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RAM RAJYA: TREATISES ON
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Devotees pour their hearts and wallets out for Mandir

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

The construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya has been an extraordinary milestone, surpassing ₹5000 crore in donations, well beyond the initial target of ₹900 crore set by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, according to recent reports.

As the grand opening ceremony approaches, a significant sum of ₹3,200 crore has already been deposited in the "dedication fund" account.

Expressing gratitude, a spokesperson for the trust said, "The overwhelming support and generosity of devotees have propelled the construction of the Ram temple beyond our expectations. It is a testament to the deep-rooted devotion and faith of the people."

In the lead-up to the consecration ceremony, the trust has witnessed a remarkable surge in daily donations and offerings to Ram Lalla. The trust is currently receiving three to four lakh daily, with monthly donations ranging from ₹1.5 crore to ₹2 crore. The spokesperson added, "The outpouring of contributions demonstrates the global reverence for Ram Lalla and the significance attached to the completion of the temple."



Evening view of the Ram Temple ahead of its consecration ceremony in Ayodhya

PTI

Lord Ram gives his first darshan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a momentous revelation, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) shared the first image of the Ram Lalla idol on Friday, three days before the eagerly anticipated "pran pratishtha" ceremony scheduled for January 22. The striking black stone statue, adorned with a garland of roses and a yellow cloth covering its eyes, stood in a dignified posture, as revealed by Sharad Sharma, an office-bearer of the VHP.



On Thursday afternoon, the newly sculpted idol of Lord Ram, crafted by Mysuru-based artist Arun Yogiraj, found its place in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple. The 51-inch idol, representing Lord Ram as a child, was ushered in with prayers and devotion, guided by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust. Anil Mishra, a member of the Ram Mandir Trust, conducted the crucial "prime resolution", emphasising that the consecration of Lord

Ayodhya airport on test alert

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
LUCKNOW

In anticipation of a substantial surge in air traffic on January 21 and 22, Saurabh Singh, the manager at Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, has said that the airport administration is fully prepared for a significant influx of charter flights. With 40 charter flights expected on

January 21 and an additional 40 scheduled to land on January 22, the airport is bracing for a logistical challenge that demands meticulous planning. Expressing concerns about the limited parking bay capacity, Singh highlighted the need to manage the departure of planes efficiently, especially after dropping off VIP guests. "To address this, airports in

Lucknow, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, and Kushinagar have been put on high alert to accommodate the overflow of aircraft and ensure a seamless operational flow," he said. The strategic coordination efforts of the Airport Authority of India extend across 12 airports in five states-Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand-with the

aim of efficiently managing the influx of charter flights during the specified period. However, the challenge lies in Ayodhya's capability to accommodate the heightened air traffic, as the airport is equipped to park only four aircraft. To underscore the significance of the event, one bay has been exclusively reserved for the Prime Minister.

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To efficiently manage the substantial influx of donations, the Ram temple trust has embraced modernity by employing cash counting machines. This step ensures accuracy and transparency in handling the financial support pouring in from devotees worldwide. In addition to financial contributions, devotees across the globe are expressing their devotion by sending over 5,000 new clothes for Ram Lalla.

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CAPSULE

SC judges invited for Jan 22 Ayodhya event

NEW DELHI: Five Supreme Court judges, including present Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, who were part of the Constitution bench which paved way for the construction of the Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, are invited as State guests to witness the consecration ceremony on January 22. Besides the present CJI Chandrachud, former CJs Ranjan Gogoi and SA Bobde and former judges Ashok Bhushan and S Abdul Nazeer were part of the bench which had delivered the historic verdict on November 9, 2019.

SP, RLD announce 2024 poll alliance

LUCKNOW: The Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal on Friday announced their alliance for the Lok Sabha polls, with the RLD saying that the other party will leave seven seats in western Uttar Pradesh for its nominees. SP president Akhilesh Yadav and RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary announced the tie-up on social media for the elections later this year.

Pakistan Polio scheme coordinator killed

PESHAWAR: A Polio immunisation programme coordinator was killed and a policeman was injured when their vehicle was attacked in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of northwestern Pakistan on Friday, police said.



SC rejects pleas of Bilkis convicts for more time to surrender

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eleven convicts in the case of gangrape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of seven of her family members during the 2002 riots in Gujarat will have to surrender on January 21 as the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed their plea seeking an extension of time to surrender. Observing that the reasons cited by the convicts have no merits, a bench of justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to grant them relaxation. The convicts had moved the apex court on Thursday seeking more time to surrender.

The top court had on January 8 annulled the remission the Gujarat Government granted to the 11 convicts in the high-profile case while slamming the State for being "complicit" with an accused and abusing its discretion. It ordered the convicts, who were released prematurely on Independence Day in 2022, to go back to jail within two weeks. "We have heard senior counsel and counsel for the applicants and the counsel for the non-applicants also. The reasons cited by

applicants to seek postponement of surrender and report back to jail have no merit inasmuch as those reasons in no way prevent them from complying with our directions. Hence the miscellaneous applications are dismissed," the bench said. The reasons seeking extension of the deadline to surrender included failing health, impending surgery, sons marriage and harvesting ripe crops.

The first five convicts who had sought relief are Govind Nai, Pradeep Mordhiya, Bipin Chandra Joshi, Ramesh Chandana and Mitesh Bhatt.

Later, the remaining convicts also moved a similar plea. "The respondent himself is an old man who is suffering from asthma and is in really poor health. It is further submitted that the respondent was recently operated upon and had to undergo an angiography. It is also submitted that the Respondent is yet to undergo another operation for the treatment of 'Hemorrhoids'," Nai said in his plea. He also cited his bedridden 88-year-old father's ill health to seek relief.

Flight curbs in Delhi till Republic Day, French President chief guest

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the nation prepares for its Republic Day celebrations on January 26, Delhi International Airport Limited has issued an important notice affecting flight operations. There will be no flight arrivals or departures at the Delhi airport from 10:20 am to 12:45 pm every day until January 26 in connection with the Republic Day preparations and celebrations. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has revised the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) to enforce these new restrictions. Initially applicable to non-scheduled flights with exceptions, the restrictions now extend to all flights during the specified time frame from January 19 to 26. The 145-minute closure of Delhi airport daily for the next week could further affect commercial schedules after weeks of heavy fog causing delays, diversions, and/or cancellations of hundreds of flights. Passengers are advised to check with their airlines for updated flight schedules and plan their airport arrival accordingly, keeping in mind the stipulated no-operation hours. The Airports Authority of India has issued a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) outlining restrictions from 6 am to 9 pm between January 26 and 29, with a complete flight halt on Republic Day from 6 am to 9 pm. In a post on X, Delhi airport said that, according to the NOTAM, no flights would be arriving or departing from Delhi airport for 2



hours and 15 minutes between January 19 and 26. Earlier, the restrictions were applicable only to non-scheduled flights with certain exceptions. The Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi is the country's largest airport and handles 1,300 flights daily. The 75th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2024, will feature French President Emmanuel Macron as the honored guest, marking the sixth instance of a French leader participating in Republic Day festivities. Until now, France and the UK were tied with five invitations each. 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. These restrictions will be in force from 6 am to 9 pm during the period from January 26 to 29. The NOTAM will not impact the operations of the Indian Air Force, Border Security Force, Army aviation helicopter operations, as well as state-owned aircraft/helicopters flying with the Governor/Chief Minister of a State.

Akasa Air issued a statement indicating that some flights to and from Delhi between January 19 and January 26 have been cancelled or rescheduled due to airspace closure. The partial shutdown of operations at one of the busiest airports in the world is an annual feature as the capital is placed under a security blanket before the Republic Day celebrations.

India will celebrate its 75th Republic Day next week with French President Emmanuel Macron as the chief guest; this will be the 6th time a French leader will be the guest of honor at a Republic Day parade.

As part of the security measures for the significant day, the operation of sub-conventional aerial platforms, including UAVs, paragliders, micro-light aircraft, quadcopters, and hot air balloons, has been prohibited over Delhi in anticipation of Republic Day. The order came into effect on January 18 and will remain in force until February 15.

The order stated that certain criminal or anti-social elements or terrorists inimical to India may pose a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries, and vital installations by using these platforms. In addition to platforms such as paragliders, para-motors, hang gliders, UAVs, unmanned aircraft systems (UASs), micro-light aircraft, remotely piloted aircraft, hot air balloons, and quadcopters, the order also mentioned para-jumping from aircraft.

Climate crisis takes six months toll on human lifespan

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change is advancing menacingly, posing a growing threat to humanity, as noted in a study. The research suggests that human-induced global warming and erratic rainfall could reduce the average human lifespan by approximately six months. This underscores the urgent need for global efforts to address and mitigate the consequences of global warming, aiming to protect both the environment and humanity. Amit Roy from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology and The New

School for Social Research, USA, used a composite climate change index. The findings indicate that the worst affected will be women and individuals in developing nations. The study is published in the open-access journal PLOS Climate. The study's outcome is particularly significant, as it establishes, for the first time, a link between climate change and life expectancy. We have already observed, through well-documented research, the impact of temperature and rainfall - two telltale signals of climate change. These factors contribute to a range of public health concerns, from the acute and



direct, such as natural disasters like flooding and heat waves, to the indirect yet equally devastating, including respiratory and mental illnesses.

To elucidate the relationship between life expectancy and climate change, the author examined data on average temperature, rainfall, and life expectancy from 191 countries spanning the years 1940 to 2020. GDP per capita was used to control for drastic differences between countries.

In addition to measuring the isolated impacts of temperature and rainfall, the author designed a first-of-its-kind composite climate

change index, combining these two variables to gauge the overarching severity of climate change. The findings of this study suggest that if the annual average temperature increases by 1 degree Celsius, life expectancy at birth will decline by 0.44 years. Moreover, the temperature rise will further negatively impact life expectancy by interacting with the rainfall cycle.

"If the composite climate change index - an index of the geometric mean of temperature and rainfall - increases by 10 points, life expectancy at birth will decline by 0.50 years. Furthermore, climate change

will disproportionately reduce the life expectancy of females more than that of males," said the author. Beyond the results of this study, Dr Roy is hopeful that the composite climate change index will stand as the global conversation about climate change, become a usable metric for the nonscientific public, and encourage collaboration and even friendly competition among countries to combat the impacts of climate change. Mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to a changing environment are of particular importance, the author says.

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Modi begins process of giving keys to 1 lakh houses to beneficiaries

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
In a second visit to Maharashtra within a week ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday initiated the process of distribution of more than one lakh homes to the beneficiaries under three Government different schemes at Solapur in western Maharashtra. Modi — who also laid the foundation stone for AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) projects worth around Rs. 2,000 crore on the occasion — expressed his delight of inaugurating the largest housing society under the PM Awas Yojna. Speaking in an emotionally choked voice, the Prime

Minister recalled the wish from his childhood days about living in such homes. Modi said the nation was currently in a bhakti mood with the Pran Pratishtha at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya scheduled to take place on January 22. "Ram always taught us to be true to our words and promises... It gives immense satisfaction when the dreams of thousands of families are realized and their blessings become my greatest wealth," Modi said. "It is a matter of great joy that these 1 lakh families will light Ram Jyoti in their pucca homes in the evening of 22nd January... Ram Jyoti will become an inspiration to them to ward off the darkness of poverty," the Prime Minister said. The Prime Minister dedicated



to the nation more than 90,000 houses completed under PMAY-Urban in Maharashtra and 15,000 houses of Raynagar Housing Society in Solapur, whose beneficiaries comprise thousands of handloom workers, rag pickers, Bidi workers, drivers, among others. He also initiated the distribution of first and second instalments to 10,000 beneficiaries of PM-SVANIDHI in Maharashtra during the programme. A teary-eyed Prime Minister

recalled assuring the people during the foundation stone laying ceremony of this project that Modi himself would come to hand over the keys to their houses upon completion of the project. "Today Modi has fulfilled his guarantee... Modi's guarantee means fulfilment of a guarantee," he said. While praying for the prosperity and happiness of the beneficiary families, Modi said: "Our government is trying from the first day to ensure that there is good governance in the country by following the ideals of Shri Ram and honesty reigns in the country. It is Ram Rajya only that inspired the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas". Modi — who had on January 12 launched, commissioned

and dedicated various projects worth Rs 30,500 crore — used the occasion to reach out to the people in the state ahead of the Lok Sabha polls scheduled for May this year, by listing out the achievements of his ten-year-old governments on various fronts. Drawing an analogy to the city of Solapur with Ahmedabad about being the city of 'Shramiks', the Prime Minister highlighted his connection to the city of Solapur during his time at 'Purvashram' and said that it was the Padmashali families that provided food to him even though their living conditions were poor. Modi recalled being presented with a woven artwork of Lakshmanrao Inamdar, a lawyer who was instrumental

in shaping the Prime Minister's life and said that it still remains an important part of his life today. Lamenting that earlier poverty alleviation programmes failed to provide results owing to lack of intent and pilferage by middlemen, Modi said: "Unlike in the past, we have taken the benefit of the government schemes directly to the beneficiaries. In the last 10 years, more than 30 lakh crore rupees have been transferred directly to the accounts of women, farmers, youth and the poor". The Prime Minister said that 25 crore people in the country have come out of poverty in the last nine years. Highlighting the role of many cities like Solapur in the economic expansion of the coun-

try, Modi credited the double-engine government for continuously improving facilities like water and sewage in these cities. He also noted the development work of connecting cities with good roads, railways and airways taking place at a fast pace. "Be it Sant Gyaneshwar Maharaj Palkhi Marg or Sant Tukaram Palkhi Marg, work on these is also going on at a fast pace. The work of the four-lane highway between Ratnagiri, Kolhapur and Solapur will also be completed soon", he said. Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, Ajit Pawar and Founder of Raynagar Federation Narsayya Adam were among those present on the occasion.

Storm in CPM over Vijayan receiving PM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
The Nava Kerala Sadass led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan which saw him visiting all Assembly constituencies in the State has brought out the fault lines within the CPI(M) as well as the differences between the fringe outfits in the Left Democratic Front. The present crisis within the CPI(M) arose as a result of the notice by the Registrar of Companies in Bangalore against Veena Muhammed Riyaz, the daughter of Vijayan. The software development company owned by Veena Muhammed Riyaz, whose new husband is the minister of tourism and PWD, is alleged to have collected monthly commission from a sand mining company based in Kochi. The findings by the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate is that an amount of Rs 2 crore exchanged by the company to Veena's Hexalogic Ltd between 1917 to 2020. The Interim Board for Settlement of the Income Tax Department has found that though there was a deal between Veena's company and the sand mining firm, no work has been executed by the software firm and the amount received by the CM's daughter is enmeshed in mystery. There are reports that most CPI(M) ministers are unhappy over the chief minister rushing



to Kochi from the capital city to receive and see off Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his two-day visit to Kerala on Tuesday and Wednesday. The photographs flashed across the media showed a visibly upset Vijayan standing with folded hands in front of the Prime Minister. Though the sidekicks of Vijayan in the party which included Kerala State Secretary M V Govindan, former minister A K Balan who is struggling to get a position in the Government and E P Jayarajan, who is upset that his interest was overlooked while appointing the party secretary have closed ranks and came out questioning the IT Department, ED as well as the Centre, the rank and file of the party are against the CPI(M) taking up the cudgels on behalf of Veena. "The party had decided not to intervene in the cases filed

against former party secretary Kodyeri Balakrishnan's son who was arrested by the ED in connection with money laundering and drug trafficking. Shouldn't the same criterion be applied in the case of chief minister's daughter," asked a veteran CPI(M) leader. He also pointed out that both the sons of Balakrishnan were active party members and had contributed to the party coffers as and when need arose. "There should not be any discrimination in this case too," he said. Though party leaders are yet to come out of the Iron Curtain of the AKG Centre at the capital city, ministers in Vijayan's cabinet has started giving pinpricks to the latter. "We should not forget the fact that our responsibility and obligation are towards the people who elected us as their representatives," said K Krishnakutty, minister for power and a hardcore secularist.

Declare January 22 holiday in Bengal: BJP to Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
The ruling Trinamool Congress has chosen to "ignore" a letter from Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar requesting her to declare a holiday on January 22 so that the people can celebrate the inauguration of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Though considering it to be an "emotive issue" none of the senior TMC leaders would make a comment government sources said that the rulers have preferred to ignore the letter and let the day pass peacefully. Majumdar in his letter that like on earlier "special occasions" the

Chief Minister had announced holidays on she should consider January 22 a special day when the idol of Lord Rama would be consecrated in Ayodhya. "I have requested our CM... to kindly consider declaring 22nd January 2024 to be a school holiday, so that the youth of West Bengal gets to rejoice in the Ram Mandir consecration celebrations," Majumdar posted on the X. Later Majumdar said, "the Chief Minister has announced a separate programme where she will lead a rally... she is free to do what she likes... that is her prerogative... alongside she also enjoys the prerogative of announcing a state holiday like

they have done in many other States to let the people of Bengal celebrate the inauguration of Ram Temple... the whole world is celebrating... and Bengal should be a part of this celebration... now it depends upon the Chief Minister on which side of the rope she wants to stand... where she claims to be a devout Hindu... she should not have any difficulty in announcing a holiday because Lord Rama belongs to the entire mankind, member of all the religions". While sources in the Government privately said that the letter has been "chosen to be ignored" the TMC leadership refused to comment on it say-

ing they were not the right persons to make comments on the issue. Notwithstanding, the TMC's studied silence a senior leader and an MP made a loaded statement — of course on conditions of anonymity — saying the present "Government declares holidays on Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Laxmi Puja, Saraswati Puja and Biswakarma Puja, Janmashtami which are being celebrated for centuries and go along with the culture of the State." He would not however qualify the word "culture" so to say. Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court on Thursday rejected a public interest litigation (PIL)

petition seeking declaration of January 22 a "dry day". The Bench of Chief Justice said that the declaration of dry day was a policy matter and its provisions were contained in respective enactments which the Court could not over write. "This is a policy decision... a beverage corporation is there, and the trade is regulated by way of an enactment under the Excise Act. Unless those provisions are challenged, we cannot do anything," the Court opined. Elsewhere State Opposition Leader Suvedu Adhikari too attacked Mamata for coming in the way of the people who want to celebrate the inauguration of Ram Temple.

Devotees pour...

From Page 1
Tailored by Bhagwat Prasad in Ayodhya, these garments adhere to a specific color scheme for each day of the week, symbolising the meticulous devotion to Ram Lalla's attire. Bhagwat Prasad, a dedicated tailor, has received requests from across the country, and he has crafted approximately 1000 sets of clothes for Ram Lalla. Each set comprises three curtains, one big bed, one small bed, six dupattas, and a quilt. Bhagwat Prasad shared, "It is

heartening to witness the widespread participation in this endeavor. Devotees are not only contributing financially but are also ensuring that every aspect, including the attire of Ram Lalla, reflects utmost devotion." As Ayodhya prepares for this historic consecration ceremony, the collective efforts of devotees and the modern approach adopted by the trust underscore the significance of this moment in India's cultural and religious landscape.

SP, RLD announce Lok Sabha alliance

PTI ■ LUCKNOW
The Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal on Friday announced their alliance for the Lok Sabha polls, with the RLD saying that the other party will leave seven seats in western Uttar Pradesh for its nominees. SP president Akhilesh Yadav and RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary announced the tie-up on social media for the

elections later this year. "Congratulations to everyone on the alliance of RLD and SP. Let us all unite for victory," Yadav said in a post on X. Reposting this tweet, Chaudhary said, "Always ready to protect national and constitutional values. We expect all workers of our alliance to move forward together for the development and prosperity of our region." He also posted pictures of the two leaders shaking hands. An RLD spokesperson told PTI that the seat-sharing deal was finalised at a meeting between the two leaders. "The RLD will contest seven seats in western Uttar

Pradesh," he said. But the spokesperson did not name the specific seats. Uttar Pradesh has 80 Lok Sabha seats. Both the parties had contested the 2022 assembly elections in an alliance in which the SP had won 111 seats while the RLD bagged 8 seats. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls also, the RLD was part of the SP-BSP alliance. The RLD had got Mathura, Baghat and Muzaffar Nagar seats but it lost on all the three while the SP and the BSP had won 5 seats and 10 seats, respectively. The RLD's core vote bank has been the Jat population. The

Lok Sabha constituencies where there is maximum Jat population are Muzaffarnagar, Kairana, Bijnor, Mathura, Baghat, Amroha and Meerut. These could be the seats on which the RLD is likely to contest, sources said. Though the RLD did not have enough strength to send Chaudhary to the Rajya Sabha, the SP supported him in his election. After the two parties, which are part of the opposition INDIA alliance, finalised their plan to go ahead together in the Lok Sabha polls, it is to be seen how the Congress proceeds in terms of seat-sharing in Uttar Pradesh.

HC forms panels to probe Bengal fake job card scam

PNS ■ KOLKATA
In further embarrassment for the Trinamool Congress Government, the Calcutta High Court has constituted two separate committees to inquire into the fake job card and related MNREGA scam. The functioning of the three-member committee comprising a representative each from the Centre, State and Comptroller and Auditor General would be monitored by the Court, the Judges said. While passing the order Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam said "in the fake job card scam case, one representative each from the state as well as the Centre, along with a representative of the comptroller and auditor general, will conduct the probe." A four-member committee on the other hand would inquire into the alleged discrimination in the distribution of the job cards. The panel will have the representatives of the central and state governments, the CAG and the accountant general of India's office. According to sources the Court took into consideration more than 300 letters written by farm labourers who had

failed to get 100-days' jobs. Subsequently a PIL was filed by the Paschim Banga Kshet Majoor Samiti, an independent outfit of labourers which alleged that there was gross discrimination in terms of issuing job cards to the supporters of Opposition parties. While the actual needy persons were not given job cards those belonging to the ruling party or those who were the relatives of the political class from the ruling party secured jobs, the laborers' forum alleged. Earlier investigations conducted by central teams in 4-5 districts had revealed that there were more than 25 lakh fake job cards issued under the MNREGA scheme. Union Minister Giriraj Singh last October went on record saying that "issuing of 25 lakh fake job cards under the MGNREGA by the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government is a scam," adding the Centre was considering a CBI investigation in that regard. Subsequently though these names were deleted, the TMC put up a counter argument alleging how there were about 1 crore fake job cards discovered in the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh.

SC rejects pleas of Bilkis convicts...

From Page 1
In his plea seeking more time to surrender, Chandana said he was looking after his crops and that were ready for harvest. He said he is the only male member in the family and has to take care of the crops. "Further, applicant's young son is of marriageable age and the applicant bears the responsibility to look after this affair and with kind indulgence of this Honourable Court may even complete this affair," Chandana said. Mordhiya submitted he requires regular consultation

with doctors after he underwent a lung surgery. Another convict Mitesh Bhatt said his winter crops are ready and for harvest and he needs to complete the task before surrendering. Joshi has cited a recent leg surgery to seek relief. The other six convicts released prematurely are Bakabhai Vohania, Kesarbhai Vohania, Jaswant Nai, Radheshyam Shah, Rajubhai Soni and Shailesh Bhatt. Excoriating the Gujarat Government for remitting their sentences, the apex court had said it "usurped" the power of the Maharashtra

government to grant remission. The Bilkis Bano case was transferred from a Gujarat court to a court in Mumbai, and the Supreme Court said the Maharashtra government was vested with the power to grant remission. Bilkis Bano was 21 years old and five months pregnant when she was gang-raped while trying to escape the horror of the communal riots that broke out after the Godhra train burning incident in February 2002. Her three-year-old daughter was among the seven family members killed.

Climate...

