

CM participates in Republic Day celebrations in Ujjain

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, while extending congratulations and best wishes to the people of the state on the 75th Republic Day of the country, has said that after the remarkable Amrit Mahotsav of independent India, the Amrit Mahotsav of the Republic of India has arrived. Participating in the Republic Day parade for the first time, on the initiative of the state government, the district Police band is playing tunes on patriotic songs and inspiring people to live and die for the country. While paying tributes to martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the country, he expressed his gratitude to Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and all other makers of the Constitution. Chief Minister

Dr. Mohan Yadav was addressing a programme organized at Dussehra Ground in Ujjain on the 75th Republic Day. On this occasion, Madhya Pradesh anthem was presented by Kalapathak group. Yadav said that it is a wonderful coincidence that just before the national festival, a great event of national pride created a golden chapter in Ayodhya. The concept of Ram Rajya was revoked in India with the Prana Pratishtha of Lord Shri Ram's idol, initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. 5 lakh laddoos from Ujjain, the city of Lord Mahakaleshwar, the center of time was sent to Ayodhya. As a tribute to Lord Shri Ram, the state government has decided to make Chitrakoot a world-class religious and tourist destination by developing all the major places on Shri Ram Van Gaman

Path. Ramayana fair will also be organised here every year. Similarly, the state government is developing Shri Ram Raja Lok in Shri Ram Raja Complex of Orchha. Senior citizens of the state will travel to Ayodhya by air and rail for Rama darshan through the Mukhya Mantri Teerth-Darshan Yojana. The state government has decided to organize Vikramotsav-2024 and a huge trade fair in Ujjain from Mahashivratri to Gudi Padwa. The centuries-long wait of 140 crore Indians has ended and a new spiritual power has emerged thanks to the determination of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, Sakba Vikas has become the body of democracy and Ram Rajya the

soul. Vikasit Bharat-Sankalp Yatra has emerged as a symbol of Modi's guarantee to bring India into the category of developed countries by the year 2047. The vehicle's reached every village, city and town and has transformed the lives of underprivileged who have not been able to avail the benefits of government schemes. Today, on 26th January the yatra has ended and I am happy to say that more than 50 lakh people in Madhya Pradesh have been benefited during the Yatra. The participation of more than 2 crore citizens across the state with enthusiasm and joy in the yatra shows MP's inclination towards has Modi ji and Modi ji's dedication towards MP. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that on Prime Minister Mod's call, Makar Sankranti focusing

on women empowerment and youth was celebrated with joy and enthusiasm in Madhya Pradesh from 10 to 15 January. Over 1,576 crore Rs were transferred to the accounts of 1 crore 29 lakh Ladli Behnas of the state and social security pension amount of Rs 341 crore was transferred to the accounts of more than 56 lakh beneficiaries. Under the Maa Tujhe Pranam yojana, a group of 150 girls were sent on a tour to the Statue of Unity, Ekta Nagari, Kevadiya, Gujarat. Employment fairs focusing on women and youth were also organized. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the beginning of the year 2024 has brought huge achievements for Madhya Pradesh. Indore has yet again bagged the award for cleanest city of the country in Swachh Survekshan-2023.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inspects parade during Republic Day celebration in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Friday. Pioneer photo

BHEL Bhopal celebrated R-Day at Piplani parade ground

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

BHEL, Bhopal celebrated the 75th Republic Day at Piplani Parade Ground with traditional zeal & fervor. On this occasion SM Ramanathan, Executive Director hoisted the National Flag. He also received salutes from CISF contingents during the program. Sangeeta Ramanathan, President of BHEL Ladies Club was especially present at the function. BK Singh, General Manager (HR) and President, BHECNIS, Avinash Chandra, General Manager (WEX & MOD) and Vice President, BHECNIS, and Cultural Secretary, BHECNIS, Commandant. Harish Kumar Sahu, all the General Managers/DROs, all the officials of the trade unions/unions and all the Vice Presidents of the club were also present. Addressing the public on this



occasion, Ramanathan extended good wishes and congratulations to everyone on the 75th Republic Day and said that today India has succeeded in creating its image as the fastest growing country in the world economic system. Under the Self-reliant India campaign of the Honorable Prime Minister, BHEL along with various other industries of the country has also received a lot of encouragement and the year 2024 has

started with new expectations and hopes for us. Under the able and efficient leadership of the Chairman and Managing Director of BHEL, BHEL has achieved success in new business areas and further strengthened its reputation as an engineering company. He also shared information about the order book of Bhopal unit and important works done by various departments on this occasion and said that Bhopal unit will set a new milestone by achieving the set target. After this, award winning tableaux during Vishwakarma Jayanti were displayed by various departments on the occasion of and cultural performances were given by various cultural troupes. Parades and other presentations were given by children of various schools. The efficient strategy and fire-fighting performance of the CISF Bhopal Unit in combat-

ing terrorism was appreciated by all. On this occasion, Best Executive, Supervisor and Worker awards were given by the Human Resources Department. In the same sequence, the popular All India Poet's Conference by BHECNIS was also organized in Sanskritik Bhawan. BK Singh, General Manager (HR) and President, BHECNIS, Avinash Chandra, General Manager (WEX & MOD) while honoring all the poets said that this popular event has been restarted on the demand of the people. In the Kavi Sammelan, Ajatshatra, Udaipur, Sudeep Bhola, Delhi, Himanshu Bawandar, Mumbai, Ram Bhadwar, Etawah, Ms. Sumitra Saral, Pratapgarh, Rajasthan, Abhay Nirbhik, Kanpur and Kumar Chandan, BHEL, Bhopal mesmerized the people with their compositions.

MLA opens 14th edition of Sagar Reunion Games 2024

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The two days of the fourteenth edition of Sagar Reunion Games 2024 Khel Mahakumbh began today at SISTec Ratibad Campus to promote fitness and health amongst Sagarites. The games are organised every year to promote sports and good health amongst Sagarites. This year Khel Mahakumbh has accorded a new dimension with Sports Authority of India (SAI) joining it to celebrate Fit India Week. Rameshwar Sharma MLA Huzur Vidhansabha and Former Protom Speaker Madhya Pradesh Assemble inaugurated the 14th edition of Sagar Reunion Games 2023 in an exciting opening ceremony by releasing balloons into the sky at SISTec Ratibad Campus. On the occasion distinguished

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guests Sanjay Bharadwaj Cricket Coach NIS BCCI Level 3, Vishnu Sudhakaran Regional Director Sports Authority of India Bhopal, Dr Abhishek Singh Chouhan Director Sports Authority of India Bhopal, Yashpal Solanki Arjuna Awardee & High-Performance Director Judo Sports Authority of India, Yash Ganghes International Judo Player and Jatin Saxena International Cricketer along with Siddharth Agrawal

Managing Director Sagar Group and Dr Jyoti Deshmukh Group Director SISTec were present during the inaugural ceremony. SAI India pledged everyone with an oath-taking ceremony to celebrated the Fit India Week Followed by Reunion Games Oath in its true spirit of sportsmanship. Speaking on the occasion, Rameshwar Sharma said, "I am elated to be part of the Sagar Reunion Games. After Pado India, Bado India the mantra for all of us is Khelo India, Bado India and Jeeto India." Eleven teams of Sagar Group ventures with over 800+ participants will be participating in the Reunion Games 2024 Khel Mahakumbh and will lock horns against each other. The participating teams of Sagar Reunion Games 2024 are CO Trailblazers, SPS Saket Saviours, SNPL Rice Steamers,

SMPL Super Spinners, SPS GN Gladiators, SPS RN Spartans, SPS Katara Blasters, SPS Dynamic Dashers, SISTec Super Kings, SPS Ratibad Royals and SMH Mustang. The two-day reunion will join the participants with a pledge for fitness followed by heats of matches and tournaments in exciting games of Cricket, Badminton, Table Tennis, and Tug of War along with sessions of Yoga & Meditation, Zumba, Rope Skipping etc. All teams will be competing with visitors as guests who will enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the wider community and connect to witness the inspiring collaboration between a leading corporation and a prestigious sporting institution. The winners will be awarded trophies in a felicitation ceremony at the close of games on Sunday.



Police contingents march past during Republic Day celebration at Lal parade ground in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

CME on Breast Oncoplastic & Reconstructive surgeries

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Department of General Surgery in collaboration with Department of Anatomy and Plastic Surgery, AIIMS Bhopal hospital has organized CME and Workshop under the aegis of Asian society of Mastology, (ASOMA), American college of Surgeons and ICMR on 27th Jan 2024. Surgical faculty of national repute came from AIIMS New Delhi, KGMU Lucknow, Indore, Jabalpur along with Surgeons of Bhopal. More than 150 surgeons across the country attended this workshop which includes General Surgeon, Oncosurgeon, plastic Surgeons, radiation oncologist and surgical trainee. In the inaugural speech, Executive Director Prof.(Dr.)Ajai Singh encouraged this CME with Cadaveric workshop organized in collaboration of Department of General Surgery, Anatomy and



Plastic Surgery, which will definitely benefit the postgraduate and practicing surgeons. He also said that AIIMS Bhopal is planning to establish a cadaveric lab in the department of Anatomy, very shortly for more such academic activity for surgeons. President of AIIMS Bhopal Dr. Sunil Malik sir congratulated the organizing committee for organizing such multidisciplinary workshop for cancer of breast and requested more such programmes for undergraduate and postgradu-

ate students. Guest of Honor of Workshop, Prof.(Dr.) Chintamani Sir from, New Delhi gave an detailed overview of the oncoplastic Surgical techniques for Breast cancer by video presentation. Dr. Vidya R from NHS Birmingham UK has moderated the Panel Discussion in which General Surgeon, Onco-surgeon, plasticSurgeon , radiologist and radiation oncologist were discussed the management of Breast cancer. Dr. Swagata Brahmachari and Dr. Shyam Lal organized this event. On January 28, 2024 there will be hands on cadaveric workshop in which there will be 40 participants who will learn the oncoplastic technique on cadaver, which will be first of its kind in Madhya Pradesh.

Army War College celebrates R-Day

Mhow: 75th Republic Day was celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm at Army War College, Mhow. A number of events were organized which were attended enthusiastically by the posted staff, their families and officers attending courses, including officers from Friendly Foreign Countries. The highpoints of the event were the bicycle and bike rallies organised in the vicinity of Mhow, which were flagged off by Lt Gen D P Pandey Commandant Army War College & Mrs. Usha Pandey, Regional President AWWA. A Kite flying event was also organised in the college premises in which colourful kites soared in the skies. Patriotic songs were played in the background of the fluttering tri colour providing the occasion a patriotic fervor and festivities in the campus.

15-year-old girl mowed down by speeding truck in Kotwali area

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A class 10 girl student was mowed down by a speeding truck in Bhopal at around 9 am on Saturday morning. The incident took place near Kotwali police station. After the accident, a 15-year-old student was taken to Hamidia Hospital in critical condition, where she died. Police said that the father of the deceased girl was going to drop the student and her friend to school on a bike. The accident occurred after a passenger of a car parked on the road going from Budhwara to Moti Masjid opened the gate. Due to which the bike hit the gate and all three fell on the road. Before they could regain control, the student identified as Mabilia was crushed by a speeding truck coming from Moti Masjid side. Father Sharif suffered serious injuries on his head, shoulder and hand in the accident. While the student's friend went into a coma. The student's father operates a flour mill, after the incident the car owner

Police said that the father of the deceased girl was going to drop the student and her friend to school on a bike

fled from the spot leaving the car which was seized by police in the investigation. Talaiya police station in-charge CS Rathore said that the girl was seriously injured in the incident. People nearby immediately took him to Hamidia Hospital. Where he died. CCTV footage is being scrutinized. People reached the spot after the incident and locals expressed anger about the car owner and wanted to damage the car but it was saved by the police. The locals protested and told the police about setting the car on fire. They told TI that if they wanted, we could have set the car on fire, but police should take legal action. The girl has died, while the father is critical.

Sizzle to Indore's culinary scene

Indore: Gola Sizzlers is bringing its sizzling magic to the vibrant streets of Indore, known as Mini Mumbai, with the recent opening of its newest outlet at Phoenix Citadel, Village Khajrana. The aroma of flavorful sizzlers has already started to tantalize taste buds, creating a buzz in Indore's diverse culinary landscape.Choosing Indore as the next destination was a thoughtful move, considering the city's bustling energy and cultural richness. Indore's essence aligns seamlessly with Gola Sizzlers' commitment to delivering a unique and delightful dining experience. The doors are open, and the sizzle has begun, marking the brand's venture into this culinary hub. Gola Sizzlers stands out for more than just its sizzling dishes; it's an immersive culinary adventure that goes beyond the ordinary. With a menu featuring over 30 award-winning sizzlers, the brand caters to the diverse palate of Indore residents. The commitment to delivering an exceptional dining experience positions Gola Sizzlers as a preferred choice in the city. Beyond serving delectable dishes, Gola Sizzlers is weaving itself into the fabric of Indore's community.

8th International Buddhist Festival 2024 today at Chunabhatti

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Buddhahoomi 'Dhammaduta Sangha' is organizing the 8th International Buddhist Festival-2024 at Buddhahoomi Mahavihara Monastery Chunabhatti Kolar on Sunday. It will include national and international level Buddhist religious leaders from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos, Bhutan, Tibet, Bangladesh, Vietnam, America and various states of India. Senior religious leader from Thailand and head of Wat Thai Siri Rajgir Foundation, Phra Vidhes Vachirameshi Vichayan Mahasthavir arrived in Bhopal on Saturday. Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan welcomed him at the airport. The international guests at the festival included Bhadant Girimanda Mahathero Chief Monk of Orient Studies Society of Sri Lanka, Lama Pema Wangpael Chief Buddhist Monastery Bhutan, Phra Achan Jexana Mahathero Chief Monk of Vat Laos International Buddhist

Monastery Laos, Phra Dhamma Bodhivong Mahathero Chief of Royal Dhai Monastery Laos, Dhui Thong Vietnam and Along with this, Dr. Parvinder Singh, Ambassador-at-Large from America, World Peace Institute, United States of America, Vasantha Gonsal, retired Lieutenant Commander from Korala, Sri Lanka and Dhai Buddhist Upasika are participating. The program was inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale, Madhya Pradesh BJP President BD Sharma, Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla, Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Deora, Minister Vishwas Sarang, Krishna Gaur, former Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation President Tapan Bhowmik, MLA Rameshwar Sharma, Bhagwandas. Sabnani, former MLA PC Sharma, Rahul Kothari, Sunil Pandey, Kishan Suryavanshi and other guests including Dr. Udayan Vajpayee will be among the speakers.



