

OPINION 6
TAIWANESE CONUNDRUM
FOR MAINLAND CHINA

MONEY 10
EMERGED STRONGER, SAYS ADANI ON
ANNIVERSARY OF HINDENBURG REPORT

SPORT 12
SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN
STRONG POSITION



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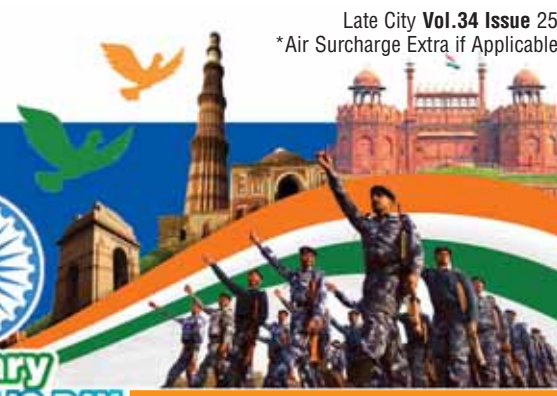
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HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY

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HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY



Modi Fulcrum of BJP Manifesto

INSPIRES FIRST TIME VOTERS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in April-May this year, BJP president JP Nadda officially launched the party's 2024 election campaign, releasing a video featuring a theme song dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The theme song in Hindi, "Sapne Nahi Haqeeqat Bunte Hai, Tabhi Toh Sab Modi Ko Chunte Hai" (Not dreams, but (we) weave reality, that's why everyone chooses Modi), highlights how Modi delivered on his promises and fulfilled people's dreams after they elected him at a time when the country was in a "bad shape".

The campaign song was released by Nadda at an event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed young voters virtually. In a virtual interaction with millions of first-time voters from across 5,800 locations in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the nation's youth on Thursday to contribute to the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He urged them to share their thoughts on the NaMo app. The Prime Minister expressed his anticipation of meeting some of the contributors soon. Additionally, he provided a link to the website narendramodi.in, where individuals can share their inputs for the BJP's manifesto. He



also called upon the connected youth through social media not only to vote but also to assist people whose names were not on the voters' list in getting them included. "I invite the youth of India to contribute to the BJP manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Share your thoughts on the NaMo App. I look forward to meeting some of the contributors myself in the future," said PM Modi. His social media post about the BJP manifesto came on the occasion of National Voters' Day, during which he also urged those who have not yet registered themselves as voters to do so. The song, presented as a 2-minute and 13-second video, expresses the

ruling party's confidence and emphasises that Modi is all set to become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term. It features a photo of Modi performing dandavat pranam in front of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.

The video highlights the government's achievements in various sectors and the launch of schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Har Ghar Nal Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) that were introduced in the last 10 years of the Modi regime.

Continued on Page 2



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and others during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various developmental projects in Bulandshahr on Thursday

Gifts Bulandshahr with dream projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BULANDSHAHR/NEW DELHI

After inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 19,100 crore in Bulandshahr ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday that he merely heralds the call for development, while it is the people who sound the poll bugle for him. Touching upon the completion of the praan pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya, the Prime Minister emphasised the priority of 'Rashtra Pratishtha,' urging its elevation to new heights. "We must strengthen the path

from Dev to Desh and Ram to Rashtra," PM Modi declared during a massive rally in Bulandshahr, western Uttar Pradesh. He said that the time had come to elevate "Rashtra Pratishtha" to greater heights, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by 2047. Modi also mentioned the late BJP leader and former UP CM, Kalyan Singh, saying that he would have been pleased to witness the development in Ayodhya. "This region gave us Kalyan Singh, who devoted his life to 'Ram Kaaj' and 'Rashtra Kaaj,'" Modi remarked in Bulandshahr.

Continued on Page 2

Highways on a high under Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) is poised to transition to a Quality-Cum-Cost-based selection system for bidding on various road construction and related projects, replacing the age-old L-1 least-cost selection process. This shift aims to enhance the quality of the undertaken works.

Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister of Road Transport and



Highways (MoRTH), said, "The Ministry of Roads will soon adopt a qualitative tendering

process instead of the least-cost bidding process to promote quality and road safety in various projects. Qualitative tendering will facilitate the incorporation of safer road features in designs, considering the behaviour of road users." Gadkari lamented the fact that there have been several instances where officers in the ministry have omitted safety features in highway projects to reduce costs, ostensibly in the pursuit of financial viability.

Continued on Page 2



French President Emmanuel Macron during his visit to the Amber Fort in Jaipur

PTI

Kerala Governor delivers knockout punch in Assembly

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Kerala Government found itself in an embarrassing situation as Governor Mohammed Arif Khan concluded his address to the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, the opening day of this year's session. The Governor, after his customary salutations to the House, read out the concluding line of the policy statement and promptly left the House, all within a span of one minute.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (also known as Karana Bhoothan) stood bewildered and perplexed as the Governor exited the House, leaving both the shocked treasury and Opposition benches aghast. This is the first incident of its kind reported from anywhere in the country.

There is nothing surprising in this development. The policy statement given to the Governor by the Government for reading out in the House is complete nonsense. The State Government has blamed



the Centre for all its omissions and commissions, leading the Governor to skip the entire speech. However, according to PC George, a seven-time legislator and former chief whip of the Kerala Government, the Governor has done nothing wrong, as this incident was waiting to happen. He said what is interesting is the speeches to be delivered by the Congress during the discussion on thanking the policy statement.

"The Congress and the CPI(M) are constituents of the INDI Alliance, and Kerala is the only State where they are not together. If the Congress is sincere, its legislators should expose the failures of the government. We saw a woman assistant public prosecutor committing suicide in Kollam earlier this week due to the harassment meted out to her by the CPI(M) leaders. A physically challenged person committed suicide in Wayanad because the State government failed to

provide the monthly pension due to him, while the octogenarian Mariyamma, another pensioner, has been going around the state with a begging bowl soliciting financial help from good Samaritans, as the CPI(M) government has failed to reimburse her dues for more than a year," said George.

The 63-page-long speech, intended to be read out by the Governor, was full of eloquence on Pinarayi Vijayan and a scathing attack on the Centre. While highlighting NITI-Ayog's praise for the 'unprecedented' progress made by the State in the Human Development Index, the Keralaeyam Global Show, and the Nava Kerala Sadass, which ended in a fiasco, the speech blamed the Centre for every setback suffered by Kerala, pointed out the veteran lawmaker. VD Satheshan, leader of the Opposition, blamed the CPI(M) and the BJP for the Governor's actions.

"He humiliated the people of Kerala," alleged Satheshan.

Continued on Page 2

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Maratha quota march reaches Mumbai doorsteps

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The clamour for reservations for Marathas in jobs and education reached the doorsteps of Mumbai on Thursday evening...



Before the morcha's entry into Mumbai, the State government had sent out a delegation to meet Jarange Patil...

Speaking to the media, Jarange Patil said, "How can we talk to some government officials? We want Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar to sit across from us and resolve the issue."

ernment." For more than five months, Jarange-Patil has been leading the agitation, demanding reservations for Marathas in jobs and education.

It may be recalled that Jarange-Patil, who had initiated a hunger strike in Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district from August 29, demanding reservations for the Maratha community...

Left joins Congress yatra in West Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

While the national Congress leadership continued to engage in diplomatic discussions with Mamata Banerjee, emphasising the Bengal Chief Minister's significance within the INDIA alliance...

Setback for Maha Vikas Aghadi

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a setback for the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) on Thursday rejected the invitation extended to it by the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) for seat-sharing talks for the Lok Sabha polls...

comedy blockbuster, "Lage Raho Munnabhai" (2006). The invite sent to Ambedkar to attend the seat-sharing talks - convened at a five-star hotel in Mumbai on Thursday evening - had been signed by Patole, NCP (SP) state President Jayant Patil and Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut.

seats to be arrived at among three MVA constituents in Maharashtra, Ambedkar had on January 8 sought to know Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray as to what kind of seat-sharing arrangement was being reached among the three MVA partners - Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (SP).

Man sets motorcycle on fire to keep himself warm

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As biting cold grips Delhi, a man in Pul Prahladpur area of the city allegedly set a motorcycle on fire on Thursday to keep himself warm, police said.

help of a matchstick," a police officer. After noticing the motorcycle on fire, its owner and another neighbour came out of their houses and informed the police, the officer said.

he was feeling cold. He has been booked under section 435 (Mischievous act by fire or explosive substance with intent to cause damage) of the IPC, police said.

Ayodhya Ram temple darshan timings extended

PTI ■ AYODHYA (UP)

The extended timing to offer prayers at the new Ram temple in Ayodhya came into effect on Thursday with 'darshan' being allowed from 6 am as key roads leading to the temple town remained closed to regulate vehicular movement.



Sultanpur and Amethi blocked 15 kilometres ahead of their borders with Ayodhya. On Wednesday, the temple management decided to let people offer prayers from 6 am to 10 pm, and allotted 15 minutes for 'aarti' and 'bhog' from 12 noon. Earlier, it was 7 am to 6 pm with a two-hour break in between.

perishable items to move into Faizabad but the entry into Ayodhya town is still closed." Vehicles from nearby districts have been prohibited from entering Ayodhya district, he added.

Highways on...

From Page 1

"Road engineering is the primary factor contributing to the rising number of road accidents in the country. A recent road safety audit of seven roads in the country revealed approximately 57 engineering shortcomings on the Pune-Mumbai expressway alone, and 25-28 per cent engineering defects on other roads.

Gifts Bulandshahr...

From Page 1

"In Ayodhya, I declared that 'pran pratishtha' has been completed, and now it is time to elevate 'rashtra pratishtha' to new heights," he added. Regarding 'Modi ki guarantee', aimed at achieving the saturation of welfare schemes, the prime minister emphasised, "What our government promises, it delivers. Our efforts are focused on ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach all intended recipients.

corruption. "This is true secularism and social justice," he concluded, noting that the dreams of farmers, women, the poor, and youth are the same in every society. The Prime Minister also highlighted that due to genuine government efforts, 25 crore people were lifted out of poverty in the last 10 years.

He went on to express that for decades after Independence, development was confined to a few regions, leaving a significant part of the country deprived. Modi added that Uttar Pradesh was neglected for decades after Independence as those in governance behaved like rulers, keeping the people deprived.

Modi Fulcrum...

From Page 1

It also showcases the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, along with Modi's interactions with global leaders and India making history by achieving a soft landing on the Moon.

complementing the ongoing national fervour linked with the 'Modi Ki Guarantee' movement. At the launch event, which coincided with the first-time voters' conclave (Nav Matdata Sammelan), a music video was released, highlighting how Prime Minister Modi has transformed the dreams and aspirations of millions of Indians into reality.

