examined, are continuing, the UN said.

The UN cited video that emerged last week from the country's North Kordofan State showing men wearing Sudanese army uniforms carrying severed heads of members of the rival paramilitary

"For nearly a year now, accounts coming out of Sudan said UN human rights chief have been of death, suffering Volker Türk, calling for and despair, as the senseless

The report, which covers a prompt, thorough and inde- conflict and human rights vioed with no end in sight," Türk

"The guns must be silenced, and civilians must be

protected," he added. Speaking from Nairobi Kenya, by videoconference to the UN briefing in Geneva on Friday, Seif Magango, a regional spokesman for the UN human rights office said that "the number of people dis-placed (in Sudan) has now crossed the 8 million mark, which should concern every-

Earlier in February, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters that there is no military solution to Sudan's conflict and urged the rival generals to start talking about ending the conflict.

He stressed that continued fighting "will not bring any solution so we must stop this as soon as possible."

Angry French farmers with tractors back to Paris for another protest

ngry farmers were back to Angry farmers were such as Paris on their tractors Friday in a new protest demanding more government support and simpler regulations, on the eve of a major agricultural fair in the French capital. Dozens of tractors drove peacefully into a neighbourhood on the capital's west side carrying flags from Rural Coordination, the farmers' union that staged the protest. The protesters then posed with their tractors on a bridge over the Seine River with the Eiffel

Tower in the background. The latest protest comes three weeks after farmers lifted roadblocks around Paris and elsewhere in the country after the government offered over 400 million euros (USD 433 million) to address their grievances over low earnings, heavy regulation and what they describe as unfair competi-



tion from abroad. "Save our agriculture," the Rural Coordination said on X, formerly Twitter. One tractor was carrying a poster reading: "Death is in the field."

The convoy temporarily slowed traffic on the A4 highway, east of the capital, and on the Paris ring-road earlier on Friday morning. French farmers' actions are part of a broader protest movement in Europe against EU agriculture policies, bureaucracy and overall business conditions.

Farmers complain that the 27-nation bloc's environmental policies, such as the Green Deal, which calls for limits on the use of chemicals and on greenhouse gas emissions, limit their business and make their products more expensive than

staged across France as farm-

ers seek to put pressure on the government to implement its Government officials have

held a series of meetings with farmers unions in recent weeks to discuss a new bill meant to defend France's "agricultural sovereignty." Will to be debated at parliament this spring.

The government's plan also

includes hundreds of millions of euros in aid, tax breaks and a promise not to ban pesticides in France that are allowed elsewhere in Europe, which French farmers say puts them at an unfair disadvantage. French President Emmanuel Macron is to visit the Paris Agricultural Fair, on Saturday where he is planning to have a "big debate" with farmers, supermarket CEOs and members of environmental groups, his office

ISIS bride loses appeal to regain British citizenship

PTI ■ LONDON

Shamima Begum, the London-born Bangladeshiorigin woman, who fled the UK as a 15-year-old schoolgirl to join the Íslamic State (ISIS) terrorist network, on Friday lost yet another legal bid to regain her British citizenship and return to the UK from Syria. Previously in 2022, the UK Supreme Court upheld the decision to bar the now 24year-old from returning to the UK. After a series of legal battles, Begum lost a challenge at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) in February last year and then took her case to the Court of Appeal. However, the appeal judges unanimously agreed with the special tribunal's decision and turned down the appeal. "Ms Begum may well



manipulated by others but still have made a calculated decision to travel to Syria and align with ISIL [ISIS]," said Judge Dame Sue Carr, delivering the verdict in London.

Begum, who is in a refugee camp in northern Syria, was represented at her appeal by barrister Samantha Knights who had argued that the government had failed to consider legal duties owed to a potential victim of trafficking. The

the main focus of the case was around national security.

The British government has maintained Begum could seek a Bangladeshi passport given her heritage but her family has argued that she is British and has never held Bangladeshi citizenship.

Last year, the specialist tri-

bunal had accepted then Home Secretary Sajid Javid's conclusion that revoking her British citizenship was "an integral part of the overall national security assessment carried out by the Security Service" and therefore not a matter for the

Begum, referred to as an ISIS bride for marrying a Dutch member of the terror network in Syria, gave birth to three children - all of whom later

'Indian-origin student in US died due to acute alcohol intoxication'

old Indian-origin University of Illinois student, who was found dead last month, died due to hypothermia and acute alcohol intoxication with prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributing to his death, authorities have said. Akul B Dhawan was found dead outside the campus building around 11 am on January 20. Arrow Ambulance, Urbana Fire Department and the University of Illinois Police Department were dispatched to the location after they received a report of an unresponsive male on a

An autopsy that was performed on January 23 confirmed Dhawan's death was due to hypothermia. "Acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributed to his death," Ćhampaign County Coroner Stephen Thuney said.

Thuney ruled the death accidental. A report in WANDTV.com said that according to the University of Illinois Police Department's investigation, Dhawan had met with friends at approximately 9 pm on January 19 and had consumed alcohol. At approximately 10 pm, they said Dhawan and his friends went to a local club in Urbana. "Security video showed him

consuming more alcohol before the group returned to the club," the report cited police as saying. University police said Dhawan's friends re-entered the club between 11:25 pm and 11:29 pm while Dhawan stayed outside.

Private US company lands first commercial spacecraft on Moon

PTI WASHINGTON

Aprivate American company has scripted history by landing the first commercial spacecraft on the Moon as well as the first US vehicle on the Earth's only natural satellite in more than 50 years, joining earlier feats by India, Russia, the US and China.

Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander — named Odysseus — touched down on the Moon at around 6:23 p.m. ET on Thursday, making it the first American spacecraft on the Moon since the Apollo 17 mis-

sion in 1972. "Today, for the first time in half a century, America has returned to the Moon," Bill Nelson, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator said time," Nelson said. "What we



Houston-based company, landed its Odysseus robot near the lunar south pole.

The lander carries a bounty of NASA scientific instruments, "and bearing the dream of a new adventure in science innovation and American leadership in space, well, all of that aced the landing of the life-

can confirm, without a doubt, is our equipment is on the surface of the Moon, and we are transmitting," Flight Director and Chief Technology Officer Tim Crain announced amidst cheers among his colleagues and others across the country as there were some tense moments before the landing on the Moon. As the spacecraft made its

final descent, mission controllers lost contact with it, as was expected to occur, NBC News reported. "After troubleshooting communications, flight controllers have confirmed Odysseus is upright and starting to send data. Right now, we are working to downlink the first images from the lunar surface," Intuitive Machines said, announcing the

US, EU pile new sanctions on Russia PML-N candidates' victory

The United States and the European Union are piling new sanctions on Russia on the eve of the second anniversary of its invasion of Ukraine and in retaliation for the death of noted Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny last week in an Arctic penal colony. The US Treasury Department plans Friday to impose more than 500 new sanctions on Russia and its war machine in the largest single tranche of penalties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on

February 24, 2022. They come on the heels of a series of new arrests and indictments announced by the Justice Department on Thursday that target Russian businessmen, including the head of Russia's second-largest bank, and their middlemen in five separate federal cases. The European Union announced Friday that it is imposing sanctions on several foreign companies over allegations that they have exported dual-use goods to Russia that could be used in its war against Ukraine.