From Page 1
To complement this large-scale approach, the author suggests localised future studies that consider specific severe weather events (e.g., wildfires, tsunamis, and floods), the impacts of which cannot be fully captured through analysing temperature and rainfall alone. The disruption of our climate system, along with rising temperatures and abnormal rainfall, is brought about by associated natural calamities like extreme heatwaves, powerful storms, hurricanes, tropical cyclones, flooding, droughts, wildfires, and rising

numbers of insect and vector-borne diseases. These events can have far-reaching and often devastating consequences for the economy, ecosystem, health, and human society. For instance, rising temperatures can result in more frequent and intense heatwaves, leading to heat-related illnesses and higher mortality. The study also highlighted various threats that nations are already experiencing due to climate change, with serious implications for both humans and flora and fauna. For instance, the author points out that droughts can impact water availability for agriculture, industry, and households, leading to water scarcity, crop failures, food

shortages, and a reduction in expected life spans. Flash floods and river floods can damage infrastructure, displace communities, and result in casualties. Warmer ocean temperatures can fuel the development and intensification of tropical storms, leading to more powerful hurricanes and cyclones. These storms can bring widespread destruction to the lives and livelihoods of people. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and changes in vegetation patterns can also create conditions conducive to wildfires. These fires can devastate forests, destroy homes, and have serious air quality and health implications, said the author.

Ayodhya...

From Page 1
Modi is slated to attend the historic consecration ceremony of the new idol of Ram Lalla at the grand Shri Ram Temple on January 22. A carefully selected network of 12 airports within a 1000-kilometer range, including Khajuraho, Jabalpur, Bhopal, Dehradun, and Lucknow, has been designated to handle the overflow of aircraft. Prayagraj, Kanpur, Varanasi, Kushinagar, and Gorakhpur play pivotal roles in accommodating the increased air traffic during this monumental event, while Gaya and Devghar

airports stand ready for parking arrangements. The logistical challenge escalates as a request to land 48 charter flights on January 22 has been received. To meet this demand, Lucknow plans to allocate parking for 8 aircraft, Kanpur for 10, and Prayagraj-Kushinagar for 4 each. Dehradun-Khajuraho and Kashi are considering parking 4 aircraft each, while Indore and Gorakhpur may need space for 10 and 17 aircraft, respectively. "The meticulous planning aims to ensure a smooth flow of air traffic, underscoring the importance of the historic consecration ceremony in Ayodhya," Singh said.

Lord Ram gives his first darshan

From Page 1
The Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has extended special invitations to 100 representatives from 54 countries, transcending

geographical boundaries. This distinguished gathering not only includes eminent figures from India but also welcomes esteemed guests from the United States, Britain, Australia, Mauritius, and various European, African, and Buddhist nations. The State Government has accorded State guest status to 506 of these global dignitaries, ensuring meticulous arrangements for their accommodations and

other necessities. Among the anticipated attendees are globally acclaimed industrialists Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani, megastar Amitabh Bachchan, actress Madhuri Dixit, weightlifter Karanam Malleswari, actor Prabhas, and cricket legends Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli, among others. The majority of these eminent personalities have already confirmed their participation in this momentous consecration

ceremony. Highlighting the global significance of the event, top officials from the international branches of Sangh Parivar and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) will be in attendance. The collaborative efforts of the Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and Vishwa Hindu Parishad have ensured meticulous preparation for this historic

occasion, aiming to etch it into the annals of global history. Designed for a lasting global impact, the grand ceremony draws inspiration from the successful approach taken during Deepotsav celebrations. Diplomats from select countries have also received invitations, underscoring the international outreach of this momentous event. A government spokesman revealed, "While invitations

are dispatched to numerous industrialists, film stars, cricketers, and politicians, many have already confirmed their attendance. The administration is diligently coordinating travel and accommodation arrangements for these dignitaries, who have been accorded the status of state guests." The spokesman, however, did not provide details on the specific dignitaries receiving this prestigious

state guest status. Notable names among the VVIP attendees include industrialists Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani, megastar Amitabh Bachchan, Usha Mangeshkar, Olympian PT Usha, politician Subramanian Swamy, retired Supreme Court judge Abdul Nazeer, mountaineer Bachendri Pal, weightlifter Karanam Malleswari, actor Anupam Kher, and South film actors Prabhas, Allu Arjun, Chiranjeevi, among

others. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to grace the consecration ceremony and will personally perform the consecration of Ram Lalla. Approximately 7,500 people, including a significant number of VVIPs, sadhus, saints, and mahants from across the country, have received invitations to witness this historic event, marking a momentous chapter in India's cultural and religious tapestry.

Capital ready to celebrate Traders to light 1.25 lakh diyas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The traders and shop owners in Delhi's famous Connaught Place market will celebrate the consecration of Ram temple in Ayodhya by holding various programmes, including lighting of 1.25 lakh diyas (earthen lamps) on the historic day, said New Delhi Traders' Association (NDTA) joint secretary Amit Gupta on Friday.

Many restaurants in CP have pledged to serve exclusively vegetarian food on the day of "pran pratishtha" ceremony in Ayodhya, said Gupta. The whole Connaught place (CP) market complex will be decorated with saffron flags bearing image of Lord Ram, he added. A large LED screen will be installed at the inner circle of CP for live broadcast of the "pran pratishtha" ceremony in Ayodhya for the people in the area, said the joint secretary of the New Delhi Traders Association (NDTA).

During the ceremony, the local traders and people will perform puja with blowing of conches, ringing bells, he added. Gupta said a specially prepared "laddoo" weighing



11 KG will be offered during the rituals and taken as prasad, adding a "Sundar Kand" recital programme will also be held. Gupta further said all those present, including the shopkeepers and the CP visitors, will light "Ram Diyas" in the evening. Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) Chairman Brijesh Goyal and President Subhash Khandelwal said that special programmes will be organised on January 22 in more than 100 retail and wholesale markets. There will be a Bhandara in

Kashmiri Gate, garlands have been put up in Kamla Nagar, and saffron flags have been put up in Khan Market. Sunderkand will be held in Laxmi Nagar. There will be lighting like Diwali in Dariba Kalan, jewellers will give discounts to the customers, Ram concert will be held. Boxes of laddus will be distributed in Bhagirath Palace and the gates will be decorated. Beautiful lighting arrangements are being made in Naya Bazaar. 21 thousand lamps will be lit in Sarojini Nagar Market. Saffron balloons and flags will

be put up in Lajpat Nagar market, Sundarkand path will be recited. Special arrangements are being made in Rohini and shopkeepers of Nehru Place will also celebrate Diwali on the day of Pran Pratishtha. Special decorations will be done in Chandni Chowk and Sadar Bazaar and a Shobha yatra will be held. The "pran pratishtha" ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be performed on January 22 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Government lines up 3 days Ramlila event

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government is organising a 3-day Ramlila event for the people of Delhi. From Saturday (January 20), a grand 3-day Ramlila event is being organized. The special Ramlila, taking place till January 22 at the Pyarelal Auditorium near ITO, is free for everyone. The 'Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra' will present a live 3-hour Ramlila performance from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Delhi's Minister of Art, Culture, and Language, Saurabh Bharadwaj, stated that initially, they requested permission for the magnificent Ramlila performance at the vast auditorium in Pragati Maidan's Bharat Mandapam, and were willing to pay rent. However, the Central BJP government denied permission. This announcement followed the AAP's decision to host the Sundarkand Path recitation event in Delhi every first Tuesday of the month. The

inaugural Sundarkand Path occurred last Tuesday in the national capital, with AAP Chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal participating in the recital and havan ceremony in Rohini. Bharadwaj, released a statement on Friday, expressing sorrow that the BJP, which claims to be a supporter of Bhagwan Shri Ram, has a different character behind the scenes. "The Delhi government's Hindi Academy department had been working on this plan for the past few days. Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, known for its beautiful and grand Ramlila performances for over six decades, organizes a nearly 3-hour program. However, the BJP government at the centre, which has been consistently trying to retaliate against the people of Delhi for their defeat in various ways, have not spared Delhiites even witnessing the grand Ramleela." "The BJP does not want the people of Delhi to enjoy the grand Ramleela of Bhagwan

Shri Ram. The behavior of the BJP-led central government is extremely unfortunate. Such conduct emanates a stench of petty politics," he added. Criticising the Delhi Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj's statement, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor accused him of creating a controversy. Kapoor said Bharadwaj was lying as the ITPO has a clear policy of not allotting Bharat Mandapam for religious functions. Kapoor said he had applied to I.T.P.O. for allotment of Bharat Mandapam for a religious function on 24th December 2023 but I.T.P.O. had in writing refused allotment citing policy decision to not to allot for religious functions. "AAP leaders are cleverer than their other INDI alliance colleague parties and trying to portray before the masses that they support the construction of Shri Ram Mandir and to mislead the masses are giving misleading statements," he said

NDMC makes elaborate preparations for January 22

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

From lighting up 'diyas' to live telecast of the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the NDMC area has made elaborate preparations to mark the event on January 22, its vice-chairman Satish Upadhyay said on Friday. Upadhyay said that establishments such as ITC Maurya, Taj, Ambassador, Oberoi, PSOI Club, The Lalit, The Claridges and Imperial Hotels have committed to celebrating the day through activities such as lighting of 'diyas', live telecast of the ceremony, and distribution of 'prasad' to all its staff. The Market Traders Associations in NDMC area, including Khan Market, Khanna Market, Connaught Place, Kidwai Nagar, Shankar Market, Palika Bazar, Pandara Road and Lodhi Road, will join the celebration with great pomp and show, he added.

LG orders FIR against IAS officer accused of seeking money from liquor vendors

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has ordered registration of an FIR against IAS officer Amarnath Talwade for allegedly demanding money from liquor vendors at the "behest" of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during the year 2015-16. Saxena also recommended disciplinary action against Talwade, who is currently posted in Arunachal Pradesh, with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, as per a communiqué issued by the LG office on Friday. Now, the AAP government which is facing serious corruption charges in the Delhi Excise Policy Scam, is in for fresh troubles with an IAS officer found "pressurizing a subordinate officer into collecting money from retail liquor vendors" at the behest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. "The present case pertains to the year 2015-16 when Talwade during his stint as Senior General Manager of Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd (DSCSC) had pressurised the then Manager of DSCSC PK Shahi (now retired) to collect more money from vendors by threatening him of transfer. The action came after an audio clip of the two officers' tele-



phonic conversation surfaced which was later authenticated by the FSL as genuine and undoctored," it said. In the audio clip, "Talwade admitted to have received Rs five lakh from Shahi soon after he took charge of DSCSC," the LG office said. Talwade was posted in DSCSC from January 12, 2015 to April 29, 2016, it said. "In the audio recording, Talwade is heard demanding 35 per cent (of the total collection) which he has committed to Kejriwal. To this, Shahi tells Talwade that he could arrange only 15 per cent due to two consecutive 'dry months', where collection was almost nil," it added. According to the LG office, a complaint in this regard was filed by a Noida resident on March 21, 2023 along with a

pen drive containing the audio clip to the DoV (Directorate of Vigilance). The complainant alleged that the conversation between an IAS officer and an Inspector pertained to "sharing of booty" in some excise matters. After preliminary investigation, the DoV ascertained that the said IAS officer was Amarnath Talwade and the other subordinate officer was PK Shahi. On the directions of the Chief Secretary, the DoV sent the audio clip to FSL Delhi, which on November 28, 2023, submitted its examination report, saying "there was no indication of any form of alteration in audio recording," it said. The LG office said the matter was referred to the Law Department, GNCTD which opined that it was a fit case for registration of FIR, as the infor-

mation provided by the source was not "vague or cryptic or lacked essential details" and the information related to "commission of a cognizable offence". Subsequently, the DoV proposed the matter to be referred to ACB (Anti Corruption Branch) for registration of FIR and appropriate disciplinary action against Talwade, and submitted the proposal for LG's approval, it said. The LG, while according his approval, expressed displeasure over delay in the case despite clinching evidence against the officer in the form of audio recording, it added. On Thursday, Chief Minister Kejriwal skipped the fourth summon issued by the ED to appear before it in the liquor policy case. "The matter has once again exposed the deep rooted nexus of AAP government in Delhi with liquor vendors/mafia, after the liquor scam in Delhi in connection of which former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and AAP MP Sanjay Singh are already in Jail while CM Kejriwal is facing repeated ED summons. The Supreme Court, too, has found substantial money trail, while denying bail to Sisodia in the case," it said.

Pro Khalistani graffiti appears on Government school walls, probe on

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Just days ahead of Republic Day, pro-Khalistani graffiti was found written on the wall of a Government school in west Delhi's Uttam Nagar area, police said on Friday. The slogan "Khalistan SFJ Zindabad" written on the wall came to notice on Thursday night, they said. The Delhi Police are actively investigating the incident to identify those responsible for the objectionable graffiti. A senior police officer said a case was registered in Dwarka district under section 3 of the Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act. Several teams of the district, including special staff, are working on the case to nab the accused, the officer said, adding that CCTV footage of the area was being checked. Pro-Khalistan leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, the chief of the banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), released a video after the incident. This is the second such incident to take place in less than three days. On January 16, similar graffiti was found on a pillar in west Delhi's Nihal Vihar. The graf-



fiti read "SJF, January 26, Khalistan". Pannun had released a threatening video then as well. An FIR was registered in connection with the incident on Tuesday. These incidents came before Republic Day, with Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun issuing threats for the occasion. Pannun had warned about hoisting the Khalistani flag in Delhi on January 26. The threats come in the wake of the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada in June 2023. Pannun, founder of Sikh For Justice (SFJ), a group campaigning for Khalistan, has a history of making threats against India. He was declared a 'designated individual terrorist' by the Centre in 2020, and the SFJ was banned in 2019 for its involvement in "anti-national and subversive" activities.

Ban dog breeds used for illegal dogfights, PETA writes to Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on Friday wrote to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, urging him to prohibit certain dog breeds used for "illegal" dogfights. The letter was sent to Kejriwal after a seven-year-old girl received over 15 injuries after she was allegedly attacked by a neighbour's dog in Rohini's Sector-25 area on January 16. The PETA said that a policy in Delhi aimed at prohibiting the keeping and breeding of pit bulls and similar breeds would protect both the dogs and the citizens from harm. "This is not an isolated incident. If a policy is introduced in Delhi to prohibit the keeping and breeding of pit bulls and similar breeds, it would protect both the dogs as well as the citizens from harm," the letter said. The animal rights group further said that breeds, including pit bull terriers, American bullies and Pakistani bully kuttas, are commonly abused for "illegal fighting" and kept on heavy chains as guard. "This results in a lifetime of

suffering and causes them to become fearful and defensive. Many endure painful physical mutilations such as ear-cropping - an illegal process that involves cutting part of a dog's ears to prevent another dog from grabbing them during a fight," the letter added. Recommending measures to overcome the problem, the PETA suggested that a crackdown on unregistered pet shops and breeders is necessary to stop illegal sales and adoption of community dogs should be promoted by the government. "Apart from prohibition on dog breeds primarily used for fighting, it must be ensured that pet shops and breeders are duly registered under the law. Encouraging the adoption of local Indian community dogs and cats from animal shelters over the purchase of foreign breeds must be a vital part of any new dog policy," the animal rights group wrote. "It would help reduce the number of community animals and should be encouraged alongside the sterilisation of all community dogs and cats," they added.

FIR lodged against unknown persons in Pitampura blaze

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after a fire in a residential building in Delhi's Pitampura left six people dead, police have registered an FIR against unknown people and questioned the building owner and his wife, officials said on Friday. Police suspect the main cause of the fire could be a short circuit in a room heater on first floor of the building. A fire broke out in a multi-storey building in the north-west Delhi locality at 8 pm on Thursday evening. Six people, from three families, including four women, died in the incident. Deputy Commissioner of Police (northwest) Jitendra Meena said the forensic science laboratory (FSL) team has collected samples from the spot to ascertain the cause of the fire. "At this stage we cannot rule out the possibility of the short circuit in the appliance," said Meena. Another police officer said prima facie it appears a room heater that was left on for several hours could have led a short circuit. The FSL team has collected samples, including the burnt part of the room heater, officer said, adding that the exact reason of the blaze is yet to be ascertained.



Police said that every house had an automatic door lock, which could be the reason the occupants could not be evacuated on time. The officer said owner of the building, Subhash Chand Gupta, and his wife Mamta stayed in the upper ground floor. His son and daughter-in-law stayed in the first floor of the building. At the time of incident, Subhash Chand's son and daughter-in-law were out of town, due to which the first floor was locked. The ground floor had parking spots for the residents, while the second and third floor had been rented out. The officer said that police have recorded the statements of Subhash Chand, his wife and other neighbour. According to the information

received from hospitals, those who died were identified as Rakesh Gupta (62), Renu Gupta (62), Shweta (30), Shanu Verma (27), Santosh (25) and Kirti (25). Another resident, Sahil (34), had to be sent to the hospital but he was discharged after being given first aid. Police said except Santosh -- who was a cook in one of the houses -- all other deceased were tenants and were second and third floor residents. A case under sections 304A (causing death by negligence), 285 (negligent conduct) and 336 (endangering lives) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at the Maurya Enclave Police station, police said. The six people, including four women, who died in the incident belonged to three different families, police said.

BJP, AAP at loggerheads over desealing of shops

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP and the BJP are loggerheads over the desealing of shops in the national capital. The AAP has accused the Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi of not desealing the shops at the behest of the BJP-led Central Government despite the order of the Supreme Court's judicial committee. On the other hand, Delhi BJP has said that the AAP leaders should stop fooling the local shop centre (LSC) traders who have been fighting all ends to get their shops desealed. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva has said that right from beginning since the day the Judicial Committee recommended desealing of LSC shops that Mayor should allow shopkeepers to deseal by themselves but actually the AAP wanted to extort election fund from LSC traders and so the Mayor Shelly Oberoi instigated Commissioner to move Court but when BJP raised the issue by getting token desealing of Shops done at Hauz Khas then AAP leaders started speaking against the Commissioner as facing saving act. On the other hand, the AAP leaders alleged that a large

number of shops in Delhi have remained sealed since 2017, and asserted that the MCD commissioner, acting under the influence of the BJP-led Central Government, is adamantly refusing to deseal the shops despite the judicial committee's orders and a resolution passed in the MCD House. On the other hand, Senior AAP leaders and Delhi government Cabinet Ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj and Atishi held a joint press conference at the party headquarters on Friday held the Centre responsible for not desealing the shops in Delhi despite the supreme court orders. Bharadwaj stated that on December 18, 2023, the judicial committee of the Supreme Court declared sealing unlawful and ordered that conversion charges cannot be levied on shops built on commercial land. The AAP government of the MCD passed a resolution in the House to deseal the shops; however, the MCD commissioner is refusing to comply with the orders. He said that the MCD sealed the shops based on the recommendation of the Supreme Court's monitoring committee and is now not desealing even on the orders of the Supreme Court's judicial committee.

Winter peak power demand hits record

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's peak power demand hit a record 5,798 megawatts (MW) at 10:20 am on Friday, as the national Capital experienced 'cold day' with the maximum temperature dropping to 14.2 degree Celsius, five notches below the normal while the minimum temperature settled at 7.1 degree Celsius, one notch below the normal. The dense layer of fog kept visibility poor in several parts of the city since Thursday evening. The maximum temperatures in Gurugram and Faridabad was recorded 11.7 degree Celsius and 10.6 degree Celsius respectively. The drop in the maximum temperature has led to cold wave type conditions in Delhi and NCR. Visibility dropped to 400m at Palam around 10pm on Thursday, dropping further to 25m at 11:30pm; visibility dropped to 200m at Safdarjung around the same time. Dense fog conditions prevailed in parts of the city with the Palam Observatory near the Indira Gandhi International Airport recording a visibility level of 50 metres at 5:30 am. According to real-time data released by the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) Delhi, it was the third time this month that the peak demand crossed the 5,700 MW mark - 5,726



MW on January 17 and 5,701 MW on January 12. The discoms had estimated the peak demand this winter to reach 5,760 MWA. Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) spokesperson said the discom met the highest winter peak power demand reaching 1,779.04 MW in its area in north Delhi without any network constraints or power outage. The company is expecting the peak demand to breach 1,800 MW this winter, she said. On their part, the BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and the BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) successfully met the peak power demand of 2,502 MW and 1,215 MW respectively.

Mahua vacates Government bungalow

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Expelled Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra on Friday vacated her government bungalow here, a day after the Delhi High Court dismissed her plea for a stay on eviction proceedings. The former TMC MP's counsel Shadan Farasat said that house number 9B on Telegraph Lane was vacated by 10 am this morning before the authorities arrived. "No eviction took place," the counsel told reporters. The Directorate of Estates (DoE), which comes under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, in the morning sent a team to get the bungalow vacated and the area around it was barricaded. Earlier this week, the DoE issued an eviction notice to Moitra. "The possession of the bungalow has officially been handed over to the Directorate of Estates," an official said.

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IMD floats web page on Ayodhya weather

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a thoughtful consideration for the tourists of the diverse linguistic backgrounds including those from abroad thronging Ayodhya which is now on the global map for being home to the much revered newly constructed Ram temple, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has introduced a dedicated webpage catering to weather-related information for Ayodhya and its neighbouring regions. The weather updates will be available in 140 languages like Hindi, English, Urdu, Chinese, French, and Spanish. The move aims to ensure the visitors have access to crucial weather information in a language they are comfortable with and prepare informed plans accordingly, said an official from the IMD. This inclusive initiative provides essential information such as temperature, humidity, wind patterns, and precipitation details, ensuring a more accessible and user-friendly experience for the tourists. To facilitate this, the weather department has created a special webpage on its official



website. This webpage offers weather reports not only for Ayodhya but also for places around the town. The webpage is accessible through a link that appears as soon as one opens the IMD website. By clicking on the link, users are directed to the forecast section. "With the availability of weather reports in multiple languages, visitors can plan their activities and make necessary arrangements accordingly," said the official. The special webpage carries weather predictions of Ayodhya and nearby places like Milkipur, Manakpur, Harraiya, Bhati and Bhanpur. Also, weather reports of Prayagraj, Varanasi, New Delhi

Rajnath dedicates 35 BRO infra projects to nation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday dedicated to the nation 35 infrastructure projects including 29 bridges and six roads of Border Roads Organisation (BRO), built at a cost of Rs 670 crore. These bridges and roads connect border areas and will ensure seamless logistic support to the armed forces thereby ensuring operational readiness. The defence minister inaugurated these projects at Joshimath-Malari Road in Uttarakhand and commended the BRO for strengthening the border infrastructure of the country. He also said by constructing roads and bridges, the organisation is connecting the far-flung areas with the rest of the nation geographically, while also linking the hearts of the people residing in remote villages with the rest of the citizens. Rajnath stressed that connectivity is being provided to every border area in the country through roads, bridges and tunnels, describing the work as not only of strategic importance, but also pivotal for the welfare of the people residing in these regions. "People living near the borders are no less than soldiers. If a soldier protects the country by wearing a uniform, the residents of border areas are serving the motherland in



their own way," he said. He pointed out that the Government has changed the approach adopted by previous governments that the border areas are buffer zones between the plains and the potential adversary. Rajnath emphasised that the present government considers border areas a part of the mainstream and not a buffer zone. "There was a time when border infrastructure development was not given much importance. Governments used to work with the mentality that the people living in the plains are the mainstream people. They were worried that the developments on the border might be used by the adversary. Due to this narrow men-

talities, development never reached the border areas. This thinking has changed today. Under the leadership of PM Modi, our government is committed to the development of border areas, keeping in view the Nation's security needs. We do not consider these areas as buffer zones. They are a part of our mainstream," he said. The defence minister added that the Government's approach shows a new confidence of 'New India', which will not wait for potential adversaries to reach the plains to deal with them. "We are developing infrastructure on the mountains and deploying the troops on hill borders in such a way that it is ensuring the safety of the people there, and helping the military to effectively deal with our adversaries," he said. Rajnath also drew attention to the increasing number of natural disasters in some border States and Union Territories including Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim in recent years, stating that many experts believe that climate change is the reason behind these incidents. He called climate change as not just a weather-related phenomenon, but a very serious issue related to national security. The Ministry of Defence is taking this very seriously and will seek cooperation from friendly countries in this regard, he added. Rajnath Singh made special mention of the BRO's contribution in the recent Silkyra Tunnel operation launched to rescue the trapped labourers in Uttarakhand. Commending the BRO personnel, especially women workers, for their tireless hard work during the operation, he congratulated the entire team of General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) for carrying out its duties in the time of crisis. He termed the operation, which witnessed coordinated efforts of National Disaster Response Force, BRO, Indian Air Force and state agencies, as a great example of teamwork. Out of the 35 projects inaugurated by Rajnath, 29 are bridges and six are roads. Eleven (11) of them are in Jammu and Kashmir; nine in Ladakh; eight in Arunachal Pradesh; three in Uttarakhand; two in Sikkim; and one each in Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh. These projects have been constructed under challenging weather conditions at the most inhospitable terrain. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Shri Pushkar Singh Dhama was also present during the event. The event was organised on the Dhak Bridge, a state-of-the-art 93-meter long Class 70R bridge over Dhak Nallah, which was inaugurated by Rajnath on the site. The Dhak Bridge assumes strategic importance as it will provide increased connectivity to the borders and enhance operational preparedness of the Armed Forces. It will also boost the socio-economic development of the region as it is the only road connecting villages from Joshimath to Nitipass. This will not only promote tourism, but also generate more employment opportunities. The remaining 34 projects include Ragini-Ustad-Pharkian Gali Road in Jammu and Kashmir. It is a 38.25-km long CL-9 road, which will provide all weather connectivity between Tangdhar and Keren sector, bolstering the operational readiness of the military.