Kerala...

From Page 1

"Although the Governor skipped the entire speech, the fact that he came to the House and greeted the members is an indication that the speech has been delivered by him. "This is a fallout of what the

CPI(M) has been doing to the Governor for quite some time now. The Governor has done his best to avoid all kinds of controversies and has depended on consensus. However, politicians in the State, including the BJP, have been trying to humiliate and disgrace him. Kerala does not deserve a gentleman like Arif Mohammed Khan as its Governor," said a source close to the Governor.

Praan pratishthaa moment of immense happiness: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Just days after the grand opening of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday talked about the grand praan pratishthaa ceremony at the new Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 and called it a matter of "immense pride and happiness". "The Praan Pratishthaa of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 was a matter of immense pride and happiness for everyone across the world," Kejriwal said while addressing the Republic Day function at Chhatrasal Stadium. The AAP convener further said that the Delhi Government had already adopted the 10 principles essential for 'Ram Rajya' and his government is trying to govern the city according to the "definition of Ram Rajya as given in the Ramayana". "Inspired by 'Ram rajya', our government gives good education

and health for all. Lord Ram never discriminated on the lines of caste and religion, but society has been divided on the same lines," Kejriwal said days after the consecration ceremony at Ram temple in Ayodhya. Lord Ram never discriminated on the lines of caste and religion, but society today has been "divided on those lines", Kejriwal said. In his Republic day address, the Delhi Chief Minister said it was important to "imbibe the principles that Lord Ram exemplified". He said the Delhi government, with inspiration from 'Ram rajya', provides good education and health, pension for senior citizens and round-the-clock power supply and free water supply. Kejriwal said that the Delhi government provides free rations to the poor and unemployed while establishing night shelters. "Following Lord Rama's example, where both kings and commoners studied in gurukuls,

Delhi ensures that children from all backgrounds receive the same education in government schools," Kejriwal said. The Chief Minister, in his speech, highlighted how Delhi has improved government hospitals and opened neighbourhood clinics, providing free medication and medical treatment to all citizens. "Running an administration with inspiration from 'Ram rajya' also includes providing 24/7 power supply. It also means respecting the elderly and we have been doing that by increasing their pension and arranging free pilgrimages for them. "It includes providing free water supply to poor and middle class people that we have been doing since we came to power," he said. The chief minister said that the Delhi government plans to sponsor the travel of devotees from Delhi to Ayodhya. "We will try our best to sponsor the travel of devotees from Delhi to Ayodhya Ji. On the one



Ranjin Dimri / The Pioneer

hand, while we have to devote ourselves to Lord Ram, on the other hand, with utmost honesty we have to dedicate ourselves to the welfare of our nation. If we tread the path of Lord Ram, no

one can stop India from becoming the world's number 1 country," the AAP convener said. "We conduct 'teerth-yatra' to 12 pilgrimage sites for senior citizens free of cost. Till now,

83,000 people have taken on 'teerth-yatra'. Many people have expressed their desire to visit Ayodhya ji. We will try to take as many people as possible to Ayodhya ji," he added. His gov-

ernment increased the old-age pension from Rs 1000 to Rs 2500 per month. The Delhi government has created jobs through new schools and neighborhood clinics, and a job portal has provided employment to 10-12 lakh youth, said Kejriwal. Citing a recent survey, the AAP leader claimed Delhi has the lowest inflation rate in the country, at 2.95 per cent, compared to the national average of 6 per cent. Kejriwal said that the Delhi government also focuses on safety of women in the national capital, adding that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) makes efforts on the issue even though the Delhi Police does not come under their control. The Delhi government has created jobs through new schools and neighborhood clinics, and a job portal has provided employment to 10-12 lakh youth, said Arvind Kejriwal. The grand ceremony of praan pratishthaa of Ram Lalla at

Ayodhya was celebrated across the country, it also elicited mixed responses from the opposition alliance. The Congress, CPI(M) and TMC had slammed the BJP for "politicising" the event, other parties including AAP, SP and the NCP, had joined in celebrations across the country. Making a veiled attack at the Centre, Kejriwal said that the aim of having a USD 5 trillion economy is good only when the financial benefit reaches all poor people in the country. "But the country will remain poor if 4 trillion out of that remain with one or two people," he said. "In the last 75 years, the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer. Bringing down inflation is part of the concept of 'Ram rajya' followed by us. Delhi has minimum price rise as per central government reports. If people are suffering from price rise we cannot say it's Ram Rajya," he said.

Delhi turns into fortress for Republic Day



Ranjin Dimri / The Pioneer

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi has turned into a "fortress" for the grand Republic Day celebrations in the national capital with more than 70,000 personnel being deployed across the city on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day parade on January 26. Out of over 70,000 personnel, 14,000 will be deployed at and around Kartavya Path for the security of the Republic Day parade. The Delhi Police are patrolling, conducting anti-sabotage checks and verification drives as part of the security cover. According to Delhi Police officials, 14,000 security personnel will be guarding the areas around Kartavya Path to ensure strict vigil and avoid any untoward incident at the mega annual event. Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place for the safety and security of the 77,000 visitors expected at Kartavya Path to watch this year's parade, they added. Police have also issued advisory on traffic arrangements and restrictions put in place for the smooth conduct of traffic on Friday in the city. Extensive arrangements have been made for the safety and security of the 77,000 invitees expected at Kartavya Path to watch this year's parade, the officials said. Delhi Police in coordination with MapMyIndia, a digital mapping platform, has created navigation links to facilitate pick up and drop for Republic Day invitees who will be using the parking facility. On Wednesday, the traffic police had said they would provide alighting facility for VIPs, including senior bureaucrats and politicians, near their seating area this time on Republic Day. After dropping the VIPs near their seating area, the cars would be sent to a designated parking spot. A senior police officer said, "In a first of its kind initiative, Delhi Police in coordination with MapMyIndia has created links to facilitate pick up and

drop for Republic Day event attendees." Using the navigation links, the invitees can reach their alighting point from where their vehicles will go to the designated parking area with the help of the map. Later when the parade ends, their vehicles will pick up the invitees from their spots and proceed accordingly, the officer said. The police have issued an advisory regarding special parking arrangements for the visitors attending the Republic Day event. Parking spots 3 and 4 behind Vigyan Bhawan have a capacity of 300 vehicles. Once the capacity exceeds at these spots, the visitors are required to alight only on Maulana Azad Road near Vigyan Bhawan and their vehicles will be accommodated at parking spots 1 and 2 (behind Nirman Bhawan and Udyog Bhawan), 2A (inside Nirman Bhawan and Udyog Bhawan), 5 (behind Zabta Masjid), 6 (Kota House Jam Nagar House and Jailsaimer House), 7 (Vaniya Bhawan), the advisory stated. Apart from this, vehicle parking is not allowed at the parking lots at New Delhi, Old Delhi, Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar railway stations from 10 pm on Thursday to 12 pm on Friday, it added. Apart from this, vehicle parking is not allowed at the parking lots at New Delhi, Old Delhi, Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar railway stations from 10 pm on Thursday to 12 pm on Friday, the advisory added. "In view of Republic Day celebrations, general public is informed that the parking of vehicles in the parking lots at New Delhi Railway Station, Old Delhi Railway Station, Nizamuddin Railway station and Anand Vihar Railway station is not allowed from 10 pm on Thursday to 12 pm on Friday. "All are advised to use public transport vehicles. The pick-up and drop vehicles will be available outside railway stations for the use of commuters/passengers," the police said.

Remission for old jail inmates on Republic Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has granted special remission of 20-90 days to convicts undergoing varying periods of sentences on the occasion of Republic Day. Raj Niwas officials said on Thursday. Special provision has been made in case of prisoners aged 65 years and above lodged in Delhi jails, they said. Remission by the government may be granted on the occasion of days of national importance and public rejoicing. The remission is not applicable for convicts sentenced under charges of crimes against women, the National Security Act (NSA), Official Secrets Act (OSA) among others. All prisoners above the age of 65 years will be eligible to get a remission of 90 days, in cases where sentences are more than 10 years. A remission of 60 days will be applicable for other inmates, they said. A remission of 60 days will be accorded to



inmates (aged above 65 years) undergoing sentences of five years and above and up to 10 years. For male prisoners below the age of 65 years, the period of remission will be 45 days, they said.

A remission of 30 days will be granted to all categories of prisoners undergoing sentences above one year to five years. In case of sentences up to one year, all women and men aged 65 years and above will get a remission of 20 days, and other inmates will get a remission of 15 days, they said. The proposal of remission was submitted by the Delhi government's prison department, through the Home department, under Delhi Prison Rules and CrPC provision, officials said. Section 432 CrPC empowers the Government to give remission to convicts and as per Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India notification dated 20.03.1974, the power of Government under section 432 of CrPC is to be exercised by Lt. Governor. Prisoners awarded life imprisonment on or after December 18, 1978 for an offence for which death is one of the penalties or whose death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment are not eligible for remission, officials said.

Tribal guests get free Metro ride in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi Metro on Thursday facilitated a Metro ride for the 100 tribal community members representing every State and Union Territory of India. They traveled from INA to Patel Chowk Metro station on Yellow Line to get a firsthand experience of the world class Metro system followed by a visit to the Metro Museum situated at Patel Chowk station itself. These tribal guests- two each, comprising one male and one female member from every State and Union Territory of India are invited every year by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India as part of the Republic Day celebrations. The invitees subsequently meet the President and Prime Minister of India besides witnessing the Republic Day Parade in the capital. "Delhi Metro from time to time keeps facilitating such special visits comprising underprivileged children, youths from remote areas of Jammu & Kashmir, bravery award winning children, tribal community etc. DMRC feels privileged to provide an enriching Metro experience to these special guests while promoting inclusivity and cultural exchange," Delhi Metro said in a statement.

Three years old mowed down by cluster bus

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
A three-year-old child was mowed down allegedly by a cluster bus in southwest Delhi Najafgarh area, police said on Thursday. The bus driver has been arrested, they added. The incident took place on Wednesday evening when Priyanshu and his three-year-old son Gopal were returning from a market to their home in the Roshan-pura area on an e-rickshaw, the police said. "The father and his son were returning home after refilling gas cylinder. The driver of the e-rickshaw pressed brakes, due to which Gopal slipped from his seat and fell on the road and a cluster bus from behind mowed him down," a senior police officer said. The officer said the child was taken to a hospital with help of a police team, but he was declared brought dead. After the incident, several locals gathered at the spot and allegedly pelted stones on the bus, the police said. The bus driver, identified as Sunil, tried to flee but was overpowered by the police, they added. Heavy police deployment was made in the area to maintain law and order condition. "An FIR under Sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304-A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered in the matter. The driver has been arrested and further investigation is underway," said the officer. "Whenever an accident happens, our depot manager and operator visit the site and speak to witnesses and locals to ascertain the sequence of events. Then they also visit the police station to gather details. Till now, we have come across three different versions for the accident through this exercise," a senior transport official said.

