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MONEY 6 GOVERNMENT WORKING ON SEZ

SPORT 8 POPE DEFIES INDIA



Bihar political pot red hot

Nitish set to get BJP support as CM Amit Shah meets

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA

Bihar Chief Minister
Nitish Kumar on
Saturday is set to make
his second political volte-face in less than three years, with a highly-placed source close to the JD(U) president saying the CM is likely to tender his resignation by Sunday morning and same day by evening likely to take Oath as CM again in the BJP combined NDA Government. Sources in Bihar Government said offices like the secretariat have been asked to remain open on Sunday "in view of hectic activity expected during the day" that may see the installation of a new government with the BJP's support. Before submitting his resignation, Nitish will hold a customary meeting of the legislature party, the source added.

While former Union Minister and senior BJP leader Radha Mohan Singh met Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar at Patna, Homé Minister Amit Shah dropped all his out of Delhi schedule due to the political instability in Bihar. A meeting of State BJP executive comprising party's MPs and MLAs attended by



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, along with Union MoS Ashwani Kumar Chaubey, offers prayers at Brahmeshwar Temple in Buxar on Saturday

Union Ministers, sitting MPs were held at Patna and sources said BJP MLAs and MPs will meet again at 10 am at the party office in Patna to further chalk out the strategy. The attendees, however, Nitish on Saturday attended included senior BJP leader

few public programmes scheduled but his deputy CM from alliance partner RJD, Tejashwi Yadav, remained conspicuous by his absence.

and Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey. While the JD(U) which used

to be on a defensive note till a day earlier saying that INDIA alliance is intact with JD(U) its major partner, on Saturday

categorically held Congress responsible for the turn of events as TMC and AAP also has also vent their anger and announced to go it alone in the Lok Sabha polls this year. Continued on Page 2

Chirag Paswan

On a day marked by the escalating political turmoil in Bihar, which gained momentum towards a change leading to the cancellation of all scheduled events for Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday, Chirag Paswan, the president of the Lok Janshakti Party (Ramvilas), a major player in Bihar politics, met with Amit Shah and BJP met with Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda. The purpose of the meeting was to seek assurance that Chirag Paswan's presence in the BJP-led NDA in Bihar would not be diminished in light of the return of Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar. Nitish Kumar.

Shah's scheduled visit to Telangana on Sunday and his late-evening arrival in Kolkata for a two-day political tour of West Bengal been cancelled, according to government sources. Union Tourism Minister and BJP State president G Kishan Reddy said that Shah's tour was cancelled due to emergency



work. During his visit, Shah was supposed to hold meetings with party leaders functionaries in Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar, and Hyderabad. "We have now been

informed from New Delhi that the Home Minister will not be able to visit Bengal this time," said a member of the West Bengal BJP State committee. The committee member added that Shah was originally scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Sunday, with a packed itinerary for two days.

He was scheduled to have an organisational meeting at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district to discuss the organisation affairs in

constituencies district.

In Kolkata, he scheduled to hold an organisation meeting with the top State BJP leadership to take stock of the preparations of forthcoming Lok Sabha polls.

During the tour he also was scheduled to hold a public rally at Mecheda in East Midnapore, which is the native district of Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari. Lok Janshakti Party, before the split between Paswan and his uncle Pashupati Nath Paras had fought on six seats in

2019 Lok Sabha polls. Continued on Page 2



In this photo provided by the Indian Navy on Saturday, a view of the oil tanker Marlin Luanda on fire after an attack, in the Red sea. The crew aboard a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker hit by a missile launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels is battling a fire onboard the stricken vessel sparked by the strike

INDIAN NAVY ON RESCUE MISSION

AP JERUSALEM

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

The attack on the Marlin

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

blamed on the U.S. The Marlin Luanda burned hours until being extinguished on Saturday,

said Trafigura, a Singaporebased trading firm. Its crew of 25 Indian nationals and two Sri Lankans were still trying to battle the blaze sparked by the missile strike, $i\bar{t}$ said. No one was injured by the blast, it added.

The Indian Navy is assisting in firefighting efforts. The Navy said that its guided destroyer, INS missile Visakhapatnam, was deployed in the Gulf of Aden

in response to a distress call from the oil tanker on the night of January 26.

firefighting efforts ard the distressed onboard Merchant Vessel are being augmented by the NBCD team along with firefighting equipment, deployed by INS Visakhapatnam to assist the crew onboard the MV," the Navy said in a statement.

Early Saturday, US Forces conducted a strike against a Houthi anti-ship missile that was aimed at the Red Sea and prepared to launch, the US Military's Central Command said. That attack came after the USS Carney, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, had to shoot down a Houthi missile targeting it.

Continued on Page 2



AGENCIES CHENNAI

The internal rift within the INDIA Bloc is deepening, with a DMK Minister in Tamil Nadu launching a fresh attack on ally Congress. The Minister alleged that the Congress is more concerned about securing seats for itself in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, neglecting the collective interests of the coalition.

Acknowledging that the Congress is a "big and old Congress is a "big and old party", DMK Minister Raja Kannappan said it has "lost its strength".

"As far as the Congress is concerned, they run the party only to get seats. What is the use of that? They don't run the party thinking they should work hard or do good for the people. But when elections come closer, they will come. This doesn't work amongst the people," he has said at an event to pay tribute to the martyrs of the language struggle in Puducherry.