On the 75th Republic Day, Honorable Speaker of Madhya Pradesh Assembly Shri Narendra Singh Tomar took the salute of the parade by saluting the flag in Morena. Pioneer photo

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav greets Padmashri awardees

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has greeted the Padam awardees from Madhya Pradesh for 2024. He said that Bhagwati Lal Rajpurohit, Om Prakash Sharma, Satyendra Singh Lohia and Kaluram Bannia have brought laurels to Madhya Pradesh with their

profound dedication in their respective fields. People of Madhya Pradesh are proud of their achievements. Bhagwati Lal Rajpurohit has authored books on Malvi culture and literature, especially plays, Om Prakash Sharma is a brilliant exponent of traditional Maach style theatre from Malwa, Kaluram Bannia

have devoted his life to folk style of singing verses of saint poet Kabir. Differently abled Satyendra Singh Lohia is a talented swimmer and has inspired differently able persons to pursue sports. Om Prakash Sharma and Bhagwati Lal Rajpurohit are from Ujjain, Kaluram Bannia belongs to Dewas and Satyendra Lohia belongs to Bhind district.

Focus on setting up industrial units in non-industrial areas

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that focus should be on setting up industrial units as per local needs in the areas of the state where there are relatively lesser number of industries. Industrialists and investors should be encouraged by organizing industry promotion seminars at the district level. Discussion was held on the activities of Narmada Valley Development Department, Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion, Mineral Resources, Public Relations, Commercial and Excise Department at Samatva Bhawan located at CM House today, under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Dr. Yadav. The departments gave their presentations. Chief Secretary

Veera Rana along with Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries and Secretaries of the concerned departments were present in the meetings. Yadav, while reviewing the Narmada Valley Development Department, directed to study the best performing states, especially Gujarat, in terms of water usage. He discussed about the current irrigation percentage, various methods of irrigation, targets set for increasing the irrigation percentage in the coming years, making water available for irrigation facilities to the farmers, hydro power generation through various dams and the available water capacity of reservoirs and dams and its use. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav directed to set a timetable for providing water

for irrigation to facilitate farmers. He also told to ensure that there is necessary water flow in the river at the big ghats of the Narmada River and the places of major religious importance located on the banks of the Narmada River. Practical solutions should also be found to the difficulties arising in relation to the availability and use of water for both power generation and irrigation purposes. It was informed in the meeting that the target is to expand irrigation area to seven lakh hectares in the next two years. Narmada Valley Development Department will expand irrigation area to 19 lakh 55 thousand hectares in five years. Additional Chief Secretary NVDA Dr. Rajesh Rajoura gave a presentation of NVDA and gave information

on the implementation of the points of Sankalp-2023. Reviewing the activities of the Public Relations Department, Chief Minister Dr. Yadav gave instructions to outline theme-centric and event-based activities along with the publicity work being done through print, electronic and social media. Giving information about the working of the department, Commissioner Public Relations Sandeep Yadav apprised with the publications, journalist welfare, departmental training and media training activities. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also gave instructions to further strengthen the system of departmental publications and also for e-publication. He asked for starting incentive and reward scheme in the field

of film production and adopting innovations by sending study teams to the states. While reviewing the Industrial Policy and Investment Promotion Department, Chief Minister Yadav said that concrete initiatives should be taken to establish industries in those places in the state where industries are less. He directed to organize industry promotion seminars and programmes in tribal dominated areas like Dhar, Jhabua and urban areas like Sagar, Jabalpur. Instructions were given to discuss the possibilities of starting agriculture, animal husbandry, mineral based industrial units and to work at a fast pace for their establishment and also to encourage bamboo production based units and timber business.



Book lovers go through a collection of books during a book fair organised by Book Tale at Manas Bhawan in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

MP is better than the national average in Higher Education

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that Madhya Pradesh has not only been a leader in successfully implementing the new education policy, but has also achieved success at the enrollment level. There has been a significant increase in the gross registration rate. In the year 2021-22, the national average was 28.4 percent whereas Madhya Pradesh has successfully achieved a 28.9 percent increase in student enrollment. In Madhya Pradesh, maximum enrollments have been done at graduation level. Madhya Pradesh has maintained the level of quality education making steady progress in this direction.

Despite the challenges of Covid, surpassing the national average is a significant achievement. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav has congratulated the people of the state for this achievement. Higher Education Minister Inder Singh Parmar has also congratulated the departmental team for this achievement. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of youth aged 18 to 23 years in MP is 28.9. This is higher than the national average of 28.4. This became possible due to the efficiency of institutions related to higher education as well as technical education, law, veterinary education and agricultural education.

Journalist Mushahid passes away

Bhopal: Mushahid Saeed Khan, senior journalist of Urdu daily Nadeem, passed away on Saturday afternoon. He was ill for some time. He was undergoing treatment at Chirayu Hospital. Mushahid Saeed Khan has made a huge contribution to Urdu journalism. His absence will always be felt in the journalist fraternity in the State capital. His funeral procession will leave from Toll Wali Masjid Alok Press Budhwara. He will be laid to rest in the cantonment graveyard after Isha prayers. His funeral prayers will be held in the shed of the cantonment graveyard.

730 schools to be as PM schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

To improve the quality of school education in the state, 730 schools are being developed as PM Shri schools. Of these, 626 government schools are being developed in 313 development blocks and 104 in urban bodies. These schools are being run by the School Education Department of the state government. An action plan of Rs 219 crore has been approved by the central government for the scheme of 416 schools selected in the first phase in the year 2023-24. These selected schools are being developed on the lines of green schools. Labs, library, voca-

tional education, ICT Lab and Atal Ticking Lab are also being built in these schools. Establishment of I.C.T. labs is being given priority in government schools run by the School Education Department. Digital education has been considered important in the new education policy. Computer labs have been established in 2350 government schools of the state. Ten computers, smart TV and other necessary equipments are being provided in the lab. A pilot project has been started in 5 CM Rise schools of Bhopal district to teach robotics and coding techniques. Robotic labs are being established in 104 government schools of the state.



Artists from Brazil perform during the five-day Lokrang cultural festival at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal Saturday. The festival running from January 26 to 30, is a part of the 75th Republic Day celebrations. Pioneer photo

Five-day 39th Lokrang programme opens

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel has said that Lokrang is a commendable effort to introduce youth and children to our cultural heritage by highlighting our folk values and artistic wealth. He expressed hope that Lokrang will inspire and encourage everyone to preserve India's glorious past and rich cultural traditions, our rich cultural heritage, with combined efforts, faith and cooperation. Patel said that the happy, prosperous and free life that we all are leading in independent India is an invaluable legacy of the immortal sacrifice of our ancestors. Republic Day celebration is an opportunity to commit ourselves to building a developed India by taking inspiration from the indomitable bravery, courage, penance and sacrifice of freedom fighters, was addressing the art lovers present at the five-

day 39th Lokrang fest in the Rabindra Bhawan complex. The Governor said that cultural programmes strengthen the emotional unity of our cultural diversities by preserving moral values and beliefs through various forms of art. Unity in diversity is the culture of our country, in which lies a huge treasure of our folk culture, beliefs, moral values and philosophy of life. He said that our cultural diversity is truly the heritage of our country, it is the duty of all of us to ensure its conservation and development. Governor Patel lauded the organizers for presenting the life of great saint Shiromani Ravidas ji, his sayings in the form of drama, exhibition of the paintings of Padmashree Jodhaiya Bai, famous painter of traditional Baiga community, 'Chitra Katha', providing a platform to showcase the workmanship of traditional Gond and Bhil community painters and organizing workshop and

platform for exhibition and sale of products for about 300 traditional artisans from the state and other states. He described the presentation of dance, singing and musical art forms as well as the Swad Mela organized to introduce the cuisine of tribal folk areas as 'commendable'. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is the specialty of our culture. Our culture sees the entire world as one family. Unity in diversity is the specialty of India. In our country every festival is celebrated with joy and fervour. Lokrang is a symbol of our joy. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that India is making record achievements under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Persistent efforts are being made to preserve and promote various arts in the country. People of different arts and cultures live in our country, who connect with each other through their distinctive styles.

Rains in the State in last week of Jan

Bhopal: Following the trend of previous years rainfall would be witnessed in Madhya Pradesh in the last week of January. This time the weather pattern will be similar to the past few years. However, instead of heavy rain, there will be drizzle only, that too in the districts of Jabalpur division. Drizzle is expected on January 28-29. Senior meteorologist said that there are chances of drizzle in Dindori, Balaghat, Mandla and Seoni of Jabalpur division due to western disturbance. There is no possibility of rain in Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior or Ujjain. The jet stream has now shifted towards the north. Because of this strong winds are coming. Western disturbance activ-

ity will be seen in the state after the next 2 days. However, this will also increase the day and night temperature by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius, which means there may be some relief from the harsh cold. On the other hand, Pachmarhi and Datia had the coldest night in the state on Friday. The minimum temperature recorded at both the places was 5 degree celsius. The minimum temperature was less than 10 degree celsius in more than 20 cities. The highest of 12 degree celsius was recorded in Narsinghpur. The night temperature in big cities was recorded in Bhopal at 10.4 (temperature in degrees Celsius), Indore 11.4, Gwalior 5.9, Jabalpur 9.6, Ujjain 9.5.

R-Day celebrated in Vidut Mandal school

Jabalpur: The 75th Republic Day was celebrated with full dignity and enthusiasm at MP Vidut Mandal Balak Mandir Higher Secondary School Rampur Jabalpur operated by M. P. Vidut Mahila Mandal. The national flag was hoisted by school president Tiwari. In her address, Anjana Tiwari said that we should always respect our Constitution and fulfill our duties towards the country with full honesty. School Principal Shashi Kiran Srivastava said in her address that we should be conscious of our duties and try to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. On this occasion, various activities like speeches, poetry etc. were also organized for the students.

The function organized at Balak Mandir was conducted by teacher Manisha Pawar and the vote of thanks was given by Principal Shashi Kiran Srivastava. Apart from President Anjana Tiwari, Mahila Mandal Secretary Neelima Bhikonde, School Manager Rashmi Srivastava, Treasurer Sujata Singh, Secretary Pratibha Pani, Mahila Mandal Secretary Kavita Nigam and other teachers and students of the school were present in the program. After giving a presentation in the school, attractive presentations of march past, band and dance were given by the students of Balak Mandir in the main function of MP power companies organized at Pandulal Ground.



An artist paints a boundary wall of the office of MP Pilgrimage and Mela Authority, at 45 Bungalow in Bhopal on Saturday. Pioneer photo

BJP wins elections not only on poitics: VD Sharma

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State President and MP Vishnudutt Sharma said that the BJP has registered a landslide victory on all the eight seats of Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency in the assembly elections. Elections are won not only on politics but on the basis of country's culture, self-respect and poor welfare schemes, he added. In the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, BJP will make a record of winning Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency by the highest number of votes in the country. Madhya Pradesh organization of BJP is the best organization among all the states of the country, behind this is the hard work of our godlike workers. Sharma was addressing the meeting of party officials and workers of Khajuraho Lok Sabha constituency at Evershine Garden in Panna district on Saturday. Sharma, while addressing the meeting at Evershine Garden in

Panna, said that Digvijay Singh is the Jaichand of the country. In an attempt to be close to Sonia Gandhi, Digvijay Singh is attacking Indian culture and standing with anti-national forces. Sharma further said that if the Madhya Pradesh organization of the party does any good work, it gets praise. The state organization is said to be the best organization in the country. Every booth of Khajuraho Lok Sabha will be Congress free and every booth will be made a Modi booth. Preparations for Lok Sabha elections have started. We have to work on the country, structure from the district to the power center. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi the 'Mera Booth Sabse Strongest' campaign was started by Modi ji. Due to this campaign, Bharatiya Janata Party has received more than 48 percent votes in the assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh. Now we have to increase votes by 10 percent more. The party has created history by winning the

Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections. Similarly, now we have to create a history of victory in the Lok Sabha elections also. The State President said that it was only due to the efficient leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Lord Ramlala could be consecrated in Ayodhya. At the time of Ramlala's consecration, the governments of countries like America and Britain had declared a holiday. My minority brothers and sisters of Madhya Pradesh are also saying that they got benefits only in the BJP government, Congress only used the minorities. The Prime Minister used to say that the stigma of slavery will not remain in the country. Removing Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a big decision of BJP. Congress leaders used to say that removal of Section 370 would lead to riots, but when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government removed Section 370, nothing

happened in Jammu and Kashmir. Now even people like Feroze Abdullah are chanting Ram-Ram. Sharma said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to take India to ultimate glory by 2047. At present a big change is taking place in the politics of the country. Party leaders and workers will work on the lost booths and ensure BJP's victory at all the booths. The Prime Minister says that we have been able to win only on the basis of the strength and ideas of the organization. The trumpet of Lok Sabha elections has been announced. All the party officials and workers will join the election campaign here with a pledge to win the booth. On this occasion, State Government Minister Dilip Ahiwar, State Vice President of the party and in-charge of Sagar division Chaudhary Mukesh Singh Chaturvedi, former minister and MLA Brijendra Pratap Singh, Sanjay Pathak, Rajnagar MLA Arvind Pateria and others were present.

Swoosh Germs Away Kit launched

New Delhi: The first-of-its-kind innovative Swoosh Germs Away! kit by Harpic India, designed in collaboration with News18 Network and Sesame Workshop India Trust has made its debut at the World Economic Forum 2024 in Davos. The kit, unveiled in September 2023 in India by the Honorable President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu, is part of Mission Swachhta aur Paani, a pan-India campaign that champions inclusive sanitation practices and advocates for appropriate toilet behavior throughout the nation. Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs and Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, at Davos lauded the unique kit for its innovation and transformative power. He said, "I am very happy to witness projects centered around children, focusing on their well-being, education about the importance of sanitation, and the rational use of water.



बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा
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Whereas, the Undersigned being the Authorised officers of the Bank of Baroda Under the securitisation and reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of security interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notice upon the Borrower calling to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, Notice is here by given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charges of Bank of Baroda For an amount as shown below and Interest thereon.

Name & Address of Borrower	Outstanding Amount	Description of the Property
Borrower : Mr. Arun Pathak S/o Mr. Bhagwati Pathak and Mrs. Neelu Pathak W/o Mr. Arun Pathak Guarantor - Guarantors- Mr. Dinesh Kumar Pathak S/o Bhagwati Prasad Pathak	Rs. 20,58,240.24 + Interest & other expenses Demand Notice Date : 01-09-2023 Possession Date : 25.01.2024 (Symbolic)	Property in the name of Arun Pathak S/O Bhagwati Prasad Pathak. - Land and Building situated at Flat No. 302, Gajanan Apartment, Ward No 29, Govindpuri, Gwalior. Area 86.71 Sqr Mtr (933 Sqr Feet) in the name of Bounded By- East-Property Other, West-Lobby then Flat No 301, North-Property Other, South-Road Colony

Place: Gwalior, Date: 27/01/2024 Authorised officer, Bank of Baroda



ROHA HOUSING FINANCE

GROW WITH YOUR OWN HOME

POSSESSION NOTICE (Under Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)
Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of Roha Housing Finance Private Limited (hereinafter referred to as "RHFL"), Having its registered office at JJT House, A 44/45, Road No.2, MIDC, Andheri East, Mumbai - 400 093 under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice dated mentioned below under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the borrowers (names and addresses mentioned below) to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower mentioned herein below having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein below and to the public in general that undersigned has taken **Physical Possession** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with the Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers mentioned here in above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the Charge of Roha Housing Finance Private Limited for an amount as mentioned herein under and interest thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower (s)/Loan A/c No. / Branch	Schedule of the Properties	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
LAN:HLBHP.LSCON000005001124/ Branch: Bhopal Cluster 1. Sachin Patwa, 2. Pramila Sachin Patwa Add.1: Ward No. 11 Berasia, Bhopal Madhya Pradesh 463106, Add.2: Berasia Hat Bazar Berasia, Bhopal M.P.463106	All that part and parcel of the property bearing property address : A Residential House At Nagar Palika Ward No. - 11 Ibrahimpura Tehsil - Berasia, Bhopal Madhya Pradesh 463106. Bounded as Follows: East-Gali/Road, West - Gali/Road, North-House of Malka bee, South-House of Dhurvery ji	21/07/2021 & ₹ 6,94,678/-	23.01.2024

Place : **Madhya Pradesh**
Date : **26.01.2024** Sd/- Authorised Officer
Roha Housing Finance Private Limited

Hand over Gyanvapi structure to Hindus: VHP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Saturday claimed the ASI survey report has “reconfirmed” that the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi was constructed after demolishing a “magnificent temple” at the site and demanded that the structure be declared “a Hindu temple and handed over to the community. It also demanded that Hindus be permitted to offer “sewa puja” to the ‘Shivlinga’ found in the “so-called Wazukhana area” at the disputed site. “The evidence collected and the conclusions provided by the ASI do prove that the religious character of this place of worship existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and as at present is of a Hindu Temple,” VHP working president Alok



Kumar said in a statement. “Thus, even as per Section 4 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, the structure should be declared as a Hindu temple,” he also demanded. The VHP also called upon the Intezamia Committee that manages the mosque to agree to “respectfully shift” the Gyanvapi mosque to another appropriate place and to hand over the original site of Kashi Vishvanatha to the Hindu society. “The VHP believes that this righteous action shall be an

important step towards creating amicable relations between the two prominent communities of Bharat,” Kumar said. The VHP’s demands came after the ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex was made public two days ago, with the lawyer representing the Hindu litigants claiming that the mosque was built after demolishing a pre-existing temple. “Hand over the Gyanvapi structure to Hindus,” Kumar said.

He claimed the evidence collected by ASI “reconfirms that the mosque had been constructed after demolishing a magnificent temple”. A part of the temple structure, particularly the western wall, is the remaining part of the Hindu temple, he further claimed. The ASI report also proves that parts of the pre-existing temple including pillars and pilasters were reused with modifications to extend the span of the mosque and in the construction of the ‘sahan’, he added. “The Shivalinga in what was called the ‘wazukhana’ leaves no doubt that the structure does not have the character of a mosque. The discovery of the names including the Janardana, Rudra and Umeswara in the inscriptions found in the structure are the tell-tale evidence of this being a temple,” Kumar claimed.

Happy that work is underway on One Nation, One Legislative platform: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said he was happy that Parliament and State Legislatures were working towards realisation of the goal of ‘one nation, one legislative platform’. Addressing the 84th All India Presiding Officers’ Conference (AIPOC) virtually, the PM also rued that some political parties defend their members even if they violate the rules of the House, and warned that it did not augur well for Parliament and state legislatures. “In 2021, during discussions with you, I spoke about ‘one nation, one legislative platform.’ I am happy that our Parliament and state legislatures are now working towards this goal through E-Vidhan and Digital Sansad platforms,” the prime minister said. Led by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla a total of 26 Presiding Officers

participated in the inaugural session. Notably, the ‘one nation, one legislative platform’ project aims at making available the proceedings of all legislatures on a single digital platform. The image of a legislature depends on the conduct of its members, the prime minister stressed. “There was a time when, if any member in the House broke the rules and action was taken against that member, senior members of the House would talk to him so that in future he did not repeat the mistake and break the rules of the House. Inaugurating the Conference

at Mumbai, Birla expressed concern over incidents of indiscipline, disruption of proceedings and unparliamentary conduct in the legislatures affecting their credibility. Birla noted that there is enough space to give voice to dissent in the democratic system, therefore, disruption should not be used as a tool of protest and dissent. Stressing on innovation, Birla suggested that new and innovative methods of working should be promoted in legislatures so that the democratic institutions can better perform their responsibility of monitoring

the executive and people’s faith in these institutions will enhance. Referring to the role of parliamentary committees in democracy, Birla noted that parliamentary committees play a vital role in shaping laws and policies in the present perspective. Parliamentary Committees are actually ‘mini Parliaments’ and they review these laws, policies and programs on behalf of the Parliament and make them more useful to the public, he added. Maharashtra Chief Minister, Eknath Shinde; Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Harivansh; Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Rahul Narwekar, Deputy Chairperson, Maharashtra Legislative Council, Dr. Neelam Gorhe and Deputy Speaker, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Narahari Sitaram Jirwal graced the Inaugural Session and addressed the distinguished gathering.

Collect data for Digi Yatra with fliers consent: Scindia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said Digi Yatra is purely voluntary for air passengers and personnel at airports have been directed to collect data for the application only with the consent of passengers. There have been complaints that biometric data for Digi Yatra were being gathered from passengers without their consent and the issue was flagged to the minister by Rajya Sabha member Saket Gokhale. Digi Yatra, which provides for contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports based on Facial Recognition Technology, is available at a minimum 13 airports for domestic passengers. In response to the member, Scindia has said that the issue was examined and “airport operators have been advised to sensitise Digi buddies on consent taking process and keeping use of Digi Yatra completely voluntary”. To support passengers with the use of Digi Yatra, services of individuals called Digi buddies have been made



available at the airports. The minister, in a letter dated January 24, told Gokhale that Digi Yatra is a voluntary process for seamless and hassle free air travel which is purely voluntary. “Consent of passenger is prerequisite for taking face biometric on kiosk based registration. Further, the data is automatically purged from the airport system after 24 hours of departure of the flight,” Scindia said in the letter, a copy of which has been shared by Gokhale on social media platform X. The data shared by a passenger for Digi Yatra is stored in an encrypted format. For availing the service, a passenger has to register his or her details on

DigiYatra app using Aadhaar-based validation and a self image capture. In the next step, the boarding pass has to be scanned and the credentials are shared with the airport. At the airport e-gate, the passenger has to first scan the bar-coded boarding pass and the facial recognition system installed at the e-gate will validate the passenger’s identity and travel document. Once this process is done, the passenger can enter the airport through the e-gate. The passenger will have to follow the normal procedure to clear the security and board the aircraft. Digi Yatra Foundation, a not-for-profit company, is the nodal body for Digi Yatra.

Modi to inaugurate Diamond Jubilee celebrations of SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court on Sunday. Unveiling the 75th year of the Supreme Court, Prime Minister Modi will launch citizen-centric information and technology initiatives that include Digital Supreme Court Reports (Digi-SCR), Digital Courts 2.0 and a new website of the apex court, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). He will also address the gathering on the occasion. The Supreme Court held its inaugural sitting on January 28, 1950. Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court of India on January 28 at 12 noon at the Supreme Court auditorium, the statement said. The Digital Supreme Court Reports (SCR) will make Supreme Court judgments available to citizens free of cost and in the electronic format, it said. The key



features of Digi-SCR are that all 519 volumes of Supreme Court reports since 1950, covering 36,308 cases, will be available in the digital format, bookmarked, user-friendly and with open access, the statement said. The Digital Courts 2.0 application is a recent initiative under the e-Courts project to make court records available to judges of district courts in the electronic form. This is coupled with the use of artificial intelligence for transcribing speech to text on a real-time basis. Prime Minister Modi will also launch the new website of the Supreme Court which will be in a bilingual format in English and Hindi, and has been redesigned with a user-friendly interface, according to the statement. This would be followed by the sitting of a Ceremonial Bench of the SC in the CJI Court at 3:30 pm.

Congress launches donate for Nyay crowdfunding campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday launched a ‘Donate for Nyay’ crowdfunding campaign for the ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra under which people will get a Rahul Gandhi-signed letter or merchandise in return for their donation. Launching the campaign at the AICC headquarters here along with Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said the idea behind this initiative and the earlier wider crowdfunding campaign of the party, ‘Donate for Desh’, was not to get money but to motivate workers. Under the party’s ‘Donate for Nyay’ campaign, any person who donates Rs 670 or more will get a T-shirt signed by Rahul Gandhi as a gift, Maken said. “Those who donate Rs 67,000 or more will get a ‘Nyay Kit’ which will contain a T-shirt, bag, band, badge and sticker,” he said. “For anything that one donates, he or she will get a letter signed by Rahul ji and a certificate of donation,” said Maken, flanked by Ramesh, joint treasurer Vijay Inder



Singla and Congress minority cell head Imran Pratapgarhi. He said that under the party’s ‘Donate for Desh’ crowdfunding campaign launched on December 18 last year, Rs 20 crore has been collected. Within two hours of launching the ‘Donate for Nyay’ campaign, Rs 2 crore had been collected, the Congress treasurer said. Asked about funds collected through the crowdfunding campaign being lower than expectations, Maken said, “We can’t contest elections by raising money through our workers. If someone thinks we will get all our funding for the elections through this crowdfunding, he is wrong and this is something we did not intend.” It is much more than the

crowdfunding by any other political party as both the AAP and the BJP had started it but they could not reach even Rs 1 crore. “You cannot undermine the efforts of 3 lakh Congress people who have given money. The idea is not to get money, the idea is to motivate the workers. Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will be going through one part of the country. The rest of the party workers in other parts will be able to participate by giving Rs 67,” he said. So, it is a political platform and not a money generation programme, Maken stressed. The Rahul Gandhi-led yatra is on a two-day break from January 26 to 27 and will restart from West Bengal’s Jalpaiguri on Sunday.

Ensure smooth Yatra passage through Bengal, Kharge writes to Mamata

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apprehending trouble by Amiscreants during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in West Bengal, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seeking appropriate directions to ensure its smooth passage through the State and safety of the yatrins, including Rahul Gandhi. In his letter, Kharge expressed fear that some miscreants may try to show the state administration in bad light or disrupt the yatra, as had happened in some neighbouring states. He said the Congress has embarked on the “Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra” from Manipur to Maharashtra to spread the message of justice to heal and unite the nation. Kharge said Rahul Gandhi, who is leading this yatra had earlier walked from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, has always maintained that the yatras serves a larger purpose of uniting people who stand divided today by the BJP in the name of religion, caste and creed and to ensure that the weakest are assured of justice social, economic and political. “That is why the yatrins have remained apolitical and attracted crores of people across India cutting across all sections of the society who identify with a strong, progressive and secular ‘INDIA for All’” he said. The Congress president said



the Bharat Jodo Yatra went across the country without any untoward incident and culminated in a rally in Kashmir. “However, some miscreants targeted the current Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in your neighbouring states. This has been done on political instigation but our cadre faced it bravely. “Now the yatra is passing through Bengal over the next few days. I have been made aware that again some miscreants may foment trouble for the yatra. I am not sure if intention may be to show the state administration in bad light or to disrupt the yatra,” Kharge wrote. “I am writing to request you that you may kindly issue

appropriate directions to ensure smooth passage of the yatra through Bengal and ensure safety of the yatrins, including Shri Rahul Gandhi. “I am aware that the Gandhi family and you share very cordial relations, and you would ensure that all security concerns would be addressed adequately. However, I thought it would be best if I personally write to you requesting for the same,” the Congress president said. Kharge has earlier spoken to Banerjee soon after she announced that the Trinamool Congress would contest the elections alone and efforts are on to have a tie-up with her party and the Congress. The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered West Bengal in Cooch

Behar Thursday morning and after a two-day break would restart from Jalpaiguri with a padayatra. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the yatra will then proceed to Siliguri and Gandhi will address a public rally there. On January 29, the yatra will reach Araria in Bihar and will remain in Bihar’s Araria, Purnia and Kishanganj on January 30, where Gandhi will address rallies and padayatras. On January 30, the yatra will return to West Bengal at night and will be in Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum districts on January 30 and 31, after which it will go to Jharkhand, Ramesh said. He said as some exams are going on in Siliguri, the padayatra will start at 2 pm instead of in the morning. “Kharge ji has spoken to West Bengal Chief Minister and have given him invitation to her to join the yatra. We feel that going by her statement, her target is the BJP and she is fighting against BJP. The Congress also wants to defeat the BJP are on the same page. “The Congress wants that West Bengal chief minister should participate in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and we will welcome her. She should take out some time for the yatra,” Ramesh said. “The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi all respect Mamata ji. And they know that of we have to defeat communal forces and it is important that she should be a partner of the opposition alliance,” he said.

