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JAI JAGANNATHA



With the blessings of
Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha,
The divine inauguration of the
'Shree Mandira Parikrama Prakalpa'
will conclude today.

17th JANUARY | 1:15 PM ONWARDS

The inauguration ceremony will be telecast live on all Odia TV channels and live streamed on the **"IPR Odisha"** YouTube Channel **7 AM** onwards.



**SHREEMANDIRA
PARIKRAMA
PRAKALPA**

Pousha Shukla Saptami
17 January 2024



Security tightened in Delhi ahead of praan pratishthaa

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police is making adequate security arrangements, including using drones, across the national Capital ahead of the "praan pratishthaa" ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 and the Republic Day celebrations.

"Security has been beefed up across the national capital ahead of praan pratishthaa and the Republic Day. Our forces are already taking out flag march in several sensitive areas identified by the department," a senior police officer said.

The officer added the Delhi Police is "keeping an extra vigil in those sensitive areas" and "using drones to monitor security".

More than 8,000 police personnel have already been deployed in Delhi for the January 26 parade across the national capital.

The night patrolling staffs, who have been directed to check hotels, guest houses and dharamshalas, are checking security measures in place at these facilities, particularly near the railway stations and interstate bus terminals, and their records to know who are visit-



ing the national capital and for what purpose.

"Different markets of Delhi like Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazaar, Chawri Bazaar, Khari Baoli, Kashmiri Gate, Naya Bazaar, Connaught Place, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Bhagirath Place, Kinari Bazaar and several other big or small markets are making their arrangements for January 22," the police officer said.

"Several temples like Prachin Hanuman Mandir, Jhandewalan Mandir, Birla Mandir and Kalka Ji temple will celebrate praan pratishthaa. We are also expecting high footfall and additional security forces will be deployed to maintain law and order situation," he added.

Action is being taken against

anyone found to be violating rules under Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), police said.

Another senior police officer said the "Ministry of Home Affairs has issued directions for verification of tenants and servants, border checking, security of vital installations, malls and markets, and patrolling in areas drawing heavy footfalls".

"Those who are not following the orders, we are taking strict action against them and registering the FIR," he added. The police said that they used drones to monitor the sensitive areas of the northeast district on Tuesday, adding a flag march was taken out on Monday.

Kerjiwal, wife attend Sundar Kand recital event

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accompanied by his wife and the AAP leaders attended the "Sundar Kand" recital programme at a temple in Rohini on Tuesday and sought the blessings of Lord Ram and Hanuman for the country's progress. Kejriwal tweeted, "I along with wife participated in the Shri Sundar Kand Paath organized in Rohini temple to worship the lord." Meanwhile the Delhi BJP said that Kejriwal who recited Sundar Kand, had expressed grief over the construction of Ram temple from the public



platform and opposed it. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister sought happiness, peace and progress of all people. In the over 1.5 hour-long programme,

and they bless you with happiness and prosperity as well as happiness and progress in Delhi and the country," he said on the occasion. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs, councillors and other party leaders along with local people attended the 'Sundar Kand' programmes in all the 70 assembly constituencies in Delhi.

Delhi Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj also participated at Sunderkand Paath in his assembly constituency. Bhardwaj, in a tweet, said, "With the immense grace of Bajrangbali ji, Sunderkand was recited in every assembly of Delhi including Chirag

Delhi. We pray to Bajrangbali ji for everyone's well-being, may there be peace in Delhi, the country and the entire world, may there be goodwill and love everywhere." Taking a dig at the Kejriwal government for organizing 'sunder kand' in all 70 assembly constituencies, the Delhi BJP leaders said that there was a time when CM Kejriwal had opposed the Ram Temple from a public platform and said that he himself and his family including grandmother were very sad that the construction of the Ram Temple was being done hurting sentiments of other religion people.

₹1 crore each to kin of fallen four security staffers, firefighter

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 1 crore each to the kin of four security personnel, a civil defence volunteer, and a firefighter who lost their lives in the line of duty. Revenue Minister Atishi said the scheme covers personnel from various branches to ensure that the families of those who dedicate their lives to protecting people are supported and cared for. The Delhi government provides an honorarium amount of Rs 1 crore to the families of all uniformed personnel residing in Delhi or deployed in Delhi, who showed bravery and lost their lives in the line of duty, she said. Of the six personnel, two are from the Indian Army, two



from the Delhi Police, and one each from the Delhi Civil Defence and Delhi Fire Service. Captain Jayant Joshi, a copilot in the Indian Army's 254 Army Avn Squadron, was killed on August 3, 2021, during a helicopter crash-landed in the Ranjit Sagar Dam. His body was found after nearly 75 days.

Assistant sub-inspector Om Prakash, deployed at the Okhla Industrial Area Police Station, was killed while trying to stop three motorcycle-borne men from escaping after violating rules. Major Raghunath, a resident of Dwarka, was part of the 3rd Battalion of the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces). Participating in an operation to thwart a potential infiltration bid on May 5, 2022, he slipped and fell into a nullah near the line of control. He suffered a serious head injury and was declared dead by doctors. Puneet Gupta, a civil defence volunteer, was run over by a truck while firefighter Praveen Kumar was killed while dousing a blaze at a factory in Bhogarh in north Delhi. Both the incidents took place in 2021.

Airspace restrictions imposed for 11 days from January 19

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Airspace restrictions will be in place in the national capital for 11 days starting from January 19, in connection with the Republic Day preparations and celebrations, according to an official. The restrictions, which will be in force till January 29, will not impact scheduled flights.

Landing or take-off of non-scheduled flights of scheduled airlines, and chartered flights will not be permitted from 10 am to 1.15 pm during the January 19-25 period, the official said on Tuesday.

As per the NOTAM issued by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), these restrictions will be



in force from 6 am to 9 pm during the period from January 26 to 29. Generally, a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) is a notice with information that is essential to personnel involved in flight operations. The official said the curbs will not impact the movement of scheduled flights of scheduled airline operators.

3 new district court complexes approved

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal government's Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) has approved three new district court complexes in Rohini Sector-26, Shastri Park and Karkardooma. After the completion of these three projects, Delhi's District Court will witness an increase of 200 courtrooms. Sharing about the projects, Finance Minister Atishi said keeping the convenience of judges, lawyers, and citizens in mind, these three projects will incorporate better public facilities.

The 11-storey new District Court Complex in Rohini Sector-26 will feature 100 new courtrooms and 270 lawyer chambers, along with modern facilities. The complex will consist of 3 basements, a ground floor, and two 11-storey building blocks. It will house 100 courtrooms and 270 lawyer chambers. The total cost of this project is estimated to be Rs 714.19 crore.

Additionally, a new District Court Complex in Shastri Park will include 48 courtrooms and 175 lawyer stations. The total cost for this project is estimated to be Rs 184.91 crores. The third project involves constructing an additional court block near the existing court in Karkardooma. This new court block will have 50 new courtrooms, and the total cost for this project is estimated to be Rs 199.39 crores.

The Finance Minister said currently, there is a considerable backlog of pending cases on



judges and courts nationwide, leading to unnecessary delays in case resolutions. "In this context, the commitment of the Kejriwal government to provide sufficient judicial infrastructure in the capital is crucial. The government's dedication to building 200 new courtrooms in Delhi in this direction proves to be highly significant in strengthening the judicial system."

"These three projects are highly significant in the direction of enhancing Delhi's judicial infrastructure, and their completion will greatly aid in the swift resolution of legal matters," Atishi said.

She also said that the Kejriwal government is actively working on a war footing to address the shortage of courtrooms in Delhi's district courts, and these three projects are crucial steps in this direction. Keeping the convenience of judges, lawyers, and citizens in mind, these three projects will incorporate better public facilities.

FSSAI extends timeline for Pan Masala warning labels third time

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a breather to the Paan Masala manufacturers, the country's top food regulator, Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has extended the deadline for the third time in a row to them to comply with the provision of bigger health warnings on pan masala packets. The manufacturers are now provided a timeline up till May 1, 2024, instead of November 1, 2023, to comply with the requirement of the warning statement that 'Chewing of pan masala is injurious to health' must cover half i.e. 50% of the front-of-the pack of the label. Contrary to the last two extensions since May 1, 2023 when

three months were given, this time the industry players have been allowed to prepare themselves within six months to implement the warning statement.

The move comes in the wake of representations received from various associations, federations, and industry stakeholders, who have sought additional time to comply with the specified amendment as per Schedule II of the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Second Amendment Regulations, 2022, said the Apex food regulator. The amendment followed after it was noted that while it is mandatory to publish warnings occupying 85% of a cigarette packet, pan masala wrappings had no such warnings. There



have been several reports and observations by the courts like in Gujarat and Assam that the products have cancer-causing substance.

The first deferral for the warning label was for three months from the enforcement date of May 1, 2023. Following this, a

subsequent direction was issued in August when the FSSAI extended the deferment for an additional three months till November this year, citing that the industry needed more time to prepare for compliance. "Considering the industry's requests and after thorough deliberation, the FSSAI has now decided to grant a further extension to the compliance period. The enforcement of the 'note' about Pan Masala will be deferred for an additional six months, starting from 1st November 2023," said a statement from the food regulatory body.

This extension aims to provide businesses with the necessary time to adjust and implement the required changes, allowing them to effectively utilize or

exhaust existing packaging material inventory. "Representation has been received from the association requesting an extension of the period for compliance of the 'note' amendment to exhaust the packaging material having the existing warning and to arrange for the new packaging material," said an official from the apex food regulator.

Boosted by surrogate tobacco advertisements by celebrities and easy availability, the Indian pan masala market has grown by leaps and bounds. According to a report by research firm Expert Market Research, the market reached a value of Rs 57,428 crores in 2020 and is further expected to touch nearly Rs 107,918 crores by 2026.

LG okays Delhi forensic laboratory posts restructuring

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the restructuring of Scientific, Ministerial, Information Technology and Accounts Cadre posts in the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), in the national capital. The restructuring of the FSL Delhi cadre will be at par with the cadre structure of Directorate of Forensic Science Services (DFSS), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

According to a Press statement by Raj Niwas the exercise for restructuring of the cadre which was carried out at the LG's insistence with an aim of meeting the laboratory's requirements, has resulted in the creation of 420 additional posts and abolition/surrender of 144 posts of various categories, which had become redundant.

Further, as per directions issued by Saxena, a separate file is being submitted to the Administrative Reforms and IT Department in respect of 80 posts of Junior Scientific Officer and 10 posts of Data Entry Operators. The proposal relating to creation/abolition of various posts of Scientific, Ministerial, IT and Accounts Cadre posts in FSL, Delhi was submitted by FSL/Home Department, GNCITD in pursuance of meeting dated 23.11.2022 held



under the Chairmanship of LG for restructuring/creation of new posts in FSL with respect to present scenario, volume of work and clearance of backlog pendency in FSL. After examining the matter in consultation with AR, IT and Finance Department, the Home Department submitted the proposal for creation of 420 additional posts and abolition / surrender of 144 posts of various categories.

While a total of 196 scientific posts has been created, that in the new structure for Crime Scene Management Division, 142 posts have been created. In the Administrative and Accounts category, 43 posts would be available and 38 posts of MTS and other miscellaneous staff has been created.

A post of System Analyst has been created in IT department for support and functioning of the recently adopted Blockchain technology, which will be further augmented by creating 90 more posts.

Water outage for 2 days for upkeep

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Water supply will be affected in several areas in Delhi on January 18 and January 19 due to the installation of a flowmeter and maintenance work at the Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) said on Tuesday.

Residents are advised to store sufficient water, and water tankers will be available on request, it said in a notice.

"Due to installation of flowmeter in South Delhi rising main at Sonia Vihar WTP and other maintenance works, the water supply in South Delhi main from Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant shall remain affected for 16 hours. The water supply will not be available on January 18 from 10 am to morning of January 19," the notice said.

The DJB said water supply will be affected in Kallash Nagar, Sarai Kale Khan, Jal Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, Moolchand Hospital, Greater Kailash, Vasant Kunj, Devli, Ambedkar Nagar, Okhla, Kalkaji and Govindpuri.

₹544 crore for Mandi facelift

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to ensure development of various mandis across the capital, Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board (DAMB) approved a budget worth Rs 544.80 crore. The announcement to this effect was made by Development Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday after a board meeting held at Delhi Secretariat. The board approved a budget for mandis in the financial year 2024-25. The meeting included officials from the Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board (DAMB) and Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC).

Giving details, Rai said, "The board has given the green signal to a budget of Rs 544.80 crore for the development of mandis. For the financial year 2024-25, the board has allocated approximately Rs 225.96 crore to APMC, Azadpur; Rs 20.07 crore to Fruit & Vegetables Market, Ghazipur; Rs 21.27 crore to FP & EMC Ghazipur; Rs 8.63 crore to Flower Market; Rs 21.77 crore to APMC Keshopur; Rs 31.36 crore to APMC, Narela; Rs 5.36 crore to APMC, Najafgarh and Rs 210.40 crore to DAMB."

NGT slaps ₹15,000 fine for not submitting report on CM house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed a cost of Rs 15,000 on the Delhi forest department for the non-submission of a proper report by a panel formed earlier to find the panel position regarding the alleged violations of green norms at Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence. The NGT also directed the Delhi government and its public works department (PWD) to pay a cost of Rs 10,000 each for not submitting their reports according to the tribunal's earlier directions.

The NGT was hearing a petition that alleged the raising of permanent and semi-permanent constructions and the



falling of more than 20 trees for developing structures at 6, Flag Staff Road (the chief minister's residence) and 45-47, Rajpur Road (properties adjoining it).

In May last year, the tribunal formed a joint committee for ascertaining the factual position. The committee comprised the chief secretary and principal secretary (environ-

ment and forest) of Delhi, a nominee of the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) and the district magistrate of North Delhi.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said despite repeated directions passed in July and October 2023, the committee failed to submit its report and the tribunal, in November last year, granted it four weeks, failing which the chief secretary was directed to appear before the green panel.

In an order passed on Monday, the bench, also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel, said, "No report by the joint committee is on record even today nor has the chief secretary appeared by virtual mode."

Long Covid patients at higher risk of digestive diseases: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

If you had or suffer from long Covid-19, chances are you have a higher risk for digestive diseases, for at least up to one year, says a study published in the journal BMC Medicine. It has shown that people who suffered both severe and mild Covid-19 infections suffered from digestive diseases like gastrointestinal (GI) dysfunction, peptic ulcers, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), gallbladder disease,

nonalcoholic liver disease, and pancreatic disease.

"Our study provides insights into the association between Covid-19 and the long-term risk of digestive system disorders. Covid-19 patients are at a higher risk of developing digestive diseases," said the researchers in the paper.

"The risks exhibited a stepwise escalation with the severity of COVID-19, were noted in cases of reinfection, and persisted even after 1-year follow-up. This highlights the need to understand the varying risks of

digestive outcomes in Covid-19 patients over time, particularly those who experienced reinfection, and develop appropriate follow-up strategies," they added.

In the study, the team from Southern Medical University in China and the University of California Los Angeles, US, compared rates of digestive diseases among Covid survivors 30 or more days after infection (112,311), a contemporary comparison group (359,671), and a pre-Covid group (370,979) in the UK.

Common antipsychotic drugs linked with increased risk of cardiac death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The use of the common antipsychotic drugs such as quetiapine and haloperidol given to patients of mental illness such as schizophrenia and psychosis is associated with an increased risk of ventricular arrhythmias and sudden cardiac death (SCD), a new study in Heart Rhythm said. The findings underscore the importance of closely monitoring patients receiving these medications and implementing appropriate risk mitigation strategies to ensure patient safety.

"Caution is advised to manage cardiac risks in patients prescribed these medications," said the authors of the study. Ventricular arrhythmias are abnormal heartbeats

that originate in your lower heart chambers, called ventricles. These types of arrhythmias cause your heart to beat too fast, which prevents oxygen-rich blood from circulating to the brain and body and may result in cardiac arrest. The risks of cardiac conditions associated with the use of antipsychotics have been a concern for the last 30 years. Drugs have previously been either removed from the market or had their use restricted due to an unacceptably high risk of lethal ventricular arrhythmias.

Drug-induced cardiac arrhythmias, however, remain an important clinical issue because there are drugs that increase the risk of SCD, but they remain on the market because they serve an important clinical need, and there are no safer alternatives.

OPINION 6 HEED ELECTORAL MATH TO WIN LS ELECTIONS

WORLD 8 RISHI SUNAK FACES CONSERVATIVE REBELLION IN PARLIAMENT

MONEY 10 STOCK MARKETS END 5 DAYS WINNING RUN

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



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NAGAL ENTERS AUSTRALIAN OPEN 11 SPORTS

PRAAN PRATISHTHAA OF RAM BEGINS



BISWAJEET BANERJEE/ BP SINGH ■ AYODHYA

The installation of the new statue of Ram Lalla in the revered Ram Temple in Ayodhya has entered a significant phase with the initiation of Praan Pratishthaa rituals starting on Tuesday.

Tuesday. Prior to this, a thorough cleanliness drive was carried out in the Ram Janmabhoomi complex, and the temple itself was cleansed with water from the holy Saryu River.

While earlier reports hinted at Prime Minister Narendra Modi being the main Yajmaan during the Praan Pratishthaa, individuals involved with the ceremony clarified that PM Modi will play a symbolic role rather than being the main host.

time for Praan Pratishthaa, Pandit Laxmikant Dixit, the officiant of the Praan Pratishthaa in the Ram temple, and Swami Ramvinay Das, the general secretary of Shrimath Trust of Ramanand sect, shared insights into the hosting arrangements.

decision follows the pattern set during the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the Ram Mandir in 2020, where Ravindra Narayan Singh and his wife were the hosts. Pandit Venkatraman Ghanpathy, trustee of Srikashi Vishwanath Temple and a scholar involved in the Ram Mandir Praan Pratishthaa, added that Prime Minister Modi's role will primarily involve his presence in the sanctum sanctorum on January 22, participating in specific rituals.

Centre assures UP seamless journey to Ayodhya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday announced that it has enhanced the medical facilities in Ayodhya ahead of the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple next week. This initiative is aimed not only at ensuring a smooth event but also to cater to the large number of devotees expected to throng the holy site after the ceremony.



Broadcasting, announced that a 120-bed hospital in Ayodhya has been upgraded, with additional emergency beds. Chandra, who also holds the additional charge of Secretary in the Health Ministry, visited Ayodhya on January 10 to assess the preparations for health facilities related to the Praan Pratishthaa of the Ram Mandir.

including the addition of 200 beds, including 50 emergency beds. A team from the Trauma Centre at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi has been sent to Ayodhya to train 200 paramedics in the temple town to handle medical emergencies, Chandra said.