The 27-nation bloc also said that it was targeting scores of Russian officials, including "members of the judiciary, local politicians and people responsible for the illegal deportation and military reeducation of Ukrainian chil-

dren."
"The American people and people around the world understand that the stakes of this fight extend far beyond Ukraine," President Joe Biden said in a statement announcing the sanctions.

"If Putin does not pay the price for his death and destruction, he will keep going. And the costs to the United States along with our NATO Allies and partners in Europe and around the world — will rise."

The US specifically was to target individuals associated with Navalny's imprisonment a day after Biden met with the opposition leader's widow and daughter in California.

It was also hitting "Russia's financial sector, defense industrial base, procurement net-works and sanctions evaders Ukrainians live in agony, uncertainty notified from Islamabad

her phone, replaying the last video her 25-year-old son Vladyslav sent her from the front line before the volunteer soldier disappeared 19 months ago in a battle with Russian forces in Ukraine's eastern

Donetsk region.
Reva is one of the thousands of Ukrainians desperately seeking news of loved ones who have disappeared in the two years since Russia's fullscale invasion began. According to Ukraine's National Police, more than 30,000 people have been reported missing in the last 24 months. "Up to this day, I am searching for my son," Reva said. "He is alive to me. Regardless of the circumstances, there is no evidence that he has perished."

The last time Reva spoke to her son, she begged him not to take part in a battle the next morning. "Don't go, say your arm hurts," she told him over

the phone. "Mom, I'm sorry. I love you very much," Vladyslav replied. "I'm going into battle. I don't know if I'll be back. "I'll be out of touch. Pray," were his last words to her. The missing include soldiers like Vladyslav lost on the battlefield, but also civilians and children who have vanished in a variety of circumstances. For many relatives, the agonising uncertainty and relentless search for answers has already gone on for two years with no end in

across multiple continents," Biden said. "They will ensure Putin pays an even steeper price for his aggression abroad and repression at home."

The EU asset freezes and travel bans constitute the 13th package of measures imposed by the bloc against people and organisations it suspects of undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of

'Today, we are further tightening the restrictive measures against Russia's military



A Ukrainian soldier takes his position on the frontline near Klishchiivka the Donetsk region, in Ukraine on Friday

Red Cross. From her home,

which is now in Spain, she

came to Ukraine to file a police

report and provide DNA to

Ukrainian authorities. Despite

the efforts, neither side was

able to provide her with any

information. "I would like, of

course, to believe that he is

alive," Usenko said, adding

that the uncertainty not only

drains her but also affects

close friends, relatives and his

children. The International

Committee of the Red Cross

says since February 2022 its team has been contacted more

than 100,000 times by families

searching for their loved ones.

"That doesn't mean a hundred

thousand missing people. But

this gives you an idea of just the

amount of suffering that this

creates on both sides," Achille

his associates. Companies mak-

ing electronic components,

which the EU believes could

have military as well as civilian

uses, were among 27 entities

accused of "directly supporting

Russia's military and industri-

al complex in its war of aggres-

sion against Ukraine," a state-

ment said. Those companies —

some of them based in India,

Sri Lanka, China, Serbia,

Kazakhstan, Thailand and

Turkey — face tougher export

restrictions. The names of the

companies will only be made

sight. Inna Usenko left her hometown of Mariupol on a business trip the day before the war began in 2022. She lost contact with her brother, Herman Sikorskyi, on March 1 as Russia laid siege to the eastern city and thousands of civilians were trapped. Several weeks later, a Russian airstrike hit the house where he had lived. "I don't know what to think, whether he's alive or not," she said. "I understand perfectly well that if I were there, he would have come to me, and maybe something would have been different, so I feel guilty all the time." In an attempt to find her

brother, Usenko filed a missing person's report with the occupation authorities, the Russian Federation and the Russian

and defense sector," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. We remain united in our

determination to dent Russia's war machine and help Ukraine win its legitimate fight for selfdefense." In all, 106 more officials and 88 "entities" — often companies, banks, government agencies or other organizations — have been added to the bloc's sanctions list, bringing the tally of those targeted to more than 2,000 people and entities, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and

the ICRC in Kyiv, said. For relatives looking for information, the official search

often begins with submitting a DNA sample. Andrii Levytskyi, head of forensics at the National Police's main investigation department, said more than 18,000 DNA samples of relatives of servicemen and civilians have been collected and processed.

DNA is a vital part of establishing the status of the missing person, especially if they are military. Even if fellow soldiers said they witnessed a soldier killed in battle, it's not enough to confirm the death, said Petro Yatsenko, the head of a press office at the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of POWs.

"Until we have the body, until we have DNA analysis, this person will have the status of missing," he said. He said they have had cases in which soldiers were found wounded in captivity, despite testimony from their comrades that they were killed in battle. Over the past two years, numerous volunteer projects have arisen to aid in the search for missing people, often serving as a last resort for relatives who receive no official information from authorities. Mariia Reshetova, who runs the Search for the Missing project under the Kateryna Osadcha Foundation, said they have around 1,000 open cases and have already closed hundreds.

public once they are published in the EU's official journal, which should be a matter of days. The bloc said the companies "have been involved in the circumvention of trade restrictions," and it accuses others of "the development, production and supply of electronic components" destined to help Russia's armed forces.

Some of the measures are aimed at depriving Russia of parts for pilotless drones, which are seen by military experts as

 $P^{\text{akistan's election commission on Friday notified the}}$ victories of three candidates from Nawaz Sharif's PML-N in the federal capital, delivering a fresh blow to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party, which had challenged the original poll results.

Backed by the 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreeke-Insaf (PTI) party, three losing candidates - Amir Mughal, Shoaib Shaheen and Mohammad Ali Bukhari - had petitioned in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), alleging manipulation of the results.

On Wednesday, the IHC suspended poll result notifications issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from NA-46, NA-47 and NA-48, putting on hold the success of three candidates of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, who had won respectively on the three seats.

While Anjum Aqeel Khan and Chaudhry won on the PML-N tickets, Raja Khurram Nawaz won as an independent candidate and joined the party after his victory. After hearing the parties on Friday, the electoral watchdog restored the order suspended by the IHC and issued the notification announcing the victory of the three candidates, Geo News reported.

"Now the Commission, after hearing the parties, has finally disposed of the petitions filed by Mr Aamer Masood, contesting candidate NA-46 ICT-I, Mr Shoib Shaheen, contesting candidate NA-47 ICT-II, and Syed Muhammad Ali Bokhari, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, Ch. Azhar Mehmood contesting candidates NA-48 ICT-Ill, in light of the order passed by the Hon'ble Islamabad High Court," the ECP said.

Earlier, the three PTIbacked losing candidates had challenged the election results before the ECP on February 10, and the commission issued a status quo order. However, on February 11, the ECP also issued the notification that declared Khan, Chaudhry, and Nawaz as returned candidates.

Speaking to media outside the ECP, PML-N-backed Chaudhry slammed his rivals for creating controversy over the election results. "We are ready for a political battle," he was quoted as saying. Chaudhry accused the PTI of guiding the high court and advised the party not to fight against the state.

Independent candidates backed by the PTI won more than 90 seats in the National Assembly in the February 8 general election. The PML-N won 75 seats while the PPP came third with 54 seats. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has 17 seats. To form a government, a party must win 133 out of 265 contested seats in the 266-member National Assembly.