Minister Pradhan reviews preparations for 7th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday reviewed the preparations for the seventh edition of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’. “Pariksha Pe Charcha has become an annual tradition, that exam warriors, parents and teachers all look forward to, to overcome anxiety and come out with their best. There is excitement amongst everyone for the interaction with the Prime Minister, at PPC 2024, for the most-sought after interaction of the year,” Pradhan said on Friday. “Pariksha Pe Charcha” (PPC) is an initiative led by Prime Minister Modi to address the stress associated with examinations and promote a celebratory approach towards life, aligning with the larger movement of ‘Exam Warriors’. Organised by the Ministry of Education, ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha’ has been engaging students, parents, and teachers for the past six years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth edition was held

online, while the fifth and sixth editions returned to the town-hall format. A total of 31.24 lakh students, 5.60 lakh teachers, and 1.95 lakh parents participated in the previous year’s edition. “The current 7th edition recorded a remarkable 2.26 crore registrations on the MyGov portal, highlighting widespread enthusiasm among students nationwide,” Pradhan said. Scheduled on January 29, the event will be held in a town-hall format at the Bharat Mandapam. Two students and a teacher from each State and Union Territory, along with winners of the Kala Utsav, have been invited. A hundred students from Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) will attend for the first time. An online MCQ competition on the MyGov portal from December 11, 2023, to January 12, 2024, determined participants based on their submitted questions. Selected participants will receive a Pariksha Pe Charcha kit, including the “Exam Warriors” book by the prime minister and a certificate.

Niti Aayog identifying key sectors for transforming India into global manufacturing hub

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Government aims to make India a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047, its premier think tank Niti Aayog has decided to reach out to experts to help identify key sectors that have the potential to transform the country into a Global Manufacturing Hub. “With its favourable demographics, skilled workforce, and increasing economic growth, India can attract significant investments and become a preferred destination for manufacturing. In view of this, research studies are proposed to be undertaken by industry vertical on identifying the key sectors for India to become a global manufacturing hub,” said an official from the Niti Aayog. As per the Request for Proposal issued recently, the studies will focus on analyzing various factors, including future trends in manufacturing, industrial capabilities, infrastructure, policy framework, and market potential, to determine the sectors that offer the most significant opportunities for India’s manufacturing growth. The researchers have been asked to study around 12 sectors which they feel that can be exploited to boost the investments. Among others, the study should give details on identification of key sectors in India with high growth

potential for manufacturing considering the value of product, manufacturing efficiency and global demand. Also, assessment of the existing industrial capabilities, infrastructure, and other factors of production in the identified sectors has also been sought. “Assessing the infrastructure requirements, including transportation, logistics, power supply, and digital connectivity, for each identified sector; examining the policy framework, including regulatory environment, tax structure, trade agreements, and ease of doing business, relevant to manufacturing in India,” needs to be factored in while submitting the studies. The experts will also have to suggest global market trends, competitive landscapes, and export potential for the selected sectors. The move comes amid various reports stating India has the potential to become a Global Manufacturing Hub, and by 2030 it is expected to add more than US\$ 500 billion annually to the global economy. As per FICCI president Anish Shah, India’s manufacturing sector will transform into a global powerhouse in the next five years, aligned with the country’s goal of reaching a USD30 trillion GDP by 2047. India can become a manufacturing hub for the world and that is going to drive manufacturing growth faster, he had said.

Houthi missile hits tanker, crew put blaze off

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The crew aboard a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker hit by a missile launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels extinguished an hourslong fire onboard the stricken vessel Saturday sparked by the strike, authorities said.

The attack on the Marlin Luanda further complicated the Red Sea crisis caused by the Iranian-backed rebels' attacks over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The tanker carried Russian-produced naphtha, a flammable oil, drawing Moscow further into a conflict that so far it had blamed on the US.

Early Saturday, US forces conducted a strike against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed at the Red Sea and prepared to launch, the US military's Central Command said. That attack came after the

USS Carney, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, had to shoot down a Houthi missile targeting it.

The Marlin Luanda burned for hours until being extinguished Saturday, said Trafigura, a Singapore-based trading firm. Its crew of 25 Indian nationals and two Sri Lankans were still trying to battle the blaze sparked by the missile strike, it said. No one was injured by the blast, it added.

"We are pleased to confirm that all crew on board the Marlin Luanda are safe and the fire in the cargo tank has been fully extinguished," Trafigura said. "The vessel is now sailing towards a safe harbor."

The Indian navy said its guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam was assisting the Marlin Luanda's crew in fighting the fire. It posted images showing the blaze still raging Saturday, likely fueled by



the naphtha on board.

The ship, managed by a British firm, is carrying the Russian naphtha bound for Singapore, the company said. It described the flammable oil as being purchased below the price caps set by G7 sanctions placed on Russia over its ongoing war on Ukraine. It wasn't clear what environmental impact the attack had caused.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attack on the Marlin Luanda in a prerecorded statement late Friday, describing it as a "British oil ship." He insisted such

attacks would continue.

Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade between Asia, the Mideast and Europe.

Since the airstrike campaign began, the rebels now say they'll target American and British ships as well. On Wednesday, two American-flagged ships carrying cargo for the US Defense and State departments came under attack by the Houthis, forcing an escorting US Navy warship to shoot some of the projectiles down.

China, which relies on the seaborne trade through the area, has called for calm. The US had sought to get China to apply pressure on Iran, as

No evidence of POWs killed in Russian plane crash: Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

Officials in Ukraine said Russia has provided no credible evidence to back its claims that their own forces shot down a military transport plane carrying Ukrainian prisoners of war who were to be swapped for Russian POWs.

The Ukrainian agency that deals with prisoner exchanges said late Friday that Russian officials had "with great delay" provided it with a list of the 65 Ukrainians who Moscow said had died in the Wednesday plane crash in Russia's Belgorod region. Ukraine's Coordination Staff for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said relatives of the named POWs were unable to identify their loved ones in crash site photos provided by Russian authorities. The agency's update cited Ukraine's military intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, as saying that Kyiv had no verifiable information about who was on the plane.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Wednesday that missiles fired from across the border brought down the transport plane that it said was taking the POWs back to Ukraine. Local authorities in Belgorod, which borders Ukraine, said the crash killed all 74 people onboard, including six crew members and three Russian servicemen.

"We currently don't have evidence that there could have been that many people onboard the aircraft. Russian propaganda's claim that the IL-76 aircraft was transporting 65 Ukrainian POWs (heading) for a prisoner swap continues to raise a lot of questions," Budanov, who heads Ukraine's POW agency, said.

Social media users in the

Belgorod region posted a video Wednesday that showed a plane falling from the sky in a snowy, rural area, and a huge ball of fire erupting where it apparently hit the ground.

Kyiv has neither confirmed nor denied that its forces downed a Russian military transport plane that day, and Russia's claim that the crash killed Ukrainian POWs could not be independently verified. Earlier Friday, Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukraine's air force commander, described Moscow's assertion as "rampant Russian propaganda."

Ukrainian officials earlier this week confirmed that a prisoner swap was due to happen Wednesday but said it was called off. They said Moscow did not ask for any specific stretch of airspace to be kept safe for a certain length of time, as it has for past prisoner exchanges.

An International Committee of the Red Cross spokesperson in Ukraine urged Russia on Friday night to return the bodies of any POWs who might have died in the plane crash. In a live interview with the US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Red Cross Media Relations Officer Oleksandr Vlasenko also remarked that "very little time" had passed between the initial reports of the incident and Moscow declaring it was ready to return the bodies of the Ukrainian POWs.

While Ukraine and Russia regularly exchange the bodies of dead soldiers, each trade has required considerable preparation, Vlasenko said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for an international investigation into the crash. Russia has sole access to the crash site.

Trump ordered to pay \$83.3m in defamation case

AP ■ NEW YORK

A jury awarded USD 83.3 million to E. Jean Carroll on Friday in a stinging and expensive rebuke to former President Donald Trump for his continued social media attacks against the longtime advice columnist over her claims that he sexually assaulted her in a Manhattan department store.

The award, when coupled with a USD 5 million sexual assault and defamation verdict last year from another jury in a case brought by Carroll, raised to \$88.3 million what Trump must pay her. Protesting vigorously, he said he would appeal.



It was the second time in nine months that a civil jury returned a verdict related to Carroll's claim that a flirtatious, chance encounter with Trump in 1996 at Bergdorf Goodman's Fifth Avenue store ended violently. She said Trump slammed her against a dressing room wall, pulled down her tights and forced himself on her.

In May, a different jury awarded Carroll USD 5 million. It found Trump not liable for rape, but responsible for sexually abusing Carroll and then defaming her by claiming she made it up. He is appealing that award, too.

Trump is also awaiting a verdict in a New York civil fraud trial, where state lawyers are seeking the return of USD 370 million in what they say were ill-gotten gains from loans and deals made using financial statements that exaggerated his wealth.

As for Trump's ability to pay, he reported having about \$294 million in cash or cash equivalents on his most recent annual financial statement, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. Testifying at his civil fraud trial last November, he Trump boasted: "I have very little debt, and I have a lot of cash." Trump skipped the first Carroll trial. He later expressed regret for not attending and insisted on testifying in the second trial, though the judge limited what he could say, ruling he had missed his chance to argue that he was innocent. He spent only a few minutes on the witness stand Thursday, during which he denied attacking Carroll, then left court grumbling "this is not America."

Carroll, 80, clutched her lawyers' hands and smiled as the seven-man, two-woman jury delivered its verdict. Minutes later, she shared a weepy three-way hug with her attorneys.

She declined comment as she left the Manhattan federal courthouse, but issued a statement later through a publicist, saying: "This is a great victory for every woman who stands up when she's been knocked down, and a huge defeat for every bully who has tried to keep a woman down."

Trump had attended the trial earlier in the day, but stormed out of the courtroom during closing arguments read by Carroll's attorney. He returned for his own attorney's closing argument and for a portion of the deliberations, but left the courthouse a half hour before the verdict was read.

"Absolutely ridiculous!" he said in a statement shortly afterward. "Our Legal System is out of control, and being used as a Political Weapon."

Israel presses on with war against Hamas

AP ■ RAFA (GAZA STRIP)

Two women and a man were killed early on Saturday in what witnesses said was an Israeli airstrike on a home in the southernmost part of Gaza, as Israel pursued its military offensive against the Palestinian enclave.

The strike came less than a day after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to do all it can to prevent death, destruction and any acts of genocide in Gaza. As part of its binding ruling, the top United Nations court asked Israel for a compliance report in a month, meaning the military's conduct will be under increasing scrutiny.

The court stopped short of ordering a cease-fire, but the orders its judges issued were in part a stinging rebuke of the army's conduct so far in Israel's nearly 4-month-long war against Gaza's Hamas rulers. Friday's decision came in a case brought by South Africa, which alleged Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian territory's

people, a charge Israel vehemently denies.

The war has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, destroyed vast swaths of Gaza and displaced nearly 85 per



cent of a population of 2.3 million people. It was triggered by an unprecedented Hamas attack on southern Israel on October 7 in which militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took about 250 hostages.

The overall Palestinian

death toll in the war rose to 26,257 as of Saturday, with 174 deaths over the past day, the Health Ministry in Gaza said. The ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count, but has said

ians. Israel says its air and ground offensive in Gaza has killed more than 9,000 militants.

Bilal al-Siksik, who lost his wife, a son and a daughter in Saturday's strike in Rafah, a town on Gaza's border with Egypt, said the decision by the world court meant little since it did not stop the war.

"No one can speak in front of them (Israel). America with all its greatness and strength can do nothing," he said as he stood beside the pile of rubble and twisted metal that was once his home. "What can people do, who have no power or anything?" He said his family was asleep when their residence was struck. Rafah and its surrounding areas are crammed with more than 1 million people after the Israeli military ordered civilians to seek refuge there from the fighting elsewhere in the territory. Despite those orders, the designated evacuation areas have repeatedly come under airstrikes, with Israel saying it would go after militants as needed.

ICJ ruling vindicated us: SA Prez Ramaphosa

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

President Cyril Ramaphosa has said the International Court of Justice's ruling has vindicated South Africa's unprecedented decision to charge Israel of genocide during its military offensive against Hamas in Gaza and marked an important first step in its quest to secure justice for the Palestinians.

The top UN court on Friday stopped short of ordering a ceasefire in Gaza but demanded that Israel try to contain death and damage in its military offensive. South Africa, which brought the case, had asked for the court to order Israel to halt its military operations against Hamas militants. The top UN Court court decided not to throw out genocide charges against Israel for its military offensive in Gaza, as part of a preliminary decision in the case.

In a national TV broadcast on Friday evening, Ramaphosa said the ruling of the International Court of Justice is "a victory for international law, for human rights, and above all, for justice."

"The court has concluded that pursuant to Article 9 of the (1948 Genocide Convention, it has jurisdiction to adjudicate our application. The effect of the order that the ICJ has granted today is that there is a plausible case of genocide. This follows the unprecedented action taken by South Africa to take another country to the International Court of Justice," he said.

The president said the ICJ ruling marked an important first step in South Africa's quest to secure justice for the people of Gaza.

"Some have told us to mind our own business. Others have said it was not our place. And yet it is very much our place, as people who know too well the pain of dispossession, discrimination, and state-sponsored violence.

"We are also a people who were the victims of the crime of apartheid. We know what apartheid looks like. We experienced and lived through it. Sadly, many people died and were exiled like

our beloved leader Oliver Tambo and others, others were jailed, like the father of our democracy (Nelson Mandela) and others were maimed," Ramaphosa said.

He said, "We, as South Africans, will not be passive bystanders and watch the crimes that were visited upon us being perpetrated elsewhere. We stand on the side of freedom for all. We stand on the side of justice."

The war between Israel and Hamas began on October 7 after Hamas' attack in which around 1,200 Israelis were killed.