Two in five school kids lack healthy BMI: Survey

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A survey encompassing 73,000 school students aged 7 to 17 nationwide has brought to light a concerning trend: two in five children lack a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI), and three in five exhibit insufficient upper and lower body strength. Interestingly, girls outperformed boys in BMI and flexibility, while boys excelled in aerobic capacity and lower body strength. Conducted across 250 cities and towns, including metros, the survey highlighted that two in five children lack the desired anaerobic capacity, and an even higher proportion, three in four, lack the required aerobic capacity. The 12th Annual Health Survey, facilitated by Sportz Village through its EduSports in-school Physical Education & Sports program, further revealed that one in three children lacks the desired abdominal or core strength, while three out of five lack adequate upper and lower body strength. These findings underscore the urgency of prioritising physical fitness initiatives and cultivating healthy lifestyle



habits among school-aged children. Sportz Village, a youth sports platform dedicated to promoting physical activities among children, emphasises the need to address these concerns to prevent potential long-term health issues. In understanding the terms used in the context of physical fitness, aerobic capacity refers to the ability of the heart and lungs to deliver oxygen to the muscles, while anaerobic capacity involves the total energy derived from anaerobic (without oxygen) energy systems, crucial for high-intensity short-duration exercises like sprinting. Abdominal or core strength relates to the torso muscles, influencing posture, and flexibility is measured by the joints' ability to move freely. Upper body strength encompasses the power of muscles such as Pectorals (chest), Rhomboids (upper back), Deltoids (outer shoulder), Triceps (back of the upper arm), and Biceps (front of the upper arm). On the other hand, lower body strength involves the strength of muscles in the legs, such as quadriceps (muscles on the front of the upper leg), Hamstrings (muscles on the back of the upper leg), Gluteals, Hip Flexors, and Calf muscles. The study observed that a

higher percentage of girls exhibited healthier BMI levels, with 62% of girls achieving scores within the healthy range. In contrast, boys showed a comparatively lower percentage in this regard. Further scrutiny of specific physical fitness parameters revealed that girls outperformed boys in flexibility and upper body strength. These findings underscore the positive impact of regular physical activity on these aspects of girls' health. However, the survey also highlights areas where boys demonstrate stronger performance, such as in aerobic capacity and lower body strength. These nuanced insights into gender-specific health indicators underscore the importance of tailored approaches in promoting overall well-being among both boys and girls. The survey further revealed that more children in private schools exhibit better upper body strength levels (43%) compared to their counterparts in government schools (31%). However, children from government schools performed better in BMI, aerobic capacity, and flexibility.

The survey also brought attention to the significance of Physical Education (PE) periods, noting their pivotal role in shaping children's health. For instance, comprehensive data unveiled a noteworthy correlation between the number of PE sessions per week and various aspects of children's physical fitness. Saumil Majmudar, CEO & Managing Director of Sportz Village, cited survey results that he deemed discouraging, emphasising the need for sports to be considered an integral part of education, providing opportunities for children to engage in structured physical activities. Majmudar lamented that unfortunately, there is a tendency among school leaders and parents to perceive sports and physical education as non-essential and less important than academics. Consequently, less time and energy are devoted to physical activity, resulting in poor health among children. However, various studies have demonstrated that regular structured physical activity not only improves physical health but also influences mental health and academic performance, he added.

Amrit Udyan to be opened for public from February 2

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The famed Amrit Udyan of the Rashtrapati Bhavan will open for public viewing from February 2 to March 31, an official statement issued on Friday said. People can visit the Udyan six days a week except on Mondays which are maintenance days, it said. They will be allowed to visit in six hourly slots between 10 AM and 4 PM, said the statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The capacity for the two forenoon slots (10 AM to 12 noon) will be 7,500 visitors during weekdays and 10,000 visitors in each slot on weekends. The capacity for the four afternoon slots (12 noon to 4 PM) will be 5,000 visitors in each slot during weekdays and 7,500 visitors on weekends. Booking can be made on <https://visit.Rashtrapatibhavan.Gov.In/visit/amrit-udyan/rE>. The Amrit Udyan will be open for special categories on February 22 (for differently abled persons), February 23 (for personnel of defence, para-



military and police forces), March 1 (for women and tribal women's self-help groups) and March 5 (for children of orphanages). Walk-in visitors have to register themselves at the facilitation counters as well as at the self service kiosk near gate no 12 of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the statement said. Entry and exit for all visitors will be from gate no 35 of the President's Estate, close to where North Avenue meets the Rashtrapati Bhavan, it said. "For the convenience of visitors, shuttle bus service from Central Secretariat Metro Station to gate no 35 will be available at the interval of every 30 minutes between 9.30 AM to 5 PM," the statement said. During the tour, visitors will pass through the Bonsai Garden, Musical Fountain, Central Lawn, Long Garden and Circular Garden. There will be food courts for them at the exit. Visitors can carry mobile phones, electronic keys, purse/handbags, water bottles and milk bottles for infants. Provision for drinking water, toilets, and first aid/medical facilities will be made at various places along the public route, the statement said.

R Day flypast to comprise 29 fighter jets among 51 aircraft

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The enthralling fly-past this year at Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path will see a total of 51 aircraft comprising 29 fighter jets and eight transport aircraft of IAF including newly inducted C-295, 13 helicopters and one heritage aircraft. The fly-past includes four helicopters of the Army and one P-8i maritime patrol aircraft of the Navy which will fly in two separate formations. A C-295 aircraft flanked by two C-130 aircraft in echelon, will fly as the Arjan formation during Republic Day fly past, IAF spokesperson Wing Commander said IAF Spokesperson Wing Commander Ashish Moghe said here on Friday. The IAF inducted the first C-295 in September last year, which will replace the HS-748 Avro transport aircraft in service. The IAF marching contingent of 144 personnel will be led by Squadron Leader Rashmi Thakur with Squadron Leader Sumita Yadav, Squadron Leader Prati Alhuwalia and Flight Lieutenant Kirti Rohil as supernumerary Officers. They will be marching to the tune 'Sound Barrier' played by 72 IAF musicians and three drum majors. The band will be led by Sergeant CA Daniel. For the Beating Retreat cere-



mony on January 29 at Vijay Chowk, the IAF Band comprising of 121 musicians would be participating in the event. The band will be led by Warrant Officer Ashok Kumar. In line with theme of the 75th Republic Day Parade-2024 'Samridh Bharat Sashakt Bharat', the theme of the IAF tableau is 'Bharatiya Vayu Sena: Saksham, Sashakt, Atmanirbhar' officials said. Flight Lieutenant Ananya Sharma and Flying Officer Asma Sheikh, both Su-30 pilots, would be present on the tableau, they added. As regards the tableau, they said the IAF has been at the forefront of rendering humanitarian aid, both within and across borders. In

75th Republic Day parade to be women centric

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the themes of 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat-Loktantra ki Matruka', the 75th Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path will be women centric, Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane said here on Friday. President of France Emmanuel Macron will be the chief guest at the parade. A 95-member marching contingent and 33-member band contingent from France will also take part in the parade. Along with the aircraft of Indian Air Force, one Multi Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft and two Rafale aircraft of the French Air Force will participate in the Fly-past. Giving details of these highlights of the Republic Day at Kartavya Path, the defence secretary said women marching contingents will form the major chunk of the parade, with most of the tableaux of States, Union Territories (UTs) and Central Ministries and Organisations showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity, unity and progress. He reiterated that the themes have been selected in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's views that 'India is truly a mother of democracy'. For the first time, the parade will be heralded by 100 women artists playing Indian musical instruments. The parade will commence with the music of sankh,



naadswaram and nagada to be played by women artists. The parade will also witness an all-women Tri-Service contingent marching down Kartavya Path for the first time. The CAPF contingents will also consist of women personnel. "Best representation of women will be seen in this year's Republic Day parade," the Defence Secretary said. The parade will start at 1030 hrs and run for a duration of approximately 90 minutes. The seating capacity at Kartavya Path is 77,000, of which 42,000 is reserved for the general public. Around 13,000 Special Guests have also been invited to witness the parade this year. Aramane said the objective is to provide an opportunity to the people from all walks of life to take part in the national festival, in line with the

Government's vision of jan bhagidari. He quoted the Prime Minister by saying that these guests are the pride of the country. These Special Guests include best performers of in various fields and those who made best use of various schemes of the Government such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural & Urban), PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Street Vendor's Aatmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, PM Vishwakarma Yojana, PM Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana, PM Matsya Sampada Yojana, Stand-Up India scheme, Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme and Rashtriya Gokul Mission. Sarpanches of Vibrant Villages, women workers of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Electronic Manufacturing sectors and Central Vista Project, women Space Scientists of ISRO, Yoga Teachers (Ayushman Bharat), winners of international sports events and Paralympic medalists will also attend the parade, in addition to Best Self-Help Groups, Farmers Producer Organisations, references of PM Mann Ki Baat programme, and 'Super-100' of Project Veer Gatha 3.0 & winners of National School Band Competition. These special guests will be prominently seated at Kartavya Path. Aramane stated that given their tough livelihood, special emphasis was laid to include Vibrant Villages in the list of Special Guests for them to be part of the Republic Day celebrations of the country. A total of 25 tableaux - 16 States/UTs and nine Ministries/Departments - will roll down the Kartavya Path during the parade. Like each year, the tableaux have been selected by an expert committee comprising eminent persons in the fields of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture and choreography besides others. The Defence Secretary informed that to address the concerns of some States/UTs over the non-inclusion of their tableau in the parade, Ministry of Defence has devised a unique three-year roll-over plan, which ensures equitable participation on a rotational basis of all states and UTs over a period of three years. The Ministry of Culture will be showcasing 'Anant Sutra - The Endless Thread' textile installation at Kartavya Path. It will be installed behind the spectators seated in the enclosures. Anant Sutra is a visually-stunning tribute to the saree, India's timeless gift to the world of fashion. This unique installation will showcase nearly 1,900 sarees and drapes from every corner of the country, mounted at a height with wooden frames along the Kartavya Path. It will have QR codes which can be scanned to know the details about weaving and embroidery arts used in it. As the Nation is celebrating 75th year of its Republic this year, Ministry of Defence will release a Commemorative Coin and Commemorative Stamp during the celebrations.

ED summons Sharad grandnephew on January 24

PTI ■ MUMBAI
The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Maharashtra MLA Rohit Pawar, a grandnephew of NCP supreme Sharad Pawar, for questioning on January 24 as part of its money laundering probe into the alleged Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam, official sources said Friday. The federal agency had raided the premises of Baramati Agro, a company owned by Rohit Pawar, and some linked entities on January 5 in Baramati, Pune, Aurangabad and some other locations. Rohit Pawar, 38, is a first-time NCP MLA from the Karjat-Jamkhed seat in the Maharashtra assembly and is the owner and CEO of Baramati Agro. He belongs to the Sharad Pawar faction of the NCP. Rohit Pawar is the nephew of Baramati MP Supriya Sule, and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar. The Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank money laundering case stems from an August 2019 FIR of the Mumbai

Police's Economic Offences Wing. The NCP (Sharad) said Rohit Pawar's 'Yuva Sangharsh Yatra' had 'hit a nerve' and made the BJP insecure. The ED probe against his firm pertains to allegations of 'diversion' of funds and deposit of earnest funds of a company that bid for the purchase of a Maharashtra-based allied cooperative sugar factory, sources had said.

Form No. 3
[See Regulation-15(1)(a)]/16(3) DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL CHANDIGARH (DRT 2)
1st Floor SCO 33-34-35, Sector-17 A, Chandigarh (Additional Space Allotted on 3rd & 4th Floor also)
Case No.: OA/1431/2023
[Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993]
Exh. No.: 21658
ICICI BANK LIMITED
VS.
SHAILENDRA KUMAR AGRAWAL
To,
(DEF-4) ASHINA LANDCRAFT REALTY PVT. LTD.
3H PLAZA M-6, DISTRICT CENTRAL JASOLA, NEW DELHI, DELHI

SUMMONS
WHEREAS, OA/1431/2023 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on 04/01/2024. WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 17707080.99/- (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed). In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-
(i) to show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted;
(ii) to disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;
(iii) you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;
(iv) you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;
(v) you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets. You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 20/05/2024 at 10:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence. Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date 08/01/2024.
Signature of the Officer Authorised to issue summons

Public Notice
"Sh. Puneet Ambwani and Smt. Jaya Jotwani have resigned from partnership Firm M/s MAA PAARPATI MEENAKSHI EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION: 12/25, East Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 on closing of 10.01.2024 and the continuing partner Smt. Ambwani & Sh. Naresh Jotwani has admitted Kaveri Technobuild Private Limited, Sh. Girish Kumar Goel & Sh. Deviram as partner in the firm w.e.f. 11.01.2024".
Thanking you
For Maa Paarpati Meenakshi Educational Foundation
Kavita Ambwani (Partner)
Place: New Delhi
Date: 17.01.2024

मध्य प्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम
कार्यालय परियोजना यंत्री, संभाग क्र. 01, खालियर
ई-मेल : mpphcgwaliono1@gmail.com
प्रेस विज्ञापित
मध्य प्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम, संभाग क्र. 01, खालियर द्वारा निविदा क्रमांक 37/2023-24 (ऑनलाइन निविदा क्रमांक-2024_MPPHC_327098_1) आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 30.01.2024 तक ऑनलाइन खरीदे जा सकते हैं। विस्तृत निविदा सूचना एवं अन्य विवरण Portal : <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर देखे जा सकते हैं।
म.प्र. माध्यम/113364/2024 परियोजना यंत्री

कार्यालय नगर निगम, ऋषिकेश
Haridwar Road Rishikesh, Distt-Dehradun, Pin-249201
Website : www.nagarnigamrshikesh.com, Email : nprishikesh@gmail.com
Ph : 0135-2430015, 1800313529
विज्ञापित/निविदा सूचना
नगर निगम, ऋषिकेश को आईएसडब्ल्यूएम प्लाट लालपानी कक्ष सं-0-1 हेतु प्रोजेक्ट मैनेजमेंट कन्सल्टेंसी (पीएमसी) के चयन हेतु इच्छुक अनुभवी, दक्ष, कम्पनी/फर्मों से 2 बिड सिस्टम (तकनीकी एवं वित्तीय) के अन्तर्गत दिनांक 20.01.2024 से 02.02.2024 तक ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है जो [website-www.uktdenders.gov.in](http://www.uktdenders.gov.in) पर देखी जा सकती है।
पत्रांक: 3460/साओ/2023-24 नगर आयुक्त
दिनांक : 19.01.2024 नगर निगम, ऋषिकेश

ICICI Bank
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005
PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation
This is to bring to your notice that Neeraj Singh/ Annu Kumari (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LN00000206281 allocated at Flat No 414, 4th Floor, Tower A, Manhar Garden, Khasra No. 839, 831, 832, 383, 838, 833, Mauja Sikhandrabadla Road, Tehsil and Dist Agra. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.
The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated August 24, 2023, informing that Gayatri Development Pvt. Ltd. has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.
Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.
Dated: January 20, 2024 For ICICI Bank Limited
Place: Delhi Sd-

MOULIN COMMERCIAL LIMITED
1, Anand Gram, Arya Nagar Mehrauli, Gurgaon Road, New Delhi-110047
CIN: L74899DL1982PLC067811, Email: info@vinygroup.com
Telephone: 91-124-4301035, www.moulin.co.in
RESULT OF POSTAL BALLOT AND E-VOTING
It is hereby informed that pursuant to the Section 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (as amended), the Company has sent Notice of Postal Ballot dated 08th December, 2023 for seeking approval of the Shareholders by passing Special Resolution through Postal Ballot and Remote e-Voting for Special Business listed therein on 15th December, 2023.
Based on the Scrutinizer's Report dated 19th January, 2024, the Chairman has declared the Results of Postal Ballot as under:-

Item No.	Brief Particulars of Special Resolution	Total no. of Valid Votes	Mode	Total Votes Cast In Favour		Total Votes Cast Against	
				No./of Shares	% of Votes	No./of Shares	% of Votes
1.	Special Resolution pursuant to the SEBI (Delisting of Equity Shares) Regulations, 2021 as amended for the voluntary delisting of the equity shares of the Company from the Calcutta Stock Exchange Limited where the shares of the company are listed.	28	Physical Electronic	5,27,950 NIL	100% NIL	NIL NIL	NIL NIL
				Total	5,27,950	100%	NIL

Accordingly, the above Special Resolution has been passed with requisite majority. The date of declaration of results of Postal Ballot and e-Voting, i.e., 19th January, 2024 will be considered to be the date of passing of the Resolution. The result of Postal ballot and e-Voting has been displayed on the website of the NSDL and has also been posted on the Company's website www.moulin.co.in along with the Scrutinizer's Report and communicated to the Stock Exchange where the shares of the Company are listed.
By Order of the Board of Directors
For MOULIN COMMERCIAL LIMITED
Sd/-
ASHISH GUPTA
MANAGING DIRECTOR
DIN: 00115090
Date: 20.01.2024
Place: Kolkata

KEY CORP LIMITED
CIN No.: L65921UP1985PLC007547
Regd. Office: 16/16-A, Civil Lines, Kanpur - 208001
Email: keycorppltd@gmail.com; Phone: 0512-3013416, 3010422, 2305416
STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE THIRD QUARTER ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023 (₹ in Lakhs)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Current Quarter ended	Corresponding Quarter ended	Nine Months ended	Corresponding Nine Months ended	Previous Year ended
		(31.12.2023) (Unaudited)	(31.12.2022) (Unaudited)	(31.12.2023) (Unaudited)	(31.12.2022) (Unaudited)	(31.03.2023) (Audited)
1.	Total Income from Operations (Net)	21.68	4.45	43.27	23.35	1618.01
2.	Net Profit / (Loss) from Ordinary activities after Tax	(11.92)	(11.16)	(9.34)	(40.28)	1536.36
3.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the Period after Tax (after Extraordinary items)	(11.92)	(11.16)	(9.34)	(40.28)	1536.36
4.	Equity Share Capital	600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
5.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve as shown in the Balance Sheet of Previous Year)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4103.36
6.	Earnings Per Share (before extraordinary items) (of ₹ 10/- each)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.67)	25.61
	Diluted:	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
7.	Earnings Per Share (after extraordinary items) (of ₹ 10/- each)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.67)	25.61
	Diluted:	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Notes: 1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/Annual Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange website of BSE and also on company's website at: www.keycorppltd.com.
2. Above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the board of directors of the company at its meeting held on 19.01.2024. The Statutory Auditor of the company have carried out a limited review of accounts of the company for the 3rd quarter ended 31st December, 2023.
By Order of the Board
(G.D. Maheshwari)
Director
DIN: 00235209
Place: Kanpur
Date: 19.01.2024

KSOLVES INDIA LIMITED
CIN: L72900DL2014PLC269020
Regd. Office: 317/276, Second floor, Lane no.3, Mehrauli Road, Saidajai, Saket, New Delhi South Delhi DL 110030 IN
Corp. Office: B-4, 3rd Floor, B Block, Sector 63, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301
Tel No.: 0120-4983851, E-mail: cs@ksolves.com, Website: www.ksolves.com

Extract of the Unaudited Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter & Nine Months ended on December 31, 2023 (Amount Rs. in Lakhs)

Particulars	Quarter ended on 31/12/2023	Quarter ended on 30/09/2023	Quarter ended on 31/12/2022	Year to date figures for year ended on 31/12/2023	Year to date figures for the year ended on 31/12/2022	Year to date figures for the previous year ended 31/03/2023
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Revenue from operations	2841.92	2598.35	2055.20	7819.09	5556.69	7,831.16
Profit before tax	1188.01	1114.57	823.83	3315.31	2335.20	3293.56
Profit after tax	893.59	823.09	617.60	2473.63	1738.39	2472.04
Total comprehensive income for the period	888.11	818.16	614.13	2463.45	1719.37	2444.98
Paid up equity share capital (Face value: Rs. 10 per share)	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60	1185.60
Total reserves (including non-controlling interests)	1818.39	1679.62	719.41	1818.39	719.41	1052.75
Earnings per equity share Basic and diluted	7.54	6.94	5.21	20.88	14.66	20.85

Extract of the Unaudited Standalone Financial Results for the Quarter & Nine Months ended on December 31, 2023 (Amount Rs. in Lakhs)

Particulars	Quarter ended on 31/12/2023	Quarter ended on 30/09/2023	Quarter ended on 31/12/2022	Year to date figures for year ended on 31/12/2023	Year to date figures for the year ended on 31/12/2022	Year to date figures for the previous year ended 31/03/2023
	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Revenue from operations	2814.95	2598.79	2028.13	7710.88	5465.64	7711.85
Profit before tax	1178.17	1113.56	823.28	3300.88	2366.04	3299.31
Profit after tax	884.22	825.72	613.21	2464.88	1768.78	2487.03
Total comprehensive income for the period	878.74	820.79	609.75	2452.70	1749.77	2459.97

1. The full format of the quarterly Un-audited financial results is available on the website of the Stock Exchange (www.bseindia.com) and www.nseindia.com and also on the Company's website www.ksolves.com.
By Order of the Board
For Ksolves India Limited
Sd/-
Ratan Kumar Srivastava
Managing Director
Date: 18.01.2024
Place: Delhi