CAPSULE

Ramaswamy quits Presidential race

Washington: Donald Trump scripted a decisive victory in the Iowa caucuses, cementing his status as the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, a contest that also saw Indian-American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy ending his bid and backing the former US President.

Tighter IT rules for deepfake: Government

New Delhi: Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Tuesday said compliance with the advisory on deepfakes has been "mixed" from social media and online platforms, and promised that amended IT rules will be notified in a week to tackle the issue.

Gita Press runs out of Ramcharitmanas

New Delhi: As the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya approaches, many people are eagerly buying copies of Ramcharitmanas. The Gita Press in Gorakhpur has run out of stock due to high demand.

SC says no to survey in Mathura, for now



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Allahabad High Court order that allowed a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple in Mathura.

appointment of a court commissioner to oversee the survey of the mosque premises which, the Hindu side claims, hold signs suggesting that it was a temple once.

court commissioner. It should be very specific on the purpose. You can't leave everything to the court to look into it," the bench told senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Hindu bodies like Bhagwan Shri Krishna Virajman and others.

MODI MEDITATES



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the Veerabhadra Temple at Lepakshi in Sri Sathya Sai district on Tuesday

PTI

Chithra to travel with chhoti si aasha to meet Ram

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Faces assault for getting invite

South Indian Nightingale. That is how music connoisseurs describe KS Chithra, the ace playback singer. Six national film awards, Padma Bhushan (2021), and a host of international honours have made Chithra a musician belonging to the global league.

people of Kerala, especially the believers, to observe the Prana Prathista of the Bhavya Lord Ram Temple at Ayodhya on January 22 by lighting diya and reciting hymns in praise of Lord Ram.



potential to boomerang and cause a lot of damage to them," said Rama Chandran. He expressed his desire to listen to Chithra singing the age-old hymn "Pibare Ramarasam..." penned by Sadashiva Brahmendra, a monk who lived during the 15th/16th century in Tamil Nadu.

as a mission to ridicule, degenerate, and humiliate Sanatana Dharma. "This has been going on for quite some time now. Critics feel that by making fun of the customs and traditions of Sanatana Dharma, it would deter followers from embracing it.

BJP attacks Rahul over Ram temple jibe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi saying he would like people to believe that the faith of Hindus can be manipulated but no one wants him to interpret how they should practise their beliefs. The Ram temple is a deeply felt emotion by Hindus in every corner of the country, Union minister and BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said after Rahul Gandhi accused the BJP of turning the January 22 consecration ceremony at Ayodhya into a party event. With the former Congress president targeting the BJP over the Ram temple issue and also slamming the Modi Government for its handling of the economy, Chandrasekhar hit back at him at a press conference. "Rahul Gandhi lives in a la-la world. He thinks everything he says is predicated on nobody understanding the truth and he can get away with these atro-



cialous lies. He tried so in 2014 and 2019 and is trying again. The people of India are wise enough. They understand the truth and what his politics is about," he said. The minister cited the performance of the Congress government in Karnataka which he blamed for "corruption and farmers' distress" in the state. Rahul had said in Nagaland that it is difficult for his party's leaders to attend the January 22 ceremony as the BJP and the RSS have turned it into a "political event" centred around Prime Minister Narendra

Modi. His remarks at a press conference during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra here came days after the invitation to the event at the Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. With a Niti Aayog report saying that over 24.82 crore people moved out of multidimensional poverty in nine years till 2022-23, Chandrasekhar lauded Modi's pro-poor and welfare policies for development and accused the Congress of misleading the poor with empty slogans of 'Garibi Hatao'.

The Modi government has reversed the "anyay" (injustice), he said in a swipe at Gandhi's Nyay Yatra. The Congress played on the poor for decades, he said. The Modi government has made a transformational impact, he said. Since 2015, more than 1 lakh start-ups and 112 unicorns have come up, the BJP leader said, adding that a parliamentary report in 2012 had noted that nine groups had cornered 97 per cent of the net worth in the banking system. Capital availability for the young innovators was then scarce but now they are rising due to a supportive system, he added. There will be 10 lakh start-ups and 10 thousand unicorns in the next 10 years, he claimed, asserting that India has become a technology-producing country from a technology-consuming country. It has led to a steady decline in the unemployment rate, he added. Union minister and senior BJP leader Anurag Thakur on

Tuesday said the opposition parties should stop commenting on the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as it has been built after a long wait of 500 years. Thakur took part in cleaning the Hanuman mandir premises at Connaught Place on Tuesday, under a campaign to clean local temples launched by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the ceremony in Ayodhya on January 22. "Some people are still not happy with the construction of the temple," Thakur told reporters when asked about the opposition parties' charge that the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have turned the "pran pratishtha" ritual into a political event. There are some who are pained at the construction of the temple, there are some who are pained by the "pran pratishtha" ceremony and then there are some who have to give statements on it for the sake of their politics, the Union minister said.

Mobile users may soon be able to stream videos without internet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday said mobile users may soon be able to stream videos without a SIM card or an internet connection as Direct-to-Mobile broadcasting could become a reality in the near future. Addressing a Broadcasting Summit, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Apurva Chandra said trials of the home-grown Direct-to-Mobile (D2M) technology would soon be held in 19 cities and made a strong pitch for reserving the 470-582 MHz spectrum for this emerging technology. Chandra said a 25-30 per cent shift of video traffic to D2M would unlock the 5G networks, accelerating the nation's digital evolution and democratising content delivery. Last year, pilot projects to test the D2M technology were carried out in Bengaluru, Kartavya Path and Noida. Chandra said the D2M tech-



nology would help reach nearly 8-9 crore "TV Dark" homes across the country. Of the 280 million households in the country, only 190 million have television sets. He said there were 80 crore smartphones in the country and 69 per cent of content accessed by users was in the video format. Chandra said heavy use of video led to the clogging of mobile networks, which resulted in the buffering of content. Developed by Saankhya Labs and IIT Kanpur, the D2M broadcasting technology leverages terrestrial

telecommunications infrastructure and public broadcaster-assigned spectrum to transmit video, audio, and data signals directly to compatible mobile and smart devices. With the potential to reach over a billion mobile devices, the adoption of D2M technology promises transformative benefits, including cost reductions in data transmission and access, improvements in network efficiency and resilience, and potentially leading to the establishment of a nationwide emergency alert system.

Employees do not need permission to pursue online Mission Karmayogi courses: Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday said the Government employees do not need permission to pursue courses on an online platform of Mission Karmayogi, aimed at fostering their capacity building. The Personnel Ministry clarification comes after it noticed that provisions contained in earlier official directives were being interpreted to mean that government servants in the ministries/departments/other organisations (MDOs) are required to seek permission to enrol for and consume courses available on iGoT (integrated government online

training) Karmayogi platform. In an order, it said those directives "do not apply to online courses intended to be pursued by government servants on iGoT Karmayogi". The Government of India is implementing a flagship programme -- the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB) or Mission Karmayogi -- to foster capacity building of the civil services for addressing the changing needs and aspirations of the citizens. "Central to the programme is competency-driven capacity building approach enabled through the comprehensive online platform - iGoT

Karmayogi," said the order issued to all central government departments and ministries. The iGoT Karmayogi platform intends to harmonise the institutional and individual competency needs and democratise anytime, anywhere learning, it said, adding that all the ministries/departments are requested to bring this clarification to the notice of all concerned under their administrative control. Meanwhile Union Personnel Minister Jitendra Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured that benefits of various government welfare schemes reach the doorstep of citizens.



Addressing a 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' programme at Imphal in Manipur, the minister of state for personnel said there was a time when citizens had to go from one office to another or grease the official

machinery even for small benefits. "Now, PM Narendra Modi has turned everything upside down. Government officials come to the doorstep of each and every citizen since they

have been made accountable to authorities to report whether all beneficiaries have been covered or not," a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry quoted Singh as saying. This has been made possible due to the visionary and imaginative leadership of the prime minister that has made citizens the nodal point of government planning. Every welfare scheme is devised with the common man in mind, he said. "Purely objective parameters are being followed to deliver justice wherever justice had been denied in the past," he said. Prime Minister Modi will always be credited for having

introduced a new work culture in India wherein each poor and public welfare scheme is designed to reach the last man in the last queue, regardless of caste, creed, religion or vote-bank considerations, the minister said. Modi has ensured doorstep delivery of government welfare benefits to citizens. "With the Kashmir valley soon to be linked by railways with the rest of the country in the next few months, Udhampur is going to emerge as the most important railway junction in north India," said Singh. Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur is Singh's parliamentary constituency. "We have already demanded

that a full-fledged division headquarters of the railways be set up at Udhampur," he said. The 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' is aimed at disseminating information about various government welfare schemes and ensuring that their benefits reach people. It focuses on various 'Jan Bhagidari' events like experience-sharing by beneficiaries of schemes, interaction with progressive farmers, and celebration of achievements of gram panchayats that achieve 100 per cent saturation of schemes like Ayushman Card, Jal Jeevan Mission, Jan Dhan Yojana and PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, among others.

Kavitha skips ED questioning in Delhi excise policy case: Officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BRS leader Kavitha K did not appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday for a fresh round of questioning in connection with a money-laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy, officials said. The 45-year-old daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao is understood to have communicated her decision not to comply with the ED summons to the investigating officer through an email. Her lawyer, Nitesh Rana, said that "there is a Supreme Court order that has said that the ED cannot summon Kavitha in this case". However, ED sources have said that the BRS leader had obtained a temporary relief from the apex court last year and it is not valid now. The federal agency might issue a fresh summons to her. The



sources said the ED will take a decision in this context soon. Kavitha K or Kavitha Kalvakuntla was questioned thrice last year in connection with the case and the ED had recorded her statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC has asserted in the past that she had done no wrong and accused the BJP-led Centre of "using" the ED as the saffron party could not gain a "backdoor entry" into Telangana.

The ED has recently issued a fourth summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the case. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader has been asked to appear before the agency on January 18. The last time Kavitha deposed before the ED, she was understood to have been confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman and an accused in the case, Arun Ramchandran Pillai, who allegedly shared close ties with her, apart from those of a few

others involved in the case. Pillai, the ED had said, "represented the South Group", an alleged liquor cartel linked to Kavitha and others that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the AAP to gain a larger share of the retail liquor market in the national capital under the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2020-21. The "South Group", according to the ED, comprises Sarath Reddy (former promoter of Aurobindo Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSR Congress MP from the Ongole Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others. The ED has also alleged in Pillai's remand papers that he "represented the benami investments" of Kavitha in the case. Kavitha was questioned by the CBI in the case. The ED case of money laundering was filed taking cognisance of the CBI FIR.

Centre sets up tribunal to assess if Tehreek Hurriyat in Jammu and Kashmir is unlawful

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday set up a tribunal consisting of a Delhi High Court judge to adjudicate if there is sufficient ground for declaring pro-Pakistan separatist Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir, as an unlawful association. The Jammu and Kashmir-based group, founded by deceased separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was declared outlawed by the government on December 31 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, for five years. In a notification, the Union Home Ministry said exercising the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 5 read with sub-section (1) of section 4 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, (37 of 1967), the Central government constituted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal consisting of Justice Sachin



Datta, Judge, High Court of Delhi, for the purpose of adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH), Jammu and Kashmir, as an unlawful association. The organisation was declared banned as it has been fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India propaganda in the Union territory. While imposing the ban on the separatist amalgam, the Union Home Ministry had said it is known for its involvement in fomenting terrorism and anti-

India propaganda for fanning the secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir. The TeH's objective is to separate Jammu and Kashmir from India and establish Islamic rule in Jammu and Kashmir. The ministry said the leaders and members of the TeH have been involved in raising funds through various sources, including Pakistan and its proxy organisations, for perpetrating unlawful activities, including supporting terrorist activities and sustained stone-pelting on the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir.

The ministry said the TeH and its members by their activities show sheer disrespect towards the constitutional authority and constitutional set up of the country. The TeH members are also paying tributes to the terrorists, who were killed in encounters with the security forces and its members have been involved in supporting terrorist activities with an intent to create a reign of terror in the country, thereby endangering the security and public order of the state, the notification said. The home ministry said the TeH and its leaders and members have been indulging in unlawful activities, which are prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty, security and communal harmony of the country, adding the group never believed in a democratic system of governance and its leadership gave repeated calls to boycott the assembly elections on multiple occasions.

Seat sharing issues among INDIA Bloc partners will be resolved: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KOHIMA

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday expressed confidence that the seat-sharing issues among the INDIA bloc partners will be resolved and claimed that the coalition will defeat the BJP in this year's Lok Sabha polls. He also said there is mutual respect and affection between the leaders of the INDIA bloc, which he asserted is "an ideological formation" that is in opposition to the idea of the RSS and BJP. Addressing a Press conference in Nagaland during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, Rahul said the status of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) is "very good". "We are in conversation with our partners. The issue of seat sharing is being taken up. Those discussions are ongoing and I think they are going quite well. Let us see where those discussions end. Broadly, a lot of those discussions are quite simple. They are not complex discussions and are relatively easy discussions to have. So I am quite confident that they will be resolved," he said.



Asked about reports that Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (United) chief Nitish Kumar was upset after the last meeting of the INDIA bloc, Gandhi said the media "overplays" these things and does not show the mood and brotherhood during the coalition's meetings. "By raising one issue, you (media) make that the main issue. There is mutual respect and affection between the leaders of the INDIA formation," the former Congress president said. The INDIA bloc is an ideological formation that is placing itself in opposition to the idea of the BJP-RSS, he added. "I am very confident that the

small problems of the INDIA bloc will be resolved and we will together fight the BJP in the election and defeat it," Gandhi asserted. His remarks came at a time when the constituents of the INDIA bloc are engaged in talks over seat sharing for the Lok Sabha polls, with Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal proving to be the sticking points among the partners. Rahul expressed confidence that the opposition alliance will win the Lok Sabha polls likely to be held in April-May. "I see the INDIA bloc placed very well in taking on the BJP in 2024," he said.

Congress appoints Sharmila as new president of Andhra unit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Tuesday appointed YS Sharmila, the daughter of former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, as the new president of the party's Andhra Pradesh unit. Sharmila, the sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, had joined the Congress on January 4 in Delhi in the presence of Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. "Congress president has appointed Y S Sharmila Reddy as the president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect," an official announcement by the party said. "Congress president has also appointed Shri Gidugu Rudra Raju, the outgoing PCC president, as special invitee to the Congress Working Committee. The party appreciates the contributions of Gidugu Rudra Raju in his role as PCC president," the party said. Sharmila while thanking the Congress leadership for her appointment said she would work faithfully towards restoring the past glory of the party in the state with total commitment and integrity.



Noting that she was looking forward to working closely with each and every Congress foot soldier, Sharmila sought the support of Gidugu Rudra Raju who resigned as APCC chief to enable her to take over the post. AICC in-charge of Andhra Pradesh Manickam Tagore congratulated Sharmila on being appointed as the new chief of the Andhra Pradesh Congress, saying "I hope you will contribute to making the Congress party stronger, similar to the way late YS Rajasekhara Reddy did in 1999 and 2004". Sharmila, the founder of YSR Telangana party, had also announced the merger of her

party with the Congress, and said she would fulfil any responsibility given to her. Lauding the Congress, she had said it is the largest and "most secular" party in the country as it unwaveringly serves all communities and unites all sections of people. "Today, I am very happy to be merging the YSR Telangana party into the Congress party. It gives me immense joy that the YSR Telangana party is going to be a part of the Indian National Congress from today onwards. That YSR Telangana party is not going to be separate any more from the Congress party gives me great delight," she had said after joining the Congress.

Mamata to take rally on January 22 for harmony

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that priests, and not politicians, should perform the Pran Pratishtha (consecration of idols). While she did not explicitly reference the consecration programme at the Ayodhya Ram Temple, Banerjee asserted, "It is the duty of the priests, not ours (politicians), to perform Pran Pratishtha." She made this statement while announcing a "rally for harmony" on January 22, coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inauguration of the Ram Temple. In an apparent effort to counter the BJP's outreach program across the state, aimed at spreading awareness about the mega event in Ayodhya, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee declared a harmony march on January 22. Banerjee emphasised that there would be a "rally for harmony" organised throughout the state. She mentioned leading a procession from the Hazra crossing near her house in south Kolkata after offering prayers to

Goddess Kali at the Kalighat temple. Banerjee directed all district Trinamool Congress leaderships to arrange similar marches throughout the state. Banerjee explained, "First, I will offer Puja at Kalighat Temple on January 22, after which I will participate in a harmony rally with people of all religions." She added, however, that her rally was not connected to "any other program. Banerjee also mentioned that her march would visit various religious places, including temples, Gurudwaras, mosques, and churches on the designated day before concluding at Park Circus Maidan, an area predominantly inhabited by members of minority communities. She also instructed her party members in districts to follow suit. Although the Chief Minister reiterated that the "harmony rally to be launched by us will have nothing to do with any other program" (referring to the inauguration of the Ram Temple by the Prime Minister), she emphasized that as a politician, she was not in favour of participating in any consecration ceremony.

Ram consecration heralds new era

BISWAJEET BANERJEE AYODHYA

Ayodhya, a city deeply entrenched in history and spirituality, is currently undergoing a profound metamorphosis, heralding the advent of a new era. The once modest single-lane road that wound through the city has now transformed into a grand four-lane thoroughfare, adorned with broad footpaths embellished with Surya Stambhs (lamp posts).

This development as a transformative force in the lives of Ayodhya's residents. The architectural splendor of Ram Path is heightened by Surya Stambhs lining both sides of the footpath. Along this grand boulevard, showrooms featuring multinational brands have emerged, contributing to the commercial vibrancy of the region, extending up to the district hospital crossing.



one, but our income has gone up. The influx of people has increased, leading to higher sales of tea and samosas," she says with a smile. As one approaches Udaya crossing, the demarcation between Ayodhya (old Faizabad) and Ayodhya Dham becomes evident. The Ayodhya Development Authority has implemented a building code here, giving all structures, both commercial and residential, a consistent light ochre hue. This transition point marks the beginning of a visual journey offering a clear line of sight to Hanuman Garhi, Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, and Ram Ki Paldi.

New Ram Lalla statue to be placed soon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The eagerly awaited installation of the newly crafted statue of Ram Lalla in the sanctum sanctorum is scheduled for January 18, marking a historic moment for devotees while the consecration will take place on January 22. In a testament to the continuity of devotion, the present idol, revered for seven decades, will find its sacred place within the confines of the new temple, Champat Rai, the General Secretary of the Janmabhoomi Temple Trust, revealed that the statue, expertly carved in black stone by Karnataka's renowned sculptor Arun Yagiraj, will take its eternal place in the newly constructed temple.