However, the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have agreed on a powersharing deal to form a new coalition government, which may effectively end former prime minister Khan's chances of returning to power. PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif has been nominated as the prime minister candidate, while PPP's Asif Ali Zardari is for the president's office.

On Wednesday, the PTI rejected the attempts by two of its arch-rivals to form a coalition government, warning that robbing its public endorsement by the "mandate thieves" will result in the worst political instability.

IMF ready to work with new govt; mum on Imran's demand

Washington/Islamabad: The

(PTI) founder Khan on Thursday said he will write to the International Monetary Fund, demanding the Washington-based institution stop its support to Pakistan where his political rivals, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party, were on the verge of forming a coalition government with a "stolen mandate.

The 71-year-old former prime minister's message from jail was conveyed through Barrister Ali Zafar, who met him in the Adiala Jail incarcerated since last year after being convicted in corruption and other cases.

IMF is looking forward to working with the new government in Pakistan, a top official has said while keeping mum on jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's demand that the global lender should conduct an "audit" of the election results before approving any new loan for the cash-strapped country. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

The IMF is looking for-

ward to engaging with ing with the new government Pakistan's new government on on policies to ensure macropolicies to ensure "macroeconomic stability and prosperity" for the country, Julie Kozack,

head Communications Department of the IMF said, while maintaining silence on any communication to the organisation from jailed former premier Khan on the outcome of the February 8 polls in the country. During the press conference in Washington on Thursday, Kozack was asked about whether Pakistan was on track to secure the third tranche of the stand-by agreement reached in June 2023 and also if the IMF would entertain any letter by Khan calling for investigations into election irregularities.

We look forward to work-

Supply of fodderseed

economic stability and prosperity for all of Pakistan's citizens. And I am going to leave it at that," Kozak said. She said that on January 11 the IMF Executive Board

approved the first review of the Stand-By Arrangement, with Pakistan that brought total disbursements under the Stand-By Arrangement to USD 1.9 bil-"The Stand-By Arrangement is supporting the authority's efforts to stabilise the economy and to, of course, with a strong focus on protecting the most vulnerable," she said. Talking of the fiscal conditions of Pakistan, she said that during the tenure of the interim government, the authorities had "maintained economic stability".

Managing Directo

Return Navalny's body to family, authorities urged

Russians including Nobel Prize-winning journalist Dmitry Muratov and ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov have Russian authorities to return the body of opposition leader Alexei Navalny to his family, a week after his death in an Arctic penal colony.

Navalny's mother said on Thursday that she has seen her son's body and that she is resisting heavy pressure to agree to a secret burial away from the public eye. Lyudmila Navalnaya said investigators allowed her to see her son's body in the city morgue. She said she repeated her demand to have Navalny's body returned to her and protested what she described as authorities trying to force her to agree to a secret burial.

"They are blackmailing me. They are setting conditions where, when and how my son should be buried," she said Thursday in a video statement from the Arctic city of Salekhard. "They want it to do

Navalny's spokesman, Kira Yarmysh said on X, formerly Twitter, that his mother was also shown a med-"natural causes." Yarmysh didn't specify what those were. Posting on social media, prominent Russians directly appealed to President Vladimir Putin, demanding that he return Navalny's body to his family.

"Just give Lyudmila her son," Muratov, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize said, adding, "It's awkward to talk about this in a country that still considers itself Christian."

Nadya Tolokonnikova, who became widely known after spending nearly two years in prison for taking part in a 2012 protest with the band Pussy Riot inside Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, also released a video. "We were imprisoned for allegedly trampling on traditional values. But no one tramples on traditional Russian values more than you, Putin, your officials and your priests who pray for all the

year, day after day," Tolokonnikova said.

"Putin, have a conscience, give his mother the body of her ical certificate stating that the son," she added. Navalny, opposition politician, suddendied in an Arctic prison last week, prompting hundreds of Russians across the country to stream to impromptu memorials with flowers and candles.

The Russian authorities have detained scores of people as they seek to suppress any major outpouring of sympathy for President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe before the presidential election he is almost certain to win. Across the ocean in San Francisco Thursday, US President Joe Biden met with Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya and 20-year-old daughter Dasha, expressing "condolences for their devastating loss."

To state the obvious, he was a man of incredible courage," Biden said after the meeting. "It's amazing how his wife and daughter are emulating that.

Imran, wife move lower court against 'un-Islamic marriage' case verdict **Islamabad (PTI):** Jailed former 3 was against the facts, while

Pakistan prime minister Imran the indictment issued against Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi her in the case on January 16 on Friday separately moved a was also illegal. The petition challenging the verdict in the "un-Islamic" marriage case in which they were jailed for seven years and their marriage in 2018 declared illegal. Earlier this month, a trial court sentenced Khan, 71, and his wife Bushra Bibi, 49 to seven years in jail and imposed a Rs 5,00,000 fine on each for "contracting marriage during the 'iddat' (period of waiting)" in a case filed by Bibi's former husband Khawar Maneka in November last year.

The district and sessions couple's appeals on Friday, Geo annulment of the trial court's

court will mark the former first News reported. Bushra Bibi filed her appeal at the court through her lawyers seeking decision, the report said. The third spouse of the

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

party founder petitioned that

the judgment delivered by civil

judge Qudratullah on February

was rejected without assigning any reason and that the civil court did not conduct the trial

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	No. CSMC/6 Dated :- 17/	Garden Section/1168 02/2024	5/2024
S.No Work Na	ame	Final Date of	Tender Submission

Construction Multiplay System Date :- 04/03/2024 In CSMC Main Garden: 5 PM Put to Tender:- Rs.8,44,76,029/ lote:- Tender Notice is Published on Website www.mahatenders.gov.in

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पत्रांक : सी-4921/यू०सी०डी०एफ०/निविदा पी०एण्डआई०/२०२३-२४ दिनांक: 23/02/२०२४

E-Tender Notice No.: 33(1-2)/UCDF/P&I/2023-24, Date- 23.02.2024

Following E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned, from experienced and financially sound Authorized Manufacturers/Dealers/Firms for the following works so as to reach this office on or before 01.03.2024 up to 5.00 PM. The Tender will be opened on 02.03.2024 at 11:00 AM.

Name of Work

reputed software Design/ Website Design/ Website Development / Portal Design

firms for making a website for The Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Punjab Sports University, Patiala. The sealed bids (Technical and Financial) both in separate sealed envelopes i.e. double develop system as per prescribed format must be sub-mitted upto 06-03-2024 upto 4:00 PM. The details of the tender will be available on the University website https://mbspsu.ac.in on 24th Feb 2024.

Important Note: In case of any query bidders can contact office during working hours. Detail terms and conditions are given on https://mbspsu.ac.in

NA/12/22297/2023/32822 Dated CHD :- 2/23/2024

NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

3RD CALL E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

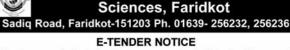
Request for Proposal/Bid (RFP)/RFB for appointment of PMA fo "Consultancy Services for Assisting and Supporting in Project Management to NDMC for Implementation of (i) Smart System Metering Work (DT and Feeder Metering) and (ii) Implen Loss Reduction Infrastructure Works under Phase-I of RDSS, Gol".