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Rajinder Kumar/ Priyanka/ LBGUR00005251424	Unit No. 1, 1st Floor Villa Constructed on Plot No. 83, Block- III Eros Garden Colony Suraj Kund Road Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	August 17, 2023 Rs. 92,64,511/-	Delhi/ NCR & Pundri (Kathail)
2.	Angur Singh Chauhan/ Sapna/ LBGUR000005514228	Unit No. 1, 1st Floor Villa Constructed on Plot No. 50, Block-V, Eros Garden Colony Suraj Kund Road Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	August 17, 2023 Rs. 75,18,368/-	Delhi/ NCR & Mainpuri (Agra)
3.	Rohan Sahani/ Meenakshi/ Ved Prakash/ Lata/ LBDLE00004961412/ LBDLE00004965262	Plot No-149, Block-A, 4th Floor, With Roof Rights, Sector-8, Dwarka, Delhi/ January 17, 2024	August 28, 2023 Rs. 69,58,178/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Arjun Dixit/ Rupesh Dixit/ LBDLE00004350148/ LBDLE00004857771	Flat No. 13 F, 2nd Floor, Block C, Mig Munirka Delhi/ January 17, 2024	September 25, 2023 Rs. 28,67,114/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Vishal Kapoor/ Rishya Bhatia/ LBFDB00002853072/ LBFDB00002853075	Unit No. J-504, 5th Floor Tower J, In Multistoried Residential Housing Complex Princess Park, Sector 86 Village Budena Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	September 25, 2023 Rs. 52,71,696/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Kaushalya/ Karam Vir/ LBGUR00004415012	Unit No-08, Ground Floor (Apartment No. Gf-08/f-II) Block F-II, Southends Apartments, Chakrwood Village, Suraj Kund Road Village Lakharpur Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	August 17, 2023 Rs. 23,97,336/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Komal Singh/ Ran Vijay Singh/ LBFDB00005186265	Flat No-A5-604, 6th Floor, Tower A-5, Habitat 78, Sector-78, Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	September 26, 2023 Rs. 16,91,703/-	Delhi/ NCR
8.	Sanjay Shah/ Sangeeta Shah/ LBDLE00001092691	Flat No. 412, 4th Floor, Block C-1, Mayfair Tower, Eros Garden, Chakrwood Village, Suraj Kund Road, Faridabad/ January 17, 2024	September 26, 2023 Rs. 7,81,036/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: January 20, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Sandeep Singh Ludra who is purchasing the Freehold DDA Flat No.8-13, on Second Floor, Category MIG, Block-B, situated at Malviya Nagar Extn., Saket, New Delhi-110017, from Mrs. Usha Kanchhal wife of Late Hari Shankar Kanchhal. The Relinquishment deed dated 17.10.2023 duly registered as Document No.8915, in Addl. Book No.1, Volume No.5713, on pages 12 to 131 dated 17-10-2023, SRO-VA HauzKhas New Delhi, and same to be financed by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited, That, Original Allotment Agreement with ATS dated 29.04.1993 & WILL have been lost/missing/not available. Vide FIR No. LR No. 819820/2023 dated 24.08.2023, Police Station Prithvi Branch Delhi. If any Person having any type of claim/ right/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all Encumbrances, liens etc. Lucem Legal LLP B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank, Sector 2 Noida, UP-201301, Contact # 0120-4263979

Public Notice
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Sourabh Chaudhary is the sole owner of Property bearing No. W2-306-A, area measuring 180 sq. mtrs. i.e. 21596 sq. yds. out of Khasra no. 32913, 14/5/2 (part of 15), 17 & 18/1, situated in the revenue estate of Urbanized Village Palam, Delhi State, New Delhi. Near Chitralok Mohalla about Near Don Bosco Ashram, Palam Extn. New Delhi. This ownership was legally acquired through a Relinquishment Deed dated 22.03.2023 vide doc. No. 3225, executed by Mrs. Shashi Lata, Mrs. Sangeeta, Mrs. Sonia Sirohi read with rectification deed dated 17.06.2023 doc. No. 6715. Mr. Sourabh Chaudhary is now the process of mortgaging the aforementioned property with SMCFC India Credit Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 14 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 14-days period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 14-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +910120-3101683/4562809; e-mail: accounts@lvnorth.in

कार्यालय मुख्य महाप्रबन्धक, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान
जल भवन, वी ब्लाक, नेहरू कालोनी, देहरादून
पत्रांक : 8682 / ई-निविदा / 2023-24 दिनांक : 19 / 01 / 2024
ई-निविदा सूचना
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान की ओर से निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा, टू-बिड सिस्टम (तकनीकी बिड एवं कार्मिशियल बिड) आधार पर निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।
निविदा कार्य विवरण

निविदा सं	कार्य विवरण	घरोहर घनराशि रु०	निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय	ई-निविदा द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	तकनीकी बिड खोले जाने की तिथि एवं समय	निविदा की वेबसाइट	प्री-बिड मॉडिग की तिथि एवं समय
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	दर अनुबंध आधार पर उत्तराखण्ड राज्य के विभिन्न जनपदों में स्थापित विभिन्न कलेक्शन सेंटर्स पर विभिन्न साइटों पर के माध्यम से जलमूल्य आदि के बिल तैयार करना, बिलों के विरुद्ध कलेक्शन प्राप्त करना एवं तत्सम्बन्धित कार्य	37500.00	20.01.24 from 11:00 a.m.	05.02.24 upto 5:00 p.m.	06.02.24 at 11:00 a.m.	90 days	27.01.24 at 11:00 a.m.

ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारीयों व शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड की वेबसाइट www.uktdenders.gov.in पर ऑन लाइन देखी/प्राप्त की जा सकती है।
"जल संवर्धन-जीवन संवर्धन"
सचिव (प्रशासन)

Online Tender Document for M.P. Police POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL
No. PHQ/15/GPC/7520-5/2024 Bhopal, Dated 12/01/2024
"ONLINE TENDER NOTICE"
Online tender are invited by Deputy Inspector General of Police (Provisioning) Police Head Quarter, Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for FSL Items on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgpe/app>

List of Equipments for New DNA Lab at RFSL Jabalpur

Sr	Name of Equipment	Quantity	EMD Paid Online Through mptenders.gov.in	Tender Fees (Rs.)
1	Genetic Analyzer with all accessories	01	6,00,000	50,000
2	PCR machine	02	30,000	2,000
3	Real Time PCR Machine with Accessories	01	1,05,000	3,000
Total cost of EMD & Tender fees			7,35,000	55,000

1. Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition & must submit online through website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgpe/app>.
2. Tender document can be download from the website of MP Police (www.mppolice.gov.in).
3. Bids shall be submitted online only at MP Tenders website: <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgpe/app>
4. Critical Date Sheet:

Published Date	13/01/2024 Time 14:00 PM
Bid Document Download Start Date	13/01/2024 Time 16:00 PM
Pre Bid Meeting Date	18/01/2024 Time 12:00 PM
Bid Submission Start Date	24/01/2024 Time 11:00 AM
Bid Submission End Date	01/02/2024 Time 14:00 PM
Bid Opening Date	02/02/2024 Time 16:00 PM

5. Intending Bidders are advised to visit this website regularly till closing date of submission to keep themselves updated as any change/modification in the tender will be intimated through this website only by corrigendum/addendum/amendment.
6. Bids will be opened as per date/time as mentioned in the Tender Critical Date Sheet. After online opening of Technical-Bid the results of their qualification as well Price-Bid opening will be intimated later.
(D.R. Teniwar)
D.I.G (Provisioning)
For: Director General of Police M.P.

G-23134/23 Rathi Steel and Power Limited

RATHI STEEL AND POWER LIMITED
CIN-L27109DL1971PLC005905
Regd. Office: 24/1-A, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Estate, Mathura Road Vihar, New Delhi-110044, web: www.rathisteelandalpower.com, e-mail: investors@rathisteelandalpower.com, Tel: 011- 40512426

NOTICE FOR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING ELECTONIC VOTING INFORMATION OF RATHI STEEL AND POWER LIMITED
Extra Ordinary General Meeting: Notice is hereby given that the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of the members of the Company will be held on Saturday, February 10th, 2024 at 12.30 P.M. through Video Conferencing ("VC") / Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM") for the purpose of transacting the business mentioned in the notice. Notice of the said EGM and e-voting instructions have been sent to the members of the company electronically whose email-ids are registered with the depositories. Notice of the EGM is available on the website of the Company and can be downloaded from the following link rathisteelandalpower.com/pdf/Notice-to-EGM.pdf. The same is also available on the websites of National Securities Depository Limited ("NSDL") at www.evoting.nsdl.com and the Stock Exchange i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com.
Electronic Voting Information: Members holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form, as on cut-off date February 03, 2024 may cast their vote electronically on the special businesses as set out in the Notice of the Extra Ordinary General Meeting through electronic voting system of NSDL. All the members are informed that (a) the special business as set out in the notice of the EGM may be transacted by electronic voting (b) the date of completion of sending of notice of EGM is January 19, 2024 (c) voting through electronic means shall commence at 09:00 AM on February 07, 2024 and ends at 05:00 PM on February 09, 2024 (d) voting through electronic means shall not be allowed beyond 05:00 PM on February 09, 2024 (e) Notice of the EGM will be made available on the company's website i.e. www.rathisteelandalpower.com and on NSDL website i.e. <https://www.evoting.nsdl.com> (f) for process and manner of electronic voting, members may go through the electronic voting instructions or in case of any queries/ grievances connected with the e-voting, members may refer the frequently asked questions (FAQs) for shareholders and the e-voting user manual for the shareholders available at the download section of



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Restive neighbourhood

As tension and friction between Iran and Pakistan escalate, it could be a major headache for India

It smells like a war is brewing in the neighbourhood. This time, Iran and Pakistan are trying to work out their differences with missiles. Iran used missiles and drones for its strike near Koh-e-Sabz in Balochistan, saying it was a militant hideout. In retaliation, Pakistan conducted airstrikes near Saravan, Siestan-Balochistan. Iran and Pakistan were purportedly targeting armed non-State actors — Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan, and the Balochistan Liberation Army and the Balochistan Liberation Front in Iran — that each country accuses the other of harbouring. The tension between them has raised concerns about regional stability, with potential implications for neighbouring countries, including India. The strained relations between Tehran and Islamabad have roots in various geopolitical, economic and security issues, each carrying its own set of consequences. One major source of friction is the Balochistan region. Both countries have accused each other of failing to address cross-border terrorism and smuggling activities, exacerbating mistrust between them. As India maintains close ties with Iran and seeks stable relations with Pakistan, the developments have caught New Delhi's attention.

For India, the Iran-Pakistan spat holds several implications, including strategic interests. The Chabahar Port, developed by India in collaboration with Iran, has been a key gateway for Indian trade and investment in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Any disruption due to the Iran-Pakistan tensions might affect the smooth functioning of this crucial maritime facility. Security concerns are also on the rise, as

instability on the Iran-Pakistan border may have repercussions for India. The potential for an influx of refugees, increased terrorism or the spillover of violence could create challenges for India's border security and counter-terrorism efforts. Economically, any disruption in the Iran-Pakistan relationship may affect regional trade dynamics. India has been striving to enhance economic ties with Iran, particularly in the energy sector, and maintain stability its relations with Pakistan for overall regional economic prosperity. Besides, the involvement of world powers could make things worse. The US is already at loggerheads with Iran and would like to bleed it by funding Pakistan's offensive in terms of dollars and drones, not to speak of heavy artillery which Pakistan could use against India as well. India may find itself in a precarious situation and might have to settle for a nuanced approach, siding with Iran but not annoying the US. This, however, presents its own set of challenges, given the complex nature of the situation and the strong anti-Iran stand of the US. New Delhi must carefully navigate its foreign policy to safeguard its strategic interests while promoting stability and cooperation in the region.



Artists from Laos perform during the 7th edition of India International Ramayan Mela, in New Delhi

The Maldives must adhere to neighbourhood dharma

Diplomatic tensions emerge as troll armies in the Maldives take on India, sparking an online clash and hinting at a deeper political crisis

During his recent visit to Lakshadweep, Prime Minister Narendra Modi enthusiastically showcased the breathtaking beauty of the archipelago on various social media platforms. The carefully curated photographs highlighted the pristine environment of Lakshadweep, primarily dependent on coral reefs. Modi's penchant for image-centric publicity has been evident, and in this case, he strategically used visuals to position himself as a forward-thinking leader. In one of his social media posts, Prime Minister Modi encouraged adventure enthusiasts to include Lakshadweep in their travel itineraries. By sharing picturesque images of the tourist attractions in Lakshadweep, he aimed to boost tourism in the region. Many individuals naturally expressed admiration for the beauty of Lakshadweep and praised the initiative. However, a segment of social media users took an unexpected turn by using the opportunity to criticize the neighboring Maldives. Some suggested refraining from visiting the Maldives due to their perceived anti-India

stance, emphasizing the preference for exploring the beauty of their own country. A few even made light-hearted comments about the Maldives' uncertain future. In response, Maldivian ministers engaged in a war of words, with Minister Mariam Shiuna making objectionable tweets linking Prime Minister Modi with Israel. This exchange triggered a jingoistic campaign from both Indian and Maldivian supporters, with hashtags like #BoycottMaldives gaining traction on social media. Celebrities and public figures, known for their frequent visits to the Maldives, were also targeted. In a significant development, the Maldivian government took action by suspending the three ministers responsible for the objectionable comments

Ram Rajya: Treatises on good governance



PRAFULL GORADIA

Valmiki's Ramayana gives us a vivid picture of what Ram Rajya was. It was an efficiently governed welfare State with a strong and responsive Government that cared for all

The ethos of the Hindu polity has been derived from Vedic philosophy, which placed the practice of dharma above everything else. In the Vedic ideal, therefore, there are clear, well-laid-out constraints upon the powers a ruler can wield. It is out of this Vedic idea that the concept of the Ram Rajya was born during the era of Shri Ramachandra, and which is held out the ideal state for the benefit of people. Thinkers and political leaders in India have venerated the Ram Rajya as the ideal to be striven for, and it resonates as the ideal polity in the minds of most Indians.

The realities of human nature do not lend themselves easily to the achievement of such a polity. Realpolitik has taken precedence over any single-minded pursuit of the ideal state. This is exemplified in the Western world by Niccolò Machiavelli and in India by Chanakya, the guru of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya around 310 BC. Machiavelli looked at the pursuit and perseverance of political power, while Chanakya along with Chandragupta, was the co-founder of one of the largest and most powerful empires of the ancient world. His Arthashastra remains even today a seminal treatise on governance. The pursuit of realpolitik for a strong and powerful, yet ideal and welfare-oriented state precedes even Chanakya. Krishna Rajya, therefore, is as important, as the Ram Rajya that preceded it. Much can be gleaned of the political institutions of the Ramayana era, loosely termed as Ram Rajya, from Valmiki's Ramayana. These provide researchers, scholars and lay readers with some idea of what Ram Rajya might have been like, notwithstanding counter-arguments that Valmiki's treatment of the political system of his age might have been more ideal than what actually materialized on the ground. As the sage Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama, the polity he described in the Ramayana may be taken to be reflective of the prevailing political system of governance in the era they both lived. Valmiki's work embodies the



extant aspects of the ancient Indian polity of the Treta Yuga, the era of Rama. A deeper look at the state of the polity during Vedic times reveals parallels between the Vedic and Ramayana's ideas of government. Seminal work on the likely nature and shape of the polity during the period of Rama was done by Ms Pazhamaneri Chandrashekar Dharma (1907-1977), a highly accomplished academic and scholar, and former lecturer at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Ms. Dharma's work The Ramayana Polity likely remains the only work of research on what the structure of governance and administration in the period of Rama must have been like.

There is a dearth of information on Ram Rajya. The irony is compounded by the fact that there are ample references in Valmiki's Ramayana itself, which deal with the socio-political conditions of the Treta Yuga. It is indeed possible to collate such details to derive a picture of the polity that existed during this period. Western interpretations either treat the Ramayana as a 'myth' or an allegorical representation, or talk of a so-called 'Aryan conquest' of southern India. The Ramayana however, nowhere mentions any founding or extension of any 'Aryan realm' in south India. Indeed, there is not even a hint of Rama even attempting any civilizational change outside



THERE IS A DEARTH OF INFORMATION ON RAM RAJYA. THE IRONY IS COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT THERE ARE AMPLE REFERENCES IN VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA ITSELF WHICH DEAL WITH THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE TRETA YUGA

Ayodhya. In the light of research of later years and ever-new findings on India's civilizational history, most Western theories and their Indian reproductions are open to questioning and rebuttal. Valmiki's Ramayana gives us insights into social life—habits, customs, attire, ceremonies, beliefs, castes, tribes, forms of government, the status of women, education, science, commerce, industry, navigation, etc. The term 'Aryan' one comes across in this context is used solely for nobility of character and loftiness of values, and not for any particular race or community. The Ramayana teaches not only the geography of India but also about other countries. The land ruled by the Ikshvaku-Raghu lineage and other dynasties in the north (the dynasty in which Rama was born) stretched from the Panchnad (today's Punjab) in the northwest to Videha, Mithila and Anga in the east (all in present-day Bihar), to Saurashtra in the southwest and to the great Dandaka forest in the south (present-day Andhra Pradesh). The other major communities mentioned in the Ramayana are the Vanaras and the Rakshasas, who ruled Lanka. In governance, the monarchy described in the Ramayana—and here the Ikshvaku-Raghu Dynasty's monarchy is the most prominent was not an absolute monarchy in any

sense. The powers of the emperor or samrat were circumscribed by institutions like the sabha (royal assembly) that comprised princes, ministers, advisors and military officials. The sage advice and counsel of rishis is a striking feature of the epic age in India, a pointer to the fact that ancient Hindu society has always accorded primacy to spiritual and dharmic authority over the temporal one. Apart from the governing body advising the king, the state also had representative organisations, called the Paurajana in the Ramayana. Paura means the representatives of the citizens within the capital while the Janapada are the representatives of the people in the countryside, both organs suggesting decentralization of power in Ram Rajya. A premium was placed on military organisation and power. It is a measure of the political efficacy of Rama's rule that following his defeat of Ravana, India under him did not have to face any serious military challenge from any other quarter, nor was there any social upheaval that sometimes follows a major conflict. The administration of Ram Rajya will be compared with the administrations of modern times too. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author, and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHEN WILL THE GAZA WAR END?

Sir — I am writing to express my concern and dismay regarding the prolonged conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Despite ongoing international efforts and United Nations intervention over the past four months, tensions persist, and the situation remains dire. On a positive note, a recent development involves the emergence of a 'barter system,' facilitating the exchange of hostages and medicines. While this is a step in the right direction, the extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure in Gaza requires significant financial and time investments for reconstruction. Media reports and images underscore the widespread destruction, emphasising the urgent need for rebuilding to restore habitability. Notably, the tunnel network in Gaza remains untouched by Israeli airstrikes, serving as a holding space for Israeli citizens taken hostage by Hamas.

The economic impact of the Gaza war extends beyond the immediate conflict zone, affecting numerous countries. The longer the conflict persists, the more detrimental its consequences become. It is imperative for the United Nations to take decisive action to bring about a resolution and end the war. The continued existence of the United Nations is called into question if it cannot effectively address and resolve such conflicts, which have far-reaching humanitarian and economic implications.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

STUDENTS DIE IN BOAT MISHAP

Sir — In a tragic incident, a boat capsized in Harani Lake near Vadodra, Gujarat, claiming the lives of 12 students and 2 teachers on Thursday. The ill-fated boat, which was carrying four teachers and 27 students on a picnic, exceeded its capacity with around 35 people on board. The vessel lost balance and capsized, resulting in the unfortunate demise of 14 individuals, including 12 children and two

India's No. 1 chess player



Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, also known as Pragg, is a chess grandmaster and a former world youth champion. He became India's No.1 chess player after beating Ding Liren, the current classical world champion, with the black pieces in the Tata Steel Chess Tournament 2024. Pragg is the fifth-youngest person ever to achieve the title

of Grandmaster, at 12 years, 10 months, and 13 days. He is also the second-youngest person to achieve a rating of 2600. He is widely regarded as one of the most talented and promising chess players in the world. The Tata Steel Chess Tournament is one of the most prestigious events in the international chess calendar. The 86th edition is held in Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands. The tournament features 14 players in the Masters category and 14 players in the Challengers category, both playing in a single round-robin format. The top seed in the Masters is Ding Liren, followed by Anish Giri, Ju Wenjun, and Pragg. The winner of the Challengers will qualify for the next edition of the Masters. The tournament also includes a Chess Festival and a Chess on Tour event, where one round of the Masters is played in a different location in the Netherlands.

Sabita Kumari | Hazaribagh

teachers, as there were no apparent safety measures in place. The authorities have launched a search operation for the remaining students who are still missing. Gujarat Education Minister Kuber Dindor expressed deep concern, stating that rescue operations are ongoing with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and fire brigade personnel actively involved. He emphasised the absence of safety measures and pledged a thorough investigation, promising the strictest punishment for any lapses that may have led to the tragedy. Dindor condemned the total lapse on the part of the authorities, holding them accountable for the loss of precious innocent lives. The incident underscores the need for stringent safety protocols and raises questions about the adequacy of measures in place to prevent such accidents in the future.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF FORMER CM

Sir — On the occasion of the 107th birth anniversary of the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Purachithalvar Dr M.G. Ramachandran, I wish to recall my close association with him since 1969 when I was as a PG student of Economics in the Presidency College, Chennai. In 1982 he enabled me to visit Japan to attend the United Nations Conference on Human Settlement and present a research paper entitled "Problems of Urban Growth: A Case Study of Chennai City," by amending the G.O. Earlier only GAZETTED Government servants were permitted to obtain passport and travel abroad. He was kind enough to amend the GO to permit non-gazetted Govt servants to travel abroad. He was also gracious enough to sanction 50% of the travel and boarding/lodging expenses amounting to around Rs 37,000; 50% was borne by the UNESCAP.

Dr C Murukadas | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

is attributed to the government under Mohammed Muizzu, where anti-India sentiments were exploited for political gains during the 2023 elections. An anti-India campaign initiated by opposition parties gained momentum after 2020, with the slogan 'India Out' demanding the removal of Indian military deployment in Maldives. The situation escalated in 2022 when a crowd attacked an International Yoga Day event organized by the Indian High Commission in Male, leading to a setback in diplomatic relations. The anti-India sentiment intensified during the 2023 elections, with local issues, perceived failures of the Solih government, corruption, and the anti-India wave playing crucial roles in Dr. Mohammed Muizzu's election victory. In essence, the recent social media spat and political developments highlight the deep-rooted anti-India sentiments in Maldives, fueled by a complex mix of regional politics, historical dynamics, and local issues. (The writer is a senior journalist, views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE PROFOUND POWER OF LOVING-KINDNESS

The Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness resonate with contemporary psychology



BHIKKHU SIRI SIVALI ABHASARO

Love is a word that has been defined by numerous intellectuals and philosophers, especially in the West. If you delve into novels, you'll discover that each novel provides a unique definition of love. It seems like we've never seen this multifaceted side of love; it is an exceptionally subjective topic and can be quite disturbing for meditation and mindfulness.

Bhakti begins with faith, sacrifice, renunciation, and devotion. It is a path that leads away from worldly matters and transcends them. On the other hand, love is akin to holding onto something tightly, and having a desire to possess it. The Buddha himself stated that love is a cause of suffering and fear, as it makes it challenging to understand the impermanent nature of the world. This is why Buddhism advocates for loving-kindness, which is neither love nor bhakti—it is the middle way. Loving-kindness is comparable to a tree; it provides shade for wanderers but doesn't expect them to stay or leave. It operates without expectations, simply doing what needs to be done.

In the "Karniya Metta Sutta" (Loving-kindness Discourse), the Buddha provides a beautiful quote: "Just as a mother loves her only son, you should also be kind to everyone in this world." Examining this statement carefully reveals that a mother can wholeheartedly love her own son, not others' sons. However, Buddha encourages drawing inspiration from this and applying it universally to all of humankind, urging against limiting one's compassion as a mother does only for her son.