Fashioned from Shyam Shila, the Ramlala idol boasts a lifespan of thousands of years and is impervious to water. Applications of sandalwood and roli will not diminish the idol's shine. Standing at a majestic 51 inches from toe to forehead and weighing between 150 to 200 kg, the idol is adorned with a crown and aura, while the arms of Shri Ram extend gracefully to the knees. The exquisite sculpture, set in a standing posture on a lotus flower, holds a bow and arrow, emanating a childlike softness reminiscent of a five-year-old.

Temple doors to open for devotees on January 23

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a momentous announcement, the doors of the Ram Temple are set to swing open for devotees on January 23, marking a significant milestone following the grand inauguration ceremony. Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust General Secretary, Champat Rai, unveiled comprehensive measures to ensure a seamless and regulated entry process for all pilgrims. Rai emphasised the necessity for a well-organised approach, indicating the possibility of extending the temple entry into the night to accommodate a maximum number of devotees. Concurrently, the entry of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), RSS, and other members of 'vichar parivar' (like-minded organizations) is scheduled to commence from January 26. To manage the anticipated influx, specific time slots and batches will be allocated to devotees and other groups, ensuring strict adherence to the designated schedule. With an expected daily turnout of 4,500 to 5,000 visitors, each person is requested to limit their stay to one day. This arrangement is slated to remain in effect until February 23 or 24, as per Rai's announcement.

city's life revolves around this 13-km stretch of the road." Simultaneously, the Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has undertaken a mission to enhance the city's aesthetic appeal, reminiscent of the Treta Yuga's splendor. The installation of 6 feet tall and 6 feet wide 3D and basic 4D illuminated laser-cut metal sculptures at various locations in the city exemplifies this initiative.

Modi gets rousing welcome in Kochi

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

In less than a fortnight after this whirlwind tour to Thrissur where he rocked the people with a scintillating road show on 3 January, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took Kochi by storm on Tuesday with a 1.5 km road show. The Prime Minister reached Kochi straight from Paal Samudra in Andhra Pradesh where he dedicated to the nation a state-of-the-art National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics, an establishment to train and equip the taxmen of the country.

airport. The Prime Minister was received by the people by showering him with petals of flowers. What made these road shows unique is the fact that Narendra Modi is the first Prime Minister in the country to stage road shows in Kerala. The Prime Minister was accorded warm welcome by the twitterati with the hashtag #SuSwagatham Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is scheduled to take off to Guruvayur by 6 am on Wednesday to attend the marriage of Bhagya, daughter of actor Suresh Gopi at the Lord Krishna Temple. He will also worship at the Bharath Temple at Trippayar after paying his obeisance at the Prime Minister landed at Southern Naval Command's

inaugurate a series of infrastructure projects including that of Sagar Mala completed at a cost of Rs 4000 crore. The Prime Minister is staying overnight at the Government Guest House at Ernakulam. Had withstanding the crowd that had gathered for the road show, the Prime Minister remains the BJP's star campaigner. No leader in the State BJP could mobilise at least hundred persons on their own for a public meeting and that speaks about the state of affairs in Kerala BJP, according to Professor Stanley Sebastian.

He will also be scheduled to

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that my client Sh. Tapan Kumar Chattopadhyay, S/o Late Sh. Bhola Nath Chattopadhyay, R/o H. No. 26/7, Sector D, Pocket-2, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, had served all his relations and disinherited his son Sh. Bodhisattwa Chatterjee and his daughter in law Mrs. Indrani Mitra from all his movable and immovable properties due to his misconduct and bad behaviour on dated 10.11.2020 through publication in Pioneer newspaper, now my client Sh. Tapan Kumar Chattopadhyay S/o Late Sh. Bhola Nath Chattopadhyay has withdrawn recalled his previous public notice dated on 10.11.2020 with immediate effect. So they, being his son and daughter in law mentioned above, have changed their attitude and left ashamed about their previous acts.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Mrs. Shobha Verma W/o Late Shri Vijay Verma R/o, Flat No- 8A, Of Pocket-B, East of Kailash, South Delhi-110065, Mob. 99989-83684, Email: vishal.vr@gmail.com, has applied for the conversion of aforesaid property. The original Allocation letter, Possession letter, NOC of Water & Electricity etc by DDA of aforesaid property has been lost. A F.I.R to this effect has been lodged to police station at 16/01/2024. Any person(s) claiming any right, having any objection or found in possession of original document may write/contact with above named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice & can personally contact Deputy Director (LAB) Housing, SFHS, D-Block, IIIrd Floor, DDA Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE. The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work. 1. Name of Work: Operation and Maintenance of WWP/200 KLD at delhi main station for 3 years in the s/o SSE/WDL/ISTN under ADE/N/DLI. 2. Approx. Cost of work: Rs. 85,99,932.94/- (Rupees Eighty Five Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand and Nine Hundred Thirty Two and Ninety Four paise only). 3. Earnest Money to be Deposited: Rs. 1,72,000/- (One Lakh Seventy Two Thousand Rupees). 4. Cost of tender document: Rs. 0.00/-. 5. Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender: 06.02.2024 at 15:00 Hrs. 6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE. JIM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited. Corporate Identity Number: U67190MH2007PLC74287. Registered Office Address: 7th Floor, Energy, Appasahib Marathe Marg, Prabhadevi, Mumbai 400025. T: +91 22 6630 3030 F: +91 22 6630 3223 www.jimfinancial.com

DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Ltd (formerly known as Dewan Housing and finance corporation ltd) have assigned a pool of Loan (including below mentioned loans) together with underlying security interest created therefor along with all the rights, title and interest thereon under Section 13(1) (b) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("SARFAESI Act") vide an assignment agreement dated March 29, 2023 ("the Assignment Agreement") in favour of JIMFAR (JIM) (herein referred as Assignee). The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of JIM, assignee. Under Securitisation And Reconstruction Of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act), in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to JIM, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further interest as detailed in the said Demand Notice(s), from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to JIM by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

Table with 3 columns: Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s), Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date, Description of secured asset (immovable property). Includes details for KANISK KUMAR CHAUDHARY and AYSHA SINGH.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to JIM as aforesaid, JIM shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risk of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of JIM. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act or Rules made there under, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW (Govt. of India, Ministry of Finance, Banking Division) 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow -226007

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW (Govt. of India, Ministry of Finance, Banking Division) 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow -226007

Table with 4 columns: Case no and title and amount date, Description of property to be sold with the name of the Co-owners, Reserve Price, Earnest Money 10%. Includes details for M/S SPECTRA PAPER COATERS PVT. LTD.

Date and time of auction: https://drt.auctiontiger.net/ on 20.2.2024 between 11.00 am to 12.00 Noon (with extensions of 5 minutes duration after 12.00 Noon required). Earnest Money Deposit last date for submission of bid from with EMD. - Each bidder shall deposit earnest money (EMD) @ 10% of the Reserve Price in the form of Bank Draft payable to "Recovery Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Lucknow and payable at Lucknow. The said demand draft along with duly filled-in E-Auction EMD form should reach through speed post or by hand to Mr. Abhay Kumar Singh, Chief Manager India SME Assets Reconstructions Company Ltd. (ISARC), CH ARC, C/o SIDBI, 8th Floor, "A" wing, Constanatia Building, 11, Dr. U.N. Brahmachary Street, Kolkata-700017. Contact Mobile Number 980394478 or before 13.2.2024 upto 17.00 Hours positively (Auction Date 20.2.2024). On receipt of EMD the prospective bidders shall receive their User ID/password through their email ID, from above E-Auction agency M/s e-procurement Technologies Ltd. (Auction Tiger) Ahmedabad. Email: mail ID: https://drt.auctiontiger.net/. Mr. Ram Prasad Sharma, Contact No. 9978591888, other help line No. 926556282/079-61200594/598/587538.

APPENDIX IV-A Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property. E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) of the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN : L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 20.02.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 22,02,146/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Two Thousand One Hundred Forty Six only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLLAJ00380178, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 04.01.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan documents) w.e.f. 05.01.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from HAKIM SINGH RAWAT and PRATIBHA @ PRATIBHA RAWAT. The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 22,80,000/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Eighty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 2,28,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Twenty Eight Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai-400051. Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400059. Branch Address: 1st floor, Vishwakarma Complex, Plot No 17/18, Behind Yashoda Hospital, Koushombi, Ghaziabad-201010. The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ("ICICI HFC") and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

CHANGE OF NAME. I, AJAY KUMAR NOLAKHA S/o Dalvir Singh R/o 6B/254, Railway Officer Enclave, CP, New Delhi-110011, have changed my name from Ajay Kumar Nolakha to Ajay Kumar Naulakha for all purposes. PD(24)C I, HITHERTO KNOWN AS Rekha W/o Mr. Deepak Bhakar R/o f-7/7, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017, Have Changed My Name and shall hereafter be known as Rekha Kaur for all purposes. PD(24)C

ICICI Home Finance. Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai-400051. Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400059. Branch Address: 1st floor, Vishwakarma Complex, Plot No 17/18, Behind Yashoda Hospital, Koushombi, Ghaziabad-201010. The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ("ICICI HFC") and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226 007 (Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh) SUMMONS FOR FILING & APPEARANCE BY PUBLICATION O.A. No. 1126/2022 Date: 09-01-2024 [Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules) 1993] ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant Versus AJAY KUMAR GAUTAM & OTHERS ...Defendants To, Defendants:- AJAY KUMAR GAUTAM S/o SHRI HARBANS LAL GAUTAM, R/o F-1743, 12th Avenue, Gaur City-02, Gh 03 Sec-16C, Greater Noida, West Noida- 201307. Also at:- Plot No. Gh-04b-1, Flat No. 1202, 12th Floor, Tower-E Manorath, Sector-16, Noida, Noida- 201307. (U.P.)

FORM NO. 5 DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL 600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Temple, Lucknow- 226 007 (Area of Jurisdiction- Part of Uttar Pradesh) SUMMONS FOR FILING REPLY & APPEARANCE BY PUBLICATION O.A. No. 1127/ 2022 Date : 10.01.2024 [Summons to defendant under Section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993] ICICI Bank Ltd. ...Applicant Versus YANGCHAN KISHORE & OTHERS ...Defendants To, Defendants:- 1. YANGCHAN KISHORE W/o LT. COL. NAND KISHORE W/o 612/B, Golf view, Hanuman Camp, Ahmedabad, Gujarat-380 001. Also at : Flat No. 1902, 18th Floor, Tower C3 Victory Ace, Pocket No.-2, Plot No. Gh-02, Sector-143, Noida Gautam Buddha Nagar-201301, (U.P.) 2. RAJNEESH KUMAR BHARAT S/o KRISHAN CHANDER R/o 612/B Golfview, Hanuman Camp, Ahmedabad, Gujarat- 380 001. In the above noted application, you are required to file in Paper Book form in two sets along with documents and affidavits (if any), personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel/duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the Tribunal 19/07/2024 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decide in your absence. Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal Lucknow

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Steeplechase

Challenges mount for INDIA bloc as likely partners choose to go it alone and seat-sharing woes persist

The INDIA bloc, a potential alliance aimed at consolidating the Opposition forces and taking on the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, is facing setbacks one after the other. The latest hiccup comes with BSP supremo and former UP Chief Minister Mayawati's decision not to be part of the conglomeration. This puts the very basis of the alliance at risk as it defeats the main purpose of preventing the split of Opposition votes. Mayawati's decision could seriously jeopardise the INDIA bloc's chances in Uttar Pradesh, which sends the largest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha. Another stumbling block for the INDIA bloc comes from within its ranks, as the West Bengal unit of the Congress has advised its central leadership against aligning with the Trinamool Congress (TMC). This internal discord poses a significant challenge to the alliance's goal of presenting a united and formidable challenge to the BJP. The TMC had earlier offered two seats to Congress, which was



frowned upon by the larger party. But this is not all: It is nothing compared to the seat-sharing arrangements that are yet to be stitched up. While regional parties are crucial to secure votes in their respective strongholds, they are often reluctant to cede too many seats to the Congress. The Congress, seeking to re-establish itself as the main political force, is eager to secure a substantial number of seats. However, convincing regional players to relinquish their claims in favour of the Congress poses a complex challenge that requires delicate negotiation and compromise.

The reluctance of regional parties to concede more seats to Congress stems from a variety of factors. Many satraps fear that a disproportionate allocation of seats could weaken their own political standing and bargaining power. To put things in perspective, the problems that the INDIA bloc faces today were all on the cards when it all began. The Opposition managed to cobble up an alliance of the opposition parties who were ideologically separated and at cross-purpose with each other in the electoral matrix. The only common factor was their resolve to defeat the BJP. But as time progressed, the leaders realised that even if the BJP were defeated, they would also get marginalised if they do not assert themselves now. This notion is at the bottom of the INDIA bloc's woes. It can only be resolved if the regional parties agree to dilute their egos and compromise their party standing in their respective States, a tall order indeed. The Congress party, on the other hand, is grappling with its own share of problems as its leaders are deserting it. Overcoming these challenges will require strategic leadership, adept negotiation skills and a commitment to placing collective interests above individual ambitions. The ability of the INDIA bloc to surmount these obstacles will ultimately determine its effectiveness in the general elections.

PICTALK



People wash their cattle at the Marina beach on the occasion of Mattu Pongal, in Chennai

Heed electoral math to win LS elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

Emulating successful coalitions like the Janata Party, United Front and National Front could prove advantageous for the opposition parties in the forthcoming elections

Congress Party's responsibilities have increased with the decision of the INDIA bloc to name Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge as the President. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has declined the post of convener. Forming partnerships before elections is relatively easy, but the real challenge lies in agreeing on seats. How difficult is seat-sharing for the INDIA Bloc, and can the Opposition overcome the obstacles before the polls?

The Congress party is leading a coalition of 26 partners to find a solution that satisfies everyone. They have decided to nominate a single candidate to contest against the Bharatiya Janata Party to prevent the opposition vote from being divided. However, the Congress-led coalition finds itself in a difficult position as most regional parties are bargaining hard for more seats, which could only come at the cost of the Congress party's interests. Mallikarjun Kharge has instructed the Party to initiate talks with other allied leaders to address this dilemma. It indicates that the Congress was prepared to contest in fewer seats, this time to accommodate the partners. The Congress party had formed alliances with other political parties in several states before the elections. It joined with DMK in Tamil Nadu, RJD, JD (U) in Bihar, and JMM, in Jharkhand. Although these alliances continue, the Congress knows that seat-sharing will be challenging in certain states, particularly Delhi, Punjab, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. The Congress party is currently trying to strike a balance between meeting the needs of their Party and their allies. It faces the challenge of maintaining positive relationships with its regional partners. The Congress's local units differ with the top leadership about giving away seats to partners. Seeing the reality, Kharge has directed the Party's alliance committee to put in extra efforts to accommodate allies. He has also reached out to opposition leaders to coordinate with the INDIA Bloc. The Congress will fight against the BJP directly in 13 states and



against non-BJP parties in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, and Telangana. The Congress will share space with the CPI (M) in West Bengal and Tripura. In the past, Congress wielded significant political power in Delhi and Punjab. However, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged as a strong contender against Congress' dominance, as it now holds power in both states. While the Congress aims for four seats in Delhi and seven in Punjab, the ruling AAP. The party seeks a larger share of seats. Additionally, the AAP plans to contest in other states like Goa, Haryana, and Gujarat. Similarly, in UP, the Samajwadi Party; in Bihar, RJD, and JD (U); in Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference and PDP; and in Tamil Nadu, DMK, are expected to have the upper hand. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, will be in control of her state. Meanwhile, in Jharkhand, the Congress, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) are aiming to secure a larger share of seats than their partners in the INDIA



THE CONGRESS PARTY IS LEADING A COALITION OF 26 PARTNERS TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT SATISFIES EVERYONE. THEY HAVE DECIDED TO NOMINATE A SINGLE CANDIDATE TO CONTEST AGAINST THE BJP TO PREVENT THE OPPOSITION VOTE FROM BEING DIVIDED

Bloc. During the 2019 elections, Congress contested 421 seats but won only 52. They formed alliances in some states and contested in fewer seats, such as nine in Bihar, seven in Jharkhand, 21 in Karnataka, 25 in Maharashtra, and nine in Tamil Nadu. However, they contested in 70 out of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. Congress has less chance of defeating the BJP on its own. It will not contest the 272 seats required to form the government independently but may contest 255 seats, the lowest ever. Its best-case scenario is to win 125 seats. As a key player, the Congress should focus on directly challenging the B.J.P. in over 190 seats, with strong leaders fielded from constituencies. The Party needs to strengthen the booth committees at the ground level. The Bharat Jodo NYAY Yatra, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has also sparked controversy. KC Tyagi, leader of JD (U), questioned why Congress did not make it a joint yatra with opposition bloc partners. Although Congress invited its partners, how they will respond is still

uncertain. A successful yatra will go to the credit of Rahul Gandhi. The Opposition is in a difficult situation regarding the inauguration of the Ram Temple. The opposition coalition has decided to boycott the event. Attending it would only support their narrative as it is a political spectacle for the BJP. While Congress was internally divided, it declined the invitation. The CPI (M) leader, Sitaram Yechury, also politely declined the invitation. Although the poll surveys have predicted that Prime Minister Modi will win the upcoming election, the Opposition still has a slim chance if they remain united. The opposition parties should take inspiration from successful coalitions like the Janata Party, United Front, and National Front. To win the election, the Opposition must communicate the Modi government's failures and their alternate plans more effectively. This will be challenging in the crucial Hindi belt. Ultimately, it is up to the voters to decide whether to continue supporting Modi. (The writer is a popular columnist, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FLIGHTS DISRUPTED

Sir — In the last two days, Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport has experienced significant disruptions, with nearly 600 flights delayed and 76 cancelled owing to dense fog and poor visibility. This has caused a ripple effect across airports in the country. As per sources, the primary reason for the chaos is the limited operational capacity of the airport's runways. Currently, Delhi airport has only one Category-III Instrument Landing System (CAT III ILS)-equipped runway designed for operations in low visibility. The second runway, 28/10, is undergoing re-carpeting, making it temporarily unusable. This has led to a heavy reliance on a single runway, 29/11, which is equipped to manage operations when visibility drops below 200 m. The runway constraints have led to delayed arrivals and departures. On 14 January, departures were halted until 11.00 am owing to visibility below the minimum level of 125 m. Flights faced considerable delays, with some waiting for over two hours to be assigned parking bays for de-boarding. Airline officials argue for a change in the departure sequence assignment. They suggest assigning the sequence based on the scheduled time of departure rather than boarding status. This could streamline the process during disruptions caused by weather conditions.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

GLOBAL PULSES SUMMIT

Sir — After 18 years, India is going to host a 'Global Pulses' meet. The conference will be held at the Taj Palace Hotel on February 14 and 17 in New Delhi. More than 40 countries are participating in this conference. Nearly 800 government representatives and commercial and non-profit organisations are coming to take part in it. This conference is organised by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and the Global Pulse Confederation (GPC). By December 2027, India will become

Maldives-India ties



The Maldivian President had asked the Indian government to withdraw its military presence from Maldives before March 15. In a hitherto strained diplomatic relations scenario between the two nations, over recent derogatory comments by Maldivian ministers targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his visit

to Lakshadweep, this insistence will only cause the rift to widen. The current government, with a pro-China stance, seems to overlook India's historical support to the island nation. From military aid during a 1988 coup attempt to assistance in the 2004 Tsunami and the 2014 water crisis, India has been a steadfast ally. In 2020, amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, India promptly supplied vaccines, aiding the Maldives. However, suspicions arise that anti-Indian political forces influence the current leadership, perceived as puppets. China's evident vested interest raises concerns. Time will reveal that not all that glitters is beneficial, urging the Maldivian government to grasp the enduring support India has offered.