Since then, Israel has been continuously attacking Gaza with the country's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressing that they will continue its war till victory is achieved despite "international pressure". Since Israel started bombarding the Gaza strip, some 26,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Gaza health authority.

Paraphrasing a statement by Nelson



Mandela made 30 years ago when he was elected South Africa's first democratically elected president, Ramaphosa said, "We say again today, never, never and never again shall it be that acts of genocide are perpetrated with impunity as we, the international community look on."

The president said he firmly believed that following this judgment there should now be a more concerted effort towards a ceasefire.

"Negotiations should commence on a permanent two-state solution, to enable Israel and Palestine to live side by side as independent states," he said as he thanked those in the international community who had supported South Africa's application to the ICJ.

"We will not waver in our commitment to the Palestinian people and their quest for self-determination. Our own painful history obliges us to do no less. We thank the International Court of Justice for upholding its role of achieving justice, promoting peace, preventing genocide and holding those guilty of genocide accountable," Ramaphosa said.

Pak seeks \$2 billion loan from China

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan has sought financial assistance of USD 2 billion from its close ally China for a year, according to a media report on Saturday.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, in a letter, has requested his Chinese Premier Li Qiang to roll over the debt as soon as the deposit time for the loan from China is completed on March 23.

In his letter, Kakar expressed gratitude to China for its financial assistance to Pakistan during its economic crisis as the cash-strapped country has secured a safe deposit of a total of USD 4 billion in loans from China, reducing the country's mounting pressure on external debt payments and stabilising its foreign exchange reserves, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Earlier this month, the UAE rolled over Pakistan's maturing loan of USD 2 billion. Apart from the UAE, Saudi Arabia has deposited USD 5 billion with the State Bank of Pakistan.

Following the loan rollover by the UAE, the interim government requested the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to dispatch a new mission this month for talks for the last loan tranche of USD 1.2 billion. The IMF's next mission is critical for not only securing the last loan tranche but also for beginning negotiations for a new long-term programme.

While speaking to a private TV news channel recently, former finance minister Ishaq Dar said in case his party – the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)

– won the elections and formed the government, the decision about the new IMF programme would be made at the earliest. Dar, the four-time finance minister of the country, added that in case his party decided not to enter the IMF programme, it would immediately start implementing the belt-tightening measures.

The IMF has made new adjustments in its fresh staff-level report about the available financing to Pakistan.

The Washington-based lender has increased the projection of budget support loans to USD 3 billion but cut the project financing to USD 3.7 billion for this fiscal year. The overall external financing requirements have been reduced to a little under USD 25 billion with minor downward adjustments in the current account deficit projections, the report said.

The report suggested the global lender had made a minor adjustment of USD 575 million in its current account deficit projection in comparison with July's estimates.

The IMF has now projected the deficit at USD 5.7 billion or 1.6 per cent of the GDP – an estimate that appeared on the higher end. Pakistan is in economic ruin and awaiting a monumental financial default without long overdue structural reforms sought by global creditors such as the IMF and the World Bank, along with bilateral partners like China and the UAE. The primary reason behind Pakistan's economic woes is its staggering debt levels, which, as of 2023, amount to nearly USD 125 billion owed to external creditors, with approximately one-third to China.

Sharif's party to focus on revival of Pak's economy

PTI ■ LAHORE

Focus on bringing Pakistan's economy back on track, the message of peace to India, a vow to combat climate change, and zero-tolerance towards terrorism are the highlights of the manifesto unveiled by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's party on Saturday.

With less than two weeks before the February 8 general elections, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) manifesto promises to send a "message of peace" to other countries, including India, on the condition that New Delhi revert its August 2019 action on Kashmir, Dawn.com reported, quoting the manifesto.

The manifesto also vows to combat the impacts of climate change and a "zero-tolerance policy" towards terrorism, it said.

Released at a special event here in the provincial capital of Punjab, the PML-N later shared the detailed manifesto titled 'Pakistan ko Nawaz do' on its official X account. "If voted to power, the party vowed to provide the public with cheap and increased electricity as well as speedy development. Its promises include a 20 to 30 per cent reduction in power bills, a 15,000 megawatt-increase in electricity production, and a 10,000 MW production of solar energy," the Dawn newspaper reported.



Revelers march during a traditional carnival to celebrate the departing winter and forthcoming spring in the village of Hamry, Czech Republic on Saturday. The carnival is part of a centuries old tradition called the Shrove-tide Procession which takes place in Eastern Bohemia near the end of winter and before Christian Lent. Experts trace the event, also known as Masopust, with its vibrant colors and archaic masks to pre-Christian paganism, then common in the area. AP/PTI

Tuvalu's PM loses his seat in crucial poll

AP ■ SYDNEY

Prime Minister Kausea Natano reportedly lost his seat in parliament in elections on the tiny Pacific island nation of Tuvalu.

The election for the 16-seat parliament, which could have implications for China, Taiwan and Australia, saw eight new-

comers win seats, according to Radio New Zealand. The report couldn't be independently confirmed. Tuvalu, with just over 11,500 people, is one of the smallest nations in the world. But the election has gained international attention because Tuvalu, a British colony until 1978, is one of only 12 countries that have

official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island that China claims as its territory.

Natano is a supporter of Taiwan. Another contender for the top job, the reelected Finance Minister Seve Paeniu, has said he wants to review Tuvalu's relationships with both Taiwan and

China.

The elections come as China, the United States and others wrangle for influence in the strategically crucial region. But China has been putting pressure on supporters of Taiwan. Nauru, for instance, another small Pacific nation, recently switched its support from Taiwan to China.

Gunmen kill 9 on Iran-Pak border area

AP ■ TEHRAN

Unknown gunmen on Saturday shot to death nine people in the southeastern part of Iran that borders Pakistan, media reports said.

A report by the semiofficial Mehr news agency said the shooting took place in a home near the town of Saravan, in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province. It added that the victims were not Iranian.

No official news outlet reported the shooting and no group has yet taken responsibility for the attack.

HalVash, an advocacy group for the Baluch people, shared images online that appeared to be bodies of victims and said three more people were wounded. It said they were Pakistani nationals and identified four of them, saying all the victims were workers at an auto repair shop.


Last week, Pakistan launched retaliatory strikes on the same area, allegedly targeting militant hideouts, an attack that killed at least nine people.

The strikes followed Iran's attack Tuesday on Pakistani soil that killed two children in the southwestern Baluchistan province.

The tit-for-tat attacks appeared to target two Baluch militant groups with similar separatist goals on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border. The two countries have accused each other of providing safe haven to the groups in their respective territories.

On Friday, media reports said both nations' ambassadors resumed activities in each other's capital that were idled following the attacks.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



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Dated : 25/01/2024

Letter No. : 471(I)/ Nivida-01/2023-24

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)
Short Term E-TENDER NOTICE

The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated **29/01/2024** & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	PD PWD Ranikhet Improvement & Damarikaran of Bajkhet Kankot Toulbudhani Turachora Motor Road in Km. 19 to 23.200 in Salt constituency of Almora district under the state sector.	₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST	₹ 6.93 Lakh	120 Days	15 Month (Including With Raining Season and Winter Season)	Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./Any state Govt./Any Govt. Undertaking

Sreeja advances to quarterfinals

PTI ■ MAPUSA (GOA)

Indian paddler Sreeja Akula registered a commanding victory to move into the women's singles quarterfinals of the ongoing World Table Tennis (WTT) Star Contender Goa 2024, while Manika Batra and Archana Kamath suffered defeats in their respective last-eight matches here on Saturday.

The Hyderabad-based paddler Akula began the contest on a positive note against higher ranked Hong Kong opponent Doo Hoi Kem (WR 36) and won the thrilling first game before losing the second.

However, the world No. 66 Indian looked in complete control of the next two games and clinched the match 3-1 (12-10, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8) to reach the quarterfinals.

"In 2021, I had lost to the same opponent, so it feels really great to win a match against her in this tournament. I was able to execute my plans perfectly and kept myself motivated even after losing the second game to win the contest,"



Akula said after the win. "She was really aggressive and I focused on putting the ball on the table and choosing the right ball to attack which worked in my favour. I will be

well prepared for the upcoming match as well." The tournament is co-hosted by Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis under the guidance of the

Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI). On the other hand, India's top-ranked singles paddler Batra (WR 38) went down 1-3 (11-9, 11-13, 7-11, 9-11) to

the world No. 13 Xiaoxin Yang of Monaco despite winning the first game of the contest. In the other women's singles pre-quarterfinal, youngster

from Bengaluru Kamath lost to South Korea's Jeon Jihee by 1-3 (11-13, 11-9, 6-11, 4-11).

World No. 8 Shin Yubin of South Korea continued her positive form to defeat Sweden's Christina Kallberg 3-1 (11-5, 11-6, 10-12, 11-6), whereas Chinese Taipei's Cheng I-ching (WR 18) beat Yang Ha Eun of South Korea by 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-9).

In the last-16 stage of the men's singles category, world No. 8 Felix Lebrun of France extended his sparkling form to register a comfortable 3-0 (11-3, 12-10, 11-9) win against Sweden's Ruls Moregard.

However, his brother Alexis Lebrun faced a 1-3 (8-11, 11-8, 10-12, 8-11) defeat against world No. 14 Quadri Aruna of Nigeria.

Six-time Olympic medallist Dimitrij Ovtcharov of Germany looked in fine form to beat England's Liam Pitchford 3-1 (11-5, 8-11, 17-15, 11-8) as he made his way into the quarter-finals of WTT Star Contender Goa 2024.

The semi-finals and finals will be played on Sunday.



Rhythm, Ujjwal win mixed team pistol gold

PTI ■ CAIRO

India picked up their first gold medal of the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday when Rhytham Sangwan and Ujjwal combined to defeat the Armenian pair of Elmira Karapetyan and Benik Khlgatyan 17-7 in the 10m air pistol mixed team event.

Earlier Arjun Babuta and Sonam Uttam Maskar won silver in the 10m air rifle mixed team event. Indian shooters have so far won one gold and two silver medals here.

Anuradha Devi had opened the team's account with a silver in the women's 10m air pistol on Friday evening.

Rhythm, who won her second consecutive World Cup mixed team gold in Cairo, and Ujjwal finished second behind the Armenian pair in qualifying with a total score of 580. The Armenians were a point ahead.

The Indians, however, proved far too superior in the final, going up 7-1 very quickly as Benik had a horror outing.

The closest Armenians got was when the scores read 11-7, but Rhythm picked up in the later stages

and despite low scores all around, the Indians prevailed by a big margin in the end.

In the air rifle mixed team, Arjun and Sonam had topped qualification, piping the British pair of Dean Bale and Seonaid McIntosh by a point but then went down 3-9 at the beginning of the race to 16 points final.

It was soon 6-12, as whatever the Indians threw at the British pair, they would return in kind. But Arjun and Sonam held their composure as Dean showed nerves and soon it was 14-14.

On match point, McIntosh showed her class and hit a 10.9 and despite solid 10s from the Indians, the British pair snatched the gold.

No Indian shooter, however, was able to make the trap finals at the shotgun ranges.

Zoravar Sandhu shot 118 to finish 12th in the men's trap event as Bhowneesh Mendiratta (114) and Prithviraj Tondaiman (112) finished further down.

In women's trap, Rajeshwari Kumari was 13th with a score of 110 while Manisha Keer (109) and Bhavya Tripathi (106) finished 15th and 18th respectively.

700 wrestlers to compete in senior nationals: WFI president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Around 700 grapplers, representing all affiliated state units except Punjab and Odisha, will participate in the Senior National Championship in Pune from Monday, the suspended Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said on Saturday.

The national body was suspended by the Sports Ministry on December 24, just three days after it held its election for violating its own constitution after it announced to host the 2023 age group nationals in Gonda, UP in last week of December.

The Sports Ministry had said that the Nationals organised by WFI will not be recognised. However, WFI remains defiant.

"The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is organising its 2023 Senior National Wrestling Championship in Free Style, Greco Roman & Women Wrestling. The Championship is being



organised by the Maharashtra Rajya Kushtigiri Sangh at Pune from 29th to 31st January 2024," said WFI president Sanjay Singh in a statement.

"Around 700 Wrestlers across the country are participating in this mega event. All affiliated state units of Wrestling Federation of India have entered its teams for participation in the event except Punjab & Odisha." The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) then on the behest of the ministry formed a three-member panel to manage the day-to-day affairs of WFI.

Aryna beats Zheng 6-3, 6-2 to clinch back to back Australian Open titles

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Aryna Sabalenka clinched back-to-back Australian Open titles with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Zheng Qinwen on Saturday in a one-sided women's final. The No. 2-seeded Sabalenka broke Zheng's serve in the second game and took the first set in 33 minutes. She broke again to start the second set and maintained her dominance throughout against the No. 12-seeded Zheng.

"It's been an amazing couple of weeks. It's an unbelievable feeling right now," Sabalenka said in the trophy presentation. "As usual, my speech is going to be weird - it's not my super power."

Only two things slowed down Sabalenka's progress Saturday for her second Grand Slam singles title.

In the third game of the second set, with Zheng serving, the match was interrupted after an activist



started yelling out. The match continued after the man was escorted out by security.

Then, when she was serving for the match, Sabalenka had three championship points at 40-0 but missed two with wide or long forehands and another with Zheng's clever drop shot.

After giving Zheng a breakpoint chance, she bounced the ball away behind her in disgust but she recovered her composure to win the next three points.

In the end, she needed five championship points before finishing off with a forehand crosscourt winner. It was the kind of shot that had kept Zheng on the back foot almost from the start.

The 25-year-old Sabalenka improved to two wins in three Grand Slam finals, all in a span of 13 months. She beat Elena Rybakina a year ago for the title in Australia.

Sabalenka is the first woman since Victoria Azarenka in 2012 and '13 to win back-to-

back Australian Open titles, and the fifth since 2000 to win the championship here without dropping a set - a group that includes Serena Williams.

The 21-year-old Zheng was making her debut in a major final and playing an opponent ranked in the top 50 for the first time in this tournament. It was the second time in as many majors their paths had met in the second week.