In Buddhist psychology, loving-kindness possesses the characteristic of "Appamaa," meaning limitless or beyond limits. It offers freedom from aversion-filled thoughts and serves as a beneficial subject for meditation. During meditation, where negative thoughts often arise, especially those filled with aversion, loving-kindness meditation can be a tool to overcome them. It focuses on cultivating goodwill and warm feelings towards others, such as wishing for their happiness or success.

The Buddha, in his teachings, eloquently outlined the 11 profound benefits of practising loving-kindness. Embracing this virtue promises not only a serene mind but also tangible improvements in one's life. From experiencing peaceful sleep and waking easily to fostering love from others, including both people and animals, the ripple effects extend to protection from external dangers, radiant countenance, and a serene mind. The culmination of such a compassionate life is envisioned in a peaceful death and a subsequent rebirth in joyous realms—a testament to the transformative power of cultivating loving-kindness in every facet of existence. Engaging in the practice of loving-kindness, as endorsed by modern psychology, yields a myriad of benefits for individuals. This intentional cultivation of positive emotions not only diminishes negative emotions but also amplifies a positive tone, fostering a sense of positive emotions and interconnectedness with others. Additionally, the practice has been associated with a reduction in migraines, chronic pain, PTSD, and schizophrenia-spectrum disorders. Notably, it activates empathy and emotional processing in the brain, leading to an increase in grey matter volume and respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), thereby contributing to a slowing of biological ageing. Beyond these physiological effects, the practice of loving-kindness also has interpersonal implications, making individuals more helpful, compassionate, and empathetic. It plays a pivotal role in diminishing biases towards others, enhancing social connections, and curbing self-criticism, creating a holistic approach to psychological well-being. In essence, the exploration of love across various philosophies reveals its intricate nature.

(The writer is a Buddhist monk; views are personal)

Is Pakistan on the verge of Balkanisation?



UMANG KOHLI

As Pakistan grapples with internal challenges and elections looming, Iran's actions may add complexity to an already precarious situation



Over the last ten days, Iran has fired missiles across the Middle East into Iraq, Syria and even towards its south into Pakistan. Yet for all the missiles launched, Iran appears to have stopped short of a major escalation. The attacks are measured, seemingly to warn and flex its muscles and not get into a confrontation with the major players. However, what has baffled most analysts in India is why a fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran would hit targets in Pakistan. The much-publicised attack on 'Jaish al-Adl' by Iran has a background. Jaish al-Adl has its origins in an organisation called Jundallah. The execution of Jundallah's leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, by Iran in 2010, led to the rise of Jaish al-Adl in 2012. It has Sunni fighters some of whom have connections to the Sunni triangle in Iraq, with a stated mission to secure the independence of Sistan and Balochistan Province. Pakistan itself is wary of this group but right now hands of the Pakistan Army are full and elections are around the corner, so maybe they let Iran do their dirty work. It may however be very difficult for the normal public in Pakistan to digest this humiliation. Iran on the other hand has been hyperactive following a dual suicide bombing this month claimed by the Sunni militant group Islamic State that killed over 90 people.

The attack took place on the fourth anniversary of Soleimani's death (a popular Iranian General killed by the US) and came as a blow to Iran's government. Iran by attacking targets in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan is trying to establish that it is a major player in the region and is going to retaliate if it is attacked directly or indirectly. Iran has time and again showcased itself as a Shia State that would fight against Sunni fighters across the region,



WHAT HAS BAFLED MOST ANALYSTS IN INDIA IS WHY A FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIC REGIME IN IRAN WOULD HIT TARGETS IN PAKISTAN

and so did the attacks. Iran has been championing the Islamic cause in a way in the entire Middle East and will project these attacked elements in Pakistan as a proxy of Israel and the United States.

However, the question is, has Pakistan become so lawless and out of control that various terrorist organisations are mushrooming up here and there? Does the Pakistan government or the army have no power and authority to control non-state actors inside its territory? Is Pakistan losing its significance even in the Islamic World? Is Pakistan the hub centre of global terrorism and do various organisations all over the world find safe heaven inside its territory? Has the failing economy of Pakistan made it even more chaotic than Afghanistan? Is Pakistan on the verge of Balkanisation with POK, the Af-pak border and Baluchistan on the verge of breaking free?

Pakistan is facing the worst existential crisis and is simultaneously facing major challenges on multiple fronts: economic, environmental, and political apart from military challenges. Therefore, the threat of balkanisation is absolutely real. It is almost an economic colony of China right now with religious fundamentalism making matters worse. The feudal setup of the 19th century has not completely died down and administrative (not democratic) institutes except the army have not evolved. The judiciary and parliament in Pakistan are still only an extension of the

army and are barely in a nascent stage. The possibility of organisations like 'Mukti Vahini' coming up in POK is very strong in the future due to poor infrastructure development and bad human rights record in the region. Pakistan may balkanise on its own and faster than we think, though Pakistan may unreasonably blame India for it. Under these circumstances, Pakistan may have been advised by China to do only cosmetic action against the strikes inside its territory by Iran, which they have now carried out. Pakistan is likely to play the victim card and ask some more money from the US to safeguard its borders. It may also ask China and Turkey to provide it with more drones and radars, and ask the US to give it more F16 to safeguard its borders.

The use of existing drones taken from China and Turkey to hit some make-believe targets on the border with Iran is the best Pakistan could have done. Such drone strikes are a fig leaf to prevent humiliation. The reckless retaliation only proves how phoney the Pakistan intelligence and security network has become. If they knew about these so-called terrorists inside Iran's territory then why did they not act against them earlier? Why did they wait for a strike inside their territory by Iran to do a so-called pinpoint surgical strike? Pakistan has had friendly relations with Iran at many levels, so much so that Iran's nuclear program is credited to Pakistani scientists. If Pakistan had some intelligence

about some 'terrorist' groups operating from Iran's soil the issue should have been flagged much earlier and resolved with a joint action. The bottom line is Pakistan and its border areas are a hub of global terrorism and Pakistan is unable to control these Non-State Actors which operate with impunity from within its territory. It may be recalled that the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been also volatile over the last few months. All these factors also point towards a situation where the state of Pakistan can be seen collapsing under its weight.

It is also clear now that China will have an overwhelming say in the coming elections in Pakistan. Whatever the outcome of the election, it looks like Pakistan will be in chaos and will be a headache for India for some time at least. The overall situation in the Middle East looks very disturbing and it's about time a ceasefire comes about there or this conflict could spill over to other areas and regions as well. Considering the evolving situation in the Middle East, both China and the US will want a government that is favourable to them in Pakistan and it looks like both of them are therefore giving the Pakistani army a loose rope. This will only hasten the Balkanisation of Pakistan, as the common man in Pakistan has been fed up with being ruled by the army (directly or indirectly) for the last 75 years.

(The writer is an expert on international relations; views are personal)

Crafting a new international relations theory

The international community must remain vigilant against divisive forces that seek to disrupt the delicate balance of global relations

MIT Professor Norman J. Padelford's insights on International Relations are highly relevant to the current state of world politics. He acknowledges that International Relations involve the interplay of domestic politics, the evolving power dynamics, the contextual framing, and the impact of changing power relationships on global politics. Scenes once confined to Hollywood war movies, such as building explosions, attacks on installations, and warfare atrocities, are resurfacing in the postmodern world order. Recent months have witnessed the rise of international terrorism, regional conflicts in West Asia spilling over into neighbouring regions, ongoing Russia-Ukraine tensions, and simme-



SUSHIR HINDWAN

ling unrest in Pakistan, all contributing to conflict and violence in international politics. The escalating skirmishes, verging on war-like situations, underscore the role of envy as the source of many global miseries. The key to a peaceful prospectus lies in diplomatic efforts, emphasizing cooperation through transparent and reliable communication, built on trust and coordination. The focus of International

Relations should shift toward increasing support and agreement on issues such as limiting climate change, promoting renewable energy, advancing technological know-how, and securing power generation sources. China's Belt and Road Initiatives reflect a subtle strategy to expand influence, while positive cooperation emerges in the strengthening ties between India and the EU, particularly with Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. The changing times demand a fresh perspective on international cooperation, emphasizing a mature reliance on diplomatic endeavours to formulate strategies for mutual economic prosperity. A new roadmap is essential to address security concerns arising from the expansionist missions of

nations, particularly China. Recent agreements between the US and India, such as the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), mark a significant step in sharing geospatial data and enhancing defence ties. The 2+2 Dialogue further solidifies cooperation, particularly in countering threats from Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific region. International cooperation, exemplified by BECA and the Communication and Security Agreement (COMCASA), can provide a platform for multi-layered security collaboration. Challenges, such as dealing with chemical weapons in the hands of terrorists, call for strict international laws and regulations. Cooperation

between India and the US may create a mechanism to counter the spread of weapons like RDX and AK-47 assault rifles. However, framing a strategy to address religiously motivated terrorism remains a significant challenge. The US-India agreement offers an opportunity to address narco-terrorism and curtail China's expansionist plans. The evolving threat landscape underscores the need for a new framework of security-related information sharing. Smaller countries are also adapting to global dynamics, prompting nations to upgrade methods for economic, strategic, and cultural integration to counter overambitious plans in international relations. The recent recognition of India as a leading mediator in the Russia-

Ukraine conflict positions it to shape the direction of international politics in the future. The world is undergoing a major transnational transition, signalling a shift in power dynamics and the emergence of a new order. Recent global developments emphasize the importance of addressing popular aspirations and demands to prevent change and unrest. In conclusion, as the global landscape undergoes unprecedented transformations, it becomes imperative for nations to forge collaborative strategies that extend beyond conventional security concerns. The evolving dynamics of international relations call for a shared commitment to address multifaceted challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and technologi-

cal disruptions. The agreements between the US and India signify a step towards fostering a collective approach to these global issues, establishing a foundation for sustained cooperation and mutual understanding. Looking ahead, the success of these initiatives hinges on the ability of nations to rise above geopolitical rivalries and work together for the common good. It is crucial to nurture a global mindset. Embracing this ethos can pave the way for a more secure, stable, and prosperous world. The responsibility lies with nations to uphold the principles of peace, justice, and equality, steering away from the temptations of power politics. Through concerted efforts, a harmonious world order can emerge, where

nations collaborate not only for their own interests but for the well-being of humanity. In this journey towards a brighter future, India's role as a mediator and proponent of cooperation will be instrumental. By championing the cause of inclusive diplomacy, India has the potential to shape a world that truly reflects Louis Armstrong's sentiment - "What a Wonderful World." As nations navigate these complex times, it is the shared commitment to a common destiny that will ultimately determine the course of international relations, ushering in an era of prosperity and peace. (The author is a professor and a columnist. He is the recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award; views are personal)

Rifts among top Israeli officials over how to handle Gaza war

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Rifts are emerging among top Israeli officials over the handling of the war against Hamas in Gaza. A member of the country's War Cabinet cast doubt over the strategy for releasing hostages, and the country's prime minister rejected the United States' calls to scale back its offensive.

Only a cease-fire deal can win the release of dozens of hostages still held by Islamic militants in Gaza, and claims they could be freed by other means was spreading "illusions", said former army chief Gadi Eisenkot, one of four members of the War Cabinet, in his first public statements on the course of the war.

Eisenkot's comments late Thursday were the latest sign of disagreement among political and military leaders over the direction of Israel's offensive on Hamas, now in its fourth month.

Sparked by an unprecedented October 7 Hamas raid into Israel that killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and saw about 250 others taken hostage, the Israeli assault has pulverised much of the Gaza Strip, home to some 2.3 million people.

Israel has said more than 130 hostages remain in Gaza, but not all of them are believed to be alive.

Israel's offensive, one of the deadliest and most destructive military campaigns in recent history, has killed nearly 25,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities, and uprooted more than 80 per cent of the territory's population.

Israel has also cut off all but a trickle of supplies into the besieged Gaza Strip, including food, water and fuel. Several dozen trucks with critical supplies now enter the territory each day, just a fraction of the pre-war volume of about 500 trucks. Both the United States and United Nations have said more aid needs to be delivered.

A communications blackout in the territory was in its seventh day on Friday, the longest such blackout since the war began. The lack of communications hampers the coordination of aid deliveries



Palestinians look at the destruction after an Israeli strike in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, Thursday. AP/PTI

and rescue efforts.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, has provided strong military and political support for the campaign, but has been increasingly calling on Israel to scale back its assault and take steps toward establishing a Palestinian state after the war — a suggestion Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has soundly rejected.

Speaking during a nationally televised news conference on Thursday, Netanyahu reiterated his longstanding opposition to a two-state solution, arguing that a Palestinian state would become a launchpad for attacks on Israel.

Israel "must have security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River", Netanyahu said, adding: "That collides with the idea of sovereignty. What can we do?"

The US has said the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which governs semi-autonomous zones in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, should be "revitalised" and return to Gaza. Hamas ousted the authority from Gaza in 2007.

Washington has also called for steps toward the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Palestinians seek Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem for their state. Those areas were captured by Israel in 1967.

Speaking on Wednesday at the World Economic Forum in

Davos, Switzerland, Blinken said the two-state solution was the best way to protect Israel, unify moderate Arab countries and isolate Israel's arch-enemy, Iran. He said that without a pathway to a Palestinian state, Israel would not "get genuine security".

At the same conference, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said the kingdom is ready to establish full relations with Israel as part of a larger political agreement. "But that can only happen through peace for the Palestinians, through a Palestinian state," he said.

A spokesperson for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who heads the Palestinian Authority, said late Thursday that there can be "no security and stability in the region" without a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant have said the fighting will continue until Hamas is crushed, and argue that only military action can win the hostages' release.

Hamas seeks an end to the war before discussing hostage releases, and has demanded the release of thousands of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel in exchange for those held captive in Gaza.

Commentators have begun to question whether Netanyahu's objectives are realistic, given the slow pace of the offensive and growing international criticism, including

genocide accusations at the United Nations world court, which Israel vehemently denies.

Netanyahu's opponents accuse him of delaying any discussion of postwar scenarios in order to avoid looming investigations of governmental failures, keep his coalition intact and put off elections. Polls show that the popularity of Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, has plummeted during the war. Eisenkot, whose son was killed in December in Gaza, told the investigative program "Uvda" on Israel's Channel 12 television station late Thursday that "the hostages will only return alive if there is a deal, linked to a significant pause in fighting".

He said dramatic rescue operations are unlikely because the hostages are apparently spread out, many of them in underground tunnels.

Claiming hostages can be freed by means other than a deal "is to spread illusions", he said. In a thinly veiled criticism of Netanyahu, Eisenkot also said strategic decisions about the war's direction must be made urgently, and that a discussion about an endgame should have begun immediately after the war began. He also dismissed suggestions that the military has delivered a decisive blow against Hamas. Gallant has said troops disabled the Hamas command structure in northern Gaza, from where significant numbers of troops were withdrawn earlier in the week, and that the focus is now on the southern half of the territory.

"We haven't yet reached a strategic achievement, or rather only partially," Eisenkot said. "We did not bring down Hamas." The militant group has continued to fight back across Gaza, even in the most devastated areas, and launched rockets into Israel.

The former army chief said he is examining every day whether he should remain in the War Cabinet, which includes Netanyahu, Gallant and former Defense Minister Benny Gantz. Eisenkot is a member of parliament in the opposition National Unity alliance headed by Gantz. Both joined Netanyahu to help lead the war.

N Korea tests N-capable underwater drone

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea said Friday it has tested a nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by South Korea, the United States and Japan this week, as it continues to blame its rivals for raising tensions in the region.

The test of the drone, purportedly designed to destroy naval vessels and ports, came days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared he is scrapping his country's long-standing goal of a peaceful reunification with South Korea and that his country will rewrite its constitution to define South Korea as its most hostile foreign adversary.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have risen to their highest point in years, with Kim accelerating his weapons testing and threatening nuclear conflict. The United States and its Asian allies have responded by strengthening their combined military exercises, which Kim calls rehearsals for an



invasion.

The underwater drone, which North Korea said it first tested last year, is among a broad range of weapon systems demonstrated in recent years as Kim expands his arsenal of nuclear-capable weapons. South Korea's military says North Korea has exaggerated the capabilities of the drone.

North Korea's military said it conducted the test in the country's eastern waters in response to a naval drill by the US, South Korea and Japan

which ended Wednesday in waters south of Jeju island. It did not say when the test occurred.

"Our army's underwater nuke-based countering posture is being further rounded off and its various maritime and underwater responsive actions will continue to deter the hostile military maneuvers of the navies of the US and its allies," North Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement.

"We strongly denounce the US and its followers for their reckless acts of seriously threatening the security of (North Korea) from the outset of the year and sternly warn them of the catastrophic consequences to be entailed by them," it said. South Korea's Defense Ministry denounced North Korea's recent tests as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions and a threat to "peace in the Korean Peninsula and the world." It said in a statement that the US and South Korean militaries were maintaining a firm defense posture against possible North Korean provo-

cations.

North Korea in recent months has tested various missile systems designed to target the United States and its Asian allies, and announced an escalatory nuclear doctrine that authorizes the military to conduct preemptive nuclear strikes if North Korea's leadership is under threat.

North Korea conducted its first ballistic missile test of 2024 on Sunday. State media described it as a new solid-fuel, intermediate-range missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead, likely intended to target US military bases in Guam and Japan. At an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on Thursday, South Korea urged the council "to break the silence" over North Korea's escalating missile tests and threats. Russia and China, both permanent members of the Security Council, have blocked US-led efforts to increase sanctions on North Korea over its recent weapons tests, underscoring a divide deepened over Russia's war on Ukraine.

South calls on divided UN council to break silence' on N Korea's tests

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

South Korea called on the divided UN Security Council on Thursday "to break the silence" over North Korea's escalating missile tests and threats.

"It's a big question," South Korea's UN Ambassador Hwang Joonkook told reporters after an emergency closed meeting of the council on the North's first ballistic missile test of 2024 on Sunday. South Korea is serving a two-year term on the council.

The Security Council imposed sanctions after North Korea's first nuclear test explosion in 2006 and tightened them over the years in a total of 10 resolutions seeking — so far unsuccessfully — to cut funds and curb its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

The last sanctions resolution was adopted by the council in 2017. China and Russia vetoed a US-sponsored resolution in May 2022 that would have imposed new sanctions

over a spate of intercontinental ballistic missile launches. Since then, the two veto-wielding permanent council members have blocked any council action, including media statements.

North Korea's escalating test-launches in violation of the existing UN sanctions — five ICBMs, more than 25 ballistic missiles and three satellite launches using ballistic missile technology in 2023 — coupled with new threats from the North's leader Kim Jong Un have raised regional tensions to their highest point in years.

On Monday, Kim declared North Korea would abandon its commitment to a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of its constitution to eliminate the idea of a shared statehood between the war-divided countries. He said South Koreans were "top-class stooges" of America who were obsessed with confrontation, and repeated a threat that the

North would annihilate the South with its nukes if provoked.

Before Thursday's council meeting, U.S. Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood told reporters Kim's provocations "are of great concern."

He said the 15 council members need to be reminded that North Korea is violating sanctions and its obligations to the council, "and we have to insist that they adhere to those obligations, and for all Security Council members to enforce those resolutions."

By contrast, China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun, whose country is a close ally of North Korea, called on all parties involved in the Korean Peninsula to stay calm and refrain from actions that would further raise tensions.

In a message clearly aimed at the United States and South Korea, Zhang expressed hope that while attention is mainly on North Korea, "other countries are also responsible to avoid further escalation."

France's UN Ambassador Nicolas De Riviere told reporters that North Korea's actions are "getting worse and worse," with regular ballistic missile launches, continuing uranium enrichment, and advancement of its nuclear program.

"Everyone is focused on missile launches, but I think the biggest threat is their nuclear program which continues to grow again and again," De Riviere said.

And he called it "a shame" that Russia is violating Security Council resolutions by "buying military stuff that they use in Ukraine" from North Korea. "It's really bad," he said.

South Korea's Hwang said all 15 members of the Council are worried that North Korea's rhetoric and actions are "getting more and more serious."

But how to break the council's silence and inaction? "We will discuss and think about it, and how to move forward," he said. "It's a big question."

German parliament drop restrictions on dual passports

AP ■ BERLIN

German lawmakers on Friday approved legislation easing the rules on gaining citizenship and ending restrictions on holding dual citizenship. The government argues the plan will bolster the integration of immigrants and help attract skilled workers.

Parliament voted 382-234 for the plan put forward by centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz's socially liberal coalition, with 23 lawmakers abstaining. The main centre-right opposition bloc criticised the project vehemently, arguing that it would cheapen German citizenship.

The legislation will make people eligible for citizenship after five years in Germany, or three in case of "special integration accomplishments," rather than eight or six years at present. German-born children would automatically become citizens if one parent has been a legal resident for five years, down from eight years now.

Restrictions on holding dual citizenship will also be dropped. In principle, most people from countries other than European Union members and Switzerland now have to give up their previous nationality when they gain German citizenship, though there are some exemptions.

The government says that 14 per cent of the population — more than 12 million of the country's 84.4 million inhabitants — doesn't have German citizenship and that about 5.3 million of those have lived in Germany for at least a decade. It says that the naturalisation rate in Germany is well below the EU average. In 2022, about 168,500 people were granted German citizenship. That was the highest figure since 2002, boosted by a large increase in the number of Syrian citizens who had arrived in the past decade being naturalised, but still only a fraction of long-term

residents.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the reform puts Germany in line with European neighbors such as France and pointed to its need to attract more skilled workers. "We also must make qualified people from around the world an offer like the US, like Canada, of which acquiring German citizenship is a part," she told reporters ahead of the vote.

The legislation stipulates that people being naturalised must be able to support themselves and their relatives, though there are exemptions for people who came to West Germany as "guest workers" up to 1974 and for those who came to communist East Germany to work. The existing law requires that would-be citizens be committed to the "free democratic fundamental order" and the new version specifies that antisemitic and racist acts are incompatible with that. The conservative opposition asserted that Germany is loosening citizenship requirements just as other countries are tightening theirs.

"This isn't a citizenship modernisation bill — it is a citizenship devaluation bill," centre-right Christian Democrat Alexander Throm told lawmakers.

People who have been in Germany for five or three years haven't yet grown roots in the country, he said. And he argued that dropping restrictions on dual citizenship will "bring political conflicts from abroad into our politics." The citizenship law overhaul is one of a series of social reforms that Scholz's three-party coalition agreed to carry out when it took office in late 2021. Those also include plans to liberalise rules on the possession and sale of cannabis, and make it easier for transgender, intersex and non-binary people to change their gender and name in official registers. Both still need parliamentary approval.

Ten die after landslide buries house in Philippines

Davao (AP): A landslide set off by days of heavy rain buried a house where people were holding Christian prayers in the southern Philippines, killing at least 10 people, including five children, officials said on Friday.

Two people were injured, and at least one more villager remained unaccounted for following the landslide in a remote mountain village in the gold-mining town of Monkayo in Davao de Oro province, Ednar Dayanghirang, the regional chief of the government's Office of Civil Defence, said.

Three more bodies were found on Friday, after the search was paused mid-afternoon Thursday due to the risk of another landslide. "They were praying in the house when the landslide hit," Dayanghirang told The Associated Press by telephone Thursday night. "It's sad but it's the reality on the ground."

People living near the village were ordered to evacuate due to fears of more land- and mud-slides due to intermittent downpours, Monkayo Mayor Manuel Zamora said.

Days of heavy rains also flooded low-lying villages and displaced more than 36,000 people in Davao de Oro and three other provinces, the Office of Civil Defence said. The weather began to clear on Friday in some areas.

The rains were sparked by what local forecasters call a shear line, a point where warm and cold air meet.