M Pradyu | Kamur

self-sufficient in pulses production, and from January 2028, no import of pulses will happen in the country, informed Home Minister Amit Shah. Union Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said, "The pulses production has increased in India, and the government is keen to learn and practice globally, and Masur production is estimated to touch a high 1.6 million tonnes." As India is the biggest consumer and producer of pulses, this submission will make a strong bond with global countries in diversifying the production. Pulses are considered to be the sustainable food system. It helps us with good nutrition, and the protein we consume from this food keeps us healthy. As global warming has posed an alarming situation, pulse farming will contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This conference will push the farmers and producers to adopt more knowledge to produce more pulses.

Akankhya Rout | Dhenkanal

CONGRESS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Sir — The INC suffered a massive setback on Sunday when senior leader Milind

Deora resigned from the party, ending a 55-year family association. His resignation is a major blow to the party in the wake of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Deora cited disagreements over seat-sharing arrangements in Maharashtra with the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) as the reason for his resignation. He was also unhappy with the Congress for labeling businessmen and industrialists as anti-national. The BJP could benefit from the Congress-Shiv Sena rift and could emerge as the main beneficiary in the upcoming elections. In recent years, several other prominent leaders, such as Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot, have also left the party. Deora's departure is likely to exacerbate the already existing divisions within the Congress, particularly between the G-23 group and the party leadership. A possible next step for Congress could be addressing the concerns of the G-23 group and other dissidents within the party, to prevent further defections.

Kaninika Sarkar | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Revolutionising real estate through franchise models

As real estate in India continues its upward trajectory, the brokerage venture is becoming increasingly attractive

The Indian housing market is sized at around USD 222 billion, out of which the primary real estate amounts to ~ USD 70 billion. The size of commercial real estate is around USD 34 billion, making the total size of the real estate around USD 256 billion.

The market is huge, fueled by the massive aggregate population, spurred rate of urbanization, and aggressive investments by the government in infrastructure development. This also brings a spotlight to the primary brokerage industry in India, which is soaring. As per the industry estimates, the size of the primary brokerage market in India is close to USD 1.75 billion. Adding the secondary market, it amounts to USD 4.79 billion (~ INR 35,000 Crores). The proliferation of professional brokerage houses, ICPs, and portals.

As real estate continues to grow in India, so does the interest in the brokerage venture. Recent years have seen the proliferation of bigger brokerage houses, institutional channel partners, and realty portals. This has been organizing a relatively unor-



ganized industry, which was run mostly by local property dealers. Organised player comprises ~ 20% of the market, and are expected to further grow at a staggering pace. Today's property market thrives on factors like customer convenience, a shift from the past. Success in real estate advisory demands commitment to transparency, speedy execution, and adeptly managing customer concerns. Achieving this necessitates significant investment in technology, analytics, operational capacity, and enhanced marketing skills. For individual brokers it is difficult. Larger organised players with a full stack technology approach can deliver better.

Another factor that is changing the nature of real estate transactions is the pressing

need to offer multiple services under one platform. Today homebuyers want more than just a home. They want easy access to loans, legal work, CRM updates, etc. Again, the scale would matter.

The Franchise Route The transaction space in India is further evolving, with the increased popularity of franchise models. The demand for real estate franchises picked up in the wake of the pandemic, when businesses started gravitating towards asset-light models, and Indian real estate was also not an exception. The franchise routes offered a conducive approach to lower down CAPEX and OPEX, without affecting the sales momentum.

Even after the pandemic, when the markets have largely opened, the Franchise model of doing business remains highly relevant. It should be noteworthy that the Indian real estate remains largely unorganised, despite the institutional players making notable progress. Around 80% of the market is run by local brokers, freelancers, and small-time advisories. These people enjoy a tremendous

relationship in their network yet their small scale of operation has undermined their growth and evolution. These smaller entities lack the institutional style approach and bandwidth that bigger players enjoy. This affects their overall growth. Enabling smaller advisors as franchises of larger entities is a prudent strategy to bridge gaps. This grants them access to advanced business models, robust ecosystems, technology, marketing support, and operational expertise. Franchises can enhance efficiency, broaden reach, and facilitate access to high-quality deals. For larger advisories, it offers a means to expand networks, enter new markets, and capitalise on individual relationships. This approach is also beneficial for professionals from related fields like the stock market or personal finance, providing an opportunity to enter the lucrative real estate market with the support of established advisories, saving them from extensive groundwork and initial investments.

(The writer is the National Head, of Franchise-360 Realtors; views are personal)



AMIT SHARMA



FIRST COLUMN

SELFISHNESS IS THE GREATEST CURSE

It is an impediment to spiritual growth and harmony



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live... Oscar Wilde. There is a strong belief among some religious sects that all of us are a small part of a big ONE who is Supreme & Super Natural and who is known by different names & forms in different religions. However, looking at the current scenario, where we all are living an individualistic life to achieve our individual goals, one might easily argue against the belief of oneness between One Supreme & One Self. Also, each one of us is so hard-pressed & desperate to fulfil our infinite wishes that we hardly spare a moment to even think about that ONE Supreme who happens to be our mother, father, guide & saviour.

As individuals, we all expect that others should give us respect & love which we consider to be our human right/birthright. Sounds silly!! doesn't it? But it's a fact that nobody from us wishes to be totally neglected or completely deprived of his so-called human right. One may tolerate certain acts of others that go against his/her rights up to a certain limit only but not beyond all limits. This is because none of us can totally and absolutely dissociate ourselves from this feeling of individuality. It is this individual approach that hinders our growth as a human being & prevents us from imbibing treasures of knowledge from the Supreme.



Hence, we need to get rid of it at any cost, but practically speaking it is impossible to lift the chair on which one is sitting so also one cannot rise from individuality; which has become our true nature & hence one cannot get rid of this individuality by mere wishful thinking. So what is the solution then? To start with, we need to concentrate on liberating ourselves from the negative traits of our body-consciousness. YES!!, we should remember that when we become too narrow in outlook, we become selfish & after some time then this selfishness takes the form of jealousy, hatred, greed, etc. In an actual sense, these negative traits sum up as the real causes of almost all the problems in the world.

It is said that selfishness is the greatest curse of the human race. So how can we get over this curse & save ourselves? Well, experience says that one can get rid of selfishness greatly by a simple thought, belief & feeling that we are all children of One Supreme and are, therefore, brothers among ourselves and should, therefore, work for each other's well-being and should cooperate with each other to remove each other's sufferings.

Apart from selfishness, it has been also observed that the feeling of individual self also, at times, takes the form of ego or pride which drives us into destructive mode. However, when we get enlightened by spiritual knowledge, we realise how wrong were our feelings of false pride or ego, which in turn brings humility and introversion within us.

Regular practice of meditation further makes us realise that there is a great difference between HIM and us and how we have many shortcomings, weaknesses and bad qualities that need to be eliminated. So, let us all connect our minds to Him and restore all our spiritual relationships with Him to remove all the negative traits of our individual selves & re-emerge positive traits within ourselves.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal & UK)

MSMEs need cost institutional credit



AS MITTAL

Government action is needed to enhance global competitiveness and credit access for MSMEs. Schemes like Merchant Credit Card can be helpful



The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are critical to unlocking the potential of India envisioned under the 'Make In India' campaign. This sector not only serves the purpose of 'Atma Nirbharta' but also paves the way for overall production, employment generation, and untapped export opportunities. Despite being the bulwark of the Indian economy, the vulnerable MSME sector is troubled by its financial constraints, owing to constant working capital expenditure and inaccessibility to mainstream finance.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, in its report titled 'Strengthening Credit Flows to the MSME Sector', exposes the fact that less than 40% of MSMEs avail credit from formal financial systems, and therefore depend on costly and unreliable credit. The credit gap in the MSME sector is estimated to be around Rs 20-25 lakh crore, with an addressable credit demand of about Rs 37 lakh crore and an existing mainstream supply of only Rs 15 lakh crore.

The MSME sector consistently contributes around 30% share of India's GDP, 45% to its manufacturing output, and 48% to exports, while generating employment for 11 crore people out of 6.34 crore MSMEs. Almost 99% of the MSMEs are represented by micro-enterprises, and less than 1% are categorized under small and medium segments. Despite the latest amendments, the institutional credit does not match the investment requirements of micro-enterprises, which are business entities with investments of up to Rs 1 crore and turnover of up to Rs 5 crore. It is high time that the government takes decisive action to strengthen and support the MSME sector.

Accessing capital remains one of the biggest challenges for micro and small enterprises that aspire to grow. In recognition of this, the RBI has designated MSMEs as a priority sector and directed banks to allocate 40% of the Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to priority sectors, including MSMEs. The guidelines also require banks to allocate 7.5% of the ANBC to micro-enterprises. However, a study by the RBI has found that most banks do not go beyond 25% for MSME credit.

Consistent regulatory obligations have a compounding effect on firm growth. While both NSE and BSE have introduced dedicated exchanges for MSMEs, out of the 6.34 crore MSMEs in India, only 342 are listed on the BSE SME exchange. This is because firms still prefer to avoid the capital markets. Listed SMEs need to comply with SEBI, RBI, and Companies Act regulations, which can be a high regulatory burden and compliance cost. What is needed is an ecosystem for MSMEs to thrive with less regulatory compliance costs, lower funding costs and the ability to scale.

The government needs to implement steps to ensure not only the survival but also the growth of vital MSMEs in India to save critical livelihoods and generate employment. The Indian MSME sector sources 84% of its working capital requirements from informal financiers, sometimes even at a higher rate of interest.

borrowers, whereas MSMEs assess their financial accessibility based on the parameters of need, availability, and speed of credit disbursement.

As a result, informal moneylenders exploit the difference between the expectations of formal lenders and MSMEs, which contributes to MSMEs' unwillingness towards formalization. The implementation of GST has been a measure to bring maximum enterprises under the formal umbrella. But even today, out of the 6.34 crore MSMEs in India, only about 1.1 crore are registered with the Goods and Services Tax regime. This lack of formalisation among MSMEs has resulted in their credit requirements being largely unmet due to limited availability and access to data. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance has recommended several measures that can help in the formalisation and growth of the MSME sector. One of the recommendations is to link PAN- Udyog Aadhaar-GST identification numbers to curb the informal sector. It also suggested that providing working capital to MSMEs based on GST invoices can boost formalisation, including GST registration of businesses.

MSMEs are facing trust issues from banks. Merely 10% of the loans disbursal are collateral-free, while 90% are collateral-backed. As the committee also proposed creating a digital ecosystem and adopting an account aggregator framework to secure digital financial data and

enable low-cost, instant digital lending to MSMEs. This can replace physical collateral with secure access to GST invoices. Furthermore, the committee recommended that lending to the MSME sector should shift to cash-flow-based lending. In this system, loan requirements are assessed based on actual revenue generation and repayment capacities, rather than physical assets as collateral.

The Way Forward: The MSME sector faces inherent complexities that cannot be overlooked. To make MSMEs globally competitive and improve credit access for them, the parliamentary finance committee recommended that the government should introduce a Merchant Credit Card (MCC) scheme for traders and a Vyapar Credit Card (VCC) for micro-units.

These schemes could be similar to the Kisan Credit Card scheme with interest subvention, which is still awaited. However, it is high time for the government to announce the scheme in the upcoming budget to facilitate institutional credit accessibility for the MSME sector and address the problematic areas that hinder financial accessibility in this sector.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)



THE INDIAN MSME SECTOR SOURCES 84% OF ITS WORKING CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS FROM INFORMAL FINANCIERS, SOMETIMES EVEN AT A HIGHER RATE OF INTEREST

Planning for a hat-trick: Nadda's optimistic vision for BJP in 2024

BJP's national president outlines a focused approach for a decisive victory in the upcoming polls, relies on alliances and Modi's charisma

Discussing the future strategy for securing Modi's third win in 2024, Nadda emphasized that the people of the country are inclined to grant another opportunity to the Prime Minister, aiming to propel India into the category of developed nations. The outcome of state polls hinges on the faith in Modi's Guarantee, proving challenging for the opposition, lacking credibility and coherence. Nadda predicts that INDIA is facing obstacles due to regional egos, over-ambition, inner contradictions, and the control of the Gandhis over Congress. BJP, symbolizing stability, and Modi, its epicenter, form a crucial 'Mantra' expected to play a dominant role in the 2024 polls, securing a larger



K S TOMAR

number of Lok Sabha seats. Nadda criticized vested interests attempting to create divisions between North and South, asserting that such tactics will fail, especially with BJP's commitment to thwart divisive agendas. Addressing losses in Telangana and Karnataka, Nadda optimistically anticipates a different voting dynamic at the national level

in 2024. Despite setbacks in Himachal assembly polls, he plans to regain ground by winning all four Lok Sabha seats, counting on Modi's special connection with the state's people.

Nadda asserts BJP's readiness for the 2024 polls, highlighting ongoing efforts to secure victory in 150 parliamentary seats previously unclaimed by the party. The party aims to form new alliances, adopting a flexible approach in contrast to the opposition's internal struggles over seat sharing and common agenda.

Unlike Congress, BJP demonstrates commitment to generational change in states, evident in the smooth selection of Chief Ministers. Nadda commends the party's disci-

plined approach in fielding MPs, showcasing workers' readiness for sacrifice. Nadda emphasizes BJP's collaboration with RSS, a relationship dating back to the early nineties.

Nadda's close association with Modi dates back to the early nineties when the latter was in charge of party affairs of Himachal and they used to move together on Lambretta scooter in Shimla. It has been a long, arduous journey for grassroots Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker and former students' leader, 63-year-old Jagat Prakash Nadda who had been initially appointed the working president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He is considered as a symbol of dynamism, perseverance,



sobriety and maturity. Later he got elected to the post of national president of BJP on January 20, 2020 and extension upto June, 2024 due to state polls and general elections. Nadda's journey from an RSS worker to BJP's national president is marked by his faith in

Modi and Shah. He credits his success to them, acknowledging the challenge of matching Shah's standards. Nadda's exit from Himachal politics in 2010, due to differences with Dhumal, provided an opportunity to work in the organisation. In the post-Himachal assem-

bly polls in 2017, Nadda's unaffected reaction to not being chosen as CM reaffirmed party leadership's faith in him. Modi and Shah's strategic planning, evident in advance announcements, positioned Anurag Thakur and Nadda for significant roles.

Nadda's association with Jayaprakash Narayan's Bihar movement and RSS shaped his political career. Guided by Vajpayee, Shekhawat, and Advani, Nadda is recognized for his moderate and open-minded approach. Nadda dismisses the opposition's caste census ploy, anticipating Modi's vision of focusing on youth, women's development, farmers, and the poor to be the predominant takeaway in the 2024 polls.

Nadda grew under the influence of stalwarts such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and LK Advani, who guided him at every step of his political career. He is known for his qualities of being moderate and open-minded.

In the end, while negating the opposition ploy of caste census, Nadda feels that BJP will take appropriate decision national caste census but Modi's vision of four castes will be predominant. Takeaway in 2024 polls who feels that youth, development of women, farmers and poor will take India to next level in future.

(The writer is political analyst and senior journalist based in Shimla; views are personal)

Donald Trump triumphs in Iowa caucus

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump scripted a decisive victory in the Iowa caucus, cementing his status as the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, a contest that also saw Indian-American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy ending his bid and backing the former US president.

Iowa is the first of the state-by-state contests where Republican Party voters pick their candidate who will almost certainly face Joe Biden, a Democrat, in the November 5 presidential election.

Despite facing a number of legal challenges, Trump, 77, won the Iowa caucuses in a landslide with Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida securing a critical but distant second-place finish in the contest that took place amidst blistering cold.

Trump won 51 per cent of the votes, an unprecedented margin, kickstarting his bid to win his party's third consecutive presidential nomination.

Trump's victory was the largest margin in the history of Iowa's Republican presidential caucuses, easily surpassing the previous winning margin of 12.8 per cent set in 1988 by the late Senator Bob Dole.

With about 94 per cent of the results that have been recorded, CNN reported that Trump will receive 20 of Iowa's 40 delegates. DeSantis is estimated to get eight delegates, Haley to get seven delegates and Ramaswamy will receive two delegates. There are 3 delegates unallocated.

There are a total of 2,429 delegates up for grabs in the Republican primary season. A candidate needs the backing of at least 1,215 delegates to win the nomination.

Thanking "the great people of Iowa", an ebullient Trump said, adding that "it would be so nice if we could come together and straighten up the problems of the world." "It's going to happen soon," he said, amidst cheers from his supporters. Trump also sought to patch things up with Ramaswamy and said "He did a hell of a job. He came from zero, and he has a big percent." Out of the total votes, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis came in second with 21.2 per cent of the votes polled, as against 51 per cent by Trump.

Indian-American former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley came a close third with 19.1 per cent of the votes polled.

Trump's landslide Iowa win is a stunning show of strength after leaving Washington in disgrace, the US media commented.

Trump is facing an unprecedented 91 criminal charges across four indictments and trials. Some of the cases could occur in the coming months, including one in Washington set for March 4 accusing him of illegally trying to upend his 2020 election loss to Biden. But the criminal charges did not impact him in the lead-up to the Iowa vote.

Meanwhile, 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur Ramaswamy suspended his presidential campaign following his poor showing in the Iowa Caucus and announced his endorsement of its winner Trump.

Ramaswamy was a distant fourth with 7.7 per cent of the votes polled.

"I looked at every which way, and I think it's true that we did not achieve the surprise that we wanted to deliver tonight... As of this moment, we are going to suspend this presidential campaign. There is no path for me to be the next president," Ramaswamy, told his disappointed supporters in Iowa as the results of the Republican presidential caucus came in.

Speaking to reporters after his speech, Ramaswamy said he had expected to draw more first-time caucusgoers, "and that proved too difficult to actually translate into meaningful results."