Simplify process of divyang identity card certification, officials told

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Social Welfare Minister Raaj Kumar Anand on Thursday directed the officials to simplify the process of Unique Disability Identity card certification by segregating pending cases based on category and criteria. A thorough review and follow-up meeting was chaired by Anand, where representatives of UDID-notified hospitals, special secretary of Health, secretary of Social Welfare, and other senior department officers were present.

CPJ College winter fest on Feb 3

New Delhi: CPJ College of Higher Studies and School of Law, Narela, affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, will organise Winter Fest "ULLAAS" on February 3. Abhishek Jain, General Secretary of CPJ College and Yugank Chaturvedi, Director General, released a joint statement and said that the upcoming Winter Fest will be a spectacular display of rich traditions with music and dance competitions, fashion parade and Mr and Miss Ullaas titles. Apart from this, the explosive music of live band performance by Swarism would be the main attraction of the Winter Fest. Narela MLA Sharad Chauhan will grace the festival as the chief guest.

Nigerian held for extortion with explicit content threats

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
A 37-year-old Nigerian man was arrested for allegedly extorting money from a woman after threatening to upload her objectionable photos and videos on social media, police said on Thursday. The accused has been identified as Evans, who was staying in Greater Noida and

NDMC plans to offer free NEET, JEE coaching to 100 meritorious students



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) plans to tie-up with a reputed coaching centre to provide free NEET and JEE preparatory classes to 100 meritorious students studying at its schools and the Navyug schools, officials said. It will be a two-year integrated coaching for students studying in Class XI at these schools. The NDMC has floated a tender to invite bids from coaching institutes to kick off the project to prepare students for National Eligibility-cum Entrance Test and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). "Around 50 students each will be enrolled for coaching for JEE and NEET. This means that in the first year, 100 students will be enrolled for JEE-NEET coaching and the numbers will start increasing from the subsequent years," said an official. The selected coaching centre will conduct a screening test of Class XI and Class XII students to shortlist the 100 students. "The coaching will be provided under the comprehensive programme being run by the institute through offline mode. The coaching partner will include the shortlisted students in the classes run by the institute. Thus, no separate group will be formed solely for the students of NDMC school," the official added. The official said the coaching institute cannot make any distinction between students shortlisted through the scheme and students enrolled by them directly. He said the institute will have to provide study material, conduct mock tests, psychology sessions through reputed psychologists to the students. "The coaching centre is expected to provide up-to-date study material/test materials, analyse the student's usage pattern, evaluate the test answers, evaluate the test answers periodically (at least once a month), and provide progress and all India ranking report to the student and to the education department, NDMC," he added. The important condition is that the coaching centre should have at least one centre running in Delhi, preferably around the NDMC area, with all requisite infrastructure like premises, library, etc.

Dense fog may reduce visibility during Republic Day Parade: IMD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday predicted moderate to dense fog may affect visibility during the 75th Republic Day celebrations in the capital on Friday. The IMD said people would be able to see up to only 400 metres until 8.30 am on Friday due to foggy weather. The visibility levels may thereafter improve to 1,500 metres by 10.30 am. The minimum temperature is likely to settle in the range of 5 to 7 degrees Celsius,

the Met office said. The national capital region saw "cold day" conditions on Thursday, there was a sharp dip in minimum temperature across the city, with it recorded at 4.8°C — three degrees below normal. The minimum temperature in Lodhi Road was settled at 4.4 degree Celsius. Dense fog engulfed the national Capital for over six hours on Thursday morning, which saw delays of over 100 flights and 24 trains. The maximum temperature was noted at 20.5 degrees Celsius, one notch below the normal,

according to the bulletin. The national capital is experiencing cold day conditions and dense fog in the morning and night, the IMD said. Despite this, Delhi's air quality showed a marginal improvement, returning to the 'very poor' category after touching 'severe' a day earlier. As per the Central Pollution Control Board's data, the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Thursday settled at 332 in the 'very poor' category. The absence of active western disturbances (WD) weather systems that originate in the



Mediterranean region and bring unseasonal rainfall to northwest India is one of the primary reasons behind the blinding layer of fog persisting over the plains in the region since December 25, the IMD said. Generally, five to seven WDs impact the region during these months. The region has not seen any strong WD this winter so far, it said. According to IMD, fog formation requires three conditions: weak low-level winds, moisture, and overnight cooling. Strong WDs, characterised by strong winds and precipitation,

disrupt these conditions. Delhi has experienced five cold days and five cold wave days in January so far, the highest in the past 13 years. IMD said visibility was down to 50 metres at Palam at 1:30am and remained the same till 8am, when it improved marginally to 100 metres. A yellow alert has been issued for Friday, forecasting moderate to dense fog across the city. The IMD said that due to fog the visibility at Delhi-Palam was reduced to 25 metres and 50 m at Safdarjung at 5:30 am and remained the same till 8am,

when it improved marginally to 100 metres. A yellow alert has been issued for Friday, forecasting moderate to dense fog across the city. The IMD forecasted that very dense fog conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during next 4 days. The weather agency said that light rainfall or snowfall is likely over Western Himalayan Region from 25 to 30 January. The IMD also warned of severe cold day conditions prevailing over North India during next 2 days and decrease in intensity thereafter.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

To each their own

Two major players in INDIA bloc plan to go it alone in LS polls. Where does it leave the Oppn grouping?

Despite the constituents' best efforts to paper over their differences and present a united facade, the worst apprehensions about the INDIA bloc are coming true. Its seat-sharing formula is just not taking shape. The much-hyped bloc, an alliance of 28 Opposition parties aiming to counter the BJP's dominance, seems to be unravelling. Recent announcements by key constituents indicate a shift in strategy, with prominent leaders opting for independent paths in the Lok Sabha elections. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's rejection of sharing seats with the Congress and AAP's decision to go it alone in Punjab are enough to upset the bloc's apple cart even before it could start its electoral journey. Mamata, the TMC chief and a key architect of the INDIA bloc, has signalled a fracture in the purported unity. She has emphasised the need for regional parties to assert themselves and prioritise State-centric issues over national alliances. This stance has added an element of unpredictability to the bloc's future, as it challenges the idea of a united front against the BJP. As if Mamata's stance were not enough, AAP has also decided to go it solo. In Punjab, the party has declared its intent to contest the elections independently. It comes as a major blow to the INDIA bloc: In retaliation, the Congress could go it alone in Delhi and Haryana, effectively making it a three-cornered contest in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.



The challenge for the INDIA bloc now lies in reconciling the divergent aspirations of its constituent parties and finding common ground to build a cohesive narrative on. It is, however, essential to acknowledge that the dynamics of Indian politics are fluid and alliances can evolve swiftly. The INDIA bloc could potentially reassess its strategy and work towards a more unified front as the general elections approach. The posturing by the TMC and AAP should make the INDIA bloc leaders go back to the basics and rework their strategy. It may find renewed purpose in addressing shared concerns while respecting the autonomy of individual parties. The success of the INDIA bloc at the hustings hinges on its ability to navigate internal differences. The bloc's initial promise lay in consolidating regional strength; for this, it must overcome fissures and present a coherent vision for governance at the national level. It needs to convince voters that a coalition of regional parties can provide stable and effective leadership, addressing both local and national concerns. Its success will depend on its capability to forge a common agenda, communicate it effectively to the electorate and demonstrate a united front against the ruling party. While the bloc's future appears uncertain at the moment, political landscapes are known for rapid transformations. The road to general elections will test the resilience and adaptability of the INDIA bloc, determining whether it can emerge as a potent force capable of shaping the national narrative and challenging the status quo.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a religious procession to celebrate Thaipusam festival, in Chennai

Taiwanese conundrum for mainland China



BHOPIINDER SINGH

The best bet for the Chinese is to seek organic support for 'reunification' with the main land from the Taiwanese themselves. A coercive posture and rough language would not help

Contrary to Chinese assertions, insinuations, and sensitivities to what it unilaterally calls 'Chinese Taiwan' or 'Taiwan, China', the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan has its own functional democracy, constitution and approximately 3,00,000 combatants protecting its territorial sovereignty. With mainland China claiming to represent One-China as the legitimate power, the battle of wits tilted in favour of mainland China in 1971, when the United Nations switched diplomatic recognition onto mainland China. Since then, mainland China has flexed its patent admixture of financial, military, industrial and diplomatic power to bludgeon support in its favour. Today, the fast-receding number of countries that recognize Taiwan has fallen to a meagre 12 countries. Even this list includes relatively 'lightweight' nations like St Vincent and the Grenadines, Eswatini and Tuvalu, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Palau, Nauru, Holy See, Marshall Islands etc.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly warned against "Taiwanese independence separatism" and promised that Taiwan would "surely be unified". Xi's rhetoric is deeply suggestive and intimidatory. However, audiovisuals of choreographed brinkmanship aside, such a belligerent move would be anything but a cakewalk in terms of consequences for the Chinese. Practically, Chinese sabre-rattling is part of deliberately postured nationalism that is vital to buttress the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, as the main lever of legitimacy i.e., socio-economic upliftment of the Chinese, is now under extreme stress. In the absence of economic prosperity, muscle-flexing against Taiwan distracts and galvanises the Chinese masses. The disproportionate Chinese military strength to Taiwan's militaristic preparedness on paper notwithstanding, the near-certain international reactions of sanctions and embargoes onto the Chinese if they were to attack Taiwan, would break the proverbial camel's back, in terms of fur-



ther economic sufferings for the Chinese masses. It could lead to unsustainable economic regression and societal discontent. It is a price that Xi Jinping simply cannot afford, especially as the economic upside of a forcible integration, would pale in comparison to the downsides of a plausible invasion. Besides, Taiwan is extremely well-fortified with missiles, early warning systems, precision-strike weapons, underwater mines, and other counter-attack capabilities that could inflict significant damage on any invasion attempt, irrespective of the ultimate result. In any case, the Chinese would have to mount a significant fleet and accompanying wherewithal which could easily alert of an impending invasion - a discreet and sudden Chinese attack, is next to impossible. Even the fact that a potential Chinese invasion would involve breaking through large urban squalors and cities, it would entail deadly urban warfare that has tested the skills of even hardened Israelis and Russians in recent times, let alone the untested Chinese PLA soldier. Urban warfare and associated 'costs' could lead to the undoing of any residual support the Chinese may have amongst the Taiwanese. The famed 'Taiwanese porcupine'