At least 20 storms and typhoons lash the Philippine archipelago each year, especially during the rainy season that starts in June. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest to hit on record, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing, flattened entire villages, swept ships inland and displaced more than 5 million in the central Philippines.



Former first lady Melania Trump, center right, and her father Viktor Knavs, center left, are followed by former President Donald Trump, back right, and son Barron, back left, as they exit behind the coffin of the former first lady's mother Amalija Knavs, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024, at Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea in Palm Beach, Fla. AP/PTI

9/11 victim's remains identified after 23 yrs

New York (AP): The remains of a Long Island man killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11 have been identified more than two decades after the 2001 attacks, the New York City medical examiner's office announced Thursday.

John Ballantine Niven, 44, of Oyster Bay, was an executive at Aon Risk Services, an insurance firm on the 105th floor of tower two of the trade center complex, according to obituaries at the time. He left a wife and a son who was 18 months old at the time.

Niven is the 1,650th victim identified from the deadliest act of terrorism on American soil, when hijackers crashed airplanes into the Twin Towers, killing 2,753 people.

"While the pain from the enormous losses on September 11th never leaves us, the possibility of new identifications can offer solace to the families of victims," New York City Mayor Eric Adams said in a

statement. "I'm grateful for the ongoing work from the Office of Chief Medical Examiner that honors the memory of John Ballantine Niven and all those we lost."

The medical examiner's office has been using advanced DNA analysis to identify victims remains in recent years.

Ahead of the anniversary of the attacks last September, the office said it had identified remains of a man and a woman, though their names were not made public at the request of their families.

"We will forever remember our heroes who perished on 9/11 and we appreciate the continuous efforts of forensic experts to help identify victims," Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino said in a separate statement.

"We're hopeful that this amazing advance in technology helps bring peace to Mr. Niven's family and allows him to eternally rest in peace."

Modi 'best leader' for Indo-US relationship: Mary Millben

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Terming Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "best leader" for India and for the Indo-US relationship, popular singer Mary Millben has said many in the US desire to see him re-elected so that bilateral ties can continue to be strengthened to greater levels.

"I tell you certainly there's a lot of support for the Prime Minister here in the United States. I believe many desire to see the Prime Minister re-elected because, again, he's the best leader for India," Millben, a prominent African-American Hollywood actress and singer, told PTI in an interview.

Millben has a huge fan following in India and the Indian diaspora, in particular, after her rendition of the national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana' and a popular aarti in Hindi, 'Om Jai Jagadish Hare', last year. She sang India's national anthem in June 2023 at an event in the US during the prime minister's



state visit. The 41-year-singer also referred to the election season in 2024 when India is headed for general elections in the next few months while the US has its presidential elections in November. She said she believes that "the Prime Minister is on track to win in May." "This election season, I believe, is going to be one of the most important election seasons for the United States, for India, and for the world. So, there's a tremendous responsi-

bility that we all have and carry as citizens. It's my encouragement, certainly to all of my beloved family in India to make your vote, your voice heard in this election season," said the singer, who is a supporter of former US president Donald Trump.

"Certainly, it's no secret...all of India knows that I'm a big supporter of the Prime Minister and believe that he's the best leader for India and he's the best leader for the India-US relationship.

"These are the times when we as citizens need to be vocal, sharing our convictions, sharing those things, those policies that are important for our countries and certainly to our leaders.

But we hold the power to bring change to our countries," she asserted.

The African-American celebrity has earlier too praised Modi for his endeavour to include the African Union as a full member of the G20.

Judge denies Trump's request to hold Jack Smith in contempt

Washington (AP): The federal judge overseeing the 2020 election interference case against Donald Trump on Thursday rejected his lawyers' bid to hold special counsel Jack Smith's team in contempt for actions prosecutors took after the judge put the case on hold. But the judge said no further "substantive" court filings should be submitted without permission.

The former president's lawyers had accused prosecutors of "outrageous conduct" for turning over to the defense thousands of pages of evidence and filing a motion after the judge paused the case while Trump appeals his presidential immunity claim. The defense

said prosecutors were violating a court order that put the case on hold so Trump can pursue his claim in higher courts. US District Judge Tanya Chutkan said in her ruling Thursday that her Dec. 13 order pausing the case did not "clearly and unambiguously" prohibit those actions by Smith's team. However, she agreed with Trump to bar all parties in the case from filing "any further substantive pretrial motions" without first seeking permission from the court until the pause is lifted. At issue was the order from Chutkan after Trump appealed to a higher court an earlier ruling that rejected his claims that he is immune from prosecution.

Pak, Iran agree on closer co-op on security issues

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and Iran on Friday agreed to the spirit of "mutual trust and cooperation" and the need for closer cooperation on security issues as the two sides began to pick threads of tattered ties following their tit-for-tat missile strikes in each other's territory. Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani spoke with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and expressed Pakistan's readiness to work with Iran on "all issues based on the spirit of mutual trust and cooperation", Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement.

"He (Jilani) underscored the need for closer cooperation on security issues," said the statement issued after the two ministers spoke over the telephone. The positive development came after Pakistan conducted "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province that killed 9 people on Thursday. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks on Tuesday, which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Balochistan province.

Earlier, Jilani and his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan discussed the "ongoing developments" between Pakistan and Iran, the Foreign Office said. He told Fidan that the military strikes were aimed at terrorist camps inside Iran and added that Pakistan has no interest or desire for escalation. Also, officials of the foreign ministries from Iran and

Tensions with Iran won't affect February 8 polls: Pakistan EC

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

General elections scheduled in Pakistan for February 8 won't be affected by the escalating tensions with Iran, the caretaker government and the election commission have said following the tit-for-tat exchange of strikes between the two neighbours this week. Pakistan on Thursday used killer drones and rockets to carry out "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, killing nine people. The strikes came two days after Iran launched unprecedented missile and drone attacks on what it said were directed at the bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group 'Jaish al-Adl' in Balochistan province, prompting Pakistan to recall its ambassador to Iran, expel the Iranian

envoy and suspend all planned high-level bilateral visits. Responding to a query by The News International newspaper if the border tension between Pakistan and Iran will affect the planned polls and its schedule, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) spokesperson said that the polls body is still determined and focused on holding elections as scheduled. Asserting that there is no proposal about reviewing the election date because of the Pakistan-Iran tensions, he said that the electoral watchdog is busy preparing for the polls. "We are working as usual and all set to hold elections on February 8," the newspaper quoted the spokesperson as saying. Meanwhile, Information Minister Murtaza Solangi also said the elections would be held on time, asserting the ten-

sion between the two neighbours would not affect the poll schedule. The minister said he believed that the situation between Pakistan and Iran would now start de-escalating, according to the report. When enquired about the security requirements needed to hold the elections, the minister said the government would provide the required security to the election commission for the holding of elections in a peaceful manner. "There is now no backstepping from general elections on the announced date," he said. The tit-for-tat attacks between Pakistan and Iran within two days have raised tensions in the volatile region, already roiled by Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the targeting of the merchant ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthis.

In an X post on Friday, the Foreign Office additional secretary responded to his Iranian counterpart's letter saying he reciprocated the sentiments of "dear brother Seyed Rasoul Mousavi". He said Pakistan and Iran have fraternal relations and the countries need to move forward to resolve all issues through positive dialogue. He said that it is important to restore trust and confidence that has always defined bilateral relations between the two

countries. "Our common challenges including terrorism require coordinated action," he added. Mousavi said he believed that Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the endpoint of the prevailing tensions between the two countries. "Leaders and high officials of both countries know that only terrorists and enemies of both countries benefit from the existing tension between the two neighbouring countries," he wrote on X in Persian.

Lauding Sri Lanka for its "economic recovery programme", the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Friday called for the introduction of property tax to widen the tax revenue base for the consolidation of cash-strapped island nation's faltering economy. The IMF also insisted on "sustaining the reform momentum". "Swift progress towards the introduction of a progressive property tax is key to ensuring fair burden sharing while sustaining the revenue-based consolidation," a statement issued here at the end of a week-long visit by a mission of the global lender said. The IMF commended the government for its economic recovery programme in line with the lender's bailout conditions for stringent reforms. It insisted that "sustaining the reform momentum and ensuring timely implementation of all programme commitments are critical to rebuilding confidence and putting the recovery on a firm footing". Commenting on economic recovery, the IMF said the real GDP recorded positive

Polio programme coordinator killed, cop hurt in attack in KPK

AP ■ KYIV

Peshawar (PTI): A Polio immunisation programme coordinator was killed and a policeman was injured when their vehicle was attacked in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of northwestern Pakistan on Friday, police said. Unidentified assailants opened fire on the vehicle of Dr Abdul Rahman in Bajaur district when he was on his way back home from the district hospital, SHO Mamond Police Station, Dilawar Khan, said. The Rescue 1122 team provided medical aid to the injured persons and shifted them to the district headquarters hospital in critical condition. The doctor, however, succumbed to his injuries at the hospital in Bajaur, an official told PTI.

The policeman, who was travelling with the doctor as his security personnel, was still in a critical condition, the official said. Last week, two people were injured when a bomb planted on the roadside hit a vehicle in the Bajaur tribal district. About two weeks ago, at least seven policemen on polio duty were killed and more than 20 were injured in the bomb attack on a police vehicle in Mamond tehsil. So far, 109 people have been killed in polio-related incidents since 2012. As many as 162 policemen and polio workers have been injured in the attacks on polio vaccinators since 2012.

Drone attack on oil depot inside Russia causes blaze

AP ■ KYIV

A Ukrainian drone struck an oil storage depot in western Russia on Friday, causing a massive blaze, officials said, as Kyiv's forces apparently extended their attacks on Russian soil ahead of the war's two-year anniversary. Four oil reservoirs with a total capacity of 6,000 cubic metres (1.6 million gallons) were set on fire when the drone reached Klinty, a city of some 70,000 people located about 60 km (40 miles) from the Ukrainian border, according to the local governor and state news agency Tass. The strike apparently was the latest in a recently intensified effort by Ukraine to unnerve Russians and undermine President Vladimir Putin's claim that life in Russia is going on as normal before its March 17 presidential election. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed to hit more targets inside Russian border regions this year. Russia's air defences are concentrated in occupied regions of Ukraine, Kyiv officials say, leaving more distant targets inside Russia more vulnerable as Ukrainian forces develop longer-range drones.

The Russian city of Belgorod, also near the Ukrainian border, cancelled its traditional Orthodox Epiphany festivities on Friday due to the threat of Ukrainian drone strikes. It was the first time major public events were known to have been called off in Russia due to the drone threat. Ukrainian national media, quoting an official in Ukraine's Intelligence Service, said Ukrainian drones on Friday also attacked a gunpowder mill in Tambov, about 600 km (370 miles) south of Moscow. But Tambov Gov Maxim Yegorov said the plant was working normally, according to Russia's RBC news outlet. The Mash news outlet had earlier reported that a Ukrainian drone fell on the plant's premises Thursday but caused no damage. In another strike fitting the pattern, the Russian Defence Ministry said a Ukrainian drone was downed on the outskirts of St Petersburg on Thursday. The drone wreckage fell on the premises of the St Petersburg Oil Terminal on the city's southern edge, according to Vladimir Rogov, who is in



charge of coordination of the Russian-annexed regions of Ukraine. Mikhail Skigin, the terminal co-owner, confirmed that the drone was targeting the terminal. St Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, is about 900 km (560 miles) north of the border with Ukraine. In Klinty, air defences electronically jammed the drone but it dropped its explosive payload on the facility, Bryansk regional Gov Alexander Bogomaz said. There were no casualties, he added. Russian telegram channels shared videos of what they said was the blaze at the depot, which sent thick black plumes of smoke into the air. The fire is hard to put out and requires specialist equipment, Bogomaz said, adding that 32 people were evacuated from their homes near the depot. The same depot was struck by a Ukrainian drone in May last year, but the damage apparently was less significant.

Pak govt moves SC against HC verdict nullifying Imran's jail trial

CIPHER CASE

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's caretaker government on Friday challenged in the Supreme Court the Islamabad High Court's verdict nullifying the jail trial of former prime minister Imran Khan in the cipher case for allegedly leaking state secrets. In its petition filed in Pakistan's Supreme Court, the federal government implored the apex court to overturn the Islamabad High Court's decision, saying that the high court did not evaluate the facts of the case properly. Advocate Rizwan Abbasi submitted the petition on behalf of the federal ministries of law and interior, contending that the IHC order was "not in consonance with the law" and "travelled beyond the jurisdiction".

"In the petition, the government contended that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) did not have the authority to declare a special court formed to hold the cipher trial of the former premier as invalid," said Abbasi. The case is related to a diplomatic cable sent by the Pakistan embassy in March 2022 and Khan, 71, and one of his senior ministers Shah Mahmood Qureshi are accused of mishandling it for political purposes. Both were indicted last month and both pleaded not guilty. In November last year, IHC nullified the notification for conducting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan's jail trial in the cipher case registered on charges of leaking state secrets. The IHC stated in the three-page short order that the jail



trial can be conducted in "exceptional circumstances". "In exceptional circumstances and where it is conducive to justice, a trial can be conducted in jail in a manner that fulfils the requirements of an open trial or a trial in camera provided it is in accordance with the procedure provided by law." The court also declared that the November 15 notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice after the caretaker Cabinet's approval of the jail trial "cannot be given retrospective effect". In a related development Azam Khan, the former principal secretary to the ex-premier minister, on Thursday testified before the special court that the ex-premier failed to return the secret cipher document provided to him by the foreign ministry. The Express Tribune reported that Azam Khan in his statement said that the foreign secretary informed him about the cipher telegram and provided him with a copy, which he reviewed and later shared with the former prime minister. Azam Khan stated that Imran informed him that for-

mer foreign minister Qureshi had already discussed the content of the telegram with him. The cipher telegram was related to meetings of the Pakistan ambassador to the US with American officials. "The former premier retained the copy of the cipher with him and instructed the military secretary, DC, and other staff to look into the matter. He also emphasized taking the public into confidence on the matter," he said. Azam Khan said that he suggested to the former PM to have a formal meeting with the foreign ministry. "I recommended that the foreign secretary should be asked to read the message from the master cipher. In the Bani Gala meeting, the foreign secretary read out the cipher telegram. The participants later decided to present the cipher matter in front of the federal cabinet. "In the federal cabinet meeting, it was decided to bring the matter before the National Security Committee (NSC), which decided to issue a demarche on foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country."

PTI claims intel agencies abducting its candidates

LAHORE (PTI): Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party on Friday claimed the Pakistani intelligence agencies are openly abducting and harassing candidates backed by it ahead of the February 8 general elections. A spokesperson of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said that former lawmaker and PTI-backed candidate Khayal Ahmad Kastro from Faisalabad, some 130 kms from here, was allegedly abducted by the personnel from the intelligence agencies.

"Mr Kastro was abducted in full view of camera outside a district court in Faisalabad by plain clothes persons," the PTI spokesperson said. PTI secretary general Omar Ayub said, Kastro was abducted by unknown people in broad daylight "even after securing bail from the court, which is highly condemnable". Beleaguered Khan, the PTI, its leaders, and candidates backed by the party have constantly faced hurdles ahead of the February 8 general elections. The party has lost its election symbol of 'ba' and nomination papers of Khan and other prominent leaders have been rejected by the election commission. Khan and many other leaders are in Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi facing multiple cases. After Friday's alleged abduction, the party claimed that with this kind of situation, the troubles for party-backed candidates are not over despite being contesting independently. "There is no justice or rule of law in Pakistan as the PTI candidate was abducted outside the court. There is no level playing field for the PTI," he said.

growth of 1.6 per cent in the third quarter of 2023, which was the first growth recorded in six consecutive quarters. "Shortages of essentials have eased and inflation remains contained. Gross international reserves increased by USD 2.5 billion during 2023," the IMF said. The Sri Lankan government's domestic debt restructuring was well executed, the lender said. "A swift completion of final agreements with official creditors and solving with external private creditors remain critical." Sri Lanka is hoping to restructure USD 17 billion of its outstanding debt and has already reached agreements with some of its external creditors. The IMF stressed that tax policy measures needed to be accompanied by strengthened tax administration, the removal of exemptions and the reduction of tax evasion to make the reforms more sustainable and build confidence among creditors to support Sri Lanka's efforts to regain debt sustainability. During the mission, the IMF team also engaged the opposition parties critical of the IMF programme being steered by President Ranil Wickremesinghe. The main

IMF presses for more taxes for consolidation of SL economy

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Thousands arrested in SL drug raids

AP ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities have arrested tens of thousands of people in a monthlong crackdown on drugs, and vowed to continue despite UN criticism of possible human rights violations during the "heavy-handed" operation. Since the operation began in December, heavily armed police and military personnel with sniffer dogs have made regular night-time raids on homes and search buses, seizing narcotics and arresting suspects who include drug users, local dealers and distributors, and people with records of drug-related arrests. Acting police chief Deshabandu Tennakoon told The Associated Press on Thursday that more than 40,000 people have arrested and questioned during operations conducted jointly by the police and security forces, and 5,000 were ordered detained by the courts.

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Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot
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Adv. No. 03/2024

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1 Name of work with its location	PART-C: Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 25 KV AC OHE for electrification of un-electrified sidings/diesel sheds at ANDI, PNP & BHD stations in connection with "Electrification of un-electrified sidings/diesel sheds over DLI Division in already electrified section".
2 Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 63,98,208.27/-
3 Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 1,28,000/-
4 E-Tender Bid Online Submission Period	06.02.2024 (00.00 Hrs.) to 20.02.2024 (15.00 Hrs.)
5 E-Tender Bid Submission End Date & E-Tender Open Date & Time	20.02.2024 (15.00 hrs.)
6 Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen :	www.reps.gov.in

228/24

After Taiwan's election, new envoy to US offers assurances to Washington, Beijing

Washington (AP): Taiwan's top diplomat in Washington has a message for both the island's Chinese adversaries and its American friends: Don't worry that Taiwan's new president-elect will worsen relations with Beijing and possibly draw the US into a conflict. President-elect Lai Ching-te plans to keep the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, Alexander Tah-Ray Yui told The Associated Press on Thursday in his first interview with an international news organisation since he arrived in the US in December. The Chinese government has called Lai a troublemaker who will push Taiwan toward

independence. But Yui said Lai is willing to engage with Beijing, even as the island seeks to strengthen its unofficial ties with Washington for stability in the region. "We want the status quo. We want the way it is — neither unification, neither independence. The way it is is the way we want to live right now," said Yui, Taiwan's de facto ambassador to the US, noting the stance is largely supported at home and will guide the new administration. Yui spoke to the AP five days after Lai won the presidential election with more than 40% of the vote in a three-way race. Lai will succeed Tsai Ing-wen when he is inaugurated

in May. His victory, which gives the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party an unprecedented third presidential term, was not welcomed by Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its own, to be taken by force if necessary. Military action in the Taiwan Strait could draw in the United States, which has a security pact with Taiwan to deter any armed invasion from the mainland. Beijing refused to have any dialogue with Tsai because her party rejects China's claim of sovereignty over the island, and before the election had suggested to voters that they could be choosing between war and peace.

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1.	Verka Head Office, Chandigarh i. Visi Cooler • Minimum 200 Ltr and above • Minimum 300 Ltr and above • Minimum 400 Ltr and above • Minimum 500 Ltr and above ii. Chest Cooler • Minimum 100 Ltr and above • Minimum 200 Ltr and above • Minimum 300 Ltr and above • Minimum 400 Ltr and above iii. Deep Freezer a) Glass Top Deep Freezer • Minimum 400 Ltr and above b) Hard Top Deep Freezer • Minimum 500 Ltr and above	Annual/ 246 Units 332 Units 250 Units 80 Units
2.	Verka CFP, Ghana Ke Banger Fire Wood (Fresh cut)	Annual/12000 Qtls

NOTE:
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

Sd/-
Municipal Commissioner & Administrator
Municipal Corporation, CSMC

Dy. General Manager (Purchase)

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Wildlife Institute of India
(An Autonomous Institution of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India)
Chandrabani, Mohbewala Post, Dehra Dun-248002, Uttarakhand
TEL: 0135-2646245
Website: www.wii.gov.in; Email: gacmc@wii.gov.in

Adv. No. WII/MSC-FWEC/2024-26/AdvT/2024
Admission Notification for M.Sc. Course in Freshwater Ecology and Conservation

The Wildlife Institute of India invites application for admission in M.Sc. Course in Freshwater Ecology and Conservation. This course aims to impart theoretical knowledge on concepts, principles, approaches, analytical skills and field techniques in Freshwater Ecology and Conservation. The online registration for admission to the course will open on 20th February 2024 and will close on 30th March 2024.

For detail advertisement and information on eligibility criteria, selection process, and written test centres etc., please visit the institute's website (www.wii.gov.in) and (www.acsir.res.in)

Dean, FWS
Wildlife Institute of India
Dehradun

India developing 1st desi chip: Minister

Chip will be out by December, says Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

PTI ■ DAVOS

The first made-in-India chip will be out by December, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said here, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for developing a very strong semiconductor industry in the country in a short span of time with focus on the entire ecosystem. Speaking to PTI at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2024, the minister said PM Modi launched a semiconductor policy in January 2022, adding that when he met senior representatives of the industry here, the one thing they all were surprised about was how this much work could be done in such a short time. "They all appreciated the pol-

icy and the fact that PM Modi has always stressed on creating a comprehensive ecosystem because not many countries have this kind of policy and therefore they could not get such success," he said. The Minister for Communications as well as Electronics and Information Technology said the prime minister has always focussed on developing an ecosystem where there is a lot of focus on talent. "MoUs (Memoranda of Understanding) with 104 universities are already in place, their course curriculum are being revised, there is a lot of focus on design with a separate investment scheme. "Many design companies have got the benefit and they are gradually coming up in the value chain. All of this is get-



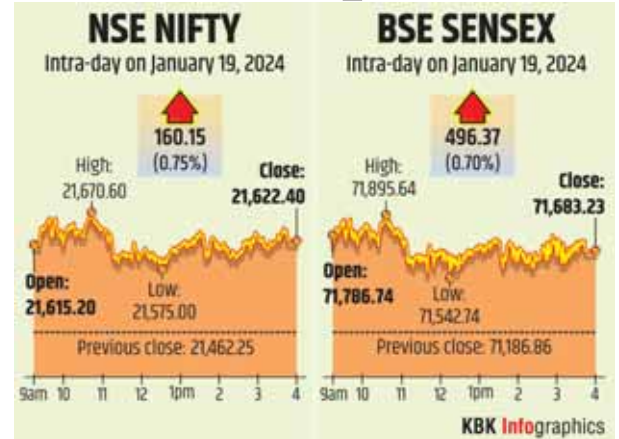
ting appreciated a lot by companies from the world over," he said. Giving the example of Macron, Vaishnaw said the way the Macron facility has moved ahead so fast, everyone has been pleasantly surprised. "The agreement was signed in June 2023, while construction started in September 2023 and the first made-in-India chip will be out in December 2024," he said. "All manufacturing CEOs, investment bankers and semiconductor business heads are acknowledging these factors

here at Davos and are saying that India has developed a very strong semiconductor industry," the minister said. Talking about why developing this industry did not get much attention earlier, Vaishnaw said Modi's thought process is always focussed on a long-term vision, be it defence manufacturing, infrastructure investment or reforms across sectors. "He always thinks with a vision of at least 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, and 50 years. His idea is that anything being done today should yield results for many years for the country," he added. The minister said earlier governments generally had a short-sightedness and they used to think from election to election. "Also, the clarity that is required in 'niti' and 'neyay' is there now. All of this is leading to the good work that is happening in India and the entire world is appreciating it," he said.