He said he had not been anticipating earlier today that he would be dropping out, and said he was "a little surprised by what happened tonight." Standing alongside his wife and his son Karthik, Ramaswamy said he will appear at a rally in New Hampshire with Donald Trump tomorrow. He was previously scheduled to hold several of his own events in the Granite State the day after the caucuses, the New York Times reported. Haley, who finished third in the Iowa caucuses, has said that she is the only Republican candidate who could take on frontrunner Donald Trump and incumbent President Joe Biden and avert a "Trump-Biden nightmare."



Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump speaks at a caucus site at Horizon Events Center, in Clive, Iowa, Monday. A PPTI

Democracy will be put to test in US polls

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union presidency on Tuesday warned that the foundations of democracy will be put to the test during the November US election, envisaging a scenario where the longstanding trans-Atlantic alliance could unravel ever more. Prime Minister Alexander De Croo of Belgium, which holds the EU presidency, said that "if 2024 brings us 'America first' again, it is really more than ever 'Europe on its own.'" De Croo spoke in an address to the EU legislature only hours after former President Donald Trump's landslide win in the Republican Iowa caucuses.

'Haley last one standing against Trump'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian-American Nikki Haley, the former two-term governor of South Carolina, is the last one standing against Donald Trump, the leading Republican presidential candidate, her campaign said on Tuesday as it released another advertisement in New Hampshire where the next primary is scheduled for next week.

The Iowa results and the New Hampshire polls show Trump, 77, is more vulnerable than commonly believed. He is the polarizing figure he has long been, Betsy Ankney, campaign manager of 51-year-old Haley said in a State of the Race Memo, a day after the former US Ambassador to the United Nations came a strong third in the Iowa Caucus of the Republican presidential race.

The Iowa Caucus traditionally kicks off the primary race as it moves to all of the 50 States over the next few months before culminating in the party delegates nominating the winner of these primaries in the Republican National Convention which is scheduled to be held in July in Wisconsin. Trump, her former boss and



and her home State of South Carolina next month, which Ankney said less Trump-friendly territory.

"Trump and Biden are the two most disliked politicians in America. Around half of Republican primary voters want more of Trump and around half prefer an alternative. That is the picture of a seriously contested nomination," Ankney said in a campaign memo. In New Hampshire, Haley is polling strong and is far ahead of DeSantis.

Tuesday morning, her campaign released a new ad "Better Choice" in New Hampshire, which paints a clear contrast between the drama and chaos of Trump and Biden, and Haley's vision for a strong and proud America.

"Biden has rained chaos down on America, but you can't beat Democrat chaos with Republican chaos," said Haley spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas. "The choice for Granite Staters is clear: two names from the past who are consumed by the past, or a new generation of conservative leadership with Nikki Haley, Trump and Biden are the two most-disliked politicians in the

country. There's a better choice, and that choice is Nikki Haley," he said.

According to her campaign manager, Haley routinely performs better than Trump in head-to-head matchups against Biden. With Trump, it will be another nail-biter election, likely followed by endless legal disputes. "With Haley, it will be a landslide. After the Biden-Harris disaster, Republicans want a winner," he claimed and noted that historically, incumbent presidents who have struggled in New Hampshire have failed to recapture the White House. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson won 48% of the vote in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. He withdrew from the race 19 days later. In 1976, President Gerald Ford won 49% of the vote in the New Hampshire Republican primary. That set the stage for a protracted nominating contest and ultimately Ford's loss in the general election. In 1992, President George H.W. Bush won 58% of the vote in the New Hampshire Republican primary. That precipitated an extended nominating contest and ultimately Bush's loss in the general election.

UK PM Sunak faces Conservative rebellion in Parliament over Rwanda asylum plan

AP ■ LONDON

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces rebellion from senior lawmakers in his Conservative Party over his stalled plan to send asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda, a controversial and expensive policy that the British leader has made central to his attempt to win an election this year.

To do that he needs to unite his fractious party, which trails far behind the Labour opposition in opinion polls. But the liberal and authoritarian wings of the Conservatives — always uneasy allies — are at loggerheads over the Rwanda plan. Moderates worry the policy is too extreme, while many on the party's powerful right wing think it doesn't go far enough.

In a blow to Sunak, two deputy chairmen of the Conservative Party say they will vote to toughen up the government's flagship Safety of Rwanda Bill in the House of Commons on Tuesday. Lee Anderson and Brendan Clarke-Smith announced they will back amendments seeking to close down asylum-seekers' avenues of appeal against deportation to Rwanda. "I want this legislation to be as strong as possible," Clarke-Smith wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

More than 60 Tory lawmakers, including former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, support amendments to toughen the legislation, and some say they will vote against the bill as a whole if it is not strengthened. Along with opposition party votes, that might be enough to kill the legislation. That would be a major blow to Sunak's authority and potentially fatal to the Rwanda plan.

Sunak insists the bill goes as far as the government can because Rwanda will pull out of its agreement to rehouse asylum-seekers if the UK breaks international law. Conservative moderates, meanwhile, worry the bill already flirts with break-

ing international law and say they will oppose it if it gets any tougher. Those concerns were underscored by the United Nations' refugee agency, which said on Monday that, even with the treaty and new legislation, the Rwanda plan "is not compatible with international refugee law."

Sunak has made the Rwanda policy central to his pledge to "stop the boats" bringing unauthorised migrants to the UK across the English Channel from France. More than 29,000 people made the perilous journey in 2023, down from 42,000 the year before. Five people died on the weekend while trying to launch a boat from northern France in the dark and winter cold.

London and Kigali made a deal almost two years ago under which migrants who reach Britain across the Channel would be sent to Rwanda, where they would stay permanently. Britain has paid Rwanda at least 240 million pounds (USD 305 million) under the agreement, but no one has yet been sent to the East African country.

The plan has been criticised as inhumane and unworkable by human rights groups and challenged in British courts. In November the UK Supreme Court ruled the policy is illegal because Rwanda isn't a safe country for refugees.

In response to the court ruling, Britain and Rwanda signed a treaty pledging to strengthen protections for migrants. Sunak's government argues that the treaty allows it to pass a law declaring Rwanda a safe destination. If approved by Parliament, the law would allow the government to "disapply" sections of UK human rights law when it comes to Rwanda-related asylum claims and make it harder to challenge the deportations in court. If the bill is passed by the House of Commons on Wednesday, it will go to the House of Lords, Parliament's upper chamber, where it faces more opposition.

US military seizes Iranian missile parts bound for Houthi rebels

AP ■ JERUSALEM

US Navy SEALs seized Iranian-made missile parts and other weaponry from a ship bound for Yemen's Houthi rebels in a raid last week that saw two of its commandos go missing, the US military said Tuesday. The raid marks the latest seizure by the US Navy and its allies of weapon shipments bound for the rebels, who have launched a series of attacks now threatening global trade in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The seized missile components included types likely used in those attacks.

The attacks, US-led retaliatory strikes and the raid all have raised tensions across the wider Middle East, which also saw Iran conduct ballistic missile strikes in both Iraq and Syria. The SEAL raid happened last Thursday, with the com-

mandos launching from the US Lewis B Puller backed by drones and helicopters, with the US military's Central Command saying it took place in the Arabian Sea.

The SEALs found cruise and ballistic missile components, including propulsion and guidance devices, as well as warheads, Central Command said. It added that air defense parts also were found.

"Initial analysis indicates these same weapons have been employed by the Houthis to threaten and attack innocent mariners on international merchant ships transiting in the Red Sea," Central Command said in a statement.

Images released by the US military analyzed by The Associated Press showed components resembling rocket motors and others previously seized. It also included what appeared to be a cruise missile with a small turbojet engine —

a type used by the Houthis and Iran. The US Navy ultimately sunk the ship carrying the weapons after deeming it unsafe, Central Command said. The ship's 14 crew have been detained. The Houthis have not acknowledged the seizure and Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A United Nations resolution bans arms transfers to Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. Tehran has long denied arming the rebels, despite physical evidence, numerous seizures and experts tying the weapons back to Iran. Since November, the Houthis have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea, saying they were avenging 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.

Malta-flagged bulk carrier hit by missile in Red Sea

Jerusalem (AP): A Malta-flagged bulk carrier sustained damage from a missile fired at it in the Red Sea on Tuesday, Greek officials said. Though no group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, suspicion immediately fell on Yemen's Houthi rebels. The Zografía had been heading north to the Suez Canal when it was attacked, the Greek Shipping and Island Policy Ministry said. The ship had no cargo on board and sustained only material damage, the ministry said. The crew includes 20 Ukrainians, three Filipinos and one Georgian. Satellite-tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press showed the Zografía still moving after the attack.

N Korea will no longer pursue reconciliation with South: Kim

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country would no longer pursue reconciliation with South Korea and called for rewriting the North's constitution to eliminate the idea of shared statehood between the war-divided countries, state media said Tuesday.

The historic step to discard a decades-long pursuit of unification, which was based on a sense of national homogeneity shared by both Koreas, comes amid heightened tensions where the pace of both Kim's weapons development and the South's military exercises with the United States have intensified in a tit-for-tat. North Korea also abolished the key government agencies that had been tasked with managing relations with South Korea in a decision made during a meeting of the country's rubber-stamp parliament



on Monday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.

The Supreme People's Assembly said the two Koreas are locked in an "acute confrontation" and that it would be a serious mistake for the North to regard the South as a partner in diplomacy.

"The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, the National Economic Cooperation Bureau and the

(Diamond Mountain) International Tourism Administration, tools which existed for (North-South) dialogue, negotiations and cooperation, are abolished," the assembly said in a statement.

During a speech at the assembly, Kim blamed South Korea and the United States for raising tensions in the region, citing their expanded joint military exercises, deployments of U.S. strategic military assets, and their trilateral security cooperation with Japan as turning the Korean Peninsula into a dangerous war-risk zone, KCNA said. Kim said it has become impossible for the North to pursue reconciliation and a peaceful reunification with the South, which he described as "top-class stooges" of outside powers obsessed with confrontational maneuvers. He called for the assembly to rewrite the North's constitution to define

South Korea as the North's "primary foe and invariable principal enemy."

He also ordered the removal of past symbols of inter-Korean reconciliation, to "completely eliminate such concepts as reunification, reconciliation and fellow countrymen" from the national history of the republic.

He specifically demanded cutting off cross-border railway sections and tearing down a monument in Pyongyang honoring a pursuit for reunification, which Kim described as an eyesore. "It is the final conclusion drawn from the bitter history of the inter-Korean relations that we cannot go along the road of national restoration and reunification together," he said. Kim had made similar remarks during a year-end ruling party meeting, saying ties between the Koreas have become "fixed into the relations between two states hostile to each other."

Norway recommends halting all foreign adoptions for probe

AP ■ COPENHAGEN

Norway's top body for international adoptions on Tuesday recommended a halt to all adoptions from abroad for a two-year period pending an investigation into several allegedly illegal cases, while Denmark's sole overseas adoption agency announced it was stopping for the same concerns.

Norway's government has the final say, and Kjersti Toppe, minister for children and families, said she believes there is a need for further investigation and has asked the Norwegian directorate for children, youth and family affairs for that.

In Denmark, the privately-run DIA said it was stopping all adoptions from abroad after the

Danish social affairs ministry, the top authority in the matter, announced a halt.

The DIA handles adoptions from the Philippines, India, South Africa, Thailand, Taiwan and the Czech Republic. On Jan 2, Denmark suspended adoptions from South Africa.

"Adoptions must be safe, sound and in the best interest of the child," said Hege Nilssen, head of Norwegian directorate for education and training, said in a statement.

"Our assessment is that the risk of illegalities is real, and that it is at a level which means that we recommend a temporary halt until the committee delivers its report and makes recommendations on what a

possible future adoption system should look like." The Norwegian directorate for children, youth and family affairs said that families already assigned a child from the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, South Africa, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Colombia and Peru will be allowed to complete the adoption process, but only after an assessment by the agency.

Couples who received approval to adopt from South Korea also will be permitted to proceed when matched with a child. A majority of the children adopted in Norway come from South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines and Colombia, according to national statistics.

8 die, 100 missing in Nigeria boat accident

Abuja (AP): Eight passengers were confirmed dead and an estimated 100 were missing after their overloaded boat capsized in north-central Nigeria, the emergency services said on Tuesday. It is the latest in a series of deadly boat accidents that increasingly point to regulatory failures.

The passengers were being conveyed from Niger state's Borgu district to a market in the neighbouring Kebbi state on Monday afternoon when the boat overturned in the Niger River, according to Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesman Ibrahim Audu. "The boat was overloaded so the strong wind affected them," Audu said.

He said the boat's capacity is 00 passengers but it was esti-

mated to be carrying a much higher number, in addition to bags of grain, making it difficult to control when it began to sink. Villagers were helping local divers and emergency officials to search for the missing passengers, many of whom were women, Audu said. He could not say how many people had survived.

Boat disasters have become rampant in remote communities across Nigeria, where locals desperate to get their farm products to market end up overcrowded in locally made boats in the absence of good and accessible roads. There is no record of the total death toll in these accidents, though there have been at least five involving at least 100 passengers each in the past seven months.

3 million British citizens living abroad regain voting right

PTI ■ LONDON

Over three million British citizens, including Indians, living abroad have regained their right to vote in the British general elections and referendums following the implementation of the Elections Act 2022. This represents the biggest increase in the British electoral franchise since the introduction of full female suffrage in 1928. As of Tuesday (January 16), the arbitrary 15-year limit on voting rights has been scrapped. British citizens worldwide can register to vote online regardless of how long they have been overseas.

This will be linked to the last UK address they were either registered to vote at or lived at. Upon registration, they

will remain on the electoral roll for up to three years. After registration, electors can also apply online for either a postal or proxy vote.

The enactment is the culmination of the 'Votes for Life' campaign led by Conservatives Abroad — the British Conservative Party's global network of members and supporters overseas.

The 'Votes for Life' campaign has also been a long-standing Conservative Manifesto commitment.

This enactment, which ensures that all British citizens abroad can remain part of our democracy, comes despite attempts to thwart the plans by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, with Labour being

responsible for curtailing democratic freedoms through the introduction of the 15-year rule in 2001 and Liberal Democrat opposition hampering efforts to revert this during the 2010-2015 coalition.

Commenting, Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove said, "From today, millions of British nationals across the world can exercise their right to vote in future general elections and have their say in the way their country should be governed."

"The Conservatives have once again shown that we are the party for democracy and protecting an individual's right to vote."

Iran strikes targets in Iraq, Syria as regional tensions escalate

AP ■ IRBIL

Iran fired missiles late on Monday at what it claimed were Israeli "spy headquarters" near the US consulate in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil, and at targets linked to the extremist group Islamic State in northern Syria. Four civilians were killed and six injured after missiles hit an upscale area near the consulate in Irbil, the seat of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, according to the security council of the Kurdish regional government.



Syrians look at an abandoned medical facility in the village of Talleta, Syria, Tuesday, that was hit by Iranian missiles late Monday night, according to a voluntary rescue group White Helmets. Iran fired missiles late Monday at what it claimed was Israeli "spy headquarters" near the U.S. Consulate in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil and at targets linked to the extremist group Islamic State in northern Syria. **AP/PTI**

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in a statement that it had hit a headquarters of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency, in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Another statement said it had fired a number of ballistic missiles at "terrorist operations," including Islamic State targets, in Syria and destroyed them.

spillover of the ongoing war in Gaza.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, Iranian-backed militias in Iraq have launched near-daily drone attacks on bases housing U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, which the groups have said was in retaliation for Washington's support of Israel, and in an attempt to force US troops to leave the region. The United States strongly condemns "Iran's reckless missile strikes" in Irbil, said State Department spokesman Matthew Miller. He said the attacks "undermine Iraq's stability."

A US defence official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details that had not been made public said the US tracked the missiles, which hit in northern Iraq and northern Syria, and no US facilities were struck or damaged in the attacks.

Ukraine Prez tries to rally support for Ukraine's fight

AP ■ DAVOS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy huddled with corporate executives and world leaders in a frenzied first full day of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, where top officials from the United States, European Union, China, the Middle East and beyond spoke Tuesday about tackling conflict and embracing technology like artificial intelligence.

Zelenskyy is endeavoring to keep his country's long and largely stalemated defense against Russia on the minds of political leaders, just as Israel's war with Hamas, which passed the 100-day mark this week, has siphoned off much of the world's attention and sparked concerns about a wider conflict in the Middle East.

"It is important that you stand with us, I thank you for your support. It is very important to be here, to boost investment in Ukraine and support our economy," Zelenskyy said at an invitation-only "CEOs for Ukraine" session, according to his office.

It is Zelenskyy's first trip to Davos as president after speaking by video in previous years, and — while surrounded by a large security contingent — he's drawing the attention of media and others trying to grab a word from him.

Conversations with the prime ministers of Qatar and Jordan will bookend the day's most visible events, with speeches by Chinese Premier Li Qiang, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and US national security adviser Jake Sullivan in between.

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said the concentration on the attacks on ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthis rebels — which have spurred retaliatory strikes by the US and Britain — was "focusing on the symptoms and not treating the real issue" of Israel's war on Hamas.

"We should focus on the main conflict in Gaza. And as soon as it's defused, I believe everything else will be defused," he said, adding that a two-state solution was required to end the



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talks to reporters after a meeting at the Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Tuesday. **AP/PTI**

conflict. She noted China's export controls on metals used in computer chips, solar cells and more.

For the US, Sullivan said no when The Associated Press asked whether he would meet with China's delegation as he headed into talks with Zelenskyy and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Zelenskyy, once reticent about leaving his war-torn country, has recently gone on a whirlwind tour to try to rally support for Ukraine's cause against Russia amid donor fatigue in the West and concerns that former US President Donald Trump — who touted having good relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin — might return to the White House next year following his commanding win Monday in the Iowa caucuses.

He hopes to parlay the high visibility of the event into a bully pulpit to showcase Ukraine's pressing needs, and allies will be lining up: Corporate chiefs including JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon and officials like von der Leyen learned in multiple gatherings what support and investment was needed to help Ukraine rebuild. "It's time for us, for Ukrainian companies, for international companies to rebuild (the) Ukrainian economy," Maxim Timchenko, CEO of Ukrainian energy company DTEK said after the session. "To rely on ourselves. To build a future for Ukraine."

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Li gave veiled criticism of US restrictions on China's ability to buy advanced computer chips used in everything from cellphones to washing machines. "Technology's achievements should be used to benefit all humankind and it should not be used as a method to limit, to suppress another country," Li said. Von der Leyen reiterated that the EU doesn't want to break from Beijing — one of its most important trade partners — but ease the risks of relying too heavily on it because "we have issues when it comes to access to the market, when it comes to a level playing field, when it comes to economic security."

Pakistan court indicts Imran, his wife Bushra in un-Islamic Nikah case

Islamabad (PTI): A Pakistani court on Tuesday indicted former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in a case of solemnising their marriage against Islamic laws, according to a media report.