Tender Value: Rs.4,83,00,000/-Tender ID No.: 2024_NDMC__1

Date of Release of tender through e-procurement solution: 21.02.2024 Pre-Bid Meeting (In the O/o CE(E-II), Palika Kendra, ND): 28.02.2024 at 1500 Hrs me for receipt of tenders through e-procurement: 07.03.2024 at 1500 Hrs Date/time for opening of Bid through e-procurement: 07.03.2024 at 1530 Hrs Further details can be seen at https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in and

https://www.ndmc.gov.in/tenders.aspx

Note: - To participate in e-tender in NDMC registration with application service provider NIC is mandatory. Executive Engineer (E) RDSS Baba Farid University of Health



for the procurement of

09.03.2024.

 Nutomated Blood Culture System Machine. 2) Tilt Table Test Machine 3) High End Digital Mammography Machine 4) High End DEXA Scan Machine 5) CRRT (Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy Machine 6) 3 Tesla MRI Machine. E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 16.03.2024 1) Lab material for GGSMCH 2) procurement of Ophthalmology equipments (Sli

Lamp & Perimeter) at GGSMCH 3) Rate contract for supply of Chemotherapy supportive Drugs/Surgical material at GGSMCH 4) Signing rate contract of TKR Terms and conditions can be downloaded from http://eproc.punjab.gov.in. The enders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tentification and document from the University website i.e. www.bfuhs.ac.in

Registra

00/12/207/2023/32775 Dated CHD :- 2/23/2024

Buddhist monks among 100 held in Sichuan over dam protests

ty officials have arrested more tĥan 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and local people in the southwestern Sichuan province to quell protests against the construction of a massive dam that would submerge six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages, a media report said.

In a rare act of defiance, residents have taken to the streets of Wangbuding township of Dege County in the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since February 14 to oppose the plan to build the 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower station on the Drichu River (Jinsha in Chinese). The dam is located on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, one of China's most important waterways, Radio Free Asia reported on Thursday.

February 14, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside the Dege county town hall to oppose the dam's construction, defying strict controls on public gatherings and extensive Sichuan and Tibet regions. The detentions reportedly occurred in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, an area with a large population of ethnic

Tibetans. Some of the arrested protesters required hospitalisation due to rough treatment, the report said. Police used water cannons, pepper spray and tasers to subdue the protesters.

Videos of protests showed monks prostrating before the officials, pleading with them not to resort to demolition when they inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries in prepara-

The USD 4.6 billion Yebatan hydropower station, the largest hydropower project in the upper reaches of the Jinsha River, exceeded 100 metres in December last year, surveillance by authorities in achieving a major milestone, state-run Global Times reported earlier. The total installed capacity of the power station is expected to reach 2,240 megawatts after completion, with a maximum dam height of 217 metres. It is the tallest hyperbolic arch dam project under construction in China, according to the report.

The protesting locals were particularly distraught over the construction of the hydroelectric dam, as it would destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto Monastery, which includes ancient murals that date to the 13th century, the RFA report said.

CORRIGENDUM

No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/148

In continuation of the tender No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/140 dated 16th Feb 2024 invited for the work, "Design, fabrication, supply, installation and commissioning of passenger lift (8 person) including civil & structural works for construction of New Lift Structure at the State Mission Office (G+4 storey), Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19", the following changes will be effective:

Clause ref. with page no. in the tender document	Present clause	Modified clause	
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion – 90 days	
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02- 2024	Last date & time for submission of tender: 27-02-2024	
National/ local competitive bidding, page-2 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02- 2024	Last date & time for submission of tender: 27-02-2024	
Calender of events, page-4 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02- 2024	Last date & time for submission of tender: 27-02-2024	
Page-5 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion -90 days	
Clause no. 8 of Appendix-I, page 28	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 23-02-2024	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 27-02-2024	

Janasanyog/CF/5863/23/24-Feb-24

👺 শিক্ষাৰ অধিকাৰ -

Sd/- Executive Director Samagra Shiksha, Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Shareholders vote to oust Byju

PTI NEW DELHI

ore than 60 per cent of shareholders of V dedutech Byju's on Friday voted for removal of Byju CEO Raveendran and his family over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup,

Prosus - one of the six investors who had called the extraordinary general

but the company dug in its

heels, calling the voting done

in the absence of founders as

"invalid".

statement said "shareholders unanimously passed resolutions put forward for vote.

"These included a request for the resolution of outstanding governance, mismanagement financial and compliance issues at Byju's; the reconstitution of the board of directors, so that it is no longer controlled by the founder of T&L; and a change of leadership of the company.

Raveendran and his family stayed away from the EGM,



calling it "procedurally However, the outcome of the vote at the EGM will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High will next hear Court Raveendran's plea

certain investors to call the High Court The

Wednesday had refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Think & Learn (T&L) - the firm that operates

passed shall not be given effect till the next date of hearing.

Change -4.75

Raveendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company Byju's in a statement, issued even before the EGM results were declared, said it "?rmly declares that the resolutions passed during the recently concluded EGM -- attended by a small cohort of select shareholders - are invalid and ineffective. The passing of the unenforceable resolutions challenges the rule of law at

TOP GAINERS

TOP LOSERS

Manuti Sozuki Manuti Sozuki Asian Painta

NPCI to help Paytm UPI users migrate to banks The Reserve Bank has asked the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to examine the possibility of migrating Paytm Payments Bank customers using the UPI handle '@paytm' to 4-5 other banks, in a bid to prevent any disruptions in the payment ecosystem.

On Friday, the central bank came out with additional steps for the benefit of customers, wallet holders and merchants who are availing banking services from Paytm Payments Bank, which has been barred from accepting deposits and credits after March 15, 2024.

As per the website of Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL), it has 30 crore wallets and 3 crore bank customers.

umbrella NPCI. organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, is an initiative of RBI and Indian Banks Association (IBA) for creating a payment and settlement infrastructure in India.

As the PPBL cannot accept further credits into its customer accounts and wallets after March 15, 2024, certain additional steps have become necessary to ensure seamless digital payments by UPI customers using '@paytm' handle operated by the bank, and minimise concentration risk in the UPI system by having multiple payment app providers, the RBI said in a statement.

"NPCI has been advised by the RBI to examine the request of One97 Communication Ltd (OCL) to become a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) for UPI channel for continued UPI operation of the Paytm app, as per the norms," it said.
One97 Communications Ltd

(OCL), which owns the Paytm brand, holds a 49 per cent stake in PPBL.

status to OCL, it may be

stipulated that '@paytm' handles are to be migrated in a seamless manner from PPBL to a set of newly identified banks to avoid any disruption. "No new users are to be added by the said TPAP until all the existing users are migrated satisfactorily to a new handle, it added.

'For seamless migration of '@pavtm' handle to other banks, NPCI may facilitate certification of 4-5 banks as Payment Service Provider Banks with demonstrated capabilities to process high volume UPI transactions. This is in line NPCI norms for with minimising concentration risk," RBI said.

PayTM QR Codes, OCL may open the settlement accounts with one or more PSP Banks (other than Paytm Payments Bank), the Reserve Bank said. It further said the migration of UPI handles is applicable only to such customers and merchants who have a UPI handle '@Paytm'. For others who have a UPI address or handle other than '@Paytm', no action is required to be taken by them.