Sensex snaps 3 days losing run, rebounds 496 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rebounded 496 points while Nifty closed above the 21,600 level on Friday as value buying in heavy-weight stocks and a firm trend in global markets helped indices cut short three days of losses. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 496.37 points or 0.70 per cent to settle at 71,683.23. During the day, it zoomed 708.78 points or 0.99 per cent to 71,895.64. The Nifty climbed 160.15 points or 0.75 per cent to close at 21,622.40 with 43 of its shares closing in the green and seven in the red. In the past three days, the BSE benchmark fell by 2.91 per cent, and the Nifty declined 2.87 per cent. "A 'buy on dips' and encouraging global cues propelled the market's recovery," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "Today's rebound was broad based; however, investors are disappointed and expect moderation in the rally. FIIs persist with risk-off sparked by the likelihood that interest rates may not moderate and domestic earnings growth can slow down as per the initial Q3 results announced," Nair said. Among the Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel rose the most by 3.52 per cent. NTPC rose by 3.04 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 2.56 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra,



Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Axis Bank, JSW Steel ICICI Bank and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers. IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were the laggards. HDFC Bank extended its losses for the fourth straight day, falling by 1.08 per cent. The stock declined around 10 per cent in the four sessions after the release of its third quarter financial results. "Firm global cues triggered a gap-up start in Nifty, followed by range bound movement till the end," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.69 per cent and smallcap index climbed 1.06 per cent. All the indices ended higher. Oil & gas rallied 2.17 per cent, metal zoomed 1.69 per cent, industrials went up by 1.62 per cent, energy climbed 1.58 per cent, commodities jumped 1.44 per cent, teck (1.29 per cent) and IT (1.06 per cent). On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark fell 885.22 points or 1.21 per cent, and the Nifty declined 272.15 points or 1.24 per cent. In Asian markets, Seoul, and Tokyo settled in the green while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading higher. The US markets ended with gains on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.63 per cent to USD 79.60 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 9,901.56 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.



Investors continue to desert HDFC Bank counter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of HDFC Bank fell for the third day in a row on Friday, tumbling over 12 per cent, with its market capitalisation (mcap) eroding by Rs 1.58 lakh crore. Investors continued to desert the counter after the company's December quarter earnings failed to impress the market. The stock declined 1.08 per cent to settle at Rs 1,470.70 on the BSE. During the day, it fell by 1.19 per cent to Rs 1,469. On the NSE, it fell 0.75 per cent to Rs 1,474.90. In three days, the stock tumbled 12.40 per cent, wiping out Rs 1,58,113.49 crore from its market valuation. The company's market valuation on Friday

stood at Rs 11,16,626.73 crore. Shares of HDFC Bank fell over 8 per cent on Wednesday and declined over 3 per cent on Thursday. HDFC Bank, on Tuesday, reported a 2.65 per cent rise in consolidated net profit of Rs 17,258 crore for the October-December period against Rs 16,811 crore in the preceding September quarter. The largest private sector lender, which merged mortgage lender parent HDFC into itself in July, reported a net profit of Rs 16,372 crore against Rs 15,976 crore in the quarter-ago period on a standalone basis. Its core net interest income grew to Rs 28,470 crore during the quarter, while the other income stood at Rs 11,140 crore.

Wheat production likely to be good this year: Agriculture Minister

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's wheat production is expected to be good this year amid higher coverage, according to Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda. The sowing of wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, that began in October has been completed. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab are the top three states having the maximum area under wheat coverage. "As per the sowing data, wheat has been covered in more area and we expect good production this year," Munda told PTI. As per the ministry's data, the total acreage under the wheat crop remained higher at 336.96 lakh hectares till the last week of the current rabi season of the 2023-24 crop year (July-June), as against 335.67 lakh hectares in the year-ago period. On January 3, Food Corporation of India Chairman and Managing Director Ashok K Meena indicated that the country could achieve a new record in wheat production at 114 million tonnes in the ongoing 2023-24 crop year provided weather conditions remain normal. Wheat production stood at a record 110.55 million tonnes in the 2022-23 crop year, compared



to 107.7 million tonnes achieved in the preceding year. Sharing about wheat crop prospects this year, a senior agriculture ministry official said the crop is in good condition and there are no reports of any damage to the crop till date. "The current cold weather condition is good for the growth of wheat and other rabi crops," he said. Climate-resistant seeds have been sown in more than 70 per cent of the total wheat area covered in both Punjab and Haryana this year, he said. The two states have sown wheat in a total area of around 59 lakh hectares this year, the data showed. Meanwhile, the agriculture ministry has started issuing regular advisories to help farmers take care of the wheat crop after the completion of sowing. As per the latest advisory for the period covering January 16-30, the ministry has asked farmers

to complete the application of nitrogen fertilizer up to 40-45 days after sowing. Farmers have been asked to apply urea just before irrigation for better results. In case of late sown, if farmers notice both narrow and broad leaf weeds in their wheat field, they have been advised to spray herbicide Sulfosulfuron 75WG of about 13.5 grams per acre or Sulfosulfuron plus Metsulfuron of 16 grams per acre in 120-150 litres of water before the first irrigation or 10-15 days after irrigation. Keeping in view the favourable humid weather for yellow rust disease, farmers are advised to visit their crops regularly to observe 'stripe rust' (yellow rust) incidence. To tackle lodging in early sown wheat crops, farmers have been asked to provide 'growth regulators' in high fertility irrigated conditions. For frost management, light irrigation should be applied to wheat crops taking due care of the Met Department forecast. The Met Department has forecast rain in northeast and central areas of India during January 16-30 and the temperature is expected to drop below normal in the forthcoming week.

FSSAI emphasises on adoption of bio pesticides in tea production



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food regulator FSSAI CEO G Kamala Vardhana Rao on Friday stressed on adoption of bio-pesticides to ensure safety and quality of tea production. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO Rao addressed a gathering of tea growers and tea planters during an interactive session held on Friday in Kellyden, Assam. The event saw active participation from key stakeholders, including officials from FSSAI, the Tea Board, Tea Research Institute, tea planters, tea processors, industry associations and Food and Drug Department of the state, the regulator said in a statement. The focal point of the discussion was enhancing traceability and testing measures for raw materials, emphasising the need for screening every batch for pesticide residues and adherence to Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) of pesticides usage as prescribed in the Food Safety and Standards Regulations of 2011 (FSSR). "Rao emphasised the importance of adopting bio-pesticides and encouraged collaboration with the Tea Board for joint inspection, sampling and testing processes," the statement said. During the session, the Tea Board stressed the significance of awareness campaigns among planters to educate them about

the maintenance of a harvesting gap to ensure safe agricultural practices. Planters raised concerns about the use of unauthorised pesticides in tea cultivation and urged the state government to impose a ban on such substances. Processors advocated for the provision of rapid testing kits at the farm gate level to streamline pesticide testing. Scientific panel members engaged in detailed deliberations on specific pesticides, monitoring procedures and the prevention of off-label use. FSSAI is extending financial assistance to Assam for the upgrading of laboratories dedicated to pesticide testing. "The need for regular interaction with all stakeholders and the formulation of a time-bound action plan to guarantee the availability of safe tea to consumers was also stressed upon during the meeting," the statement said. The event also featured key speakers such as Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce & Industry and Chairman of the Tea Board; Saurav Pahari, IAS, Deputy Chairman, Tea Board, Kolkata; Inoshi Sharma, Executive Director, FSSAI and other senior officials from FSSAI, scientific panel members and representatives from various industry associations.



Sebi to act against 3 bankers found inflating IPO subscriptions: Buch

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sebi Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Friday said the capital markets regulator has found that three merchant bankers are frequently indulging in inflating subscriptions during share sales, and promised action against them. Speaking at an annual convention organised by a lobby grouping of investment bankers here, Buch said the Sebi also has data and evidence on "mule accounts", wherein the credentials of an innocent person are used to typically front-run on stocks by those wanting to not leave a trace of trades. There is also a tendency of "inflating the IPO application numbers to give an impression of high amount of subscriptions", Buch said, adding that Sebi has data and evidence on this. "We are also seeing practices where there is a pattern of which kind of merchant bankers tend to be ... Frequent names occurring in such malpractices. Therefore, in the interest of the investors, we will be required to both review policy as well as (start) enforcement actions," Buch said. It can be noted that the comments come amid a huge surge in IPO activity, wherein many companies have witnessed very high investor demand in the run-up to the listing. The high interest typically leads to a company listing at a premium to the offer price.

Paytm Q3 losses narrow to ₹221.7 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech company One97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, on Friday reported narrowing of losses to Rs 221.7 crore for the October-December quarter, according to a filing. The losses stood at Rs 392.1 crore in the year-ago period. The revenue from operations jumped over 38 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2,850.5 crore in the third quarter of FY2023-24. In a statement, Paytm said its Q3 performance was marked by "significant growth in subscription revenue, improved margins, and increased payment business revenue". Paytm's board also approved its Rs 100 crore investment in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) to establish a global financial ecosystem. "Leveraging its success in real-time payments, Paytm aims to streamline cross-border remittances with efficient, AI-powered solutions. Additionally, Paytm will invest in setting up a development centre in GIFT City to create a technology backbone for these solutions" the release added. On the Q3 report card, the company said the number of merchants subscribing to Paytm's payment devices reached 1.06 crore as of December 2023, marking on year increase of 49 lakh. The payments business exhibited significant growth, with revenue escalating by 45 per cent YoY to Rs 1,730 crore, and the net payment margin witnessing a 63 per cent YoY increase to Rs 748 crore. Merchant payments volume (GMV) grew by 47 per cent YoY, reaching Rs 5.10 lakh crore.



"Revenue from financial services and other segments climbed by 36 per cent YoY to Rs 607 crore, driven by personal loans, merchant loans distribution, and increased revenue from the insurance broking business," the release said. Paytm said it will emphasise the introduction of new use cases, including Credit on UPI and Autopay, to stimulate monetisable incremental customer acquisition. "In the financial services segment, there is an emphasis on broadening high-ticket loans by pursuing new lending partners. Simultaneously, the company is extending its offerings in embedded insurance and merchant insurance, and actively cross-selling equity trading to the Paytm consumer base," it said. In the December quarter, Paytm disbursed loans worth Rs 15,535 crore, an increase of 56 per cent. "The total number of unique users availing loans through the Paytm platform increased by 44 lakh over the past year, reaching 1.25 crore," the company said.

M&A deal values halve to USD 66 billion in 2023

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Deal values in India more than halved in 2023 to USD 66 billion despite high growth, as investors took a wait-and-watch approach, a report said on Friday. From a volume perspective, there were 1,641 deals — a drop of more than 20 per cent over 2022 — the report by consultancy firm Grant Thornton Bharat said. The firm's partner Shanthi Vijetha said lack of liquidity in international markets, volatile market conditions, and cautious investor sentiment hindered deal activities in 2023. "As India's emphasis on sustainability and environmental responsibility positions it as an attractive hub for opportunities in the global economy, we must first overcome challenges such as currency strength and global instability," Vijetha added. Merger and acquisition deal values dropped 72 per cent to USD 25.2 billion across 494 transactions, impacting the over-

all number the most, the report said. Outbound M&As were at USD 3.2 billion — as against USD 17.9 billion in the year-ago period — were the biggest drag, the report said, adding that the overall M&As were sluggish in the first half of the year, which recorded deal values of only USD 7.8 billion. The biggest transaction was Suraksha Group's acquisition of Jaypee in the real estate sector that raked in USD 2.5 billion. On the private equity front, 2023 witnessed 1,045 deals with a collective value of USD 27.4 billion, which was a 23 per cent decline over the previous year. The biggest deal was Temasek Holdings' investment in Manipal Health Enterprises for USD 2 billion, the report said. A total of 57 companies went public and raised USD 6.2 billion in 2023, but the Initial Public Offers (IPOs) values were down by nearly a fourth as compared to the year-ago period as the average amount of money raised went down.

BUSINESS BRIEF



MOU INKED FOR SUPPLYING MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
New Delhi: POWERGRID, NR-I signed an MoU with DC, Faridabad under Corporate Social Responsibility initiative of POWERGRID. The MoU was signed by Ashok Kumar Mishra, General Manager (HR-CSR) on behalf of POWERGRID and Vikram, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Faridabad in presence of S. K. Verma, GM(HR) POWERGRID, Gaurav Singh, Add. CEO, Haryana CSR Trust and Vinay Gupta, CMO, Civil Hospital, Faridabad. As per the MoU signed, POWERGRID will provide Medical Equipment to Civil Hospital, Faridabad and its attached PHCs to the tune of 1.68 Cr., which shall be of immense benefit to the hospital in providing effective treatment to needy patients.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian carriers are expected to have an order book for 2,000 planes by March next year, with long-term rapid growth for both domestic and international air traffic, according to a report on Friday. The domestic airlines currently have an order book for close to 1,620 aircraft, including the 150 narrow-body Boeing 737 Max order announced by Akasa Air on Thursday, aviation research and consulting firm CAPA India said on Friday. This order book, however, does not include SpiceJet as well as grounded carrier Go First, CAPA India said. This is expected to rise to 2,000 aircraft by March 2025, it said. This increase, according to CAPA India, will be achieved as a result of Air India converting

Indian carriers likely to have order book for 2,000 planes by March 2025: Report

some of its 370 options to firm orders every few months, supplemented by possible further orders by other Indian carriers. In 2023, Indian airlines ordered more aircraft than those from any other country. And the total order book for Western aircraft is second only to the United States, it stated. "India is set to be the most exciting aviation market of the 21st century, with long-term rapid growth for both domestic and international traffic," it said. However, in order to support this once-in-a-generation growth, and the eventual induction of this expanding order



book, Indian aviation will need further structural and institutional reforms, CAPA India noted.

In line with its early February projections last year, CAPA India said, Air India in late February announced that it would place an order for 470 aircraft, with an additional 370 options. This was confirmed in June 2023, with the order comprising 400 narrow-body and another 70 wide-body planes. In June 2023, IndiGo placed the largest order in aviation history, by number of aircraft, with an order of 500 A320neo family aircraft. At that time, the carrier already had an outstanding order book of 488 aircraft, taking its total to just shy of 1,000, the highest of any airline in the world, CAPA India said. The current Indian order book

would place an order for 470 aircraft, with an additional 370 options. This was confirmed in June 2023, with the order comprising 400 narrow-body and another 70 wide-body planes. In June 2023, IndiGo placed the largest order in aviation history, by number of aircraft, with an order of 500 A320neo family aircraft. At that time, the carrier already had an outstanding order book of 488 aircraft, taking its total to just shy of 1,000, the highest of any airline in the world, CAPA India said. The current Indian order book

is more than 2.5 times the size of the number of aircraft in service, CAPA India said, adding this is by far the highest ratio in the world, reflecting the optimism about future growth. Airlines have the confidence to place larger orders because the penetration of air travel in India is by far the lowest among the world's 20 largest domestic markets, reflecting massive upside potential, it said. India is in a unique position, in terms of scale, growth and geography. It will need to decide what kind of aviation market it seeks to be and chart a path towards achieving that, it said.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Without handshakes, Ukrainian players trying to keep message alive

PTI ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Ukrainian player refusing to shake the hand of a Russian or Belarusian at the net has become a common sight on the tennis courts over the past two years. For those Ukrainian players competing at the Australian Open in Melbourne, it's a gesture that has more meaning than ever. "This is another reminder about the fact that there is a war in my country," Lesia Tsurenko said on Friday, after her match with Aryna Sabalenka from Belarus. "I do this for Ukraine. And, I think this is the right thing." There was no handshake at the end of the match between Sabalenka and Tsurenko on Friday, nor after Marta Kostyuk and Elina Avanesyan played, although both Ukrainians did acknowledge their opponents.

Two years on from the start of the invasion, the war continues but with Ukraine slipping down the news agenda, players are worried that their cause is being forgotten. "The worst thing is that you get too used to it," Dayana Yastremska told reporters in Melbourne this week. "And, this is very bad. Because most of the people are forgetting what is going on there. "We know about everything because we receive the news, we are reading, we are into it (but) the words are not hitting that hard like it was when the war just started. I think it's important to remember about it and do everything." Kostyuk said journalists need to keep the news alive. "They want the drama, they wanted news, they wanted all this heating between players and everything," she said. "The war



is still there. People are still dying every day. I still don't understand what all these (Russian and Belarusian) players are doing here." When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the plight of Ukrainian players was uppermost in everyone's minds, with Wimbledon banning Russian and Belarusian players from competing that year and numerous fund-raising events held around the tennis world. However, the ATP and WTA Tours decided to allow individuals from those countries to compete, albeit not under their country's flag. Wimbledon lifted its ban in 2023, under pressure of sanction against Britain's grass-court events. Since the war began, Ukrainian players have made a point of not shaking the hands of Russians and Belarusians, sometimes to the confusion of crowds, who have blamed the loser. At Wimbledon last summer, Belarusian player Victoria Azarenka was booed after losing to Elina Svitolina. Wimbledon rejected a suggestion by Svitolina that crowds should be informed about the situation before and during the

match, but the US Open did adopt the idea, putting a message on the big screens. There was no booing at Melbourne Park with crowds seemingly aware of and understanding the situation. Svitolina describes it as her "mission" to keep Ukraine in the public eye, but Tsurenko said it's an increasingly difficult battle because "people don't want to hear bad news." "I get a lot of bad messages on social media (and) people (are) kind of annoyed if I post something," said Tsurenko, who revealed that she had worked with a psychologist to help her do her job while dealing with the emotions of the war. "Seems like everyone, the whole world is kind of tired of hearing that. But unfortunately, it's still going on. It's part of my life and part of the Ukrainians' life. "And, we have to talk about it.

We have to remind people about Ukraine, and of course about all other wars that are going on right now, around the world, how unfair it is. Of course, I would like all the wars to stop, especially my country, but I think this should be a lot for the whole world." Yastremska has personal experience of the war, with her grandmother narrowly escaping a bomb that hit her building earlier this month. "That was crazy," she said. "I woke up early morning before my match (in Brisbane). I had a late session and in the morning, I got to know that the rocket arrived on the house of my grandmother. "It was between the 16th and 17th floors and she was living on floor 20. Thank God, she wasn't exactly in the apartments, but that was kind of scary."

Hero MotoSports scripts history

Becomes first Indian team to finish on podium

PTI ■ YANBU (SAUDI ARABIA)

Hero MotoSports Team Rally on Friday created history by becoming the first-ever Indian manufacturer to finish on the podium in the prestigious Dakar Rally. It was double delight for the Indian motorsports community as Sherco TVS Rally Factory rider Harith Noha secured the numero position in the overall ranking for Rally 2, also a first for India. Hero MotoSports rider Ross Branch finished the Rally at the second place for the team. His consistent performance over the 12 stages saw him at the first and second spots in the overall rankings throughout the Rally. Branch completed the 12th and final stage (175 Km) of Rally in ninth position with a timing of one hour 52 minutes and 42 seconds. With this tim-

ing he remained second in the overall ranking after Ricky Brabec of Honda team. Brabec, who won in 2020, took 51 hours 30 minutes and 8 seconds to complete the Rally this time. Branch was 10 minutes and 53 seconds behind him in the overall ranking. After achieving the best result of his Dakar Rally career, Branch said that to be on the podium is a dream come true for him. "It's a dream come true to be on the podium. Nowadays it's a big thing to finish in the top three in any rally race, and if it happens in Dakar, it's an even bigger success," Branch told PTI. "I'm really over the moon to achieve this goal for Hero. And a big thank you to the team for developing a highly competitive machine, for the sleepless three weeks here, and



for everything they've sacrificed to reach this point." Noha finished fifth in the last stage of Rally 2 and 11th in the overall bike race (combining Rally GP and Rally 2). He also finished the overall bike class race in 11th position. After finishing the race, Noah said, "It is great to finish top in Rally 2, but I am more happy to be 11th overall on the bike

- raking up a first stage win at Dakar 2022, doubling it to two stage wins in 2023, and eventually finishing on the podium in this edition. The team achieved two stage wins during this edition. Executive chairman of Hero MotoCorp, Pawan Munjal, said, "Today marks a historic day, not only for Hero MotoCorp but also for India and its sports. Congratulations to Ross and the entire Hero MotoSports team, showcasing that success is a result of dedication, consistency, and unwavering passion." He hoped this will inspire aspiring riders to do well in future. "While Hero MotoCorp has supported sports and athletes for decades, this achievement by our own team holds a unique significance coinciding with the 40th anniversary of Hero Motocorp."



Rossi hiring at Roma came before he expected

AP ■ ROME

Daniele De Rossi had often said that he wanted to coach Roma only after he had attained the appropriate experience. Then came the call from the Giallorossi's American owners, Dan and Ryan Friedkin, after they decided to part ways with José Mourinho. "You don't say no to Roma," De Rossi - a former Roma captain - explained Friday during his presentation as Mourinho's replacement. "It's a little like what happened to (Andrea) Pirlo with Juventus," De Rossi said, recalling how his former Italy teammate was put in charge of the Bianconeri four years ago without any coaching experience. "There are men who refuse and there are men who throw themselves in." The 40-year-old De Rossi played 18 seasons with Roma as a midfielder and won the World Cup with Italy in 2006. He coached SPAL in Serie B for four months last season and was an assistant to Roberto Mancini when Italy won the European Championship in 2021. "I didn't come back here just to put on the sweatshirt," said De Rossi, who was wearing a sweatshirt with his initials of "DDR" stitched onto the right side of his chest. "It's not just about nostalgia for the past. "The only reason I would have said no would have been if I thought this was a bad team," De Rossi added. "But, I think this is a strong team. So, we need to show that and that in turn could

help me in terms of career development. We'll see in a few months how it turns out." However, De Rossi did allow that he "expected a more gradual path" to the Roma job. Mourinho was let go on Tuesday with Roma languishing in ninth place, two days after a 3-1 loss at AC Milan left the team at risk of missing the Champions League for a sixth straight season. Roma was also eliminated by Lazio in an Italian Cup derby last week. "I would be content if we finish in the top four," De Rossi said. "It won't be easy to attain, but it's definitely possible. "I don't need to over-analyze the problems," De Rossi added. "I'm fortunate in that because I'm a fan of the club I've watched every match. I know this squad better than any other in the world - so that reduces the amount of study time needed." De Rossi's debut will come against relegation-threatened Hellas Verona at the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday. He signed a six-month contract that expires at the end of the season, amid speculation that Roma will then try to hire a more experienced coach like Antonio Conte. "I will fight to the death to stay here," De Rossi said. "I'm going to try and earn it on the pitch. That would be a dream for me. Dan and Ryan were very clear about the length of the contract and I said, Fine, you name the salary, but I want a bonus if we qualify for the Champions League."

Baisoya, Raj, Gangjee make cut for final round of Asian Tour Q School

PTI ■ HUA HIN (THAILAND)

Indian golfer Honey Baisoya was well-placed to clinch one of the 35 Asian Tour cards available this week despite a late double bogey in the fourth and penultimate round of the Asian Tour's Qualifying School here. Baisoya, who carded a 2-under 70 at the Lakeview Resort and Golf Club, is placed tied 8th with an overall total of 10-under 276 with one more round to go. Two other Indians -- Aman Raj (69) at T-35th and Rahil Gangjee (71) at T-57th -- also made the second cut, which came after the fourth round. The first cut was after two rounds. The fifth and final round will be played at the Springfield Royal Country Club. Among other Indians, Khalin Joshi (72) at T-73 missed the second cut by one shot and Kartik Sharma (69) and Saptak Talwar (71) missed it by two. The top-35 after the final round will earn their cards for

the 2024 Asian Tour season. Others missing out were Sunhit Bishnoi, Yashas Chandra, Arjun Prasad, Gaurav Singh, Pukhraj Singh Gill and Manu Gandas. Sachin Baisoya, Harshjeet Singh Sethi, Akshay Sharma and Divyanshu Bajaj had missed the first cut. Justin Quiban of the Philippines shot one of the lowest rounds of the week, a fourth-round seven-under-par 64, to take a single shot lead heading into tomorrow's final round. He had an eagle, six birdies and dropped just one stroke to reach 15-under. The Filipino is one ahead of Spaniard Carlos Pígame, who fired a 67, and three in front of Thailand's Dhanthai Boonma and Kristoffer Broberg from Sweden, after rounds of 67 and 66, respectively. Some of the big names missing out included Spaniard Alvaro Quiros, a seven-time winner in Europe, Thailand's Itthiphat Buranatanayarat and Rory Hie from Indonesia.