Khan, the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder who was removed from power in April 2022, and his wife have denied all charges in the case registered by Bushra's former husband, Khawar Maneka, last month, Geo TV reported.

Senior Civil Judge Qudratullah read out the charges in the court set up in the high security Adiala Jail, with Khan in attendance. However, his wife did not appear, which annoyed the judge as previous indictments were postponed because of her absence, the channel said.

The development comes a day after the Islamabad High Court reserved its verdict on Bushra's plea seeking dismissal of her former husband's case.

In her petition, Bushra contended the admissibility of Maneka's petition saying that a trial court has no jurisdiction to hear it while also urging the court to declare "null and void" the order of the additional sessions judge East on January 11.

Last month, Maneka moved a district and sessions court in Islamabad challenging Khan and Bushra's marriage. His plea was submitted only a day after petitioner Muhamad Hanif withdrew a similar petition challenging the nikah of the PTI chief "due to technical reasons".

Furthermore, she has also stressed that her ex-husband's complaint was filed under malice for nefarious purposes, falsely alleging marriage during iddat on the basis of false and fabricated documents. In their judgments, the high courts declared marriages in iddat to be irregular, not annulled, the plea noted. Iddat is a waiting period that a Muslim woman must observe on account of the death of her husband or dissolution of the marriage. During Monday's hearing, Bushra's lawyer underscored that Maneka, in his petition, claimed that his wife was a fornicator. The counsel wondered why the ex-husband was raising this issue six years after their marriage had ended.

'Military trial of most of May 9 suspects almost complete'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The military trials of most of the 103 civilians, allegedly involved in the May 9 attacks on key defence installations across Pakistan, are almost complete, and in 90 per cent of cases, the suspects have been found guilty, according to a media report on Tuesday.

Jailed former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder Imran Khan, 71, and hundreds of his party colleagues are being tried under multiple cases, including one under the stringent Official Secrets Act in connection with the May 9 violent protests by his supporters that damaged key military installations across Pakistan. "The military trials of most of 103 civilians, allegedly involved in May 9 attacks, have almost been

completed. In around 90 per cent of such cases, the suspects have been found involved in the May 9 attacks on military installations," The News International newspaper reported, quoting an informed government source.

However, the verdicts in these cases are not being announced because of the Supreme Court's order, it said.

Khan's party workers vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), Mianwali Airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi was also attacked by the mob for the first time.

Convicted in the Toshakhana corruption case, Khan, is incarcerated at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. Earlier on January 6, the Pakistan government set up a

cabinet committee to find out the masterminds, plotters, facilitators, and executors of the May 9 violent incidents, called a "criminal conspiracy" by the police. The committee report, expected to be submitted in 14 days, will give recommendations for stopping such incidents in the future and review the immediate and long-lasting impacts of the May 9 incidents.

The Supreme Court, in mid-December 2023, had adjourned the hearing of the case till the third week of January 2024. Before that, while suspending its prior decision to invalidate the military trials of 103 civilians, the apex court had conditionally allowed these trials. The Supreme Court had observed that the military courts would not issue a verdict against the suspects till its final ruling on the matter.

Global cooperation needed to curb climate crisis: WEF

PTI ■ DAVOS

Disasters intensified by the climate crisis may lead to USD 12.5 trillion economic losses and 14.5 million deaths worldwide by 2050, a new World Economic Forum analysis warned on Tuesday. But, there is still time for global stakeholders to take decisive and strategic action to counter these forecasts and mitigate the health impacts of climate change globally, it said.

The report, Quantifying the Impact of Climate Change on Human Health, developed in collaboration with Oliver Wyman, was released at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024.

It analysed the climate crisis through a new lens by providing a detailed picture of the indirect impact climate change will have on human health, the global economy and healthcare systems around the world.

"While there has been much discussion about the impact of climate change on nature and the global economy, some of the most pressing consequences of the Earth's rising temperatures will be on human health and the global healthcare system," said Shyam

Bishen, Head of the Centre for Health and Healthcare and Member of the Executive Committee at the WEF. "Recent progress will be lost unless critical emission reduction and mitigation measures are improved, and decisive global action is taken to build climate resilient and adaptable health systems," he added. The analysis is based on scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the most likely trajectory for the planet's rising average temperature, 2.5 degrees to 2.9 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

The report analysed six major climate-driven event categories as key multi-pronged drivers of negative health impacts — floods, droughts, heat waves, tropical storms, wildfires and rising sea levels.

Floods were found to pose the highest acute risk of climate-induced mortality, accounting for 8.5 million deaths by 2050.

Droughts, indirectly linked to extreme heat, are the second-highest cause of mortality, with an anticipated 3.2 million deaths. Heat waves take the highest economic toll at an estimated USD 7.1 trillion by 2050 due to the loss in productivity. Excess deaths attributed to air pollution, caused by fine particulate and ozone pollution, are expected to be the largest contributor to premature death, with almost 9 million deaths a year.

Climate change will also trigger a catastrophic rise across several climate-sensitive disease outcomes, including vector-borne disease, which will likely impact previously less affected regions, such as Europe and the United States, the WEF said.

By 2050, an additional 500 million people may be at risk of exposure to vector-borne diseases, the report finds. "The climate crisis is a health crisis, and it is driving a vicious cycle of disease, economic devastation and suffering. It is clear from this report that we are still to understand the full impact," said Vanessa Kerry, CEO of Seed Global Health and WHO Special Envoy for Climate Change and Health. "If we fail to act, not only will the death toll be staggering, but we also risk losing progress made over decades to improve health outcomes around the world."

Jan 7 election ensured democracy and people's right to vote: Hasina

Dhaka (PTI): Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday said the absolute triumph of her Awami League party in the recent general election was the "victory of Bangladesh, its people, and the continuation of democracy and development."

Hasina-led Awami League (AL) won the January 7 polls with a handsome victory amid a boycott by the principal opposition party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). The prime minister was addressing several hundred expatriate AL leaders from across the globe gathered at her official residence 'Ganabhaban' here to congratulate her on her party's fourth consecutive win in the 12th parliamentary election. The 76-year-old prime minister said, the absolute win

of the Awami League was "the victory of Bangladesh, its people, and the continuation of democracy and development," and said, her government has been able to ensure people's right to vote in the January 7 election, according to the Dhaka Tribune newspaper. "We have ensured the constitutional right of the people," Hasina was quoted as saying by the newspaper. Taking a jibe at the BNP for not participating in the elections, Hasina said, "In the 2008 election, BNP with their 20-party alliance got 30 seats only while Awami League alone bagged 233 seats."

That election was held under a neutral caretaker government," and asked how will they (the BNP) face the elections?

Thai officials, accused of coddling jailed ex-PM

Bangkok (AP): Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is serving a prison sentence after being convicted of wrongdoing in office, but he shouldn't be called an inmate, the country's Correction Department declared Tuesday.

The agency felt it necessary to explain that it is not being deferential to the controversial former leader when it refers to him in public without using the term. The department said its standard practice is not to call prisoners "inmates" in its public statements to avoid stigmatising them. It said the term is only used internally among its officials.

It was responding to critics who charge that Thaksin, a billionaire populist and unofficial patron of the political party that returned to power last year, is being given special treatment while he serves his sentence in a private room in a state hospital instead of in a prison cell.

Thaksin, 74, was ousted in a 2006 military coup after being accused of corruption, abuse of power and disrespecting the monarchy. He fled into exile in 2008 ahead of a trial on corruption charges, declaring that he was being prosecuted for political reasons.

He returned to Thailand

last year, and after being welcomed by supporters at Bangkok's airport was taken immediately to prison to begin serving an eight-year term for a series of convictions.

Less than a day later, he was transferred from prison to the Police General Hospital. Corrections Department officials said he had high blood pressure and low oxygen, suffered from insomnia and felt tightness in his chest, and that doctors recommended he be transferred to avoid life-threatening risks. His return to Thailand came the same day that the Pheu Thai party — the latest incarnation of the party that he originally led to power in 2001, and for which he is considered the de facto leader — won a parliamentary vote to form a new government.

The previous government was heavily influenced by the military, which continued its hostility to Thaksin and his allies long after ousting him in 2006.

About a week after Thaksin's return, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his eight-year sentence to a single year. He will be able to apply for parole after serving one-third of his amended sentence, or four months.

Global cooperation needed to curb climate crisis: WEF

PTI ■ DAVOS

Disasters intensified by the climate crisis may lead to USD 12.5 trillion economic losses and 14.5 million deaths worldwide by 2050, a new World Economic Forum analysis warned on Tuesday. But, there is still time for global stakeholders to take decisive and strategic action to counter these forecasts and mitigate the health impacts of climate change globally, it said.

The report, Quantifying the Impact of Climate Change on Human Health, developed in collaboration with Oliver Wyman, was released at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024.

It analysed the climate crisis through a new lens by providing a detailed picture of the indirect impact climate change will have on human health, the global economy and healthcare systems around the world.

"While there has been much discussion about the impact of climate change on nature and the global economy, some of the most pressing consequences of the Earth's rising temperatures will be on human health and the global healthcare system," said Shyam

Korean plane hits parked Cathay Pacific aircraft

Tokyo (AP): A Korean Air plane carrying 289 people hit a parked Cathay Pacific aircraft while taxiing to a runway at northern Japan's New Chitose Airport but caused no fire or injuries on Tuesday, a local fire department said.



away from its parking spot to head to a runway for takeoff when it bumped into the empty Cathay Pacific plane parked next to it, according to the Chitose City Fire Department. None of the KAL plane's

276 passengers and 13 crew members were injured, and no fire or fuel leaks were detected, the fire department said. It said the main left wing of the KAL airliner came into contact with the vertical stabilizer of the Cathay Pacific plane.

No other details, including the extent of the damage to the aircraft or what caused the taxiing aircraft to hit the parked one, were immediately available.

Transportation officials are investigating the cause of the fatal Haneda Airport collision, focusing on the communication between air traffic controllers and the two planes.

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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 17/01/2024 & 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 | CD Almora Protection work in Km. 1.00 to 18.300 of Suwakhan Doram Chalnichhina Dubroli Motor Road (SH-59) in Almora District and Jageshwar Constituency under Road Safety. | ₹ 5000.00 + 18% GST | ₹ 5.12 Lakh | 60 Days | 06 Month (Including With Raining Season and Winter Season) | Class "B" & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./Any state Govt./Any Govt. Undertaking |

00/12/185/2023/31513 Dated CHD :- 1/16/2024

India can become USD 5 trillion economy much before 2028: Puri

PTI ■ DAVOS
Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday asserted that India can become a five trillion dollar economy much before 2028 and said the country's energy transition needs to be done in an orderly manner to safeguard the interests of its large population.

breakfast session on 'accelerating India's energy transition towards sustainable economic growth' on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024. "I don't think we need to wait till 2028 to become a five trillion dollar economy, and if you look at what is happening, it should happen much before 2028," he said while listing various macroeconomic parameters. "I also think that the transition has to be orderly because transition by nature has to have both a clear roadmap and it must have in place all the safeguards that will ensure that there are no knee-jerk decisions taken," he noted.



Puri said it is even more so important for a country like India, which is also now the world's most populous country. "When it comes to energy, the relationship between economic growth and energy is very important. Because we are now close to a 4 trillion dollar economy, but the fact is, we need to take care of a very large part of our population.

"It's one thing to be theorising about the need for the transition without having to take care of domestic compulsions. As far as India is concerned, availability and energy resources are important because we import a key portion of our crude oil requirements," he said. "Given the multiple crises the world is facing, a democratically elected government like we have in India has to ensure affordability also. Then comes sustainability, and we are fully committed to that also," the minister said. He said the traditional market, which was dependent for energy on a defined number of suppliers, who could at will

decide price etc, that dynamic doesn't seem to be working. "I am confident that all the targets we have for 2030 on the energy transition, we will meet them. Our green hydrogen policy will succeed in a big way. "We are on our way to meet our targets on aviation fuel. India today presents a fantastic potential for biofuel blending. We are meeting all our targets ahead of time. The establishment of the Global Biofuel Alliance is another example of our successes," he added. Puri underlined the importance of price of green hydrogen for faster energy transition while stating that the country will continue to be fossil fuel dependent for some time.



Time to rebuild trust in each other: WEF Chair Klaus Schwab

PTI ■ DAVOS
As nearly 3,000 global leaders assembled here to discuss challenges and crises facing the world, the host World Economic Forum on Tuesday said trust and cooperation are a must in a connected yet divided world. It said the most challenging issues before the world including on security, climate and cyber fronts are not limited by borders and they travel without passports, but cooperation was still possible and was happening. WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab said this occasion should be used as an opportunity to rebuild trust in each other. At the first plenary of the WEF Annual Meeting 2024, Schwab said the world today may be more connected geographically but it is also a lot more divided and fragmented. "We are also seeing unprecedented risks on technology front," he said. "Let's use this meeting to rebuild trust in each of us for the future of humanity," he said. WEF president Borge Brende said, "We have nearly 3,000 participants from more than 125 countries here at the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum." "We are seeing a very complicated security landscape and a very fragile global economy. The most urgent issues faced by companies and countries including on security, climate and cyberspace are not limited by borders. They do travel without passports. "Still cooperation is possible and is happening. We are looking forward to a lot of progress on this front this week here at Davos," he said.

Green Hydrogen key to zero carbon future: Adani

PNS ■ DELHI
Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani said that Green Hydrogen holds the key to achieving net zero emission for countries like India. In his blog for the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Adani highlighted the viability and potential of Green Hydrogen as a key alternative to fossil fuel as the world seeks to transition towards a clean and renewable future.



Published on the WEF website, the blog noted the benefits of Green Hydrogen for the environment as well as development of India. Adani said, "For India, the equitable solution is not to replace one fossil fuel with another but to leapfrog to renewables and green hydrogen. The decrease in solar costs can be replicated with green hydrogen. This shift will help India achieve energy security and improve air quality in its cities. It will also contribute to food security by eliminating the uncertainties of imported ammonia prices, a crucial component in fertilizers. Most importantly, it will offer the world a chance to avert the adverse impacts of climate change. Green Hydrogen will hold the key to realise the dream of carbon neutrality across the world. Hydrogen has been known as a potential energy storage medium and can produce electricity in fuel cells with water as the only waste product. To fully realise Green Hydrogen potential, Adani emphasised on the importance of its broader adoption to decrease the cost of production, various policy support measures, and adopting the approach of vertical integration by encompassing the entire supply chain to make Green Hydrogen affordable. Companies with backward integration are the only ones who will be able to provide the world with affordable green molecules, he said. The cost of production of Green Hydrogen must decline from the current \$3-5 per kilogram (kg) towards \$1/kg for widespread adoption. The blog reflected on a roadmap for leaders, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the evolving energy paradigm.

Interest rates to stay higher, battle against inflation not yet over: Gita Gopinath

PTI ■ DAVOS
Affirming that the fight against price rise is not yet over, IMF's Gita Gopinath on Tuesday said interest rates are likely to stay higher than during the period immediately after the global financial crisis. There are expectations though that it will come down some-

time this year, the International Monetary Fund's First Deputy Managing Director said. Speaking at a session during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024 here, Gopinath dismissed the market bets for a cut in interest rates as premature. "The markets are expecting central banks to cut rates pretty aggressively. I think



that's a bit premature to make that conclusion. "We should expect rates to come down some time this year but based on the data we see right now, we expect this to be more likely in the second half of this year," she said. She also felt that chances of a deep recession were less likely.

Stock markets end 5 days winning run on profit taking in IT stocks

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Stock markets snapped their five-day winning run on Tuesday with the benchmark Sensex declining by 199 points due to profit-taking in IT and oil shares and weak global trends. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 199.17 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 73,128.77. As many as 20 Sensex shares declined while 10 advanced. The key index opened lower but staged a recovery in late-morning deals to touch its all-time intra-day high of 73,427.59. But the barometer failed to hold onto gains in the second half due to profit-taking in the broader market and retreated by 367.65 points or 0.50 per cent to a low of 72,960.29. The Nifty touched its all-time

intra-day high of 22,124.15 before closing lower by 65.15 points or 0.29 per cent at 22,032.30. As many as 33 Nifty shares closed in the red while 17 advanced. In the last five days, the BSE benchmark rallied 1,972.72 points or 2.76 per cent, and the Nifty jumped 584.45 points or 2.71 per cent. Both Sensex and Nifty closed at record high levels on Monday. "The broad market exhibited profit-taking following a good performance by the IT sector amid weak global cues. Investors are contemplating whether the current euphoria in markets has gone far fetched, especially with elevated domestic valuations in mid & small caps," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "FII flows are mixed due to a lack of fresh triggers. Oil prices



Pharma, M&M, Power Grid, Bharti Airtel, and SBI were also among the losers. IT stocks fell on profit-taking after rallying sharply in the past two sessions. Tata Steel, Titan, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, ITC and JSW Steel were among the gainers. HDFC Bank gained 0.42 per cent ahead of its financial

results which were announced after market hours. The largest private sector lender reported a 34 per cent jump in its stand-alone net profit to Rs 16,373 crore for the October-December period of 2023-24. "The profit taking in the IT, realty and energy majors were weighing on the sentiment while metal and FMCG showed resilience. The broader indices too inched lower and lost nearly half a percent each," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said. Kunal Shah, Senior Technical & Derivative Analyst, LKP Securities, said that the Nifty index experienced a day of mixed market dynamics, with bulls dominating the first half and bears taking control in the second half. For a sustained upward movement towards 22,300 levels, the

index needs to decisively break above the 22,150 mark. On the downside, the immediate support is located at 21,950, Shah said. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading lower. The US markets were closed on Monday on account of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The BSE benchmark jumped 759.49 points or 1.05 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 73,327.94 on Monday. The Nifty climbed 202.90 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 22,097.45. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.68 per cent to USD 78.68 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,085.72 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

States borrowing cost begins to ease; falls 7 bps

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Lower supplies for the second consecutive week finally led to the coupons on state debt to fall from the two-year high at the latest auction held on Tuesday, and the weighted average cut-off eased by 7 bps to 7.65 per cent. For the past two weeks, despite poor supplies states were forced to offer very high returns, which had touched 7.72 per cent last week, the highest in the past two years. Nine states raised Rs 19,200 crore by selling state government securities on Tuesday, 32 per cent lower than the amount indicated for this week in the auction calendar. Following this and the dip in the core-CPI inflation, the weighted average cut-off dipped to 7.65 per cent from a high 7.72 per cent last week, despite the weighted average tenor increasing to 16 years from 11, Icrs Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar said in a note. Moreover, she said the spread between the cut-off of the 10-year state bonds and the 10-year benchmark G-sec yield declined to 50 bps from 54 bps last week.