Sabalenka beat Zheng in the U.S. Open quarterfinals last year on her way to the final, where she lost to 19-year-old American Coco Gauff.

Sabalenka avenged that loss to Gauff with a semifinal victory here that extended her winning streak at Melbourne Park to 13 matches. It's now 14.

In just her ninth major, Zheng's push to the final was two rounds better than her previous best run to the quarterfinals in New York last September.

Gukesh draws with Alireza to drop to second spot

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS)

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh dropped to second spot after drawing with Alireza Firouzja of France as Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan snatched the lead going into the penultimate round of Tata Steel Masters here.

After the draw with Iranian turned French player Firouzja, Gukesh has seven points for his sole second spot.

Abdusattarov defeated women's world champion Wenjun Ju of China to accumulate 7.5 points and place himself on course for his maiden triumph at the Masters.

Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi improved his chances for a podium finish with a brilliant



victory over Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran. The Indian GM moved to 6.5 points and now shares the third spot with compatriot R Praggnanandhaa, Wei Yi of China and Anish Giri of Holland.

Gujrathi played probably the game of the tournament thus far. It was a Queen's gambit declined as black by Gujrathi but desperately seeking complications, Maghsoodloo went for a very sharp middle game and used up a lot of

time in the process. Gujrathi showcased his calculation skills and came up with a spectacular Queen manoeuvre that sealed the game in his favour.

"I felt relieved because if I don't find that move, I think I am just worse. I was thinking for like 40-50 minutes, trying to figure out if there is something and I couldn't find anything. I thought I just have a lost position, if I don't find something right now," Gujrathi said after the game.

"So I spent the time there and this move struck me like Qe7. After that Black is better. I don't know if it's winning but he collapsed because he had very low time and then my attack was just too strong."

Gukesh was up against a Grunfeld defense against Alireza and this one too was a

keenly contested game. The middle game that arose was sharp and Gukesh tried to change the equilibrium by giving up his queen for two rooks. Alireza was always in control and found a perpetual check to force a draw.

Praggnanandhaa was held to a draw by Donchenko in a Queen's Gambit accepted structure. The Indian tried to make a breakthrough but Donchenko held on to his own and drew after 60 moves.

In the challengers' section, India's Leon Luke Mendonca remained in the hunt for top spot but he needs a sort of miracle. Mendonca scored a crushing victory over Mustafa Yilmaz of Turkey but French GM Marc Andria Mariuzzi maintained his full point lead on 8.5 points by defeating Liam Vrolijk of Holland.

Renata wins junior girls title, Rei wins boys final

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Top-seeded Renata Jamrichova claimed the Australian Open junior girls' singles title with a 6-4 6-1 win over 15-year-old Emerson Jones on Saturday.

Jamrichova made six aces and saved five of six break points to clinch her first Grand Slam singles' title in just over an hour on Rod Laver Arena.

"I'm just so happy right now," Jamrichova said.

"I played my best this week. At first I started really nervous because of the crowd and of the Rod Laver (Arena), but then I just told myself, just be happy on the court and enjoy every point, just be happy that you can (be) here and play this amazing match."



The 16-year-old Slovakian won the juniors doubles title at Melbourne Park last year and made the semifinals of the juniors' tournaments at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in a stellar season.

In the boys' final, fourth-seeded Rei Sakamoto of Japan rallied from a set down

to beat Jan Kumstat 3-6 7-6(2) 7-5.

The 17-year-old Sakamoto had to withstand 25 aces from his big-serving Czech opponent, ranked No.42, but still found a way to wrest back momentum after losing the first set to win the title in two hours, 11 minutes.

Vandana returns as Indian women eye fresh start in FIH Pro League

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Smarting from the failure to make the Paris Olympics, a Savita Punia-led 24-member Indian women's hockey team will look to make a fresh start in the upcoming FIH Pro League matches. Savita will be assisted by Vandana Katariya, who returned to the side as vice-captain after recovering from a cheekbone fracture, which forced the senior striker to miss the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi earlier this month.

The Indian team endured a disappointing outing in Ranchi and failed to qualify for the Olympics after having made the cut in the last two editions.

In fact, in the last edition at Tokyo, the Indians finished a creditable fourth.

The Bhubaneswar leg of the Pro League will begin on February 3 and end on February 9, while the Rourkela leg will commence on February 12 and last till February 18.

India will take on the United States, the Netherlands, China, and Australia twice each across both legs. The Indian women will begin their campaign against reigning Asian Games champions China on February 3. The team might have failed to make the Olympics but the Hockey India selectors decided to stick to the core group that played in Ranchi while adding six more players — both junior and seniors — to strengthen the squad.

Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur, who was missed in Ranchi, and young Jyoti Chhattari are the two additions in the Indian backline, which also has Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary and Monika.

Do not write off Novak after Australian Open loss

Analysis

AP ■ MELBOURNE

It might be tempting to see some tidy symbolism and greater significance in Novak Djokovic's loss to Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open semifinals.

The end of the thirtysomething Djokovic's 33-match winning streak at Melbourne Park. The end of his bid for an 11th championship there and 25th Grand Slam trophy overall. The breakthrough for the twentysomething Sinner, an up-and-coming talent who will

now get to play in his first major final, against Daniil Medvedev on Sunday.

Then again, that was the sort of passing-of-the-torch oversimplification some folks found in Djokovic's loss to another kid, Carlos Alcaraz, in last year's Wimbledon final. And what happened a couple of months later? Djokovic claimed the US Open title as part of a 19-match unbeaten run. So don't be too quick to write off the 36-year-old from Serbia this time, either, as he essentially told the world himself after bowing out 6-1 6-2 6-7(6) 6-3 against Sinner on Friday.

"Doesn't necessarily mean that it's beginning of the end, as some people like to call it," the



No. 1-ranked Djokovic said. "Yeah, let's see what happens in the rest of the season."

At first glance, that seems like a bit of a warning to the rest of the tour.

A few moments later, Djokovic sounded more contemplative and somewhat less sure of

what's to come, saying: "I just hope that I'll get a chance to come back, to play at least another time and go through the emotions once more."

Either way, his takeaway from this particular afternoon was that he played quite poorly - "Everything, you know, was

just subpar" - against an opponent who showed off some of his best tennis and was, in a word, "flawless."

That's a fair assessment. There might not be a much larger meaning, even if Djokovic entered the day a combined 20-0 in semifinals and finals at Melbourne Park. And even if No. 3 Medvedev vs. No. 4 Sinner (they're scheduled to get started Sunday at 7:30 pm local time, which is 3:30 am ET) represents the first Australian Open men's final without at least one of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal or Roger Federer participating since Marat Safin defeated Lleyton Hewitt in 2005.

For Medvedev, a 27-year-old

from Russia who won the 2021 US Open, this will be his sixth Grand Slam final - and first against someone other than Djokovic or Nadal. Medvedev moved on by coming back to eliminate Alexander Zverev 5-7 3-6 7-6(4) 7-6(5) 6-3 in a semifinal that came after Sinner-Djokovic.

"Obviously it means so much to me to beat Novak here in Melbourne," said Sinner, a 22-year-old from Italy who lost to Djokovic in the Wimbledon semifinals last July and has now won three of their past four matchups, "but ... I know that the tournament is not over."

It was remarkable to see Djokovic, the greatest returner of his generation and perhaps

ever, unable to make a dent on Sinner's serve. Consider: This was the first completed match in a Grand Slam career spanning more than 400 contests that Djokovic did not manage to earn a single break point. Another unusual sight was all of the miscues coming off Djokovic's racket. He finished with nearly twice as many unforced errors as Sinner, 54 to 28.

Djokovic hadn't lost a match at the Australian Open since 2018 - a span of 2,195 days - because he collected four championships in a row there and didn't compete at Melbourne in 2022, when he was deported from the country for not being vaccinated against COVID-19.

Pope defies India with gritty hundred

England make 316/6 on Day 3

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Ollie Pope transformed the RGI Stadium into a gladiatorial fighting arena with a doughty hundred as England reached 316 for six to temporarily resist India's push for a win on the third day of the first Test here on Saturday.

Pope (148 batting) and Rehan Ahmed (16 batting) were guarding England's second innings fort at close and the visitors are now 126 runs ahead of India, an unimaginable position at the dawn of the day.

India were bowled out for 436 in their first innings after building a lead of 190 runs.

It was quite remarkable how Pope, who generally resembles a cat on a hot tin roof in these conditions, mustered fortitude and technical perfection to defy the Indian bowlers, who were primed to finish the match on day three itself, reducing England to 163 for five.

But Pope and Ben Foakes (34) milked 104 runs for the sixth wicket alliance to keep India at bay, stretching the match into the fourth day.

It wasn't that Pope had complete command in the middle as spinners on occasions beat him for turn and pacers deceived him outside the off-stump.

There was even a reprieve for him on 110 when Axar Patel grassed a fairly straight



chance at backward square leg off Ravindra Jadeja when the batter attempted a reverse sweep.

But the 26-year-old Essex man found a way to push those distractions away from his thoughts to build on

individual and the team's score.

Pope, whose main source of runs were sweeps and reverse sweeps, duly completed his first Test hundred, fifth in his career, against India off 154 balls, leading England's

recovery act.

It was a massive effort from a batter who had just 384 runs from nine Tests against India at an average of 24 with a highest of 81 before this innings.

However, credit should also

be given to Foakes for playing a mature hand to support Pope in his venture.

The wicketkeeper-batter is one of better players in this England line-up against spin, as he can read the tweekers off their hands and off the

pitch.

The Surrey batter who averages 40 in Asia in Tests, put all those abilities into use here to battle Indian spinners for 108 minutes across two sessions as England fought tooth and nail to stay alive in

the Test. The Indian bowlers too looked clueless in the face of this unexpected confrontation from their rivals.

However, the burgeoning stand came to a close when left-arm spinner Axar Patel managed to slip a low grubber past Foakes' defence to rattle his woodwork.

But before that fight, England resembled a rudderless ship in a storm against a set of brilliant Indian bowlers.

Pacer Jasprit Bumrah found some relevance for himself amidst the dominance of spinners to jettison Joe Root and Ben Duckett to inflict early jolts.

Bumrah managed to sneak an in-ducker past Ben Duckett (47, 52 balls) from the length as the batter was culpable of playing around the ball, while another incoming delivery that kept low gave little chance to Joe Root (2) while hitting his knee rolls.

Soon, the old firm of R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja joined the party. Jadeja was the first to get into the act in the post-lunch session, getting rid of Jonny Bairstow (10).

Bairstow negated a ball that turned away from him quite solidly, but the next one from Jadeja went straight and his decision to shoulder arms had a fatal effect on his stint in the middle.

But there was more magic in store as Ashwin got the

number of England captain Ben Stokes for the 12th time in Test cricket.

After getting tied down by three maidens in a row by the off-spinner, the left-hander tried to release the pressure going for a forward press but the ball spun past his bat to rattle the stumps.

Stokes' bewildered face spoke volumes about Ashwin's mastery over his craft, especially angles.

Before their bowlers made some early inroads into the England line-up, India had a mildly disappointing 54 minutes in the morning session after resuming from overnight 421 for seven.

Jadeja could not bring up a much-anticipated fourth Test hundred, falling leg before to Root.

The left-hander went to front foot to defend a length delivery on off-stump, and the ball took a good amount of turn to hit his pads.

Umpire Chris Gaffaney raised his finger as Jadeja opted to review the call.

The ball seemed to have taken a deflection off his bat but the replays remained inconclusive and the third umpire went with the on-field umpire's decision to give the batter out leg before.

In the very next ball, Root castled Bumrah and Ahmed cleaned up Axar as Indian innings came to a quick end, losing their last three wickets without adding any runs.



India A beat England Lions by innings and 16 runs

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A fine all-round performance powered India 'A' to an innings and 16-run win over England Lions in the second 'unofficial Test' here on Saturday.

The win also helped the hosts take an unassailable 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The hosts dismissed England Lions for 321 in their second innings with Arshdeep Singh (2/62) and Yash Dayal (1/37) claiming the wickets of overnight batters Ollie Robinson (85) and Tom Lawes (32) respectively to complete the win.

Starting the day at 304/8, England Lions' resistance lasted just 5.2 overs as Arshdeep had Robinson caught by wicketkeeper Upendra Yadav in the 88th over.

Lawes added 14 runs to his overnight score of 18 before Dayal got rid of him with Akash Deep taking the catch.

Sarfraz Khan was adjudged the Player of the Match for his 161-run knock which steered India 'A' to 489 in their first innings. Devdutt Padikkal too flourished with the bat, making 105.

Left-arm spinner Saurabh Kumar was the other star performer as he claimed his 22nd five-wicket haul to put India 'A' on the cusp of the win.

Akash Deep snapped six wickets in total to contribute to the team's cause.

The first unofficial Test ended in a draw.

The two teams will face off in the third and final match starting February 1.

Brief Scores: England Lions 152 and 321 allout in 90.2 overs (Ollie Robinson 85, Tom Lawes 32; Saurabh Kumar 5/104, Akash Deep 2/57).

All weather Bumrah ability to get reverse swing leaves Root, Mhambrey gushing

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Amid the focus on spinners, pacer Jasprit Bumrah on Saturday made a statement of his skills bagging two crucial wickets that helped India keep pace with England on the third day of the first Test here.

In a dazzling display of skill and ability to extract reverse swing, Bumrah dismissed Ben Duckett and Joe Root in the middle session of the day.

India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey was stating the obvious when he rated Bumrah as an all-weather bowler.

"Bumrah was bowling very well and was moving the ball both ways. That's the quality he has. He is a special bowler and we have seen what he can do in overseas conditions.

He has not played much (Test) cricket in India. Every time he turns up, he gives his best. It's pure skills," he said.

Mhambrey, however, said Bumrah's influence percolates to the dressing room too as one of the lead thinkers.

"The dressing room conversations he has, the energy he brings on to the field...he is a part of the discussion when the captain and support staff are around, he's right there with all suggestions," said Mhambrey.

Root was all admiration for Bumrah's impressive skill sets and said his dismissal was a big moment in the context of this Test match.

"It's what you'd expect from a Test match, and a big moment in the game. I was disappointed not to



get through it (Bumrah's spell). You know that for four or five overs he will charge in and throw everything at us.