XI JINPING HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST 'TAIWANESE INDEPENDENCE SEPARATISM' AND PROMISED THAT TAIWAN WOULD 'SURELY BE UNIFIED'. XI'S RHETORIC IS DEEPLY SUGGESTIVE AND INTIMIDATORY

strategy is predicated on making a heavily laden Chinese invasion fleet face a prickly proposition and based on defensive survivability. The fact that such an invasion could draw the committed US forces would have its own resultant algorithms. So realistically the best bet for the Chinese is for organic support for 'reunification' with the mainland Chinese, by the Taiwanese themselves. This is not an unfathomable situation, given the existence of 'pro-China and anti-China' sentiment amongst Taiwanese political parties. While the recent Taiwanese Presidential elections have brought back the decidedly 'anti-China' forces of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) with 40.05% of the popular vote (third successive victory), the fact that the other two parties have varied shades of 'pro-China' anchorage i.e., Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan's People Party (TPP), garnered 33.49% and 26.46% respectively, shows faultlines. It could be credibly argued that while the Taiwanese were aligned with DPP's nationalistic stand, there must have been anti-incumbency on local issues like low wages, unaffordable housing etc., that led to significant support for KMT and TPP. However, the competitive race

of identities in Taiwan has led to a steady assertion of locals identifying themselves as just 'Taiwanese' as opposed to 'Both Taiwanese and Chinese' or plain 'Chinese'. Yet, post the electoral results the Chinese foreign ministry reiterated, "Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China", clearly signalling the continuation of stalemate and tensions. If the Chinese were to overdo the further sanctioning against provisions of an existing free trade agreement with Taiwan (or even suspend it altogether), it would lead to painful hardships for the Taiwanese, but also to further anti-Chinese sentiment that clearly cannot be countered by military superiority or plausible invasions. The best bet for the Chinese is to have the local Taiwanese perceive more socio-economic merit in 'unification' as opposed to 'independence', a battle that puts Beijing on the backfoot given stories coming out of Hong Kong or Tibet. So, the Chinese battle-rattle-tattle for crossing the straits in a purported invasion will continue, however, the costs to walk the talk will remain prohibitive.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIR AGAINST RAHUL GANDHI

Sir — The under-pressure Assam police on Tuesday registered an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other leaders for "wanton acts of violence" on Tuesday, Frustrated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is currently in Assam and the alleged acts of violence took place while the party supporters and leaders allegedly clashed with police personnel in their bid to enter Guwahati. Four police personnel were injured in the scuffle, Guwahati Police Commissioner Diganta Bora said. Under fear, Sarma had earlier in the day instructed the Director General of Police G P Singh to register a case against Rahul Gandhi for provoking the crowd to break the barricades. Gandhi said the chief minister directing the DGP to file a case against him shows 'that they have fear in their hearts... They are afraid as the people of Assam are standing up as 'Tufan' and 'Andhi' (storm) against them'. The barricades were erected along a highway to prevent Congress leaders and supporters taking part in the Yatra from entering the main thoroughfares of Guwahati, the largest city of the north-eastern state. As Congress supporters removed the barricades, a scuffle with the police personnel ensued leading to injuries suffered by state Congress president Bhupen Borah and leader of the opposition in the state assembly Debabrata Saikia. Gandhi alleged that while BJP president J P Nadda was allowed to take the same route earlier, Congress was not permitted.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CONTRIBUTION OF NETAJI

Sir — The country can always remember the contribution of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to the freedom movement. His slogan 'Give me blood, I will give you freedom' sparked a new revolution in the country. The army 'Azad Hind Fauj' formed by him forced the British to leave India. The British had first handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Azad

Yemen crisis



The US and Britain are carrying out joint air strikes on the positions of Iran-backed Houthi separatists active in Yemen, in retaliation for blocking and attacking fleets in the Red Sea. Not only this, America has once again declared Houthis as a terrorist group. But instead of solving the area's problems, they are becoming more complicated day by day. First of all, poor countries like Yemen, where today every area has fallen into the hands of fighters. The group of Arab countries, which includes Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, tried to control all the forces

opposing each other by entering that country but failed. Now an in-depth investigation has revealed that the UAE, while fighting there, has carried out many targeted killings with the help of money. American mercenaries were given a contract by the Emirati government to kill members of a specific group. Most of those killed by these mercenaries were members of 'Islah', the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is a popular international Sunni Islamist movement that no one has ever classified as a terrorist organization but is banned in many Arab countries. They are included in the United Arab Emirates where its political activism and support for elections is seen by the country's royal family as a threat to their rule. Had gone to Yemen to restore peace but started killing Islah members. This should be investigated by the United Nations. The dark deeds of the UAE should be exposed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Hind Fauj and Netaji hoisted the tricolour there on 30 December 1943. Netaji had become synonymous with courage, bravery and patriotism. Netaji's death remains a mystery. The present Central Government has expressed gratitude to Netaji by celebrating his birthday as Parakram Diwas (23 January), making public all the files related to him and installing the statue of Netaji at India Gate. Netaji's life will always continue to inspire patriotism among the youth.

N Mateeni | Pune

BHARAT RATNA FOR THE JAN NAYAK

Sir — The centre has posthumously fulfilled a long-standing demand by announcing the Bharat Ratna award for the Former Chief Minister of Bihar, Karpooi Thakur, a dedicated leader committed to uplifting the poor and marginalized. As a notable figure in Bihar politics, Thakur's lasting impact on India's socio-political landscape is evident, offering hope and positivity to Dalits and backward classes. Hailing from

a backward class and affectionately known as the "Jannayak" or people's hero, Thakur embodied the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His commitment to breaking caste boundaries was represented during his 28-day fast unto death in support of Telco labourers, showcasing his dedication to social justice and workers' rights. As Bihar's Education Minister, Thakur promoted Hindi, removed English as a compulsory subject, and became the first Chief Minister to enforce total alcohol prohibition, addressing crucial social issues and challenging established norms. His legacy is evident in the transformed India where individuals from backward classes now hold prominent positions. Karpooi Thakur's Bharat Ratna is not merely an award; it's a recognition of his unwavering pursuit of justice and equality, shaping a more inclusive and equitable India.

Preetiyukta | Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Managing diversity in small and remote teams



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Small companies managing multi-location teams thrive through clear communication, inclusivity and technological leverage

In the modern era of remote work and globalisation, small companies are increasingly embracing multi-location teams to tap into diverse talent pools and expand their reach. Effectively managing teams spread across different locations presents unique challenges and opportunities. Small companies can mitigate these challenges by exploring strategies that help to successfully navigate the complexities of managing multi-location teams. First and foremost, since technology has made remote working possible, it should be further leveraged for seamless communication. It is the cornerstone of managing multi-location teams. Small companies should invest in reliable communication tools that facilitate seamless collaboration. Platforms like video conferencing, project management software, and instant messaging can bridge the geographical gap. Having established a connection with the team, it is vital to ascertain clear communication protocols that are essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone stays informed. Establish guide-



lines for virtual meetings, project updates, and team communication channels. Consistency in communication practices helps maintain a sense of unity among team members, regardless of their physical locations. While written communication is valuable, face-to-face interactions build stronger connections. It is beyond doubt that distance can create a sense of isolation, making team building crucial for multi-location teams. It is therefore important to include virtual team-building activities, such as online games, virtual happy hours, or collaborative projects. These initiatives promote camaraderie and create a positive team culture. In a long-distance, multi-location work environment, clarity is the king. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for each team member to avoid confusion and ensure accountability is a must. Small

companies should establish a transparent framework that outlines expectations and deliverables. This clarity minimizes the risk of duplication of efforts and promotes efficiency within the multi-location team. Utilizing the requisite project management tools play a pivotal role in coordinating tasks and projects across different locations. Small companies can benefit from using tools that enable real-time collaboration, document sharing, and task tracking. These tools enhance productivity and streamline workflows within the multi-location team. In addition, inclusivity is vital for the success of multi-location teams. Small companies should actively cultivate a culture that values diverse perspectives and contributions. Provide opportunities for skill-building, training, and career advancement for all team members, regardless of their location. This investment enhances individual capabilities. Another important aspect that helps to manage a small multi-location team is regular check-ins and feedback sessions to assess the well-being and

progress of each team member. Small companies should create an open and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing concerns or ideas. Constructive feedback sessions help in addressing challenges and fostering continuous improvement. To enhance transparency in the multi-location teams, a centralized knowledge repository accessible to all team members is a vital requirement. This repository can contain important documents, project updates, and resources, ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need. This type of centralised hub enhances transparency and minimises the risk of information silos within the multi-location team. Last but not least, being a multi-location team, embrace and celebrate the diversity within the multi-location team. Small Companies should promote cultural awareness, acknowledging the unique backgrounds, customs, and perspectives of team members. (The writer is assistant professor at Amity University; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S COMPLEX GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN 2024

India navigates global complexities amid elections and geopolitical uncertainties



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Even as the world gathered to witness once in a lifetime event in the historic dusty small temple town of Ayodhya EAM Jaishankar was speaking about the changing concepts of multilateralism and international relations in the realigning world order in Kampala and Lagos, Nigeria. India's strategic focus on being the leading voice of the global south, at a time when major democracies including India, are going to face the elections and two wars are showing little signs of ebbing, have made the path a tad more difficult.

During its G20 presidency last year, India achieved a horizontal consensus, successfully obtaining a joint communique despite stark differences between Russia and the US. Impressively, India also brought the African Union, a pivotal constituent of the Global South, into the dialogue. However, the conflict in West Asia, teetering on the brink of genocide, is now extending from the Gaza Strip to the Red Sea. Pakistan and Iran, two major Islamic nations, engaged in reciprocal surgical strikes, each claiming to eliminate terrorist bases.

Iran's influence on certain terror groups obstructs crucial maritime routes in the Red Sea, resulting in increased shipping costs. Recently, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar visited Iran to discuss the imperative of secure maritime routes. Nevertheless, the broader Gaza Strip conflict and its potential impact on the upcoming US elections seem unlikely to subside. India has adeptly cultivated a strong bilateral and bipartisan relationship with the US over the past decade, despite occasional disputes on trade and human rights. It is evident that India views the US as a crucial ally in countering the military expansion of China, safeguarding security, and promoting fair practices in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. During the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, the External Affairs



Minister (EAM) reiterated India's call for a multipolar world and the reform of global institutions, including the UN. India's longstanding demand for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has faced opposition from China. Notably, tech billionaire Elon Musk has backed India's bid for a permanent seat. In the past decade, India has advocated for a multipolar world order, emphasizing each powerful nation's distinct sphere of influence. The Ukraine conflict has reignited tensions between Russia and Western powers, while bipartisan support in the US for containing China persists under President Biden. The upcoming 2024 election, where Republican Trump may challenge Biden, could elevate immigration issues and super nationalism, potentially shifting American international influence away from multilateralism.