Johnson makes 10 birdies

Shares 1st round lead with Noren at American Express

PTI ■ LA QUINTA, CALIFORNIA (USA)

Zach Johnson made seven of his 10 birdies on the front nine on the way to a 10-under 62 and a share of the lead with Sweden's Alex Noren after the first round of The American Express on Thursday. Postcard-perfect desert conditions and the straightforward nature of this tournament's three courses in the Coachella Valley unsurprisingly led to low scores from some of the world's top players. Rico Hoey and Christiaan Bezuidenhout are one-shot back of the leaders, and 22 golfers shot 65 or better, including Patrick Cantlay, Xander Schauffele, Justin Thomas and former champion Si Woo Kim. Johnson, the 2007 Masters champ and last year's U.S. Ryder Cup captain, made six consecutive birdies to close out his front nine at La Quinta



Country Club. He added three more birdies down the stretch, getting the 47-year-old off to a bogey-free start in his quest for his first PGA Tour victory since the 2015 British Open. "La Quinta Country Club is legitimately one of the purest places we play on the PGA Tour year-in, year-out," Johnson said. "The grass is - it almost looks fake. If you have it going, and you have some sort of rhythm, and you're seeing the lines on the putting green, because they're pure, you can put a number up. Love this place. ... I told the assistant pro today if I broke 76 that I should get a free membership, but I don't think that's going to (happen). That's unfortunate, but we'll

keep working on 'em." Johnson's 29 on the front nine was the lowest nine-hole score in his 493 career PGA Tour starts, and he needed only 10 putts to do it. He credited his strong start to an offseason of preparation after his release from the demands of the Ryder Cup captaincy. "Put a lot of good work in as of late," Johnson said. "Actually been a lot of normal golf work, given what happened last year, with what I was responsible for, which was awesome. Now, it's time to get back to work. I've enjoyed the work. I've enjoyed the sweat." Noren's round started with five birdies and an eagle on the first seven holes, followed by a double bogey. He finished with five more birdies on his last six holes. The 41-year-old 10-time European Tour winner is still seeking his first PGA Tour title. "I don't think I've been 7 under after seven (holes), and then I hit it out of bounds on my eighth hole," Noren said. "Just fun to be here. I like this tournament. This course is beautiful." Hoey - the Philippines-born, Rancho-Cucamonga-raised product of USC - excelled in his fourth PGA Tour start.

AP ■ ABIDJAN (IVORY COAST)

Egypt lost Mohamed Salah to injury before coming from behind twice to draw 2-2 with Ghana in their potentially decisive Africa Cup of Nations match on Thursday. Mohammed Kudus scored both goals for Ghana but the "Black Stars" were let down by defensive mistakes as Omar Marmoush and Mostafa Mohamed capitalized to dent the four-time champion's hopes of making the knockout stage. "We made careless mistakes," Kudus said. "Now we'll have to get back to work, win the next one and then see what happens." Ghana remained bottom of Group B with just one point, level with Mozambique, while Egypt was second two points behind group leader Cape Verde. Cape Verde and

Egypt loses Salah to injury

IN 2-2 AFRICA CUP DRAW WITH GHANA, NIGERIA BEATS IVORY COAST 1-0

Mozambique play their second game of the tournament on Friday. Only the top two in each group are assured of advancing. Egypt's hopes of a record-extending eighth Africa Cup title suffered a blow before halftime when Salah limped off holding the back of his left thigh. Ghana was boosted by the return of Kudus, fit again after recovering from a hamstring injury. Kudus' team started promisingly but found it hard to get through the Egyptians' defensive lines as the Ghanaian fans let their impatience show.

A cooling break restored the supporters' good mood with many standing up to dance and cheer as the party restarted in the stands. Kudus scored in first-half injury time -- a minute after Salah left the field - when he received the ball from Salis Abdul Samad, eluded a defender, then another, before firing past Mohamed El-Shenawy in the Egypt goal from well outside the area. Kudus went close again after the break before Egypt had a goal ruled out through VAR for offside and Marmoush drew a



save from Richard Ofori. Marmoush finally equalized in the 69th after capitalising on a botched backpass from Iñaki Williams. Kudus replied two minutes later with a shot that took a slight deflection off a defender to sneak inside the far post. But, another defensive error from Osman Bukari, who had just replaced Williams, allowed Mohamed to equalise three minutes after that. "The level of performance was good. And we will need this going into the next game," Ghana coach Chris Hughton

ly showed defensive stability as it ended a six-game run of conceding at least a goal. But, it was another frustrating performance from star player Victor Osimhen, despite earning the penalty that facilitated the win. Referee Mustapha Ghorbal awarded the spot kick after consulting video replays and deciding Ousmane Diomande had fouled Osimhen. Troost-Ekong confidently fired the penalty down the centre of the goal in the 55th. Osimhen missed the game's best early chance when he shot high and wide after being played through by Samuel Chukwueze. The 60,000-capacity Alassane Ouattara Stadium was mostly full for the match, as organizers said all tickets were sold out. The opening games have been affected by ticketing problems.

NZ beat Italy 3-1 to finish 5th in FIH Women Olympic Qualifiers

PTI ■ RANCHI

A dominant New Zealand scored three goals in the first three quarters to get past Italy 3-1 and finish fifth in the FIH Women's Olympic Qualifier here on Friday. Rose Tynan (7th minute) skipper Olivia Merry (10th) and Hannah Cotter (31st) were the scorers for the 'Black Sticks Women' in the fifth-sixth place classification match. Italy's lone goal came from the stick of Ivanna Pessina in the 21st minute from a penalty corner. As expected, the Black Sticks started the match on an offensive note, putting pressure on the Italian defence from the word go. New Zealand secured their first penalty corner in the third minute, only to be denied by a goalline save from the Italian defence. New Zealand kept up the pressure and earned a penalty corner four minutes later and Rose Tynan scored from rebound to hand side the lead. Three minutes later, Olivia Merry scored from a field effort to double New Zealand's lead. The Italians came out with purpose in the second quarter and made some brilliant moves, securing their second penalty corner in the 21st minute and Ivanna Pessina found the net with her low grounded flick to reduce the margin to 1-2. Just at the stroke of half-time, the Italian goalkeeper Lucia Ines Caruso came out with a fine save to deny Samantha Child. New Zealand adopted high-pressure hockey after the change of ends and their efforts bore fruit as they restored their two-goal lead, a minute into the third quarter through Hannah Cotter, who scored from close range. Italy did not bow out without a fight and secured their penalty corner in the 34th minute but wasted the opportunity. In the 39th minute, New Zealand goalkeeper Brooke Roberts produced twin saves to deny the Italians. Eight minutes from the final hooter, Italy earned another set piece but the result was the same. Just at the stroke of the final hooter, Italy got another penalty corner but failed to break New Zealand's resolute defence.

U-19 WORLD CUP OPENER

India look for winning start against Bangladesh

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN (SOUTH AFRICA)
The most successful team in the Under-19 World Cup history, defending champions India will embark on a quest to add another trophy to their collection when a fresh bunch led by Uday Saharan takes on Bangladesh in their tournament-opener here on Saturday. Placed in Group A, the five-time winners will begin their campaign against the Asian rivals here at the Manguang Oval before they head into the other group fixtures against Ireland and the USA. Having won their first trophy in 2002 under Mohammad Kaif, Indian teams have since gone on to win the U-19

World Cup in 2008, 2012, 2018 and 2022. The event, which was moved from Sri Lanka to South Africa in a late adjustment by the ICC, features four groups of as many teams each. The top three teams in each group will qualify for the Super Sixes, followed by the semifinals on February 6 and 8 with the final to be played at Benoni on February 11. With prodigious talent in Maharashtra all-rounder Arshin Kulkarni, wicketkeeper-batter Aravelly Avanish, left-arm spinner and vice-captain Saumy Kumar Pandey and Saharan, India will feel they have adequate arsenal to go the distance. Among these players, Kulkarni (Lucknow Supergiants) and



Avinash (Chennai Super Kings) have already landed IPL deals and will be keen to make their mark on the biggest stage before they graduate to top-flight cricket. Saharan, who hails from Rajasthan but has led Punjab across age groups, has scored in excess of fifty in his last three innings which also includes a century against South Africa. Last November, the right-handed batter who shifted base from Rajasthan to Punjab, cracked 297 runs in just four matches of the U-19 Challenger Trophy at 99 with four fifties. Not far behind him was Mumbai's Musheer Khan, another promising talent in this Indian side who raked up 268 runs at 89.33 with one century and two fifties in the domes-

tic tournament. Among bowlers, each of Aaradhya Shukla, Pandey and Kulkarni were among the top wicket-takers in the U-19 Challenger Trophy before the Indian team made its way to South Africa. The team's form also favours India with this bunch winning each of their four matches in the U-19 tri-nation series in South Africa. The final against the hosts was washed out. But India will also guard against complacency against Bangladesh having lost the U-19 Asia Cup semifinal in a largely one-sided contest in December. Bangladesh defeated Australia in its final warm-up game. Squads: India: Arshin Kulkarni, Adarsh

Singh, Rudra Mayur Patel, Sachin Dhas, Priyanshu Moliya, Musheer Khan, Uday Saharan (c), Aravelly Avanish Rao (wk), Saumy Kumar Pandey (vc), Murugan Abhishek, Inness Mahajan (wk), Dhanush Gowda, Aaradhya Shukla, Raj Limbani, Naman Tiwari. Bangladesh: Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby (c), Ashiqur Rahman Shibli (wk), Jishan Alam, Ariful Islam, Mohammad Shihab James, Ahrar Amin (vc), Shiekh Parvez Jibon, Wasi Siddiquee, Maruf Mridha, Chowdhury Md Rizwan, Adil Bin Siddik, M o h a m m a d Ashrafuzzaman, Md Rafi Uzzaman Rafi, Rohanat Doullah Borson, Iqbal Hossain Emon.

Vidarbha batters crumble to let advantage slip against Saurashtra

PTI ■ NAGPUR
Vidarbha produced a meek batting effort in the first innings to squander the advantage veteran pacer Umesh Yadav gave them with a four-wicket burst against defending champions Saurashtra in their Elite Group A Ranji match here on Friday. Umesh took four for 56 as Vidarbha bundled out Saurashtra for a modest 206 but found themselves in deep trouble at 26 for 4, still trailing by 180 runs. It was an inept batting effort by Saurashtra, who are looking to regroup from a four-wicket defeat against Punjab in the last match. Opener and wicketkeeper batter Harvik Desai (68 off 95 balls) and experienced Cheteshwar Pujara (43 off 105 balls) helped Saurashtra cross the 200-run mark as they were rocked Umesh's hostility. However, Jaydev Unadkat, Aditya Jadeja, Chirag Jani and Prerak Mankad took a wicket apiece as Saurashtra gained some ground over their opponents. At Jodhpur, Rajasthan were in driver's seat after left-arm spinner Ajay Singh (5/75) and pacer Arafat Khan (3/34) wrecked Maharashtra first innings, bundling them out for 189. In reply, Rajasthan reached 110 for two with Deepak Hooda



(36) and Karan Lamba (45) holding the fort for them. At Ahmedabad, Himanshu Rana (193, 252b, 26x4) and Nishant Sindhu (119, 162b, 18x4) made brisk hundreds as Haryana piled up 391 for three on day one against a hapless Manipur attack. At Delhi, Kumar Kushagra (69 n.O) and captain Virat Singh (85 n.O) helped Jharkhand recover from 65 for four, and reach a healthier 195 for 4 against Services at close on Day 1. Brief scores: At Nagpur: Saurashtra: 206 all out in 58.4 overs (Harvik Desai 68, Cheteshwar Pujara 43; Umesh Yadav 4/56, Harsh Dubey 2/15) vs Vidarbha: 26/4 in 19 overs. At Jodhpur: Maharashtra: 189 all out in 55.5 overs (Nikhil Naik 48, Kedar Jadhav 42; Ajay Singh 5/75, Arafat Khan 3/34) vs Rajasthan: 110/2 in 26 overs (Karan Lamba 45 not out, Deepak Hooda 36 not out).

Practising landing ball on upright seam watching Shami video footages: Ollie

PTI ■ ABU DHABI
Mohammed Shami landing his deliveries on perfect seam position is a work of art and no wonder England's lethal weapon Ollie Robinson is hellbent on replicating the Indian maestro during the upcoming Test series starting January 25. England team is doing simulation of Indian conditions in Abu Dhabi and will reach Hyderabad on January 21 for the opening Test and Robinson, who was a net bowler during the 2021 series held in a bio-bubble, is expected to play a big role in the absence of the now retired Stuart Broad. "I've actually been practising Mohammed Shami's dead-straight seam," he revealed. "He's one of the best bowlers for India. I was looking at Isshat (Sharma) as well - he played at Sussex for a bit and he's done really well in India for quite a while. He's tall, similar to me," Robinson told ESPN



Cricinfo in an interview. Robinson took 21 wickets in the first four Tests against India in England but the Indian tracks will pose a different challenge. "You feel like you don't know what you're preparing for, which is a challenge I've not really had yet," Robinson said. The key is adaptability on sub-continental tracks.

"On this tour, it'll be about being adaptable; look at the pitch a day or two before and assess how it'll play, or try to get clues from the nets on the square. It'll be a different challenge but one that I'm looking forward to because it'll engage my cricket-nuffy brain." The 'Kohli challenge' Robinson dismissed Virat Kohli thrice in England and he is again looking forward to challenging the Indian great's "ego". "You always want to play against the best players, don't you? And you always want to get the best players out. Kohli is one of those. He's got a big ego and I think playing on that, especially in India, where he is going to want to dominate and score runs, playing on the fact we've had battles in the past, is exciting." For him, a successful tour of India might catapult him into a different league. "If I can have a big tour in India, then it should set me up for a while. If I do well, I can cement myself back in the team."



RANJI TROPHY Mumbai bowled out for 251

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
India all-rounder Shivam Dube carried his rich recent form into domestic circuit cracking a rapid fifty but Shreyas Gopal's four-wicket haul ensured that Mumbai were bowled out for 251 on the first day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group B match against Kerala here on Friday. Dube hit four fours and two sixes to make 51 off 72 balls and was among the three Mumbai batters to make a fifty, with Bhupen Lalwani (50 off 63 balls, 6x4s) and Tanush Kotian (56 off 105 balls, 6x4s) adding precious runs to their first innings total. If Lalwani and Dube's efforts took Mumbai to the 200-run mark, it was Kotian's rearguard action that extended their total to 250, and it could be vital in the ensuing days. Dube, who recently bagged the player of the series award in the three-match T20 series against Afghanistan, looked primed for a bigger knock but failed to kick-out. The Gopal-led Kerala bowling attack kept chipping away with regular breakthroughs, not allowing Mumbai batters to find their feet for a longer haul in the middle, here at the St Xavier's KCA Cricket Ground. Gopal was parsimonious while taking 4/28 off 18.4 overs while Basil Thampi (2/41) and Jalaj Saxena (2/80) gave him good support against Mumbai, who are coming off two consecutive outright wins in this season. At Kolkata's Eden Gardens, veteran Anustup Majumdar struck a timely 55 not out and his 79-run unbeaten stand for the fifth wicket with Abhishek Porel (47 not out) took Bengal to 206/4 in 73 overs against Chhattisgarh at the end of play. Majumdar reached 55 from 94 balls with eight fours as Bengal consolidated their position on a cold and cloudy day, having made a shaky start.

Porel cracked six fours and a six to reach 47 from 75 balls. Openers Sourav Paul (12) perished early while his partner Shreyans Ghosh, who consumed 111 balls, managed a mere one four and 22 runs. But Ghosh managed a 51-run second-wicket stand with Sudip Kumar Gharami, who missed his fifty by a whisker, falling for 49 from 81 balls with eight hits to the fence. At the Jalan Outdoor Stadium in Dibrugarh, Assam took control of their clash against Andhra as they reached 43 for no loss after bundling out the visitors for a mere 188. Andhra were shot out for a paltry total after collapsing on either side of Shoaib Mohammed Khan's (63) and Nithish Kumar Reddy's (49) knocks, who milked 113 runs for the seventh wicket. Andhra were reduced to 70 for six at one stage with the last game's centurion Ricky Bhui falling cheaply but Shoaib and Reddy rescued their side to some extent. Rahul Singh returned took six wickets (6/46) while Mukhtar Hussain and Akash Sengupta claimed two wickets apiece for Assam. In reply, Rishav Das (18 not out) and Rahul Hazarika (21 not out) made a steady start for the hosts in their first innings. In the fourth match of the Group B, no action was possible between Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the Victoria Park Stadium in Meerut due to bad weather. Brief scores: At Thiruvananthapuram: Mumbai 251 all out in 78.4 overs (Bhupen Lalwani 50, Shivam Dube 51, Tanush Kotian 56; Shreyas Gopal 4/28) vs Kerala. At Kolkata: Bengal 206/4 in 73 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 49, Anustup Majumdar 55 n.O, Abhishek Porel 47 n.O) vs Chhattisgarh.

Australia claims 10 wicket win over West Indies

PTI ■ ADELAIDE (AUSTRALIA)
Josh Hazlewood claimed his 11th five-wicket total in Test matches as Australia completed a 10-wicket win over West Indies on Friday before lunch on the third day of the first Test. Australia dismissed the West Indies for 120 in the 13th over of the day on Friday, leaving the home side needing just 26 runs to win. Steven Smith (11) and Usman Khawaja (9) easily completed that total for Australia, although Khawaja retired hurt after being hit by a bouncer with Australia needing one run to win. Marnus Labuschagne hit the winning run two balls later. Hazlewood already had four for 18 at the start of the day, as he helped Australia reduce the



West Indies to 73 for six in its second innings before stumps on the second day. Australia led by 95 runs on the first innings after making 283 in reply to the West Indies 188. "It's nice to have the weekend off now. It's nice as a group to play on that wicket. It felt like there was enough there the whole game," Hazlewood said. "I felt I bowled just as well in the first half of the summer

with no result. The wickets have been really good and playing with this team, it feels relentless and the pressure just builds all the time." Australia captain Pat Cummins said, "It was a wicket where you always felt like there might be a ball that nips and you were in the game even when someone was scoring a few runs." "The big fella (Hazlewood) really turned it on for us this week. We had a decent lead but not a huge lead and he took the game away from them in one spell really." The big question at the start of the day was whether the West Indies would be able to make Australia bat again. It began to look unlikely when Mitchell Starc dismissed Joshua da Silva (18) and Alzarri Joseph (16) and Hazlewood bowled Gudakesh Motie (3) to leave the West Indies 94 for nine, still needing one run to avoid an innings defeat. Shamar Joseph and Kemar Roche again produced a small rearguard action, adding 26 for the last wicket after putting on 55 for the last wicket in the first innings. Joseph already was a star of the match for his 36 in the first innings and his five 94 on debut.

Jagadeesan hits unbeaten 155 against Railways

PTI ■ COIMBATORE
Tamil Nadu opener N Jagadeesan enjoyed a fruitful day as he struck an unbeaten 155 against Railways during their Ranji Trophy Group C fixture here on Friday. After winning the toss and opting to bat, the hosts began on a shaky note, losing Vimal Khumar (0) in the opening over to pacer Yuvraj Singh with just a run on the board. Jagadeesan and B Sachin (33) added 83 runs for the second wicket before the latter was stumped off Akash Pandey. TN lost their fourth wicket at 130 before Jagadeesan and Boopathi Kumar (67) joined forces and tailored a 142-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Even as Jagadeesan reached his century, Boopathi was dismissed by Mohammad Saif. The hosts ended the day at 286 for five, while Pandey claimed two wickets for the visitors. In another Group C clash in Mysore, Goa ended the day at 228 for eight against Karnataka, thanks to Snehal Kauthankar's composed knock of 83. Opting to bat, Goa were struggling at 45 for three, while opener Suyash Prabhudessai, who struck 197 in the last meet, was dismissed for 27. Then, Kauthankar and skipper Darshan Misal (39) constructed an 82-run stand for the fourth wicket. However, the pair failed to last long, with the captain departing to Rohit Kumar.

Gukesh outwits Ian; Pragmanandhaa holds leader Giri

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS)
Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh produced a fine effort to outwit World Championship challenger Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia in the fifth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here on Friday. With his second victory in the tournament, Gukesh now has 2.5 points from five rounds after he made an indifferent start to the event, losing two matches in the first four rounds. Grandmaster R Pragmanandhaa

held tournament leader and defending champion Anish Giri of Holland to a draw on the day. GM Vidit Gujrathi played out his fifth draw on the trot, signing a peace pact with local hopeful Max Warderman. With eight rounds still remaining in one of the strongest traditional events, Giri maintained his sole lead on four points out of a possible five. Pragmanandhaa, Firouza Alireza of France and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan share the second spot on four points while Gujrathi and Gukesh are next in standings on 2.5, sharing it with three others.

In one the biggest upsets of the event so far, Women's world champion Ju Wnejun of China defeated Alireza in a finely crafted game. Earlier, Gukesh was a class act in a Queen's gambit declined with white pieces against Nepomniachtchi. The Indian won a pawn in the ensuing middle game but Nepomniachtchi had his share of counter play till he fell for a tactical shot that cost him another pawn. Soon it was a Queen and minor piece endgame on the board and Gukesh wrapped it up quickly. Pragmanandhaa did not have to

exert much against Giri with white pieces. Playing a lesser-known opening setup the Indian found Giri adequately prepared and the pieces got traded in a heap in the ensuing middle game. The players arrived at a Knight and pawns endgame wherein the draw was the only possible result. In the challengers' section being held simultaneously, Grandmaster Leon Luke Mendonca defeated compatriot D Harika with black pieces to jump to three points from his five games. Divya Deshmukh, the third Indian



in the fray, went down to Yilmaz Mustafa of Turkey. Erwin L'Ami of Holland leads the table in the section with 4 points, a half point clear of Anton Korobov of Ukraine. Results Round 5 of Masters (Indians unless mentioned): R Pragmanandhaa (3) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 4); D Gukesh (3) beat Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus, 2.5); Vidit Gujrathi (2.5) drew with Max Warderman (Ned, 2.5); Ju Wnejun (Chn, 2) beat Firouza Alireza (Fra, 3); Anton Donchenko (Slo, 1.5) drew with Jorden Van Foreest (Ned, 2); Parham

Maghsoodloo (Iri, 1) drew with Ding Liren (Chn, 2.5); Nodirbek Abdosattorov (Uzb, 3) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 3). Challengers: Leon Luke Mendonca (3) beat D Harika (1.5) Divya Deshmukh (1.5) lost to Yilmaz Mustafa (Tur, 2.5); Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 4) beat Stefan Beukema (Bel, 2); Eline Roebers (Ned, 1) beat Hand Moke Niemann (Usa, 3); Marc-Andria Maurizy (Fra, 3) drew with Jaime Santos Latasa (Esp, 2.5); Salem A R Saleh (Uae, 3) beat Liam Vrolijk (Ned, 2); Daniel Dardha (Bel, 2.5) drew with Anton Kkorobov (Ukr, 3.5).