Also, for the merchants using

RBI again asked the customers, whose underlying account/ wallet is currently with Paytm Payments Bank, to make an alternative arrangement with other banks well before March

Rupee falls 8 paise to close at 82.93 a dollar

PTI MUMBAI

 $T^{\text{he rupee consolidated in}}_{\text{a narrow range and}}$ depreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a strong American currency and muted trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the Indian

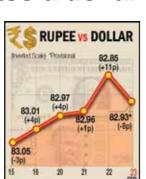
currency depreciated as foreign fund outflows weighed on the rupee.
At the interbank foreign

exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.87 and finally settled at 82.93 (provisional) against the dollar, down by 8 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee witnessed a range-bound movement. It saw an intraday high of 82.84 and a low 82.96 against the American currency.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 82.85 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee depreciated on Friday on demand from importers. Elevated crude oil prices also weighed on the rupee, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on positive global equities and soft US dollar. However, any bounce back in crude oil prices may cap sharp upside. Geopolitical



The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was 0.05 per

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was to USD 82.56 per barrel.

market front, Sensex declined 15.44 points, or 0.02 per cent, to settle at 73,142.80 points. The Nifty fell 4.75 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 22,212.70 points.

Institutional Foreign

cent up at 104.00.

tension in the Middle East may put pressure on rupee at higher levels," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.60 to Rs 83.10.

On the domestic equity

trading 1.33 per cent lower

Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they sold shares worth Rs 1,410,05 crore, according to exchange

Sensex edges lower, Nifty settles flat $B_{\mathsf{Sensex}}^{\mathsf{enchmark}}$ stock indices Change -15.44 lower in a volatile trade on Friday, reversing early gains due to selling in IT and select banking shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex

slipped 15.44 points or 0.02

per cent to close at 73,142.80

points with 17 of its

constituents closing in the red

The index opened higher but

later slipped into losses due to

profit-taking by investors. The

barometer oscillated between a high of 73,413.93 and a low

of 73,022 during the day. The broader Nifty of NSE

closed lower by 4.75 points or

0.02 per cent at 22,212.70

points as gains in FMCG, pharma and financial shares

were offset by losses in IT and

The 50-share barometer

scaled a record high of

"Nifty opened higher but

failed to sustain the morning

momentum, leading to a

closing at the day's low due to

profit booking," Rupak De,

22,297.50 in intra-day trade.

private bank shares.

and 13 in the green.

LKP Securities, said.

shares. Among Sensex HCLTech. Asian Paints, Maruti, JSW Steel, TCS, SBI, ITC and Bharti Airtel were the major losers. On the other hand, Bajaj Mahindra Finsery,

Mahindra, Titan, L&T and Wipro were the major gainers. "The domestic market paused momentarily today after reaching another record high earlier in the day, driven by positive signals from global markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

goods and The capital industrial sectors showed strength, supported Senior Technical Analyst, advancements

manufacturing and services. BSE Midcap advanced 0.25 per cent while Smallcap rose by 0.53 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 0.81 per cent, BSE Metal by 0.33 per cent, BSE Energy by 0.36 per cent and Bankex 0.29 per cent. On the other hand, BSE Industrials spurted by 1.22 per cent, Telecommunications by 1.52 per cent, Capital Goods by 1.18 per cent, and Consumer Durables 0.76 per

Reliance Industries rose by around 1 per cent to hit a 52week high intra-day. Its arm Reliance Jio Financial Services soared by more than 14.5 per securities worth Rs 1,410.05 in cent to hit a year's high level, crore.

taking its market valuation to more than Rs 2 lakh crore. Global markets were mostly higher following sharp overnight gains in US markets driven mainly by stunning December quarter results by technology company Nvidia. The Shanghai Composite index added 0.6 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng was unchanged. Tokyo's markets were closed for a holiday. Germany's DAX, the CAC 40 in Paris and FTSE 100 in London rose up to 0.1 per cent. In the domestic market, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers on Thursday as they offloaded

RBI further said that in the event of NPCI granting TPAP

component and higher share of till March 2024 and the

Renewable Energy to rise to 170 GW by March 2025: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's installed Renewable Energy (RE) capacity, excluding large hydro plants, is estimated to increase to 170 GW by March 2025 from a level of 135 GW in December 2023, rating agency ICRA said

enhance the share of RE plus large hydro in the all-India electricity generation from about 23 per cent in FY24 to around 40 per cent in FY30," ICRA said in a statement.

Given the intermittency associated with RE generation, the availability of Round The

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

R ealty firm Tata Housing has sold plots worth Rs

Clock (RTC) supply from RE sources remains important, it stated. This can be made possible

through the use of wind and solar power projects complemented with energy storage systems, it suggested. According to the statement, ICRA expects the installed RE "ICRA estimates that the rise in capacity, excluding hydro the RE capacity over the next energy, in India to increase to from 135 GW as of December

> improvement in tendering activity in the current fiscal with over 16 GW projects bid so far, and another 17 GW bids



announced 2023, it noted.

Head, Corporate Ratings, associated with the storage

World Bank needs to

reinvent: NK Singh

RTC bid tariffs seen in the Girishkumar Kadam, Senior range of Rs 4-4.5 per unit, Vice-President and Group mainly on account of the cost

energy component expected. Further, based on the prevailing capital cost of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped

Hydro Storage Projects (PSP), the viability of the RTC projects remains relatively better with the use of PSP capacity, he said. challenges in the wind energy segment could pose challenges

for execution of RTC projects, he said. As per ICRA, the sharp decline in solar PV cell and module prices, abeyance of the Approved List of Module Manufacturers (ALMM) order

timeline extension approved for solar and hybrid projects, is expected to lead to an improvement in RE capacity addition to 18 GW to 20 GW in FY24 from 15 GW in FY23. This, along with the growing project pipeline, is likely to support the scale-up in capacity addition to 23-25 GW in FY25, as per ICRA nates mainly solar power segment.

However, it stated that challenges remain on the execution front with respect to delays in land acquisition and transmission connectivity, which could hamper the capacity-addition prospects

GSTN to share Tata sells data with RBI ₹650 cr frictionless credit residential plots PTI ■ NEW DELHI in Bengaluru providers service

The government has permitted GST Network to share data about GSTregistered businesses, based on their consent, with the Reserve Bank's 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit'.

The move will help entities get loans faster on the basis of shared Goods and Services Tax (GST)-related information.

The platform, created by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) subsidiary Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, is intended to enable seamless flow of necessary information to cannot lenders to help in disbursing

credit. In a notification, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has said "the Central Government, on the recommendation of the Council, notifies 'Public Platform Frictionless Credit' as the which system with information may be shared

on consent...". The platform has been developed for the operation of a large ecosystem of credit, to ensure access of information from various

by the common portal based

data sources digitally. providers and multiple data Mohan added.

converge on the platform using standard and protocol driven architecture, the notification said.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said with appropriate consent from the supplier/recipient, GSTN is empowered to disclose specific details submitted in the GST registration application, along with data from outward tax returns, monthly and annual tax returns, and invoice preparations.

transactional information provided to lenders or the government portal. It enhances credit efficiency by minimising costs and the time required for processing. "Moreover, lenders gain access to authenticated monthly sales and purchase directly government-sanctioned sources, allowing for a more and timely accurate assessment of credit risk," Mohan said.