The current Indian government, led by Prime Minister Modi, is perceived to have a positive rapport with Trump, should he return to power. However, potential challenges may arise regarding India's key concerns, as emphasized by the External Affairs Minister during the NAM summit. These concerns include establishing regional economic hubs, resilient supply chains, predictable mobility, and trusted data flows. People-centric policies, sustainable lifestyles, digital public infrastructure, food, energy, and health security, women-led development, prioritized connectivity with respect for sovereignty, and adequate resourcing for climate action and SDG realization are highlighted as crucial aspects.

If Trump returns to the White House in 2024, India's global climate change initiatives may lose US support. Immigration challenges, exemplified by a large influx of Indian citizens at US borders, could escalate. India's upcoming elections face the daunting task of convincing voters, particularly in border states, that China has not encroached on Indian territories. The year 2024 poses significant challenges for international relations.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Is the Government's debt sustainable?



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. This will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans



Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast that India's general government debt - it comprises the debts of the Centre and states - will overshoot 100 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the financial year (FY) 2027-28. Responding to this, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) clarified that this wasn't under a 'baseline scenario' - a jargon to describe normal economic conditions. It added the IMF was referring to a 'worst-case scenario' wherein a global shock would equally affect all countries. Is the government's debt sustainable?

The government's debt is linked with how it manages its total expenditure vis-à-vis its total receipts or fiscal deficit (FD) which is excess of the former over the latter. The expenditure and receipts are broadly of two types viz. revenue and capital. Revenue expenditure (RE) is essentially consumption expenditure which does not result in the creation of assets. It includes expenses for the normal running of government departments and various services, interest charges on debt incurred by the government, subsidies and so on. Capital expenditure (CE) includes the money that the government spends on long-term assets such as property, plant, and equipment.

Revenue Receipts (RR) are receipts that neither create any liability nor lead to any reduction in the assets of the government. These comprise tax and non-tax receipts, duties and fines, and interest and dividends receipts on government investments and assets. Capital receipts (CR) are those receipts that either create liabilities or reduce the asset value of the government. These are loans raised by the government to fund long-term developmental needs. Ideally, RR should fully pay for the RE implying that revenue deficit (RD) - the difference between RR and RE - should be zero. The government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. Spending in this manner will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans thereby making such debt sustainable.

In reality, RR have consistently fallen



THE FINANCE MINISTRY EXUDES CONFIDENCE THAT THE CENTRE IS 'ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE ITS STATED FISCAL CONSOLIDATION TARGET' OF REDUCING FD TO 4.5 PER CENT BY 2025-26

short of RE leading to a revenue deficit which meant that the government was borrowing merely to finance consumption expenditure. Besides, even the loans taken for financing CE were not productively used. The result was an increase in debt to an unsustainable level. As a result, even in 2003-04 when the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act (2003) was passed by the then Vajpayee-led NDA - government, interest payments accounted for one-third of the RE.

Under the FRBM Act (2003), the Vajpayee government promised the elimination of RD by the year 2008. It also committed to reducing FD to 3 per cent of the GDP. Against these pledges, during 2008-09, RD was 4.7 per cent whereas, FD was 6.2 per cent. In his budget speech for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the intent of the Modi government to review the FRBM Act (2003) with a view to making the FD target more flexible. For this, he had set up a committee under Dr N K Singh. The committee recommended a "glide path" for the next six years, i.e., from 2017-18 to 2022-23.

It recommended an FD target of 2.5 per cent, RD of 0.8 per cent, a combined Centre-state debt ceiling of 60 per cent, and a central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for the terminal year, i.e., 2022-23. Further, it fixed 3 per cent FD to be achieved during 2018-19. The committee also allowed the Union Government to breach the target - by up to 0.5 per cent - in the case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications."

In the amendment to the FRBM Act in the Finance Bill 2018-19, even while retaining the "escape clause" to cover unanticipated events, the government adopted the glide path of achieving a 3 per cent

FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19, which was mooted by the committee. Further, it set the debt limit at 40 per cent for the Centre to be reached by 2024-25 instead of the mandated 2022-23.

The relaxation in the glide path may be seen in the backdrop of the government missing the FD target for 2017-18 by 0.3 per cent and seeing no hope of achieving 3 per cent during 2018-19, as recommended by the committee.

In the Budget for 2020-21, the finance minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman had already invoked the escape clause of the FRBM (Amendment) Act to alter the FD targets for 2019-20 from 3.3 per cent as provided in the Budget to 3.8 per cent in the revised estimate and for 2020-21, from 3 per cent - as per the glide path required under the Act - to 3.5 per cent.

Seen in relation to the target set by the N K Singh Committee or even then the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the performance of the government had been off the mark. For instance, during 2018-19, the FD was 3.7 per cent against the 3 per cent required as per the Singh Committee. If deferred subsidy payments (DSPs) are also included (in those years, substantial amounts of major subsidy bills, viz., food, fertilizers, and fuel, were kept pending), the FD would be 5.7%. Likewise, for 2019-20, including DSPs, the FD would be 5.1 per cent.

Due to Corona pandemic, the year 2020-21 saw plunging revenue and ballooning expenditure. As a result, the FD zoomed to 9.1 per cent against BE of 3.5 per cent. Being an exceptional year, a comparison with the glide path may not be apt.

In the following year, even as the pandemic waned and the economy rebounded, in her budget speech for 2021-22, Sitharaman fixed the FD target at 6.9 per cent saying her

goal was to achieve 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26. The actual FD for 2021-22 was lower at 6.7 per cent. For 2022-23, she set the target at 6.4 per cent describing this as 'advancing on the road to fiscal consolidation'. The actual was precisely at 6.4 per cent. For 2023-24, she kept the target at 5.9 per cent. It is likely that even this would be achieved.

From the above, the finance ministry exudes confidence that the Centre is "on track to achieve its stated fiscal consolidation target" of reducing FD to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. This is misleading. To reset the fiscal trajectory making it substantially relaxed and then claim that fiscal numbers are well on track looks amusing. Let us not forget that even as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the Centre should have achieved 3 per cent in 2020-21.

Against this, the actual FD during 2021-22 and 2022-23 was more than two times whereas during the current year, it is expected to be nearly twice this level. The RD at 4.1 per cent during 2022-23 and 3 per cent during 2023-24 (expected) is 4 to 5 times the 0.8 per cent level as recommended by the NK Singh Committee. The debt to GDP ratio of the Centre is around 60 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated as per the amended Act.

As per the FRBM Act (2003), the FD was to have come down to 3 per cent by 2008. Against this, we are talking of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. As per the Act, RD was to become 'Zero' by 2008. During 2023-24, it is stuck with 3 per cent. It shows how much the Centre has lagged behind in managing its fiscal situation. True, but for Modi's efforts in boosting tax revenue, the situation would have been much worse. Nonetheless, a lot more needs to be done especially by slashing RE.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

NEP: Multidisciplinary approach in higher education

NEP is fostering inclusivity and merit-based research to address security challenges and encouraging multidisciplinary practices

Nelson Mandela once commented, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Over the past few years, there has been a notable shift in the landscape of education, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping individuals physically, intellectually, and morally. Education is seen as a liberating force, breaking the chains of darkness and bigotry. Recently, there has been a concerted effort to integrate real-life experiments of democracy, environmental awareness, globalization, and governance into the framework of the new education system. The intellectual establishment plays a crucial role in providing theoretical rationale and



SUDHIR HINDWAN

strategies for educational advancements. It is imperative to explore how innovations in higher education can drive positive changes, instil confidence among the masses, and disseminate the latest global research and developments in education. This discourse aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of the evolving higher education system, emphasizing the need for inclusivity and growth.

The strength of any higher education system lies in creating internal dynamism to ensure inclusive growth. Even a well-designed system is influenced by the individuals who make a difference. Human and financial relations are intricate matters that require constant monitoring by competent authorities. In India, universities are encouraged to improve their performance by transitioning towards a more merit-based, peer-reviewed research approach, aligning with the goal of establishing a highly efficient and inclusive educational apparatus. The New Education Policy (NEP) has provided a framework to analyze and address multidimensional issues in the education sector, offering

opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. These guidelines aim to meet the key demands of higher education while maintaining a synergy between various stakeholders. The constant monitoring of the education sector by authorities is crucial for growth, especially in changing circumstances. Acknowledging the gravity of challenges faced by higher education, it is essential to address concerns related to competition, comparison, and personal greed, which may lead to manipulation and shortcuts. The right to freedom of expression in democratic societies has been debated extensively, and recent developments in the academic world present new challenges and competition.

The efforts by the University Grants Commission (UGC) have introduced fair practices and policies consistent with present circumstances. Reforms in the examination system are aimed at ensuring that only talent prevails, fostering an environment that supports academic excellence. The NEP's emphasis on exploring domestic underpinnings, gender sensitization, and addressing the concerns of marginalized communities through Special Education Zones is commendable. Provisions such as Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), the National Research Foundation, the National Educational Technology Forum, and the Indian Institutes of

Translation and Interpretation create an environment for students to excel globally. These initiatives also highlight the importance of social responsibility. The NEP encourages a new approach that provides a clear path for students interested in Security Studies, offering opportunities to learn new techniques. The provisions under NEP ensure the collaborative creation of ideas, providing insights into even the most complex issues.

At various educational levels, the NEP's approach involves mentors fully engaging in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all students. To enhance students' standards, there is an imperative need for self-academic orien-

tion and excellence, fostering problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities. Introducing a new syllabus can provide a deeper insight into strategic and security-related affairs, offering a roadmap for foolproof encountering strategies. This approach addresses issues such as the rise of terrorism, its causes, and the funding nexus between organised crime and terrorism.

The NEP's vision is to make India competitive in the field of Strategic education, attracting aspiring academicians and students. By providing multidisciplinary fervour, students will have wider exposure and opportunities for comparative studies, enriching analytical and theoretical rationale for crisis manage-

ment in India. As India faces myriad security challenges, there is an urgent need to address these issues on the international stage. The NEP's input will undoubtedly make each discipline richer in content and varied in ideas, providing a holistic educational experience. Even science students will be exposed to the nuances of international, national, socio-political, and economic issues through multidisciplinary practices. The ingenious display of this government's approach demonstrates a pure genius that promises to reshape the educational landscape.