Hospitality, travel sector players want infrastructure status for hotel industry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Hospitality and travel sector players on Tuesday demanded infrastructure status for the hotel industry besides measures such as tax exemption on LTA annually to boost domestic tourism ahead of the Union Budget. They also recommended removal of the current TDS levied on automated bookings for internal or closed user groups such as business travel platforms and reducing the total number of licenses required to establish a hotel. "A full-blown infrastructure status for the hotel sector and further rationalisation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and a Central single window clearance for hotel projects are some of the major expectations from the Budget 2024," Roseate Hotels & Resorts CEO Kush Kapoor said in a statement. The industry has been clamouring for infrastructure status for decades. The status will enable hotel projects to have easy access to cheaper debt that is at par with projects in other industries. A reduced capital cost will have a bearing on both timely completion of projects



and their overall financial health, he added. SOTC Travel Managing Director Vishal Suri said albeit interim, the Union Budget offers a significant opportunity as a growth accelerator for the travel and tourism sector, which is "a valuable contributor to the country's GDP and a powerful employment engine". Calling for a multi-pronged approach, he asked the government to "remove the deterrent to technology in the form of the current TDS that is levied on automated bookings (self-booking tools) for internal/closed user groups such as our business travel platforms."

Insurance sector premium income to double by FY34 to around USD 450 billion: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The domestic insurance sector is on course to log in over 7 per cent annual growth over the next decade and the premium income is likely to double to around USD 450 billion by financial year 2033-34, an industry report said on Tuesday. The total premium income will more than double over the next decade (2024-34) from the present USD 224 billion, and insurance penetration will increase from 3.8 per cent currently to 4.5 per cent by FY34, Swiss Re Institute said in a report. The report further said over the next five years (2024-28), the total insurance premium income of domestic insurer are likely to grow 7.1 per cent annually in real terms, which is well above the global average growth of 2.4 per cent, 5.1 per cent in emerging markets and 1.7 per cent in advanced markets, the report said. The more than double of the global average growth of the domestic industry is on the back of a resilient domestic economy which will remain the fastest growing large GDP for the next five years, along with the rising awareness about the need for insurance and the very low penetration now along with the

low insurance-to-GDP ratio of 3.3 per cent, which will also increase to 4.5 per cent, the report said. Growth will continue to be led by life market which currently accounts for about three quarters of total insurance premium income at USD 163 billion and is forecast to grow at an annual average of 6.7 per cent during FY24-28, while non-life premium, including health, is expected to expand by an average of 8.3 per cent from USD 61 billion in FY24, the report said. The report also flagged the low risk protection citing the rising incidences of natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, cyclones, drought and wildfires, with regular frequencies and said with an average annual economic loss (loss to insurance companies in terms payout) of USD 8 billion over the past decade. As much as 93 per cent in the country is uninsured, it added. The report said if the Bhuj quake were to have happened now, the economic loss would have been USD 30-40 billion, as against USD 100 million then (given the larger size of the economy now) and the actual insured loss would have been USD 4 billion, as against USD 4 million then.

TCS aims to train entire staff with Gen AI skills

PTI ■ Mumbai
Country's largest IT services exporter TCS will train its entire staff of over 5 lakh software engineers on the upcoming Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) opportunity, as per a senior official. As a business opportunity, Gen AI is in its "early days" right now and the use cases are smaller right now, head of the company's recently created 'AI.Cloud' unit Siva Ganesan told PTI. The company, which had disclosed a few months ago about being engaged in 250 generative AI powered projects, is also using the intelligence gleaned from Gen AI for making its ongoing work for clients faster, he added. "So it's probably smaller use cases right now. It is a matter of time before the huge transformation that we also talk about that supplements assets and augment come by. Is there a timeline to that, I think for right now it is wait and watch, we have to see in the coming quarters right of the game unfolds," he said.

TN 'Best Performer in States' Startup Ranking 2022

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Tamil Nadu on Tuesday got recognized as the 'Best Performer in the States' at the fourth edition of Startup India Ranking 2022 conducted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Tamil Nadu received the maximum score of 100 percent in three out of seven reform areas such as institutional and funding support, and capacity building among others. Tamil Nadu's consistent improvement in this ranking is testament to the state government's commitment towards startups. The state had secured the 'Leader' category in the States' in 2021 during the third edition of the 'Startup India Ranking' event, a press release said. A 100 percent score in 'Reform Area' implies that Tamil Nadu has performed better than all other participating states and union territories. "Extremely happy to share that Tamil Nadu is ranked as the Best Performer State (No 1 Category) by Startup India 2022 ranking. The current government has taken the state from the last band to the first band within the two and half years which is a remarkable achievement," Startup TN Mission Director and CEO, Sivarajah Ramathan said in a social media post. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Department Secretary Archana Patnaik and Industries Department Secretary Arun Roy received certificates of recognition at the event held in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. According to DPIIT, the Startup India Action Plan was launched in 2016 with the objective of supporting entrepreneurs, building up a robust startup ecosystem, and transforming India into a country of job creators instead of job seekers.



Government may extend concessional 15 per cent tax for new manufacturing units by one year: EY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The government may extend the concessional 15 per cent income tax rate for corporates to set up new manufacturing units by one year till March 31, 2025, to encourage

private investments, EY said in its 2024 Budget expectation report. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the interim Budget for 2024-25 on February 1. EY in its Budget expectations

report also said that in the interim Budget, the government would continue its focus on ease of paying taxes, while legislative reforms will stay work-in-progress. To encourage more investment in the manufacturing sector

and exports, the interim Budget may extend the sunset date for commencing manufacturing from March 31, 2024, till March 31, 2025, for companies availing 15 per cent concessional income tax rate, EY said.

The government in 2019 announced that any new domestic company incorporated on or after October 1, 2019, making fresh investment in manufacturing, will have the option to pay income tax at the rate of 15 per cent if they com-

menced their production on or before March 31, 2023. In the Budget presented on February 1, 2023, the government extended the concessional 15 per cent corporate tax rate for new manufacturing units by one more year till

March 2024. The EY report also said that while global growth prospects remain subdued, India is expected to clock a 7 per cent growth in the current fiscal, led by its resilient domestic demand.

In the medium term, India's growth is critically dependent on its saving and investment rates. It is the household sector financial savings that become available for investment by the public and the private corporate sectors, EY said.

NAGAL STUNS WORLD NUMBER 27 TO ENTER AUSTRALIAN OPEN

AP ■ MELBOURNE
Sumit Nagal returned to the big stage in grand style, pulling off one of the biggest victories of his career by stunning world number 27 Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in straight sets to breeze into the Australian Open second round, here Tuesday.
Someone who was denied a regional wild card opportunity by the AITA for his refusal to play Davis Cup, Nagal came through qualifiers and sent packing 31st seed Bublik 6-4 6-2 7-6(5) in a gruelling match that lasted two hours and 38 minutes. Nagal, ranked 137 in the world, is playing in a Grand Slam main draw for the first time since 2021 Australian Open when he had lost 2-6 5-7 3-6 to Lithuania's Ricardas Berankis in the opening round.
Nagal's victory was first by an Indian against a seeded player in



a Grand Slam main draw in 35 years. The last time it happened was way back in 1989 when Ramesh Krishnan shocked Swede Mats Wilander, the then world number one and defending champion at the Australian Open.
In the 2020 US Open, Nagal had lost to second seed and eventual champion Dominic Thiem 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 in the second round. The 26-year-old will next play China's Juncheng Shang, ranked 140, on Thursday. If he happens to win the second round, there is potential third round clash with world No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz of Spain.
By winning the first round, Nagal has ensured that he will pocket at least AUD 120,000 in addition to the AUD 65,000 for his three wins in the qualifying stage.

It means that Nagal has secured his 2024 ATP Tour budget that is no less than one crore Indian rupees.
Someone who had told PTI in an interaction that he is left with only 900 Euros in his pocket at the end of 2023 season, the prize money earned will take off a lot of financial burden of his shoulders.
"If I look at my bank balance, I have what I had at the beginning of the year. It is 900 euros (approx Rs 80,000). The funding I need to break into top-100 is around one crore," Nagal had told PTI after Davis Cup tie against Morocco.
Nagal had landed a lot of sponsorships after the interview. The Indian was off to an impressive start as he broke Bublik in the first game of the match but he also failed to hold on to his own serve next as the scoreline read 1-1.
The Indian then broke his oppo-

nent's serve twice to take the opening set 6-4 in 42 minutes. Nagal kept the ball in the play while the usual big-serving Bublik was struggling to get his rhythm. The Kazakh player's big forehand helped him only in patches. His first serve was huge disappointment while Nagal, despite his limitation with his serve, managed to hurt the tall Kazakh with consistency.
Nagal played even better in the second set as he broke serve of his opponent twice while holding his own all through to win 6-2 in 43 minutes.
In the third set, both the players held their serve till the seventh game when Nagal broke his opponent to take a 4-3 lead. He then cruised ahead at 5-3. The Indian then served for the match at 5-4 but failed to hold. The third set went into the tie-breaker with Nagal eventually winning 7-5.



Aitana hails powerful generation of women

AP ■ LONDON
World Cup champion Aitana Bonmati hailed a "powerful generation of women" in accepting FIFA's award as best female soccer player.
Looking on inside the Hammersmith Apollo theater in London on Monday was Spain teammate Jenni Hermoso, who has spearheaded the fight against sexism in women's soccer in Spain.
Hermoso was on the shortlist for the award, along with runner-up Linda Caicedo of Colombia.
Bonmati and Hermoso helped Spain win its first Women's World Cup, beating England 1-0 in the final in Sydney last August.
The 33-year-old Hermoso was forcibly kissed on the lips by then-Spanish federation president Luis Rubiales during the trophy ceremony. Hermoso recently testified at a Madrid court as part of a sexual assault case against Rubiales.
"I'm proud of being part of a powerful generation of women who are changing the rules of

the game and the world," Bonmati said in English.
The 25-year-old Spain playmaker won her first Ballon d'Or award last October. She took home a UEFA award in August, and used her acceptance speech to support Hermoso.
Rubiales eventually resigned three weeks after the Aug. 20 final. Women's team coach Jorge Vilda also left his post in the fallout.
Hermoso recently stated that Vilda also had to go because players felt he routinely invaded their privacy.
Marta, who played in her sixth Women's World Cup last year, was presented a career-achievement award and Marcia Aoki, who is Pelé's widow, was on stage to present it.
The 37-year-old Marta urged the audience to "search every day" for ways to improve equality, especially for women.
"Try to make the world better for everyone. That's my message to everyone, to every person who has the power (to make changes)," Marta added, before motioning to Hermoso as an example.



AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Swiatek beats Kenin, faces Collins next

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)
Top-ranked Iga Swiatek survived an early test of her Australian Open title hopes when she held off 2020 champion Sofia Kenin 7-6 (2), 6-2 on Tuesday in the first round. Kenin served for the first set at 5-4, but could not close it out. Swiatek rallied to take it in a tie-breaker and then broke Kenin's serve five games later.
"It wasn't easy to find my rhythm. I felt a little bit off and Sofia did everything to keep it that way, huge respect to her," Swiatek said. "I managed to get my level up in the second set." Swiatek, aiming for a fifth major title but first in Australia, faces another former finalist in her tough bracket at the top of the women's draw.
Danielle Collins, the runner-up here two years ago, beat 2016 champion Angelique Kerber 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.
"A tough little bracket that we have!" Collins said of the first two rounds. "I was like, 'Wow, I get really great draws now. But, if you're trying to win a Grand Slam, you kind of have to beat everyone.'
Kerber was one of three past Australian champions making their returns to Melbourne Park for the first time as mothers. She joined four-time major winner Naomi Osaka as a first-round exit. Caroline Wozniacki, the 2018 winner, has reached the second round. Last year's runner-up Elena Rybakina advanced 7-6 (6), 6-4 over former No. 1-ranked Karolina Pliskova to start the night session on Rod Laver

Arena.
Victoria Azarenka, who won back-to-back titles here in 2012 and '13, won a hard-hitting contest with Camila Giorgi of Italy, advancing 6-1, 4-6, 6-3. No. 11-seeded Jelena Ostapenko, the former French Open champion, beat Kimberley Birrell 7-6 (5), 6-1.
"Right into the tournament, right, playing against Camila, we know how dangerous she can be," 18th-seeded Azarenka said. "I feel like I didn't play my best tennis today, but I am happy I was able to find my way around."
Sloane Stephens found her way back to the winner column after picking up her first victory at the Australian Open since 2019. She beat wild-card entry Olivia Gadecki 6-3, 6-1. The 30-year-old American, who won the US Open in 2017, won five straight games from 2-0 down in the opening set and eased through the second to clinch victory in just under an hour.
"Pleased with the way I played," said Stephens, who reached the semi-finals of the event in 2013, but who has lost in the first round in seven of her past eight visits to Melbourne. "I've been working a lot on making the opponents play. I think that's something I had got away from. Pleased with the win."
In men's results, 11th-seeded Casper Ruud beat Albert Ramos-Vinolas 6-1, 6-3, 6-1 and Cameron Norrie defeated Juan Pablo Varillas 6-4, 6-4, 6-2. Grigor Dimitrov, the No. 13 seed, beat Marton Fucsovics 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (1), 6-2.

Japan beat Chile 2-0 to enter FIH Women Olympic Qualifier semifinals

PTI ■ RANCHI
Japan scored a goal each in the first two quarters to beat Chile 2-0 and enter the semi-finals of the FIH Women's Olympic Qualifier here on Tuesday.
Kana Urata (1st minute) handed Japan the lead within the first 23 seconds of the game via a field effort before Miyu Hasegawa (23rd) doubled the scoreline by converting a

penalty corner.
Japan, thus, finished second in Pool A with seven points from three games. World No. 5 Germany too have seven points but ended on top of the pool by virtue of better goal difference.
Japan will now take on the top-pers of Pool B in the semifinals on Thursday, while Germany will be up against the second place side of the other pool. The Japanese came out with

purpose and sounded the board with their first move through Urata who scored from a penalty corner.
Japan kept up the pressure and soon earned their second penalty corner but wasted the chance. Japan doubled their lead in the second quarter when Hasegawa scored from Aimi Kobayashi's pass.
World No. 23 Chile looked more positive after the change of ends and put pressure on the

Japanese defence for a brief period in the third quarter. In that period, the Chileans secured three quick penalty corners but failed to find the back of the net.
Japan, however, got their act together soon and broke the Chilean defence to secure two penalty corners in the third quarter but they were wasted. The Japanese kept up the pressure on the Chilean defence in the fourth and final quarter.

Avani stands seventh, Sandeep 10th at Australian Amateur golf

AP ■ MELBOURNE
Avani Prashanth picked two birdies against one lone bogey towards the end of her first nine, to be 1-under 72 and finish tied seventh after the first round of the Australian Amateur Championships.
Avani, the runner-up at the Australian Masters of Amateurs last week, is three shots behind leader Aina Fujimoto (69) at 4-under here at Keysborough Golf Club.
Sandeep Yadav, the 2023 Indian National champion, opened with a steady start of 1-under 71 as the Indian Golf Union's team had mixed results on the first day.
The players are competing at two courses, with the par at the



Keysborough Golf Club for women being par-73 and for men, par-72.
At Yarra Yarra, it is par-70 both men and women.
It is one of the most prestigious amateur events wherein both men and women play together. Among women, four players including last week's winner Rianne Mikhaela Malixi were

tied second at three-under each. Amelia Whinney is sole sixth and four players including Avani are tied at seventh.
The leader in the men's section was Australia's Kai Komulainen, who shot 6-under 64 at Yarra Yarra and led by one over Mitchell Kale of New Zealand, who carded 5-under 67 at Keysborough.
Among the other Indians playing in Australia this week, Heena Kang with 78 was tied-60 in women's section while in the men's section Varun Muthappa (74) was tied-83 and Rohit Narwal (78) was tied-165. Avani, starting from the tenth, birdied the par-3 15th and added a second birdie on par-5 17th but dropped a shot on par-5 18th.

Zverev wins his opener

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)
Olympic tennis champion Alexander Zverev won his opening match at the Australian Open on Tuesday, a day after being ordered to stand trial later this year in an assault case in Germany.
The sixth-seeded Zverev dropped the first set before rallying to beat fellow German Dominic Koepfer 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (3), 6-3 in a night match on Melbourne's Margaret Court Arena.
The 26-year-old Zverev is accused of assaulting a woman during an argument in Berlin in May 2020. He has denied the accusation.
German news agency DPA reported Monday that the trial will start on May 31, which is during the French Open.



However, it cited a court spokesperson who said Zverev will not need to make a personal appearance and can be represented by a lawyer.
A court in Berlin issued a penalty order in October ordering Zverev to pay fines amounting to 450,000 euros (USD 493,000), but the player contested the ruling which meant the case went to trial instead.
Penalty orders are used in Germany as a means of resolving

some criminal cases without going to trial if the suspect does not contest the order.
The men's tennis tour ruled last January that Zverev would not face disciplinary action after its investigation into domestic abuse allegations against him found "insufficient evidence" to substantiate the claims.
Zverev was a finalist at the US Open in 2020, won the men's singles Olympic gold medal in 2021 and is sixth in the rankings.
He led Germany to victory in the United Cup team tournament in Sydney last week but said playing a Grand Slam tournament in Melbourne was very different.
Zverev said he was seriously tested by Koepfer and was struggling for rhythm, but added: "You've got to focus on yourself, your own shots."

Messi edges Haaland for FIFA best men player award

AP ■ LONDON
Lionel Messi landed another prestigious award in soccer barely. The Argentina star needed a tiebreaker with Erling Haaland to win FIFA's best men's player prize on Monday. He has national team captains to thank.
The voting breakdown showed Messi and Haaland with 48 points each after voting by a global panel of national team coaches and captains, selected journalists, plus fans online. The tiebreaker was whoever had more first-place or "5-

point" scores from the votes of national team captains. That category was 107 to 64 for the Inter Miami forward.
Neither player showed up at the awards ceremony at Hammersmith Apollo theater in west London. Kylian Mbappé, the third finalist, skipped it too. Messi had moved from Paris Saint-Germain to Inter Miami and led the David Beckham-owned team to a little-known Leagues Cup title - all while single-handedly elevating soccer's relevance in the United States. The 36-year-old Argentina star also topped Haaland and



Mbappé for his eighth Ballon d'Or award last October. World Cup champion Aitana Bonmati showed up - and cleaned up. The 25-year-old Spain playmaker was named FIFA's best women's soccer play-

er, building on her Ballon d'Or award last October, which followed a UEFA award in August. And that was after she led Spain to World Cup glory and Barcelona to the Champions League title. She was named

player of the tournament for both competitions. Bonmati won Monday over Spain teammate Jenni Hermoso and Colombia star Linda Caicedo. "It's been an exceptional and unique year that I'll remember all my life," Bonmati said in translated comments.
"I owe this to the teams that I've played with. Without all of you, I wouldn't be here."
"The Best" awards represent FIFA's version of the older and more prestigious Ballon d'Or prize. The women's eligibility period covered performances from Aug. 1, 2022 through the

World Cup final last August. Spain's women won their first World Cup by beating England 1-0 in the final in Sydney, Australia.
Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola was named best men's coach, and England coach Sarina Wiegman took the women's prize. Guardiola led City to a treble of titles: Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup.
Messi secured the FIFA award for the eighth time in 15 years. He had won it last year, too, after leading Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title.