GST filings will become a crucial factor for businesses seeking to obtain credit and leverage government-sponsored financial service credit programmes in future,

650 crore in its recently launched residential project in Bengaluru. In a statement, the company on Friday said it has sold all inventories in the first phase of its project, Raagam, achieving revenue of over Rs 650 crore within one week of its launch. invoice

"With 576 plots sold and a total area of 9 lakh square "This arrangement ensures that borrowers feet, the project's overwhelming . withhold any response reflects the robust demand for premium residential offerings in Bengaluru's real estate market," it said. The project is part of township 'Tata Carnatica' in Devanahalli, North Bengaluru. Tata Housing Development Company Ltd is a subsidiary of Tata Realty and

> more than 33 projects with a total development potential of over 51 million square feet spread across major cities in India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Tata and Tata Housing are

Infrastructure Ltd.

registered trademarks of Tata Sons Private Ltd.

Tata Housing currently has

agencies, it stated. that the tariffs discovered in This is in line with the 50 GW the RE-RTC tenders remain Thereafter, the capacity addition is likely to be supported by the significant annual bidding trajectory higher as against the standalone solar and wind Government of India in March energy tenders, with recent



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Bank needs to reinvent and restructure itself so as to become 'better, bolder and bigger' and harness private capital on the strength of its own balance sheet, said N K Singh, Co-Convener, Expert Group on MDB Reforms. The World Bank should also

look at the possibility of tapping pension funds to increase its capital base and its capacity to fund development projects in developing nations.
"Bretton Woods was the first one, it certainly needs to be

reinvented, restructured and

recreated. But there is no

substitute for multilateral

cooperation. And that's why better, bolder and bigger, Singh said at a panel discussion at the Raisina Dialogue, 2024. A high-level expert group, led by N K Singh and former

US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, was set up by the under India's presidency. In its report, the group had

proposed a 30-point to roadmap reform Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and triple their lending by 2030, which includes attracting private investors and introducing pooled portfolio guarantees.

Bank, European Reconstruction and Development and Inter-American Development

Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Bank and IMF, were set up for funding reconstruction activities post World War II. The expert group had said that MDBs would need USD 3 trillion each year between now and 2030. Of this, USD 2 trillion can come from domestic mobilisation.

Out of the balance of USD 1 trillion, USD 500 billion could come from the private sector and USD 500 billion could come through official development financing.

Addressing the discussion, titled 'Democratic Dollars: Can the Planet Reclaim the Bretton Wood', Singh said the money has to come from shareholders, as well as the private sector.

However, the World Bank's track record to be able to use its balance sheet to harness private capital has been disappointing, Singh said.
"I would say if the World Bank needs recapitalisation, shareholders have to put in more money, but equally the World Bank needs to harness Currently, there are 17
MDBs, including Asian
Development Bank, African
Development Bank, African
Development Bank, African

BUSINESS BRIEF



POWERGRID ACQUIRES TWO TRANSMISSION PROJECTS Power Grid Corporation of India Limited has acquired two Project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) viz. Sikar Khetri Transmission Limited and Bidar Transmission Limited on 09 th February 2024 for the Transmission System Projects for evacuation of power from REZ in Rajasthan (20GW) under Phase-III Part D Phase I and Solar Energy

Zone (2500 MW) in Bidar, Karnataka respectively after competing with

various private sector players and emerging as successful bidder in



GLOBAL MEET ON MATERIAL CHEMISTRY AT SRM

The Department of Chemistry at SRM Institute of Science and Technology. Kattakulathur organised the 8th International Conference on Recent Advances in Material Chemistry recently. This three- day conference was organised in association with Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), France and University Gustave Eiffel, France. The idea of ICRAMC-2024 was to provide an excellent platform for the world's Material Scientists to share the latest developments in the area of Materials Chemistry.



VIT-AP UNVEILS V-TAPP 2024 VIT AP University announced the launch of V-TAPP'2024 on Friday, marking the beginning of a two-day extravaganza that brings together students from various colleges, universities, and institutions. Dr Buddha Chandrasekhar, Chief Coordinating officer, AICTE, Ministry of Education, Government of India and Vithal

Madyalkar, Director IBM Innovation Centre for Education, have graced the occasion as chief guest and guest of honour respectively.



Every moment in Meghalaya is a step into a world where nature and culture coexist in perfect harmony. It's a place where the clouds meet the earth, and the heart meets the soul, leaving an indelible mark on all who venture into its embrace writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL.**

PANKAJ KUMAR

captured a glimpse of the abode of clouds with his roving eye



captivating landscapes and rich cultural heritage, Meghalaya is a destination that beckons the adventurous spirit and the nature lover alike. Pankaj Kumar takes a whirlwind tour of the state to capture a glimpse of the abode of clouds. Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Meghalaya, aptly named the "abode of clouds," is a state that mesmerises visitors with its enchanting landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures. Renowned for its lush greenery, cascading waterfalls, and vibrant traditions, Meghalaya is a paradise for nature enthusiasts and cultural explorers

Meghalaya's natural beauty is unparalleled, offering a breathtaking panorama of rolling hills, dense forests, and meandering rivers. The state is blessed with an abundance of rainfall, contributing to its luxuriant greenery and earning it the distinction of being one of the wettest places on Earth. The picturesque landscapes come alive with a vibrant mix of flora and fauna, making Meghalaya a haven for biodiversity.

Waterfalls, such as the Nohkalikai Falls, plunge



dramatically from towering cliffs, creating a spectacle that leaves visitors in awe. The living root bridges, a testament to the harmonious coexistence between nature and humans, are iconic to the region. These intricate bridges, crafted from the aerial roots of the ancient rubber trees, showcase the indigenous wisdom of the Khasi and Jaintia tribes.

Meghalaya is not only a haven for nature lovers but also a place where the warmth of its people adds an extra layer of charm. The locals, known for their friendliness and hospitality, embrace visitors with open arms. The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia communities contribute to the







state's rich tapestry of cultures, and their traditions are reflected in everyday life.

The indigenous communities of Meghalaya are proud of their heritage and are eager to share their customs with visitors. Engaging in conversation with the locals provides a glimpse into their way of life, from traditional music and dance to folklore that has been passed down through generations.

One of Meghalaya's most fascinating features is its living root bridges, which exemplify the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The Khasi and Jaintia tribes have mastered the art of training the aerial roots of the Ficus elastica tree to form sturdy and durable bridges over rivers and streams. These bridges, some of which are centuries old, are a testament to sustainable living and the ingenious use of natural resources.

Meghalaya's markets are vibrant hubs of commerce where local women play a crucial role in selling a variety of products. The bustling markets showcase the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of Meghalaya's women. From handmade crafts and traditional textiles to fresh produce and local delicacies, the markets are a treasure trove for those seeking authentic experiences

unique souvenirs.

The markets also serve as social spaces where visitors can interact with the locals, learn about traditional cooking methods, and sample indigenous cuisines. This exchange of cultures adds to the richness of the Meghalayan experience.

Meghalaya, with its mesmerizing landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures, stands as a testament

to the incredible diversity India has to offer. Whether exploring the lush greenery, marvelling at the living root bridges, or engaging with the locals in vibrant markets.



INDIA DISCOVERS NEW PACE OPTION IN AKASH Root century was due: Crawley

ndia unearthed a fresh pace talent in debutant Akash Deep but veteran Joe Root single-handedly kept England afloat with a tenacious hundred that shunned 'Bazball' for a more conservative approach as the visitors hobbled to 302 for 7 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Friday. At stumps, the 33-year-old Root was unbeaten on 106 and

had used up 226 deliveries during his classical Test knock. Giving him company at the other end was Ollie Robinson (26) as England staged a decent recovery from the early jolts given by Akash Deep.