(The writer is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award and is a professor and expert on strategic affairs)

Pakistan Army chief takes a dig at Iran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Taking a dig at Iran, Pakistan Army chief Gen Asim Munir has said that those who “backstab” the country will get a “befitting reply”, days after the two neighbours conducted tit-for-tat military strikes at alleged terrorist bases in both countries. During an interaction with students from public and private sector universities nationwide here on Wednesday, Munir mentioned about the recent missile attacks by Tehran within Balochistan and said that no one would be allowed to breach Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Thursday.
“You cannot backstab us, and if you do, you will get a befitting reply”, he said. Earlier this month, Pakistan conducted “precision military strikes” against what it called “terrorist hideouts” in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province that killed 9 people. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan’s unruly Balochistan province.
Munir claimed that the insurgency in Balochistan has long been supported by Afghanistan, and the western neighbour has never shown friendship towards Pakistan. Afghanistan was the only country that opposed Pakistan’s admission to the United



Nations after independence, he said. Referring to the Taliban-led administration of Afghanistan, the army chief warned, “Do not look towards Pakistan. We are ready to sacrifice anything and everything.”
“When it comes to the safety and security of every single Pakistani, the whole of Afghanistan can be damned”, he said. The army chief said Pakistan provided food for five million Afghan nationals for 50 years, but “when it comes to our children, we will pursue those who attack them.”
Pakistan has refused to negotiate with the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), whose terrorist activities in Pakistan have increased manifold since the return of the Afghan Taliban to power in August 2021. Islamabad has also applied its economic leverage to force Kabul to take action against terrorists attack-

Had told Imran to remain engaged with US: Pak ex-foreign secretary

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Pakistan’s former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood has said that he had told the trial court on Monday, Cabinet of former prime minister Imran Khan how declassification of a diplomatic communication from the country’s embassy in Washington can affect relations with the US.
Recording his statement in the cipher case involving Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who also is a senior leader from his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mahmood said he also advised Khan’s government “to remain engaged with the US.” The cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable — the cipher — that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022, and naming the US, had claimed that it was ‘evidence’ of an “international conspiracy” to topple his government.
Khan and Qureshi, accused of mishandling it for political purposes, were indicted in December 2023 and both have pleaded not guilty. This is the first time that the details of the case are being brought out in the public domain even as Khan and Qureshi continue to face the case along with others bringing no relief to them ahead of the February 8 general elections.
“Purpose of this advice was to protect the relations of Pakistan with an important country and to avoid public and politicised discussion on a secret and privileged communication,” Mahmood told the trial court on Monday, according to The News International, which said it had accessed a copy of his testimony. The former foreign secretary also shared the details of a cabinet meeting, which was called to discuss “Declassification of cipher telegram” and another meeting held in Banigala residence of the then prime minister. In the cabinet meeting, held on April 8, Mahmood said he had underlined that “declassification of cipher telegram was neither possible nor advisable in view of the cipher security guidelines, the legal position and the foreign policy implications.”
He also told the cabinet that neither there was any past precedent of declassification of cipher nor there was any legal provision in this regard for the primary reason that disclosure of text could compromise the cipher communication system, The News said. “I also added that it could affect the working of the missions and the ministry as the trust underlying confidential exchanges with foreign interlocutors could be undermined. It could also affect relations with the US and some other countries and strained relations with the US could also complicate matters with multilateral financial institutions.”



Giant Kavadi offering cages are carried by Hindu devotees in a procession during the Thaipusam festival at Batu Caves, outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday. Thaipusam, which is celebrated in honour of Hindu god Lord Murugan, is an annual procession by Hindu devotees seeking blessings, fulfilling vows and offering thanks AP/PTI

China expands loan access for property developers

AP ■ BANGKOK
China has rolled out new rules meant to expand access to commercial bank loans for property developers as Beijing doubles down on its effort to end a prolonged crisis in the real estate industry. The policies will allow real estate companies to use bank loans pledged against commercial properties such as offices and shopping malls to repay their other loans and bonds and to cover operating expenses.
They were announced late Wednesday by the People’s Bank of China, the National Financial Regulatory Administration and the Finance Ministry. Beijing has moved this week to stabilise ailing financial markets and boost the economy by freeing up more money for lending in various ways. That includes cutting required bank reserves.
The flurry of new measures and pronouncements from senior Communist Party officials about the need to stabilise financial markets and build confidence in the economy, the world’s second largest, appears to reflect a renewed determination to get growth back on track. Dozens of developers have defaulted on their debts after the government cracked down on excessive borrowing in the industry several years ago. The largest, China Evergrande, is still trying to resolve more than USD 300 billion in debts and a Hong Kong court is due to hold a hearing on its restructuring plans next week. The latest policies are not a full reversal of the effort to rein in debt and control risks in the property industry.
The new rules say the bank loans cannot be used to buy commercial housing or rental housing or to start new construction or buy land. Loans cannot exceed 70 per cent of the appraised value of the property being used as collateral and should generally last a maximum of 10 years, with an absolute limit of 15 years. They also order banks to fully conduct due diligence before and after loans are issued to mitigate and minimise risks.
It’s unclear what impact the new rules might have on the overall crisis gripping the property market. Land sales have long been a major revenue source for local governments that now are grappling with mounting debts. At the same time, stalled construction of new homes has hit contractors and suppliers of construction materials and home furnishings. In a research note, UBS economists said “the pace and potential size of such loans remain uncertain as banks will likely watch the commerciality and risks of such loans”. But they added that the move was a “significant step” to increase support for developers.
Sales of new homes and home prices have been falling, discouraging consumers from spending since Chinese families tend to have much of their wealth tied up in property. The industry as a whole accounts for about a quarter of business activity in China. “For developer financing to fundamentally and sustainably improve, property sales need to stop falling and start to recover, which could require more policy efforts to stabilize the property market,” the UBS report said.

‘China ready to work with Pak to upgrade CPEC project’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/BEIJING
China has said that it stands ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project to deepen the political mutual trust between the two “all-weather” allies, a media report said on Thursday.
Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said after having achieved the first phase of the CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin while answering a ques-

tion during a briefing on Wednesday said, “China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation.” China has said it is ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the CPEC and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, the Dawn newspaper reported.
The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan’s Balochistan with China’s Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through

Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi. “China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners”, he said. China appreciates Pakistan’s firm commitment to the One-China principle and supports Pakistan in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, stability, development and prosperity.
In Islamabad, Prime Minister Kakar said that after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. “We have already achieved the CPEC’s first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase”, he said in an interview recorded by CGTN during his recent visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.
The Chinese state-run news outlet ran the interview on Wednesday. Prime Minister Kakar said the CPEC’s second phase required road and air connectivity around industrialisation projects. “Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity — road, air and the rest of the connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another”, he said.

Flight recorders found from plane that crashed with Ukrainian POWs aboard

AP ■ MOSCOW
Investigators have found the flight recorders of a Russian military transport plane that crashed in a border region near Ukraine, Russian media reported Thursday, a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down the aircraft, which it said was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war.
The Il-76 crashed in a huge ball of fire in a rural area of Russia on Wednesday, and authorities said all 74 people on board, including the POWs, six crew and three Russian servicemen, were killed. Ukraine’s president has demanded an international investigation into the episode, which has triggered a spate of claims and counterclaims. Russian officials accused Kyiv of shooting down the plane with two missiles and said the prisoners of war were headed for an exchange. They offered no evidence for their allegation.
The Associated Press could not independently confirm who was aboard or how the plane was downed. The commander of Ukraine’s air force accused Russia of “rampant...propaganda” — though he did not specifically address the allegations. Ukrainian authorities confirmed a prisoner exchange was due to happen Wednesday, and that it was called off, but said they had no information about who was on the plane.
“We haven’t seen any indication that such a large number of people was on that plane, Ukrainian citizens or not,” Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine’s human rights ombudsman, said on national television Thursday. Ukrainian officials noted that Moscow didn’t ask for any spe-



Women lay flowers in memory of those who were killed in the plane on Wednesday, at the memorial to soldiers who died in the Great Patriotic War “Eternal Flame” in Belgorod, Russia. AP

cial airspace to be kept safe for a certain length of time, as it has in past exchanges. Without mentioning the crash, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said that the country would target any Russian military transport plane believed to be delivering missiles, especially near the border. As the conflict approaches the two-year mark, the 1,500-km (930-mile) front line has been largely static amid a second winter of fighting. With both sides seeking to replenish their weapons stockpiles, the war recently has focused on long-range strikes.
Earlier this month, in a significant blow to the Kremlin’s forces, the Ukrainian air force claimed to have shot down a Russian early warning and control plane that can spot targets up to 650 km (400 miles) away and a key command centre aircraft that relays information to troops on the ground.
The discovery of the transport plane’s flight recorders was reported Thursday by the state-owned RIA Novosti news agency, citing emergency services. However, there is slim hope that the circumstances of the crash and the Russian allegations will be clarified. The war has often featured conflicting accusations, used as ammunition in the bid to sway opinion at home and abroad.
On Thursday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated the allegation that Ukraine had downed the plane, describing it as “a totally monstrous act.”
Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukraine’s Air Force Commander, alleged that “rampant Russian propaganda is directing a fake stream of information to the interna-

tional audience, attempting to discredit Ukraine in the eyes of the global community”. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who turned 46 on Thursday, didn’t directly address Moscow’s allegation but said Ukraine would push for an international investigation. “It is necessary to establish all the facts, as much as possible, considering that the plane crash occurred on Russian territory — beyond our control”, he said in his nightly video address late Wednesday. “It’s obvious, Russians are playing with lives of Ukrainian POWs, with the feelings of their relatives and the emotions of our society.”
Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which was expected to take place on Thursday afternoon in New York. Andrei Kartapolov, head of the defense affairs committee in the lower house of the Russian parliament, said Russia would continue exchanging prisoners despite the crash. “We can’t abandon our boys and so we will speak to the devil himself to get them out”, he told reporters.
Meanwhile, Ukraine’s largest oil and gas company, Naftogaz, said Thursday that one of its data centres had come under a large-scale cyberattack that shut down the company’s web sites and call centres.
Ukraine’s national postal service, Ukrposhta, also reported a major technical failure of its IT systems. It didn’t specify whether the issue was caused by a cyberattack. Ukraine’s State Service for Transport Safety also reported a technical failure of its data center that shut down its website and other services.