WFI seeks suspension of revocation through dialogue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Tuesday decided that it will seek a dialogue with the Sports Ministry for revocation of its suspension, saying it does not want a clash with the government and the legal options will be explored only if talks fail.
The WFI had earlier said it will knock the doors of judiciary to get the suspension revoked but had a change of mind at its Executive Council (EC) meeting, which was chaired by President Sanjay Singh and attended by 12 other elected members.
Secretary General Prem Chand Lochab and Senior Vice President Devender Kadian

were the only absentees.
"We do not want a clash with the government. We are not moving court as of today. We will seek time from the ministry and a delegation will try and speak with the government," Sanjay Singh told PTI after the meeting.
Asked if he won't get time from the ministry, he said, "First we have to try. We want to know what we need to do to get the suspension lifted. Like UWW had set certain conditions when it had suspended the ground was not holding elections. The government has suspended us but there is no clarity how it will be lifted."
"Earlier also we had written to the ministry but we did not get a reply. We will approach min-

istry in 2-3 days. A delegation will be formed for the dialogue and I am hopeful that suspension will be lifted before the Nationals in Pune.
"We had invited all elected members including Prem Chand Lochab for this meeting but he did not turn up. He had said, 'he will see.'
Lochab had objected to WFI conducting a meeting, hours after elections, saying in WFI can't conduct business in the absence of Secretary General. The ad-hoc panel has announced that it will conduct senior Nationals from February

3 in Jaipur and the age group championships in Gwalior. Citing violation of the National Sports Code and the WFI constitution, the government had suspended the newly-elected body on December 24, three days after the federation conducted its election.
The WFI has maintained that it neither accepts the suspension nor does it recognise the ad-hoc panel that has been constituted by the IOA to manage the day-to-day affairs of the sport. The Secretary General expressed his surprise even about Tuesday's EC meeting.

In a letter written to Sanjay Singh, the Secretary General asked, "how such a meeting can be conducted when the sports ministry had abstained WFI from administering and managing the day-to-day affairs of the Federation."
Lochab also wrote that he was informed about the EC meeting notice on an email ID which is not operational due to technical glitches and that he was surprised to get a call from Sanjay Singh early Tuesday.
Sanjay Singh said that state associations have given their commitment to send teams for

Nationals from January 29-31. Sanjay Singh contended that Indian wrestling was at loss because a proper functioning WFI is not in place.
"See, we did not have all entries for the Zagreb Open. We had Aman winning a gold medal but no national anthem was played and the tri-colour was not hoisted.
"The athlete plays for such moments and they can drape themselves in national flag but it did not happen because of the UWW suspension."
"So many weight categories went unrepresented and this is not good for wrestlers and Indian wrestling."
The ad-hoc panel had picked the wrestlers who competed at the Hangzhou Asian Games for

the Ranking Series event and even those 18 categories did not have all the wrestlers.
The event in Croatia had offered medals and ranking points in 30 weight categories, including 12 in non-olympic weight classes. The WFI EC also decided to bring about an amendment in its Constitution to make it clear that a two-third majority will be required only if an EC member seeks one more term for the same post.
"A lot of people claimed that I was ineligible to contest for the post of WFI President just because I have served as joint secretary. But let me clarify that if I seek a different post then I don't need a two-third majority, only a simple majority will do."

Puts legal challenge on hold

India, Afghanistan T20 clash today

PTI ■ BENGALURU

With the series already in the bag, India will be eager to perfect their freshly-baked T20 template as a team and hope that skipper Rohit Sharma's bat finally fires when they face Afghanistan in the third and last match of the rubber here on Wednesday. This will be India's final T20 game ahead of the World Cup in June, and the team management wouldn't want any drop in intensity that was displayed during victories at Mohali and Indore. India's identical six-wicket wins were marked by an ultra-aggressive mindset from ball one that saw them chasing down 159 in 17.3 overs and 173 in 15.4 overs respectively. It was a clear deviation from their earlier approach of building the momentum for a final flourish in T20s. None showed this intent more brightly than Shivam Dube and Virat Kohli.

Kohli was playing a T20I for India after 14 months at Indore, but he creamed a 16-ball 29 at a strike rate of 181. The most noteworthy feature of his little yet significant innings was the way he handled Afghan spinner Mujeeb-ur-Rahman, whom he carted for 18 runs off seven balls, striking against him at a rate of 257. Kohli has always been a bit of a slow-mover against spin but there was no trepidation this time and he showed commendable alacrity to contribute his two cents to a transformed approach. Dube reappeared in the Indian blue after a gap of three years when he was selective for the T20 series against Ireland at Malahide, Dublin, last year. But after playing in the subsequent Asian Games, Dube could not find a spot in the series against Australia and South Africa. However, the scattered appearances did not prevent Dube from following the path set by



the think tank. His two brutal fifties were too heavy to handle for Afghanistan, who did not have the services of injured star spinner Rashid Khan. Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who had missed the first match at Mohali with a groin niggle, too showed the willingness to imbibe the pattern with a quick half-century in the last game. India will eye an encore from the trio here. Among these slews of positives, a minor irritant has been the failure of Rohit to fire. He was run out in the first match after a mix up with Shubman Gill, while misjudging pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi's length doomed him at Indore. His tally of two runs across as many matches will not worry the management by any stretch of imagination. But they will certainly like to see him signing off from the series with a substantial innings. While India might not affect any

major changes in the batting unit, the think-tank can look to give some game-time to Kuldeep Yadav and Avesh Khan. The left-arm wrist spinner can come in for either Ravi Bishnoi or Washington Sundar, and Avesh can replace his fellow pacer Mukesh Kumar. Wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma has been playing T20Is from the fourth match against Australia last year at Raipur, and if the thought leaders want to give him a rest, they have the option of bringing in Sanju Samson. As for Afghanistan, they have shown isolated sparks in this series without being able to transform them into match-winning fireworks. They would hope for a good effort from opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz after two mediocre outings, as his salvos up the order go a long way in Afghans setting or chasing a target. The smooth pitch at the Chinnaswamy Stadium and its shorter bound-

aries offer him a fine chance to be among runs. A victory against India will also boost Afghanistan's confidence ahead of a packed away calendar consisting of fixtures against Sri Lanka and Ireland. India: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar. Afghanistan: Ibrahim Zadran (captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (WK), Ikram Alikhil (WK), Hazratullah Zazai, Rahmat Shah, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Azmatullah Omarzai, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Fareed Ahmad, Naveen Ul Haq, Noor Ahmad, Mohammad Saleem, Qais Ahmad, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan.

Abbas to miss third T20I, Kane ruled out

PTI ■ KARACHI

Young Pakistan fast bowler Abbas Afridi was on Tuesday ruled out of the third T20I while hosts New Zealand lost the services of their captain Kane Williamson for the remainder of the five-match series. The Pakistan team management confirmed in a statement that a low grade abdominal muscle strain to Afridi will keep him out of the third T20I, with a decision on his availability for the remaining two matches to be taken later. "His scan has shown no sign of significant injury, and he will be managed symptomatically. His availability for the last two games will be made at a later stage," the management statement said. The 22-year-old right-arm pacer Afridi made his inter-

national debut for Pakistan in this series. Pakistan are already without fast bowler Khurram Shahzad, who played in their opening Test against Australia last month, as well as spinners Abrar Ahmed and Noman Ali owing to injuries. The spin duo did not feature in any of their three Tests in Australia. Williamson suffered a hamstring strain on his right leg during the second T20I and will sit out for the remainder of the series in order to be fit in time for New Zealand's two-Test series against South Africa starting on February 3. New Zealand lead the ongoing five-match T20I series against Pakistan 2-0, having won the first two games by 46 runs and 21 runs respectively. The third T20I will be played on Wednesday.

We need to put pressure on Indian batters in middle overs: Trott

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott said his bowlers will have to put pressure on Indian batters in the middle-overs for them to be competitive against the home side in the third and final T20I here on Wednesday. Afghanistan are looking to score a consolation win after India won Mohali and Indore matches to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the rubber. India had scaled down targets with consummate ease in the previous two matches. "I will be looking at getting closer to a good 40 overs from us tomorrow. Being able to put some pressure on the Indian side in the middle overs with the ball would be nice. "It's something that we want to get better at if we want to compete at the World Cup (in June). So, plenty to play for at



that we are careful with his back. He is such an influential player. We have to make sure he is 100% ready and not rush him back from that type of surgery. It is important to give him the time and he is working extremely hard. "He has got a few more appointments and check-ups to make sure everything is okay. So, there is no real time-frame. I hope it is sooner rather than later. But there is no pressure and no rush," said Trott. Afghanistan batters also have not really fired in this series, and Trott attributed that to an underwhelming effort to his side playing not enough T20s of late.

"We haven't played a lot of T20s recently. As a side, we take a while to get into the rhythm. We saw ourselves build towards that 50-over WC with the Asia Cup and a series before that. Hopefully, tomorrow we can get it all together," he said. Trott offered a clear path for his batsmen to register some runs against their names. "We need batters going into the last ten. We have seen how hard it is to stop batters in the last five overs. What we did really well in Mohali is that in the last ten overs we got 110 runs, I think for two wickets. But in Indore, in the middle overs, we went nine overs at six (runs) an over, building up for the last five. So, we do well for one game and don't do it in the next. We need to do it more if you want to compete for the series, in World Cups," he added.



Arshdeep banks on new ball experience to ace T20 test

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Arshdeep Singh's chaotic journey in T20Is will reach its culmination point at the Chinnaswamy Stadium during the third match against Afghanistan on Wednesday, and he is banking on the recent experience of bowling with new-ball to ace the latest test of his skills. Arshdeep took four wickets from as many matches against the Aussies last year, but in each of those matches he conceded 41, 46, 44 and 40 runs in four overs. But against South Africa and Afghanistan, the left-arm pacer had relatively better outings - four wickets across four matches at an acceptable overall economy of eight. Those performances offered a microcosm of Arshdeep's efforts from January 5, 2023 to January 14, 2024 as his economy oscillated between 7.5 and above 10. The Punjab man accepted that his journey was a mixed bag during the above-mentioned period. "The last 12 months have been a mixed bag (of experience). There were a few good performances and I got to learn something new. There were a few ups and downs as well, making my performances neutral," Arshdeep said during the pre-match press meet on Tuesday. The pacer said experience of bowling with the new ball in the absence of senior pros like Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj has helped him develop as a bowler. "Specifically, I recently started (bowling) with new ball, espe-

cially on slow wickets. In the last match, I tried a few variations, especially against left-handers, and it worked and it gave me some confidence. Otherwise, I am trying to sharpen my skills," he added. Arshdeep said the role clarity within the team has helped him to gain in experience even when he was struggling a bit with the ball. "Players' roles are defined. As a bowler, you know, you have to bowl at the start and middle overs. When there is clarity, you come up with good performances," he added. The 24-year-old said even though India have already bagged the series 2-0, it won't stop him and the team to continue seeking improvement. "Mindset as a team doesn't work on what the series score-line and what happened in the last matches. The main motive is to get used to the ground, adapted quickly. We can look at improving and developing match skills," said Arshdeep. The Chinnaswamy often tests the skills and endurance of a bowler with its flat deck and short boundaries, but Arshdeep saw it as an advantage. "We feel there is nothing to lose here. Batsmen are under pressure because of the feeling that they have to score more boundaries and that is where as a bowler you are in the game. You can get more wickets," Arshdeep also said he will focus on the World Cup only when the moment arrives, as other matches, including the IPL 2024, are dominating his thought process at the moment.

WI players cannot be faulted for 'I am heading to IPL' culture: Lara

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Legendary batter Brian Lara feels that West Indies cricketers cannot be faulted for preferring lucrative T20 franchise leagues around the world, like IPL, to national duty, saying playing the game these days is also about "making a living". One of the reasons of West Indies' decline, especially in Test cricket, has been the advent of T20 franchise cricket, with a handful of the Caribbean stars choosing to chase lucrative deals around the

world instead of representing their nation in red-ball cricket. "For an 18-or-19-year-old to say, 'I'm heading to the IPL, or, 'I don't care about West Indies cricket'... It's not just his fault," Lara told 'Sen Sportsday'. "(About) 40 or 50 years ago, you may have been driven or motivated by playing for your country. But the sport today is about playing and making a living, so we have to make sure that that is part of the whole deal that we are selling," said the former captain who is here



as team mentor for the two-match Test series against Australia starting on Wednesday. Lara admitted the difficulty on the part of the West Indies Cricket Board (CWB) to compete with lucrative franchise leagues around the world. "We've got to face the facts. The franchise cricket that is being played around the world, it is very difficult for the West Indies Cricket Board to compete with that our cricketers have." He said it would be difficult to

change the mindset of the current crop of players, and so the West Indies Cricket Board must try to instil the next generation the importance of representing their part of the world on the global stage. He said that push must be made in underage cricket and at schools. "It's impossible to do it with a present crop. I think we've got to go and get that into the schools and into the age group cricket before we bring them out on the international stage," he said. "I think we've got to, first of all,

try to hold on to the young ones, the teenagers. We need to get them to understand what West Indies cricket means and how we can protect it," he added. The batting legend said it was crucial for West Indies cricketers to develop a sense of loyalty to the Caribbean team. "I just think that we have not sold what West Indies cricket means to us as Caribbean people and why you should be playing for the West Indies - that's the first thing we need to do," he said.

ICC bans Bangladesh cricketer Hossain

FOR TWO YEARS ON CORRUPTION CHARGES

PTI ■ DUBAI

Bangladesh all-rounder Nasir Hossain was on Tuesday banned from all cricket for two years, with six months of that suspended, after he accepted three charges of breaching the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code. Hossain, who was charged by the ICC (in its capacity as the Designated Anti-Corruption Official under the ECB Code) in September 2023, admitted to three charges. Charge No. 1 relates to "Breach of Article 2.4.3 of the Code, in that he failed to disclose to the Designated Anti-Corruption Official (without unnecessary delay) the receipt of a gift that had a value of over US\$750, namely the gift of a new iPhone 12," said the ICC in a statement. He also "failed to disclose to the Designated Anti-Corruption Official full details of the approach or invitation he

received to engage in Corrupt Conduct via the new iPhone 12. "Charge No. 3 - Breach of Article 2.4.6 of the Code, in that he failed or refused, without compelling justification, to co-operate with the Designated Anti-Corruption Official's investigation in relation to possible Corrupt Conduct under the Code, including (without limitation) failing to provide accurately and completely any information and/or documentation requested by the Designated Anti-Corruption Official (whether as part of a formal Demand pursuant to Article 4.3 or otherwise) as part of such investigation." As per the statement, the 32-year-old admitted to the charges and has agreed to the sanction. "Subject to him satisfying the conditions in respect of the suspended part of the sanction, he will be free to resume international cricket on 7 April 2025," the ICC added. Hossain was among the eight people associated with the Pune Devils franchise who were charged for alleged corruption in the 2020-21 edition

Advocaat hired to coach Curaçao national team

PTI ■ WILLEMSTAD (CURAÇAO)

Dick Advocaat was hired as coach of Curaçao ahead of its opening World Cup qualifier in June, the eighth national team he will lead. Advocaat on Monday agreed to a one-year contract that includes a one-year option, according to Curaçao's soccer federation. It did not say whether the option belongs to Advocaat or the federation. The 76-year-old Advocaat coached the Netherlands for

three different stints, leading the Oranje to the quarterfinals of the 1994 World Cup and the semifinals of the 2004 European Championship. He also led the Dutch team as it failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup. He also coached the United Arab Emirates (2005), South Korea (2005-06), Belgium (2009-10), Russia (2010-12), Serbia (2014) and Iraq (2021). His South Korean team was

eliminated in the group stage of the 2006 World Cup and his Russia team failed to advance from the group stage of the 2012 Euros. At the club level, he has coached Haarlem (1987-89), SVV Schiedam (1989-91), Dordrecht (1991-92), PSV Eindhoven (1994-98 and 2012-13), Glasgow Rangers (1998-2001), Borussia Mönchengladbach (2004-05), Zenit Saint Petersburg (2006-09), AZ Alkmaar (2009-10 and

2013-14), Sunderland (2015), Fenerbahçe (2016-17), Sparta Rotterdam (2017-18), Utrecht (2018-19), Feyenoord (2019-21) and Den Haag (2022-23). He won top the 2008 UEFA Cup with Zenit and top tier league titles with PSV (1997), Rangers (1999 and 2000) and Zenit (2007). Coached by Guus Hiddink, Curaçao won its first-round group in qualifying for the 2022 World Cup, then lost to Panama on 2-1 aggregate in the second round.

Kang-in scores twice in South Korea 3-1 win

PTI ■ AL-RAYYAN (QATAR)

Paris Saint-Germain winger Lee Kang-in is used to being overshadowed by Kylian Mbappe at club level. Son Heung-min remains the icon for his national team South Korea. But with two moments of individual brilliance against Bahrain on Monday, Lee took center stage at the Asian Cup. Not that he seemed comfortable under the spotlight after scoring twice in the second half to inspire South Korea to a 3-1 win in the Group E match.

"It's not just about my two goals. All the goals we score are very important for the team. I would just like to say and highlight that it is not about individual performance," a modest Lee said afterward. His coach Jurgen Klinsmann was also restrained in his praise of the forward. "If you score two in the opening game of the Asian Cup for us you deserve to be man of the match and (it was) a very good performance. But I have to keep him on the ground every day," he said with a smile. It feels like there is no danger



of success going to Lee's head. And as members of the media crowded around after the post-match news conference, he was likely happy to see it was Klinsmann, the World Cup-winning former Germany striker, who was being mobbed with requests for selfies. Lee was just trying to get back to the locker room at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. Earlier he had scored two picture perfect goals to get South Korea off to a winning start in the competition the country hasn't won since back-to-back titles in 1956 and 60.

The game was tied at 1-1 when he took control, giving South Korea a 2-1 lead in the 56th-minute with a left-footed shot from around 30 yards (meters). He was equally clinical as he scored his second goal 12 minutes later when showing sharp footwork and curling the ball into the bottom corner. Hwang In-beom had given South Korea a first-half lead in the 38th after both teams had missed chances, but Bahrain equalized six minutes after the break through Abdullah Al Hashash.