The 27-year-old Bengal pacer, who hails from Bihar, picked up three wickets in his 17 overs, marking yet another confident debut for the home side in the ongoing series.

He made life miserable for England's top-order with the new ball, grabbing the top-three in 10 balls as the visitors lost half of their side in the first session. But Root decided to drop anchor after that, reverting to his natural style of playing the waiting game. The move got him and England the desired results as he struck his first century in 15 innings. With the sun playing hide and

seek during the fag end of the day, the Yorkshire man hit the **ENGLAND REACH 302/7 AT STUMPS**



three-figure mark for the 31st time in his Test career, striking a classy cover-drive off Akash Deep. It took him 219 balls to get there and the former skipper did not show much emotion, fully aware that his job was not yet done. A record 10 of his 31 Test centuries are against India and the latest one came at just the right juncture.

England are reeling from backto-back losses in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot to trail the five-match series 1-2. He hit nine fours in his innings and was a picture of noticeably determination,

avoiding the sweep shot due to the variable bounce of the

The absence of rested pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who had dismissed Root thrice in this series, also gave the Englishman some breathing space. He was happy to play the spinners on the back-foot and slice the field.

His biggest ally in England's splendid recovery was wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes (47 off 126 balls). The visiting side went through the second session without losing a wicket for the first time in the

The duo took their time and frustrated India by adding 86 runs in the post-lunch session when the wicket flattened out. Post tea, Mohammed Siraj (2/60) gave the much-needed breakthrough dismissing Foakes three runs short of his half-century, caught by Ravindra Jadeja at short midwicket. The dismissal ended a sixth 113-run wicket

partnership. Siraj also dismissed Tom Hartley (13 off 26 balls) with a brilliant delivery that exhibited late movement off the pitch,

crashing into the off stump. Hartley had earlier narrowly avoided a catch by the second slip following an edge that didn't carry. Instead, it went past Yashasvi Jaiswal and reached the boundary rope. He departed after scoring 13, which included a powerful six

which included a powerful six off Ravichandran Ashwin over long-on. Ashwin got the scalp of Jonny Bairstow, who made a quick-fire 38 off 35 balls.

STUNNING DEBUT FOR

AKASH DEEP: Earlier, India's good run with debutants continued as pacer Akash Deep, the fourth newcomer for the hosts in this series, showed promise for this level.

Bowling one of the finest maiden spells in a Test debut — 7-0-24-3 — Akash Deep dismissed Ben Duckett (11), Ollie Pope (0) and Zak Crawley (42) in 10 deliveries while bowling from the while bowling from the dressing room end.

The pacer, who came through the ranks playing domestic cricket in Bengal, hit the deck hard in a sensational display during the first hour's play after Ben Stokes opted to be He, however, had to wait a bit for his maiden Test wicket.

In his second over of the day, he uprooted Crawley's offstump that cartwheeled a couple of metres but the celebration was short-lived as he was found guilty overstepping.

 $E_{\text{Crawley on Friday said that}}^{\text{ngland}}$ a century from Joe Root was long due and the veteran batter's unbeaten 106 on Day 1 of the fourth Test against India was a "phenomenal" knock

under the circumstances. After losing half of the side at lunch for 112, England rode on Root's determined 106 not out to end day one on 302 for 7 in the fourth Test against India

"He (Root) is unbelievable. We fully expected him to get a good score at some point in this series; he was due, he's the best player we've ever had and he played phenomenally today," said Crawley after the day's play.

"He deserves everything he gets, he works so hard at his game and he always comes good?

Root was in the middle of a lean patch and his highest score before Friday's knock in

this series was 37.
"He's probably the only bloke in our team who could have done that knock; he's that good, he's our best player and he's stepped up when we needed him to.

"We needed him to get a score and he got a score like he's done for so many years now, he's a phenomenal player," said Crawley who made run-a-ball 42 at the top of the order. Root first got a fine ally in

wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes who contributed a valuable 47 runs in a centuryplus stand.

It was tricky with the fields they were setting but we just always talk about the present, and the situation required a bit more caution with that kind of pitch and the variable bounce and that's what they delivered. "At other times, we counterpunched but they played it perfectly and read it well," he

Regarding the pitch, Crawley said, "It was nipping a lot and nipping quickly. It felt like you

had to throw a counter-punch you couldn't really sit there like those boys did later on in the day. "I expected variable bounce from the look of those cracks. It certainly did less and less as that opening spell went on. I got out still fairly early but it looked like it wasn't bouncing anywhere near as much or as quickly as earlier

"It got harder against the spin, it will continue to break up. It might be a new-ball wicket, hopefully it is when we bowl but the I think the spin's only going to get harder," he added.

on against seam.



India women eye victory against Hong Kong in Turkish Cup

PTI ■ ALANYA (TURKEY)

Having played determined football to get the better of Estonia in their opening match, India would be looking forward to another successful outing when they face Hong Kong in the Turkish Women's Cup here on Saturday.

The 4-3 victory against Estonia Indian women's national team against an European side, and it would have raised the morale of the Chaoba Devi-coached side in the four-team roundrobin tournament.

This will be India's fifth encounter against Hong Kong, ranked 79th in the FIFA rankings, and India would be buoyed by the fact that they have won all four previous games, netting 11 goals, while the opponents have managed just two. In their most recent clash, a friendly in 2019, India won by a solitary goal courtesy Pvari Xaxa, who also found the net in India's victory against Estonia in the ongoing tournament.

India currently lead the table

with three points and a goal difference of plus one, while Hong Kong are at the bottom having yet to open their account and a goal difference of -1 after losing 0-1 to Kosovo. Coach Chaoba Devi said Hong Kong had made a marked improvement since they last played in 2019 and her team would not underestimate the

'We played against Hong Kong a while ago, but they have shown significant improvement since then. We watched their recent match against Kosovo, where they put up a good fight despite losing by only one goal," said Chaoba Devi on the eve of the match. "So, we can't underestimate them. We need to focus on our finishing, as we could have scored more goals in our first match against Estonia if our finishing was better. Today, we will do some finishing drills in our training to prepare for the Hong Kong match and ensure the girls are ready to perform well. It's our time to win this tournament," added Chaoba

Australia beat New Zealand in 2nd T20, win series

AP ■ AUCKLAND (NEW ZEALAND)

Adam Zampa took four for 34 as Australia rolled New Zealand for 102 in 17 overs to win the second Twenty20 International by 72 runs Friday and take an insurmountable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The Australians will head towards the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States in June with more confidence after a comprehensive series win over New Zealand which is the world's second-ranked team.

Australia won the first match by six wickets with a four off the last ball and the third match bottween the teams is at

the third match between the teams is at Eden Park on Sunday.
"It was a great win for Australia," captain Mitch Marsh said. "Our backs

were against the wall and we thought we were probably 50 runs short.

"But, the way our bowlers came out and performed was outstanding. All of our teams over the last 12 months have been backed into a lot of corners and we've managed to find a way to get out



of them. Tonight was another example

Australia looked to have fallen short of a competitive total when it was bowled out for 174 in 19.5 overs after being 72 for one at the end of the six-over power

Opener Travis Head blasted 45 from 22 balls including five sixes to give Australia a fast start as it batted after losing the toss. But, Lockie Ferguson took four for 12 and Ben Sears two for 29 as the New Zealand seamers turned things around and provoked a sustained collapse of the Australian

innings. Australia lost six wickets for 59 runs in the last 9.5 overs.