Nepal asks Russia to send back its citizens recruited to fight against Ukraine

AP ■ KATHMANDU
Nepal has asked Russia to send back hundreds of Nepali nationals who were recruited to fight against Ukraine and repatriate the bodies of those who died in the conflict, Nepal’s top diplomat said on Thursday.
The Russian army is estimated to have recruited more than 200 Nepali nationals to fight in Ukraine and at least 14 of them have died there, Nepal’s Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud said in an interview with The Associated Press. “We have asked Russia to immediately stop the recruitment of Nepali nationals in their army, immediately return those who are already serving in the army, repatriate the bodies of those killed, and treat and return those who were wounded in the fighting”, Saud said.
Nepal is also seeking monetary compensation from Russia for the families of those Nepali nationals who were killed in the fighting, Saud said. Among the 14 confirmed killed Nepali nationals, Russia has said it is in possession of 12 bodies. Most Nepali people want the bodies of their deceased relatives to be cremated following religious rituals. “We have information that five of our citizens who fought on behalf of the Russians are being held captive by the Ukraine side. We are asking the Russian side to take initiatives to get them freed”, Saud said. Russian officials have not commented on the recruitment of foreign nationals for military service in Ukraine, but media reports have said that along with Nepal the Russian military has recruited some people from Cuba. Russian law allows foreign nationals to enlist in its army after they sign a contract with the Defence Ministry. In September, Cuban authorities arrested 17 people in connection with what they said was a network to recruit Cuban nationals to fight for Russia in Ukraine.

Separatist leader who called Putin cowardly sentenced to prison

Tallinn (Estonia): The Moscow City Court on Thursday convicted a former Ukraine rebel leader who called President Vladimir Putin cowardly of extremism and sentenced him to four years in prison. Igor Girkin, who used the surname alias of Strelkov (shooter), was the most prominent leader of Russian-backed separatist fighters in Ukraine’s Donetsk region in 2014, when rebellion arose after the ouster of Ukraine’s Russia-allied president.
He briefly became the self-declared separatist government’s defence minister, but left the post in August 2014 after rebel forces shot down a Malaysian passenger airliner over Donetsk, killing all 298 people aboard. He was convicted in absentia of murder in the Netherlands, where the flight had originated, for his role. He returned to Russia and became a nationalist commentator and activist. He supported launching Russia’s war in Ukraine, but sharply criticised authorities for being inept and indecisive in carrying out the fight. Girkin called Putin a “nonentity” and a person of “cowardly mediocrity”. He was arrested in July on extremism charges and remained in custody since then.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/01/2024
The Department of G.N.D.U., Amritsar invites online bids for the following:
Sr.No. 1
Item: Allotment of Canteens/shops
Quantity: 23
Closing date & time : 15/02/2024 at 5:00 p.m.
For details log onto www.eproc.Punjab.gov.in
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.
Superintendent (General) Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar
NA/12/21562/2023/31762
Dated CHD :- 1/25/2024

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
No. CE/PRO/ACCS-44/23/26 dtd. 19.01.2024
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
Name of the work: Construction of Compound Wall, Drain adjacent to PMR and along RRS-I & II tracks at MCHP area.
Estimated Cost: Rs. 3,05,60,262.83. Last Date & time of submission : 08/02/2024 up to 17:00 Hrs.
Refer our website for details: eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.
Pd/- Executive Engineer, PRD, PD, PPA
Sd/PR/80/2023-2024 dtd. 24.01.2024

United Textiles Limited
Regd. Office 7th K.M. Stone, Barwala Road, Hisar - 125001 (Haryana)
CIN: 117115HR1993PLC032092
Notice
Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, Notice is hereby given that the Meeting of Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024 at 11.00 AM at the Regd. Office of the Company to consider the Unaudited Quarterly Results for the Period Ended 31st December, 2023.
Further as per the Company’s Code of Conduct for Prevention of Insider Trading, the trading window for dealing with securities of the Company will remain close from 31.12.2023 to 48 hours after the declaration of the Financial Results. The said information is also available on the Company’s Website www.unitedtextileslimited.com and also on the website of stock exchanges at www.bseindia.com.
For United Textiles Limited (Vivek Aggarwal)
Whole Time Director
Dated 24.01.2024 (DIN 0709208)

NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN
Telephone: 0135-2714074, Fax : 0135-2651060
Website: www.nagarnigamdehradun.com Email : nagarnigam.dnd@gmail.com

Nagar Nigam Dehradun invites Request for Proposal (RFP) Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of two (02) Nos. of New Mechanical Road Sweeper Machines with 5 years comprehensive Operation and Maintenance (further extendable for 2 year) under SBM-U/NCFAP in Dehradun form eligible bidders having experience as indicated in the RFP document. Interested bidders are requested to procure the RFP document up to 25.01.2024 from e-tenders portal of government of Uttarakhand. Pre-bid meeting is scheduled at 12:00 noon on 01.02.2024. Any Addendum/Corrigendum including date of extension will be uploaded only on www.uktenders.gov.in. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online submission of bids is 14.02.2024 at 3:00PM.

Municipal Commissioner
Nagar Nigam Dehradun
No 28/SBM-U/NCFAP-MRS/2023&24 Date: 25.01.2024

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sabalenka beats US Open winner Gauff to reach final

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka avenged a US Open final loss to Coco Gauff and became the first woman since Serena Williams to reach back-to-back finals at the Australian Open on Thursday. Sabalenka attacked Gauff's serve throughout a 7-6 (2), 6-4 semi-final win. She will meet Zheng Qinwen or Dayana Yastremska in Saturday's championship decider. Zheng and No. 93-ranked Yastremska were playing their first-ever Grand Slam semi-final. Sabalenka is on a 13-match roll at Melbourne Park, where she made her Grand Slam breakthrough last year. Williams reached consecutive finals here in 2015, '16 and '17. Gauff went into the semifinals unbeaten in 2024 after winning a title in Auckland, New Zealand. The 19-year-old American was on a 12-match winning streak in majors and attempting to be the first player since Naomi Osaka in 2020-21 to win the US Open and Australian Open titles back to back. She'd worked out how to beat Sabalenka in New York last September to win her first major title but didn't have the answers this time against the only player in the final four with semi-final experience in Australia. The first set contained six service breaks, with both players



missing opportunities to serve it out. Sabalenka led 5-2 and missed a set point as Gauff held firm and went on a four-game roll to take a 6-5 lead. Gauff also couldn't serve it out, with Sabalenka's booming returns continuing to cause her trouble. In the tie-breaker, Sabalenka raced to 5-1. Chants of "Coco, Coco" went up around Rod Laver Arena but they didn't help Gauff. Almost a half-hour after her first set point, Sabalenka got five more. She clinched on the second of those with a big serve out

wide. Gauff was able to win points on only three of her 17-second serves in the first set, and that made her push harder and led to double faults. The second set was tight until Sabalenka got a service break in the ninth game. She missed her first match point when Gauff saved with a forehand winner to end a 12-shot rally. An ace down the middle earned a second match point and Sabalenka clinched it after an hour and 42 minutes. In doubles, 43-year-old Rohan

Bopanna and Matthew Ebden advanced to their second consecutive Grand Slam men's final by beating Zhang Zhizhen and Tomas Machac 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7). Tournament officials said Bopanna and Ebden, at a combined age of 79 years, will become the oldest No. 1 pairing in tennis history after the tournament. Bopanna and Ebden, ranked second in men's doubles, lost to Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury in the US Open final last September. In Saturday's final, they'll play Italian pair Simone Bolelli and Andrea Pavan.

Bopanna one match away from first Major trophy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna earned himself one more opportunity to win a Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open men's doubles final with Australian partner Matthew Ebden after prevailing in a tense semifinal against Tomas Machac and Zhang Zhizhen here Thursday. The second seeded Indo-Australian pair faced some stiff resistance from their rivals in the third set but eventually the experience of playing Super Tie Breakers helped them nail the finish with a 6-3 3-6 7-6 (10-7) scoreline after two hours and two minutes. Zhang (WR 54) and Machac (WR 75) are quality singles players, featuring in the top-100 list and their powerful hitting from the baseline did make it a tough contest for the experienced Bopanna and Ebden. A day after he was assured of becoming the world number one player, Bopanna as usual served well on big points and also manage to pull out the strokes and tricks when they needed the most. Bopanna has reached the US Open final twice (2013, 2023) but a Major trophy has eluded him in his career. Now at the fag end of his career at the age of 43,

REACHES AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINAL WITH EBDEN



he will have the chance to tick that box on Saturday. Bopanna and Ebden will face Italian pair of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Pavan, who beat German team of Yannick Hanfmann and Dominik Koepfer 6-3 3-6 7-6 (5) in the other semifinal. "On the circuit, we have played lot of Super Tie Breaks, that gets us sharp. They (Machac and Zhang) return extremely well, we had to make sure we serve well and on spots. This partnership (with Ebden) has been good," Bopanna said after the match. Asked about his success despite the age, Bopanna said, "A lot of stuff goes behind the scenes. A

big team is part of me. I just made sure I stay focussed on what I need to do to get ready, that is mobility and recovery. I do not look to lift heavy, just do yoga. I feel mental strength helps me." Ebden said winning in front of the home fans is special. "I could not be happier, winning before the home fans is special. These guys are super dangerous players. The doubles specialist against singles specialist is great (contest). It's good for the fans. We have been working hard together for years. One more match to go," he said. After splitting the first two sets, the second seeds were in a spot of bother in the opening game, down 0-30 but Bopanna's big serve came into play and he managed to make an important hold. A cross-court passing winner between Zhang and Machac was a treat for eyes. Bopanna was all over with his fiery volley winners at the net, pulling the rug from the under the feet of their rivals to get the first break of the set. The break and easy holds gave the second seeds a comfortable lead. Bopanna's sportsman spirit was on display yet again in Grand Slams when he touched net in game seven and himself conceded the point. Soon, the second seeds were serving for the match but suffered a break to allow little opening to their rivals. Bopanna hit a backhand long to be 15-30 and then Zhang found a cross court forehand winner to leave the Indian facing two break points. Bopanna hit his backhand wide on the first to allow the rivals strike back in the match. Zhang though was down 0-40 in next game to offer three match points to Bopanna and Ebden. They unseeded pair saved all three — one on Bopanna's return error second with serve and third with a crushing forehand winner down the line.

MSLTA ties up with Ferrero academy to promote tennis in Maharashtra

PTI ■ PUNE

The Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) has tied up with former world number one Juan Carlos Ferrero's academy, considered to be one of the best in the sport for the development of the game in the state. The main objective behind the initiative is to raise awareness about the Olympic Games in the state. Efforts will be made through this initiative to increase Maharashtra's representation in the quadrennial event and the athletes of the state to reach the podium in other events. "This is the academy of Ferrero, who is currently coaching Carlos Alcaraz and we are happy to join hands with him," MSLTA chairman Prashant Sutar said in a statement. MSLTA players selected from the activities will enjoy full sponsorship from Lakshyavedh, Government of Maharashtra and Mahatennis Foundation. This will include tennis training, physio, travelling and fitness coach. Hemant Bendre, senior coach and member of MSLTA coaching committee said, "We are looking for talent from various districts and taking those talented players in our training scheme. "Selected players will be brought to Balewadi for a residential camp keeping track of their year-long training and progress," he added. Further, talented players from Maharashtra will be sent to Spain for advance training at Ferrero's academy. Ferrero has so far produced world class tennis players like Pablo Carreno, Nicolas Almagro, Guillermo Garcia Lopez. Interestingly, all these players have reached the top fifty in the world ranking. Under this targeted initiative, the Juan Carlos Ferrero Academy will help the MSLTA to develop coaches and physical trainers in the state by imparting modern techniques and knowledge of sports science. Coaches from all over Maharashtra will be brought to Mhalunge Balewadi for in-house training at the Jesse Ferrero Tennis Academy. Selected coaches will be sent to Spain for further training.