So, you recognise that as a big moment in the game. One of my frustrations was to not still be there at the back end of it, but he's a quality bowler with a huge

amount of skill and pace," said Root.

The former England captain was also excited at the prospect of keeping his on-field rivalry with Bumrah throughout this five-match series.

"So, 1-0 to him, although 1-1 actually as I got him out earlier.

I'm sure that this battle will continue throughout the series," he added.

Later, Mhambrey also allayed any concerns over Bumrah's fitness.

The pacer was seen taking some pills towards the fag end of the day, and Mhambrey attributed it to cramps.



Australia needs 156 runs to beat West Indies

Reaches 60-2 on Day 3 of day night test

AP ■ BRISBANE (AUSTRALIA)

West Indies made early inroads through its pace and made Australia work hard for the first time in its dominant test summer during the day-night test match at the Gabba on Saturday.

Australia lost its recently named test player of the year Usman Khawaja (10) and Marnus Labuschagne (5) to end Day 3 at 60-2, still needing 156 runs to make a clean sweep of its test summer that saw them rout Pakistan 3-0 and beat the West Indies by 10 wickets inside three days in the first test at Adelaide.

West Indies wasted numerous opportunities to swell its lead beyond 215 runs as it got bowled out for 193 in the last session after No. 11 batter Shamar Joseph had to retire hurt when he injured his right toe off a searing Mitchell Starc yorker. He was adjudged leg before wicket while negotiating Starc's toe-crushing yorker only to see the bowler had over-stepped.

Josh Hazlewood picked up 3-23 with his impeccable bowling and

Nathan Lyon grabbed 3-42 with Starc and Cameron Green picking up one wicket apiece.

Shamar Joseph walked off in lot of pain and might not be able to bowl in the remainder of the test match, but Alzarri Joseph provided West Indies an early breakthrough when Khawaja edged the pacer down the legside.

Justin Greaves then squared up Labuschagne with a brilliant back-of-the-length delivery as Kevin Sinclair snapped a superb diving catch in the second slip.

Steven Smith, who is yet to make an impression in his new role as an opener after the retirement of David Warner, was unbeaten on 33 with Cameron Green negotiating the last half an hour, not out on 9.

On an oppressively hot and humid day, West Indies lost the initiative through careless batting and some smart catching by the Australians.

The tourists were progressing well at 148-4, ahead by 170 runs, when first innings half-century-maker Kavem Hodge was sharply run-out by Travis Head.

U-19 World Cup

Unbeaten India take on struggling USA

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Having already sealed a super six berth, record five-time champions India will be expected to breeze past USA in their final group game of the U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

India beat Bangladesh and Ireland in their first two games and will top the group if they win against a struggling USA, a squad full of Indian Americans. The American outfit come into the game after losing both their games to Ireland and Bangladesh.

While Bangladesh did put the Indian batters under a bit of pressure, the Uday Saharan-

led side hardly put a foot wrong against the Irishmen.

The top three teams from group A and B, and, from C and D, qualify for the super six.

Left-arm pacer Naman Tiwari has been impressive upfront while left-arm spinner Saumy Pandey has got the ball to turn and has been the pick of the bowlers with seven wickets in two games.

Number three Musheer Khan showed a lot of promise with a hundred against Ireland, and like his elder brother Sarfraz, would be looking to pile on the runs.

Opener Arshin Kulkarni would want to get a big score



under his belt going into the next stage, having made 7 and 32 in the earlier games.

Skipper Saharan has led from the front with back-to-back fifties and would want to cash in against a weaker team like the USA.

Sachin Dhas has played the role of a finisher well by getting the big hits towards the end of the innings. It will be India's third consecutive game at Mangaung Oval.

USA will have to punch above their weight to trouble the Indians.

Their batting let them down in the first two games and were all out for 105 against Ireland.

Squads: India: Arshin Kulkarni, Adarsh Singh,

Rudra Mayur Patel, Sachin Dhas, Priyanshu Moliya, Musheer Khan, Uday Saharan (c), Aravelly Avinish Rao, Saumy Kumar Pandey, Murugan Abhishek, Inness Mahajan, Dhanush Gowda, Aaradhya Shukla, Raj Limbani and Naman Tiwari

USA: Amogh Arepally, Rayaayn Bhagani, Aaryan Batra, Khush Bhalala, Prannav Chettipalayam, Arya Garg, Siddarth Kappa, Bhavya Mehta, Aarin Nadkarni, Manav Nayak, Parth Patel, Rishi Ramesh (c), Utkarsh Srivastava, Ateendra Subramanian, Aryanam Suri.

Reserves: Arjun Mahesh, Ansh Rai, Aryan Satheesh.

“People take different roads seeking fulfilment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost”
— Dalai Lama



Paradise is elusive in this world. Sometimes, even lost. But Lakshadweep is a paradise that not only exists but also retains its idyllic innocence. **CHANDAN MITRA** spent five heavenly days on the archipelago to discover its rare coral treasures. Photographs by **SHOBORI GANGULI**

(Timeline: October 2006. Given the time lapse since this was published many ground realities have changed)



LET'S FIX OUR LAKSHYA

Tilla couple of years ago when asked where I planned to spend the New Year, I would promptly reply “Somewhere the mobile doesn't work”. It has become increasingly difficult to locate such a place, although I did manage to herald 2006 at a resort near Ranaqpur in Rajasthan where the mobile, somewhat unexpectedly, did not catch the signal. I thought it would be the same when I planned a trip to Lakshadweep this year. As it transpired, connectivity is no longer an issue even in these far-flung islands that lie between 300 and 500 kms west of the Kerala coast. I had been told that BSNL provides a cellular service to Agatti, the island that has the archipelago's only airfield. What is instantly striking about Lakshadweep is its pristine serenity, untouched by civilisation. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, globally celebrated for creating the world's most famous fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, also wrote a gripping novel, The Lost World — an imagined account of a plateau in the wilds that survived the ravages of man and time to remain home to prehistoric species that were lost to the rest of the world. Purely fictional, it chronicles Sir Doyle's vivid imagination that can be traced to modern-day science fiction films like Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park. A snorkeling or scuba diving expedition in the marine wilds of Lakshadweep would have definitely spurred the author's powers of imagination. If the phrase “out of this world” could truly be applied to a place very much a part of our Earth, it must be the bountiful marine life throbbing with vitality and variety all along the coral reefs of Lakshadweep's myriad islands. The sheer remoteness of this group of 62 islands, only 10 of which are inhabited, has allowed pristine marine life to prosper in splendid isolation. The sheer tranquility of the tiny islands encircled by emerald blue lagoons and peopled more by swaying coconut palms than by humans, makes for a therapeutic holiday for metro rat-racers. A place of exquisite natural beauty, spellbinding tranquility, rich in an

astonishing array of marine life, Lakshadweep is now face-to-face with a crucial decision about its future. Which way should it go? Should it emulate the example of its southern cousin, Maldives, which has become one of the world's most sought after destinations with tourism emerging as the backbone of its economy? Or, should Lakshadweep resist the temptation of mindless prosperity, choosing instead to retain its millennial lifestyle quaint but comfortable? It's a tough call. Lakshadweep is not too easily reached. There is only a 15-seater Dornier turbo-prop aircraft of Indian Airlines that aerially connects the island to Kochi on the Kerala coast. The plane commutes between Kochi and Agatti six days a week and is the lifeline of the Union Territory Administration and its officials. There is also the option of taking the ferry, a daily service that connects different islands to the mainland, covering the 404-km distance between the UT's headquarters at Kavaratti and Kochi. Adventurous travellers sometimes hire private boats for inter-island travel. We were told on Kadmat island that some people left for Bangaram at 2 am, intending to make it to the tourist resort by 7 in the morning. Journeys by such motorised boats are exciting; we were ferried to Bangaram from Agatti this way, but it could prove a trifle dangerous if the seas are choppy. One should not forget that Lakshadweep lies directly on the route of the monsoon as it advances towards the Indian Peninsula from the centre of the Indian Ocean. Having spent four magnificent days in these quaint islands, my understanding of marine life and empathy for ecology has multiplied manifold. I cannot ever forget that momentary glimpse of a turtle, which I suddenly found staring at me questioningly as it bobbed up from below while I was swimming in the lagoon at Bangaram. It seemed to ask what right I had to invade its privacy without so much as by your leave! It was the same feeling I got diving deep in the lagoon off Kavaratti as thousands of enchantingly multi-hued fish swarmed around me. I put out my palm at some of them;

A PLACE OF EXQUISITE NATURAL BEAUTY, SPELLBINDING TRANQUILITY, RICH IN AN ASTONISHING ARRAY OF MARINE LIFE, LAKSHADWEEP IS NOW FACE-TO-FACE WITH A CRUCIAL DECISION ABOUT ITS FUTURE. WHICH WAY SHOULD IT GO? SHOULD IT EMULATE THE EXAMPLE OF ITS SOUTHERN COUSIN, MALDIVES, WHICH HAS BECOME ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SOUGHT AFTER DESTINATIONS WITH TOURISM EMERGING AS THE BACKBONE OF ITS ECONOMY? OR, SHOULD LAKSHADWEEP RESIST THE TEMPTATION OF MINDLESS PROSPERITY, CHOOSING INSTEAD TO RETAIN ITS MILLENNIAL LIFESTYLE QUIANT BUT COMFORTABLE? IT'S A TOUGH CALL



innocently, they came towards me assuming I was offering food and darted away furiously upon realising there was no meal on offer. Being first-timers, we did not risk diving or snorkelling in the deep seas beyond the coral reef, although diving instructors everywhere assured us that even those (like my wife Shobori) who could not swim had nothing to worry once a life jacket was worn. Apparently, the walls of coral that constitute the reef offer fantastic glimpses of marine life. After a couple of days familiarising with the idiom of deep-sea diving, it's worth stepping into the open sea beyond the reef. At Bangaram, we snorkelled close to the reef on which a ship had run aground 70 years ago. The sights we saw were reminiscent of underwater documentaries you watch on Discovery or National Geographic. Apart from thousands of small, colourful fish, many giant-sized fish have also made the wrecked hull of the ship their home, elegantly sashaying in and out of the protection it offers. A visit to the shipwreck at Bangaram is highly recommended as the water is shallow and one can always stand up in case of any difficulty. It is indeed a lost world waiting to be discovered in the warm, tropical waters of Lakshadweep. Living corals are rarely seen anywhere in the world today, but the waters off these islands are brimming with them. Islanders, however, mournfully point out that the El Nino of 1997 that brought swirling currents of warm water caused widespread death and

destruction of corals. “It's only now that the corals are regenerating once again. But it will take decades, provided there is no other ecological disaster, for corals here to regain their earlier vitality,” a diving instructor said at Kadmat. Interestingly, it could be dangerous at times to provoke live coral. Clamp-corals, for instance, close their apparently inert mouths tight if you happen to put your finger into them. Unless uprooted (which means killed), it isn't possible to make them let go. Moral of the story: Let sleeping corals lie. Similarly, the multifinned Lionfish can release sufficient poison if touched, to disable a human arm for around three hours. A good diving instructor is one who points to all these facts of underwater life even as he expertly guides you through the depths. We had to learn sign language to communicate underwater even for snorkelling. Making an ‘O’ by joining your thumb and forefinger is an exclamation of joy, putting your palm out and shaking it as if indicating ‘so-so’ actually conveys you are not okay, while the thumbs up sign means you aren't comfortable and wish to go up to the surface. Although scuba diving requires some detailed instructions to be carefully followed and carrying a lot of equipment like air cylinders on your back, it is actually quite simple once you get the hang of it. Personally, I found it easier than snorkelling, which entails pulling air from the surface through a nozzle into your lungs while floating

close to the surface. While diving, on the other hand, once you are in water, buoyancy ensures you don't feel the weight of the air cylinders; in fact, a belt studded with metal weights has to be worn so that you can reach the sea floor to get the best view of fish, corals, turtles and even octopuses. The Government-run Dolphin Dive Centre at Kavaratti boasts some of the best trainers, with Sikandar, Taha and Shaikat making us feel comfortable in no time. For the less adventurous, there is the option of travelling into the sea in glass-bottomed boats. I had done that in Maldives and Mauritius, but having experienced the real thing now, that seems rather amateurish. Our first halt in Lakshadweep was at Bangaram, reached by a 90 minute flight to Agatti from Kochi and thereafter another 90 minutes by boat. The day we arrived, the Pawan Hans chopper, the lifeline between the islands, got grounded due to a technical snag. Hence the boat-ride, which in fact, we quite enjoyed. Bangaram is Lakshadweep's most frequented destination, mainly because of a much publicised resort comprising 29 thatched cottages. Running for 17 years it now provides a model for similar development of other uninhabited islands. The Government facility, the Dak Bungalow with four independent cottages, shares the beach with this resort.

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BUDGET EXPECTATIONS 2024-2025

Expectations from the healthcare sector in a budget are significant, particularly in the context of public health and well-being. Industry players share some common expectations:



DR ANIL GULATI
Chairman and CEO, Pharmazz

The pharmaceutical industry in India has seen unprecedented growth in recent years and has to be prepared for increased growth in the coming years. It will be necessary to improve manufacturing quality while reducing costs. Innovation is essential to industry growth; therefore, the adoption of novel technologies to discover drugs from new chemical entities needs to be incentivized. In this upcoming budget, the government could advance policies that promote improved drug manufacturing quality and modernize regulations to aid new drug discoveries.