New Zealand's batting was depleted by the loss of Rachin Ravindra just before the start of play with a slight knee injury and Devon Conway suffered a thumb injury keeping wicket and was taken to hospital for X-rays. He returned to the ground when it was found there was no

Conway still was unable to bat and his opening partner Finn Allen had to take the gloves for the first time in his international career.

Regardless of injuries, New Zealand collapsed in the face of outstanding Australian fast bowling on a fast and bouncy wicket.

Allen hit a six from the third ball of the first over and was out to the last ball, walking down to a good-length ball from Josh Hazlewood which he edged



PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam on Friday reached the semifinals of the Para Badminton Championship to assure themselves of at least a medal

Bhagat defeated France's Mathieu Thomas 21-15, 21-17 to set up a semifinal clash with compatriot Manoj Sarkar.

Kadam got the better of Nigeria's Chigozie Jeremiah Nnanna 21-13, 21-11. He will Setiawan in the semifinal.

In mixed doubles, the Indian pair of Bhagat and Manisha Ramdass defeated Japan's Taiyo Imai and Noriko Ito 21-11, 16-21, 21-18 to seal their place in the semifinal.

They will take on the Indonesian pair of Fredy Setiawan and Khalimatus Sadiyah in the last-four.

In the men's doubles quarterfinals, Bhagat and Kadam will take on the French

four clash against Daniel Bethell of England

Smriti in confident space with her cricket, leadership: RCB coach

mriti Mandhana finding a Seamless sync with her twin duty of being the captain and premier batter of the side is intertwined with the fortunes Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Women's

Premier League Season 2, reckoned their head coach Luke Williams. In the first WPL season,

Mandhana struggled under the weight of this two-fold role, and her batting suffered a considerable dip.
The elegant left-hander could

only manage 149 runs from eight matches, averaging a feeble 18 and at a strike-rate of

119. spent a fair bit of time with Smriti through my

She's in a really confident and happy space with her cricket and the leadership. Obviously there's responsibility with captaining and opening the

batting.
"But she's got plenty of support from the team with lots of experienced seniors to help her and trying to really separate the two roles," said Williams on Friday, a day ahead of RCB's opening WPL 2024 match against UP Warriorz.
The RCB had finished fourth

in the five-team league last season, and Williams said under the leadership of Mandhana the team looked much more settled this time. "I've been fortunate to have



involvement at the Southern Brave (the Hundred team) as an assistant coach and we've

around the learnings and experiences from last (WPL) season both as a team and individual. I

'think we've really taken on board some of those learnings (from previous year)," he said. Williams said Mandhana and other senior players in the side have been working with young cricketers in the RCB fold to create a confident atmosphere. This time Smriti and others have invested time with our players, and our senior players have been fantastic working with our young players and getting to know them and everyone is really starting to feel really comfortable and confident in the environment. We're looking forward to year," said Williams. Williams, an experienced T20

coach who has a Women's Big Bash title under his belt with Adelaide Strikers, said this time the RCB has good options in pace and spin departments. "That was a large part of our auction strategy and around retention. We were trying to get some real variety across all different aspects of the game but bowling certainly was a large part of that. So, we feel like we've got more variety with our pace and spin.

"Hopefully, we will ask some questions to the batters and we have given ourselves some great opportunities with our bowling this tournament," he



AC Milan, Roma, Marseille, Benfica advance to Europa League round

seven-time

C Milan advanced to the Around of 16 in the Europa League despite a 3-2 loss at Rennes in the second leg of their playoff. Milan, which won 3-0 at the

San Siro last week, eliminated its French opponent on a 5-3 aggregate score on Thursday. The Italian powerhouse, a

European

champion, has never won the second-tier Europa League or its predecessor, the UEFA Cup. Midfielder Benjamin Bourigeaud's hat trick put the hosts up three times with Milan quickly answering twice. Bourigeaud netted the opener in the 11th minute with a fierce right-footed shot from over 20 meters to beat goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Forward Luka Jovic canceled it out 10 minutes later with a header off a cross by captain Theo Hernández. Bourigeaud made it 2-1 early

spot but Rafael Leão equalised after four minutes on a fine solo effort. Bourigeaud sent Maignan the

in the second from the penalty

wrong way with another spot kick to make it 3-2. The eight runners-up in the Europa League group stage played the eight third-place teams from the Champions

League group stage in the

The eight winners will take on the Europa League's group winners, who qualified directly for the round of 16. They are Liverpool, West Ham and



Brighton from the Premier League, as well Leverkusen, Atalanta, Villarreal, Rangers and Slavia Prague.

The draw is scheduled for Friday Nicola Zalewski converted the decisive spot kick for Roma to

prevail 4-2 in a penalty shootout over Feyenoord to qualify for the next round. Early in the game, captain Lorenzo Pellegrini found the net from the edge of the area to tie it a 1-1 after Santiago Giménez's fifth-minute header

gave the Dutch team a 1-0 lead and silenced more than 67,000 fans at Stadio Olimpico. The teams also drew 1-1 in the opening leg in Rotterdam.

Marseille's new coach Jean-Louis Gasset made a victorious debut after he was appointed Tuesday to replace Gennaro Gattuso.

Geoffrey Kondogbia and substitute Ismaïla Sarr sealed a 3-1 win for Marseille over Shakhtar Donetsk with a goal each in the second half. Marseille advanced on a 5-3

aggregate score. Earlier, Marseille striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang netted his 31st career goal in the Europa League to break the competition record and level the tie after Georgiy Sudakov converted from the spot.

Diksha, Pranavi in top five after first round in Morocco

PTI ■ RABAT (MOROCCO)

Diksha Dagar and Pranavi Urs got off to a great start, carding a fine two-under 71 each to lie tied fifth after the opening round of Lalla Meryem Cup on the Ladies European Tour here. The two Indian golfers, who had Top-25 finishes in the

Magical Kenya Ladies Open, suffered a double bogey each, but did well to birdie three of the five Par-5s that this course has. Starting from the 10th, Diksha birdied the 12th

and the 16th, but also dropped shots on the 13th and 18th for an even par stretch.

On the second nine, the front side of Royal Golf Dar es Salam, Diksha was in full flow with birdies on the second, third, fifth and eight, before a double bogey set her back on the closing ninth.

Pranavi was off to a flier with four birdies in first six holes but a bogey on 17th and a double on par.



18th meant she was just 1 under after her first nine. She had one bogey on first and two birdies on the fifth and the eighth for a 71. Mexico's Maria Fassi showed off her explosive power and fine form during the

opening round, firing a

flawless eight-under 65 to

lead by three shots on the Par-73 golf course The 25-year-old, who represented Mexico at the Tokyo Ólympics, started on the 10th and picked up three birdies within the first five holes. At the turn, the LPGA player fired up her flatstick to roll in three consecutive birdies before rolling in

another two on holes five and eight. Home favourite Ines Laklalech got the crowds fired up with a phenomenal first round of fiveunder-par. Spain's Teresa Toscano, who earned her LET card through Q School in December, sits one shot behind Laklalech on four-under-

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