Federer amazed by how much Neeraj has achieved

PTI ■ ZURICH

With their fame, success and weighty legacy sitting lightly on their shoulders, it came as no surprise when Roger Federer and Neeraj Chopra gushed about each other during a recent rendezvous, which was marked by mutual respect, admiration, and stories of triumph and dedication. Switzerland Tourism set the ball rolling by uniting the 20-time Grand Slam winner and the Olympic and world champion from India at Zurich's La Reserve Eden au Lac for a casual and free-flowing conversation. It is not often that one gets to see two dedicated, charming, and passionate sportspersons who have done their respective countries proud with their achievements, occupying the same space. "I am amazed by how much Neeraj has achieved personally and for his country through his grit and determination. "It's been great to meet him here in Zurich," said Federer, the global

HUMBLE ICONS



ambassador for Switzerland Tourism. Federer, known for his longevity and prowess on and off the tennis court, warmly welcomed Chopra who is also Switzerland Tourism's Friendship

Ambassador, to his home country, which was "a dream-come-true moment" for the 26-year-old Indian. "It's a dream come true for me to meet Roger Federer here in Zurich. I have

always admired his skill, his spirit of true sportsmanship and his ability to inspire millions around the world. "Today, however, what inspired me the most was his humility and his easy-going charm that made me feel so comfortable in his presence. "We had a wonderful time exchanging notes about our respective passions and life's experiences on and off the field," said Chopra. While Federer presented Neeraj with an autographed tennis racquet, Chopra handed the former World No 1 a signed India jersey from the Asian Games. Chopra - who became India's second individual Olympic gold medalist at the pandemic-affected Tokyo Olympics in 2021 - is hoping to repeat the feat at the Paris Olympics later this year. Since winning the gold medal at the Tokyo Games, Chopra has scripted more history by claiming a silver and an unprecedented gold medal at the World Athletics Championships. He also retained his Jakarta Asian Games gold medal at Hangzhou last year.



I have not announced retirement: Mary Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Her future is a subject of intense speculation since that final Olympic appearance in Tokyo back in 2021 but celebrated Indian woman boxer M C Mary Kom on Thursday refuted talk of retirement even though she is on the wrong side of the international cut-off age for amateur boxers. The 41-year-old six-time world champion, who won an Olympic bronze in the 2012 London edition, found herself at the centre of a social media storm after reportedly declaring that due to the 40-year age cap for amateur boxers, she has been forced to retire. In a statement this morning, she declared that she had been misquoted and a formal announcement of retirement is still some time away. "I haven't announced retirement yet and I have been misquoted. I will personally come in front of media whenever I want to announce it. I have gone through some media reports stating that I have announced retirement and this is not true," the Manipuri flyweight (51kg) category boxer asserted. She then tried to give context to her earlier comment, insisting that she was merely talking about the international rules and not referring to herself specifically. "I was attending a school event in Dibrugarh (Assam) on 24 January 2024 wherein I was motivating children and I said 'I still have hunger of achieving in sports but age limit in Olympics doesn't allow me to participate though I can carry on with my sport,' she said. "I am still focusing on my fitness and whenever I will announce retirement I will inform everyone. Please do correct this," she added. Mary Kom has not been seen in action since her pre-quarterfinal loss in the Tokyo Olympics, which was her last appearance at the quadrennial showpiece. She attempted to appear for the 2022 Commonwealth Games trials but had to pull out on the day of the selection bouts due to a torn ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) for which she underwent a surgery. However, she resumed training after rehabilitation last year and insisted that she has another 3-4 competitive years left in her even though Olympics was now out of bounds for her. Amid her gradual withdrawal, Nikhat Zareen has taken over the 51kg slot, and claimed two back-to-back world titles, the latest one coming last year. Mary Kom, on the other hand, has been seen in several administrative roles given to her by the Indian Olympic Association. She recently headed an IOA oversight panel which investigated the sexual harassment charges levelled by some top women wrestlers against the then wrestling federation head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Xavi trophy hopes at Barcelona shrink after Copa del Rey exit

AP ■ BARCELONA

The chances for Xavi Hernandez to salvage Barcelona's season — and likely his own job — are quickly fading. Barcelona has seen its best two chances of getting a title in this campaign evaporate. Xavi's side exited the Copa del Rey quarterfinals after losing in added time at Athletic Bilbao 4-2 on Wednesday, a loss that came two weeks after Barcelona was dismantled by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup. It just has the Spanish league and the Champions League to play for, and both look like long shots. Barcelona is in third place in La Liga, eight points adrift of leader Girona and seven behind Madrid. While Xavi did lead Barcelona back into the

Champions League knockout rounds for the first time in three years, it is clearly one — or two — notches below the likes of Manchester City, Madrid and other heavyweights. The 44-year-old Xavi, whose only other coaching experience was in Qatar, has recognized that a season without silverware will likely be too much for even a club great and fan favorite like him to survive despite a contract through to the end of next season. "All the coaches of big clubs depend on winning titles," Xavi said after the loss in Bilbao. "It is a fact, if we are not playing at a competitive level the normal thing would be for me to go. This is a major club. I am at Barça. Today we fought and worked hard, (but) if you don't win, the coach takes the blame." Xavi returned to coaching his boy-

hood club in November 2021 and successfully led an overhaul of the team — financed by the club mortgaging its future — to win La Liga last season, its first major title since the exit of Lionel Messi. But Barcelona has been erratic this season, when it was supposed to get younger and fitter, after the departures of veterans Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba to play with Messi in Miami. Barcelona also lost key midfielder Gavi Páez and goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to injuries, but high-profile reinforcements Ilkay Gundogan and João Félix have yet to make up for their loss. Fortunately for Xavi, his team returns home to host Villarreal in the league on Saturday. Villarreal is winless in its last four games overall and in 14th place.

"We must win on Saturday," Xavi said. "This team will turn it around by winning games. We must focus on the Spanish league and the Champions League." Madrid is also in action on Saturday when it makes a trip to the Canary Islands to face a tricky Las Palmas. Normally, this would look like a relatively easy outing for Carlo Ancelotti's side. But Las Palmas is exceeding expectations for a modest club that won promotion last season. Las Palmas is in eighth place thanks to the second-stingiest defense which has allowed only 17 goals. Madrid has the best defense with only 13 goals allowed. Surprising front-runner Girona, which has played one more game than Madrid and Barcelona, will visit Rafa Benítez's Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Avani to lead Indian team at Women Amateur Asia Pacific golf

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

Avani Prashanth, the only Indian ranked inside top-50 amateurs in the world, will lead a six-member contingent from the country at the prestigious Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific (WAAP) championship in Thailand, starting February 1. The other Indian players are Mannat Brar, Heena Kang, Vidhatri Urs, Keerthana Rajeev Nair and Saanvi Somu. The WAAP champions receive exemptions into three major championships in 2024 - the AIG Women's Open at St Andrews, the Amundi Evian Championship in France and the Chevron Championship in the United States of America. The winner will also receive invitations to a few other elite championships such as the Hana

Financial Group Championship, ISPS Handa Women's Australian Open, The 121st Women's Amateur Championship and the Augusta National Women's Amateur. Avani, ranked 42 in the world, is the winner of the Queen Sirikit Cup individual honours in 2023, and was also fourth at the individuals in 2023 World Amateur Team Championships. She also won a pro event in Europe and finished in Top-10 in numerous professional events on the Ladies European Tour including the Hero Women's Indian Open. She was also runner-up at the Australian Masters of Amateurs earlier this month in Melbourne. Her main team rivals will include Japan's Mamika Shinichi, Filipina Rianne Mikhaela Malixi and New Zealander Eunseo Choi.

Shinichi (33), Prashanth (42) and Malixi (43) are among the top ranked players in the field. Randhawa becomes first Indian to win Senior Euro Q-School Antalya, Jan 25 (PTI) Veteran golfer Jyoti Randhawa became the first Indian to finish on top in the Senior European Tour's Qualifying School and claim full playing rights in the Legends Tour this season. Randhawa finished with a 12-under 276 total and four shots ahead of his nearest rivals. Randhawa, who turned 50 in 2022 and played his first few events on the Senior Tour in Europe in 2023, shot rounds of 71-67-68-70 for 276 at the Gloria Golf Club in Antalya. Three players France's Lionel Alexandre (72), Simon Griffiths (72) of England and Spaniard Carlos Balmaseda (72) were tied for second at 280, while



Andrew Marshall of England with 75 claimed the fifth and final card on offer. The final stage of Legends School is often considered

tougher than the main event as only five cards are available from the field. The field had 55 players this year and many were past European Tour champions.

"It feels really good," said Randhawa, a three-time (2000, 2006, 2007) Hero Indian Open winner. "I got a few starts last year but I thought if I come to

Q School and get in the top five, I'll get to play the whole year, and here I am. I'm happy that I won and now I can plan my season," he added. Randhawa, a former DP World Tour player, eight-time Asian Tour winner and one-time winner in Japan, was two shots ahead after three rounds and made it four by the end of the fourth round. Randhawa played and missed the cut at the Senior Open last year, when he had Jeev Milkha Singh, who finished in Top-15, and Arjun Atwal for company. Jeev played 10 events in 2023 and had Top-10s in four of them and finished 13th on the Merit list to keep his card. "I'm pretty young for starting out (on the Legends Tour). If I can go in there and win a tournament then that makes every-

thing a lot easier. My aim is to win one and take it from there," Randhawa said. Randhawa's final round included birdies on the final two holes for a total of 12-under 276. He had started the final day with a two-shot lead and remained in control of the tournament in blustery conditions on the New Course. When Randhawa made another gain on the 10th, it looked like he would coast to victory. However, a double bogey on the 13th and a bogey on the 15th opened the door for France's Lionel Alexandre, Simon Griffiths of England and Spaniard Carlos Balmaseda. But Randhawa emphatically sealed victory with his two closing birdies, leaving the others to focus on the tight battle for the other four cards.