DR ANSHUL GUPTA
Director, of Medical & Haemato-Oncology, Medanta Hospital, Lucknow

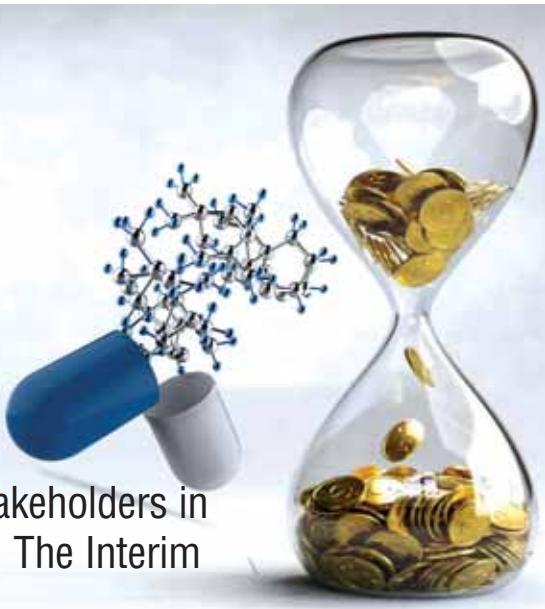
In 2023-24, the Union Health Ministry had allocated Rs 89,155 crore. This was an increase of 13% over revised estimates for 2022-23. So it is but natural that in the current fiscal, we expect the Government to further increase the health budget allocation so as to improve health care facility in the country. The proposed areas where this budget allocation should be done are:

- The health insurance coverage under Ayushman Bharat scheme should be revised / increased for cancer patients as the cancer care including cancer drugs and supportive care are expensive and the patients despite being the scheme's beneficiary could not afford the anti cancer care.
- For patients having their personal health insurance, additional benefits (over and above existing) under section 80 C should be given.
- Non-Governmental organizations including private hospitals and institutes should also be made eligible for Government funding for research projects.

ULTIMATE GOAL

HEALTH FOR ALL

Ahead of the budget, the HEALTH PIONEER catches up with the stakeholders in the Indian Pharma/Health sectors to get a glimpse of their wishlist. The Interim Budget will be presented on February 1, 2024.



KEY DEMANDS

NATHEALTH: Healthcare Federation of India, an organisation that involves leading healthcare service providers, medical technology providers (devices & equipment), diagnostic service providers and other stakeholders is seeking:

INCREASING HEALTH BUDGET ALLOCATION: India's public healthcare spending remains low, at only around 1.6-1.8 % of GDP, insufficient to tackle the magnitude of healthcare challenges. NATHEALTH recommends increasing budget allocation to 2.5% of GDP to augment the social insurance schemes, boosting healthcare reforms and infrastructure and fast-tracking digital health services across India.

RATIONALIZATION OF GST: Although increased budget allocation has been a longstanding request from the sector, there remains another persistent issue concerning the healthcare credit chain through GST. Indirect tax-

ation and lack of input credit for providers poses a significant challenge for the healthcare industry. NATHEALTH strongly recommends outlining a reform agenda in the Finance Bill aimed at restructuring the healthcare GST framework.

BOOSTING THE VALUE CHAIN: The focus should remain on augmenting local capabilities to extend care to the most remote areas, while concurrently emphasizing the localization of the value chain. Additionally, harmonizing global best practices necessitates integrated budget allocations for effective execution as well safeguards for quality and patient safety.

BOOSTING MEDICAL VALUE TRAVEL: Medical value-added services and Travel is expected to be USD 10 billion. To further aid the growth of this segment the issue of MAT credit needs immediate government attention. It is

crucial for individuals to benefit from exports. This move will give them an opportunity to offset it. It will create a more significant value proposition to focus on MVTs and boost capacity.

SEPARATE BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR SKILLING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS: While the government announced the establishment of 157 new nursing colleges in the previous budget, strengthening health workforce situation in India is one such area that needs continuous government and policy focus. India's doctor-to-patient ratio is lower than WHO recommended threshold. NATHEALTH recommends that the government should allocate funds for training and development programs for doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare workers, putting special emphasis on digital learning stack and smart certification standards.



CHANDRA GANJOO
Group Chief Executive Officer, Trivitrion Healthcare

import bill of over Rs 63,200 crore, it's crucial for the government to catalyze domestic manufacturing. This not only reduces the financial strain but also propels India towards self-reliance in medical technology. The industry advocates for a comprehensive strategy: incentivizing R&D and indigenous production, streamlining regulatory processes for faster product approvals, and enhancing infrastructure and skills. Tax incentives for investment in advanced technology,

streamlining bureaucratic procedures, and fostering industry-academia collaboration can stimulate domestic manufacturing. This approach should align with global standards and ensure a stable regulatory environment to attract investments.



RAJIV NATH
Forum Coordinator, Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AIMeD)

As per GTRI report of August 2023, the Indian medical devices industry can expand from USD 12 billion to USD 50 billion by 2030, reducing import reliance to 35% and boosting exports to USD 18 billion. Supporting policies are needed so that Indian Medical Devices Industry can make quality healthcare accessible and affordable for the common masses, aim to place India among the top five medical devices manufacturing hubs worldwide and help end the 80-85 per cent import dependence forced upon us and an ever-increasing import bill of over 63,200 Crore.

We have the following Budget recommendations to cut down the ever-increasing import bill:

- Increase in Custom Duty to a nominal 10%-15% Duty and a predictable tariff policy
- Correction of Inverted Duty by levying Health Cess of 5% custom duty on balance Medical Devices (this was not earlier applied to all HS Codes). Cess is used for Ayushman Bharat.
- Trade Margin Capping by monitoring MRP of Imports (if over 10 - 20 times of CIF)
- Income Tax benefits for project investments in Medical Devices Manufacturing.



PAVAN CHOUDARY
Chairman of the Medical Technology Association of India (MTAI)

In recent years, the Medical Device industry has benefited hugely due to noteworthy initiatives by the government, such as the National Medical Device Policy (NMDP), the Promotion of Research & Innovation in the Pharma-MedTech sector (PRIP) scheme, the establishment of medical device parks and elevation of branding and promotional strategies for the growth of the sector. That said we must also be cognizant of the nuances of the medical device sector which comprises mechanical and engineering complexities. Unlike other sectors, most medical devices have a high value but are produced in low volumes.

It may therefore not be economically viable to manufacture all devices in a single geographical area. Even countries with highly developed medical manufacturing hubs like the USA, Japan, Germany, etc. also rely on imports to cater to the healthcare needs of their country.

India's current tariff duty structure on medical device imports is very high. This high customs duty regime adversely impacts the costs of medical devices which contradicts the government's efforts to provide low-cost healthcare available to the masses through schemes like the Ayushman Bharat program (PMJAY). Therefore, we request the government that for products where the ability to import substitutes is still some time away, the customs duty rate should be reduced

DOCTOR SPEAK

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR NEWBORN SAFE DURING WINTER

Winter months can be harsh for everyone, especially for newborns. These delicate little beings require extra care and protection to ensure their safety and comfort during the cold weather. Here are some essential pointers to follow when it comes to your little ones.



DR RAGHURAM MALLAIAH
Senior Director Neonatology, Fortis la femme, New Delhi

In India, it is a common practice to over wrap or over clad babies during the winter months. However, it is important to remember the golden thumb rule – dress your baby in one layer of clothing more than what you are wearing, regardless of the season. This ensures that they are adequately warm without the risk of overheating.

Room Temperature: Maintaining the right room temperature is crucial for your baby's well-being. Resist the temptation to keep the room excessively warm as overheating can be more dangerous than the cold. Aim for an ambient room temperature of around 22-23 degrees Celsius, which most babies find comfortable. If you decide to use room heaters, do so sparingly.

Avoid keeping them on for extended periods and limit their usage to specific tasks such as bathing, changing clothes or diapers, or during exceptionally cold spells. Continuous use of heaters can lead to dry skin, irritation of breathing passages, and even discomfort in their eyes.

Winter air tends to be dry and arid, which can cause discomfort for your baby. Consider using a humidifier to add moisture to the air, making it easier for your little one to breathe and ensuring a comfortable environment.

Keeping your baby's vaccinations up to date is crucial, especially during the winter months. Vaccinations protect your baby from dangerous respiratory infections that are more prevalent during this time of the year. Consult your pediatrician to ensure your little one receives the necessary vaccinations.

Practicing good hygiene is essential to minimize the transmission of viruses during winter. Regularly wash your hands before handling your baby, and avoid taking them to crowded places where the risk of contracting infections is higher.

Breastfeeding provides your baby with both hydration and protection against infections. It is essential to continue breastfeeding during winter months to ensure your little one stays healthy and well-nourished.

Cold weather can cause dryness and discomfort for your baby's delicate skin. Use baby moisturizers to keep their skin hydrated and prevent dryness.

Contrary to some beliefs, it is perfectly safe to continue giving your baby oil massages and warm baths even during winters. Just remember to keep the bathroom warm and cozy, ensuring your little one enjoys a soothing experience. A warm bath and massage before bedtime can promote better sleep as well.

If your baby develops a fever or cough, which are more common in winters, it is important to consult a paediatrician immediately. Prompt medical attention will help identify and address any potential health concerns.

Winter may pose challenges for newborns, but by following these guidelines, you can provide them with the extra protection they need. Remember, your little bundle of joy deserves a safe and comfortable winter experience. Stay attentive, prioritize their well-being, and cherish the precious moments with your newborn during this beautiful season.

BOOK REVIEW

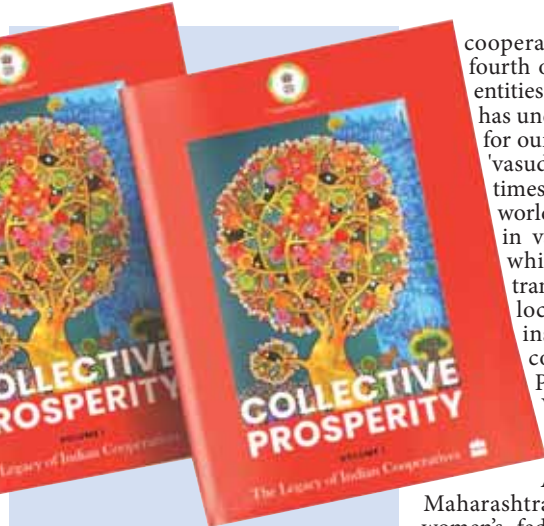
Fostering Collective Prosperity Through Cooperatives

This coffee table book is not just a collection of stories but a testament to the resilience, empowerment, economic growth, and social embeddedness achieved by cooperatives across India. It also serves as a guidepost for the future as India strives to become a global leader

BY ARCHANA JYOTI

The coffee table book 'Collective Prosperity: The Legacy of Indian Cooperatives', is all about recognizing and celebrating the achievements of Indian cooperative societies over the 75 years, taking readers on a tour of as many successful cooperatives from diverse sectors. Recently unveiled by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah in the national capital, the book is compiled by Pune-based Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (Vamnicom), a national institute under the aegis of the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT) and promoted by the Union Cooperation Ministry. The volume is the maiden effort by the institute highlighting the best practices in the sector to help the other aspirants to take a cue. One is therefore little surprised, as we delve into its pages, we embark on a journey treaded by historic cooperatives to the likes of India Coffee House, lesser known gems Looms of Ladakh to the Uralungal Labour Cooperative and iconic ones including Amul, IFFCO, Krishak Bharati Cooperativem and National

Consumer Cooperative Federation (NCCF) to name a few. Spread throughout the landscape of the country, these entities are silently working to bring prosperity while opening new opportunities for the individual and for the group to reach their individual and common goals, aligned with the vision of "Sahakar se Samridhhi " as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as also has been pointed out by Vamnicom's Director Hema Yadav who has played a significant role in the book's preparation. It is a valuable resource for individuals and communities looking to actively participate in cooperative endeavors. The remarks of Union Cooperative Secretary Gyaneshwar Singh in his Foreword rightly emphasize the significance of the Indian cooperative system which is one of the biggest in the world particularly in supporting agriculture and allied sectors with almost 30 crore members forming the backbone of the rural ecosystem serving mainly



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Author: Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management team
Pages: 217 | Price: ₹799

small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, handloom weavers, fishermen, rural and urban poor, SCS, STs and other backward classes. It needs to be mentioned here that India is home to staggering 8.5 lakhs such

cooperatives- comprising one-fourth of the total number of such entities in the world. Cooperation has undoubtedly been a way of life for our forefathers who advocated 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam' from times immemorial. Some of the world's best known cooperatives in various sectors are in India which are continuously transforming the lives of our local communities. For instance, Asia's first cooperative sugar factory, Padmashri Dr Vithalrao Vikhe Patil Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Limited is at a small village Pravaranagar, Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Similarly, India's first women's federation, the Gujarat State Women's SEWA Co-operative Federation Limited was formally established with an aim to support its members in capacity-building for management, marketing and policy and advocacy interventions with key stakeholders. The Dhundi Solar Pump Irrigators' Cooperative Enterprise (SPICE) established in 2016 at Dhundi, in Anand district, Gujarat is the world's first-ever

enterprise to use solar power to run their irrigation pumps while SWaCH is country's first wholly-owned cooperative of self-employed waste collectors in Pune, Maharashtra. Kerala-based AYCOOPS is India's first cooperative media production house in the cooperative sector which, unlike the traditional cooperatives, operates like a start-up. New-age Eco-friendly Cooperatives. Commendably, these cooperatives belong to different parts of the country, which is an indicator of a fair distribution of development across the land even though a lot still remains to be done in this respect.

For instance, as the book extends its reach to highlight cooperative hospitals in India, it is revealed that most of them are located in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh. This calls for spreading in populated States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha to fill the widening demand-odisha gap in the sector.

In tough times like those during the Covid-19 crisis when the entire world was swept by economic slowdown painting a gloomy future, AMUL, MILKFED, NAFED, MARFED, and other organizations provided necessary services

to the people and the farmers despite the supply chain being disrupted by the lockdown.

The narrative also touches upon the significance of cooperative banks, exemplified by the Saraswat Bank, and health cooperatives, providing a holistic view of the diverse roles cooperatives play in India's economic and social landscape. The impact of cooperatives on poverty alleviation, food and nutritional security, social integration, and employment generation is acknowledged, portraying them as social instruments of development, complimented by the recent initiatives of the Ministry to fortify the sector's growth.

For instance, by expanding the scope of cooperative activities and integrating them into various facets of the economy, the aim is to create a dynamic ambience that resonates with the aspirations of the younger generation while drawing their energy and ideas.

In essence, this compact collection not only shines a spotlight on the past achievements of Indian cooperatives but also serves as a guidepost for the future, as India strives to become a global leader. No doubt, the cooperative sector can be a springboard propelling India towards 'Atm Nirbharta' (self-reliant).

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