Continued on Page 2

Akhilesh offers 11 seats, **Congress to** take call

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Nitish Kumar's AS INTERIOR TO LEAVE TO LEAVE THE INDIA NIDA rejoin the BJP-led NDA, the Samajwadi Party announced on Saturday that it has offered 11 Lok Sabha seats to the Congress in Uttar Congress in Uttar
Akhilesh asserted that their alliance is "off to a good start". Yadav said in a post in Hindi on X, "Our cordial alliance with the Congress is off to a good start with 11 strong seats. This trend will move forward with the winning equation. The INDIA team and PDA (Picchda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) strategy will change history." However, UP Congress president Ajay mentioned that mentioned decision on the matter will be taken by his party's national leadership.

Continued on Page 2

Congress finds cold comfort in SP and DMK Kerala Governor

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The entire State of Kerala,

1 except for hardcore Marxists, was in for a shock as alleged goons, claimed to be activists of the CPI(M), attempted to physic Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Saturday. The Governor was travelling in his car from Thiruvananthapuram to Kollam when CPI(M) activists intercepted his car and began hitting the windshield and bonnet. When the Governor exited the car, the assailants escaped to safety. The initially silent police eventually persuaded the Governor to return to the car, but he requested a chair from a roadside vendor, sat on the pavement, and contacted the office of Union Home Minister Amit

Addressing reporters at the scene, Arif Mohammed Khan said that the series of attacks carried out on him by CPI(M) activists over the last few months were allegedly orchestrated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. "I don't have a problem with them waving black flags at me and raising slogans against me. However, when they attack the official car in which I travel, the situation becomes dangerously serious," said the Governor.



Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan stages a sit-in protest at a tea shop at Nilamel against the police's alleged failure in preventing black flag protests by the Students Federation of India (SFI) in Kollam district on Saturday

Ramkumar. octogenarian lawyer and rights leader, human described the attack on the Governor as improper and illegal. "The Governor is the Head of the State as well as the First Citizen of the State. If the Government fails to provide foolproof security to its own head, what should we understand about the intention of the council of ministers? This Government

the has failed in its Constitutional responsibilities, and it is an unconscionable Ramkumar told The Pioneer. Within hours of the attack on the Governor, the home ministry upgraded security cover to that of Z Plus, and the commandos of the CRPF took over the responsibility from the lethargic wing of the State Police.

Continued on Page 2

announces its Election Prabharis

RAJESH KUMAR NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP on Saturday **■** appointed election in-charges and co-in-charges for 23 States and Union Territories in preparation for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In the crucial Hindi heartland State of Uttar Pradesh, which sends 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha, the party has named former Rajya Sabha MP Baijayant Panda as its State incharge, while party's IT cell head Amit Malviya has also been rewarded with a post as he was appointed co-in-charge for West Bengal.

Former Maharashtra minister Vinod Tawde has been named as the party's in-charge for Bihar ongoing

Nitish Kumar is likely to switch over to the NDA. BJP Rajya Sabha member and former Iharkhand unit chief Deepak Prakash will be the co-in-charge, according to a party statement. Former Union Minister Prakash

developments in the state, where

Javadekar has been appointed to oversee the southern State of Kerala, while BJP national secretary Arvind Menon has been appointed as the election incharge for Tamil Nadu. These appointments were made by BJP president JP Nadda in anticipation of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. This comes two days after the release of the campaign theme song and video, "Tabhi toh

sab Modi ko chunte hain. political BJP Rajya Sabha member and



former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has been designated as the election incharge for Haryana. BJP leader Surendra Nagar will serve as the co-in-charge for elections in the state. Former Bihar minister and BJP's in-charge for West Bengal,

Pandey, Mangal has been appointed as the election incharge for the state. BJP leaders Amit Malviya and Asha Lakra will serve as the co-in-charges. Nadda has appointed Mahendra Singh, an MLC in Uttar Pradesh

Upadhyay will serve as the co-incharge for the State. Upadhyay has previously held positions as the president and vice president of the state BJP in Delhi. Former Gujarat chief minister and BJP in-charge for Punjab, Vijay

Rupani, has been appointed as the election in-charge for the State, with Narinder Singh, a BJP national secretary, as co-in-charge. Rupani will also oversee the election in Chandigarh.

The BJP has designated former Uttar Pradesh minister Shrikant and a former State minister, as the Sharma as the election in-charge

election in-charge for

Madhya Pradesh. Singh

recognised as a significant force

behind the saffron party's outstanding victory in the 2016

Assam Assembly Elections. Satish

for Himachal Pradesh, with Sanjay Tondon serving as the co-in-charge. Rajya Sabha member and national general secretary Radha Mohan Das Agrawal will be the election in-charge for Karnataka, and Sudhakar Reddy will serve as the co-in-charge.

BJP co-in-charge for political affairs in Jammu and Kashmir Ashish Sood has been appointed as the election in-charge for Goa. Gujarat MLA Purnesh Modi has been designated as the election incharge for Daman and Diu, with Dushyant Patel as the co-in-charge. Party leader Ashok Singhal has been appointed as the election in-charge for Arunachal Pradesh. Y Satya Kumar, a BJP national secretary and in-charge for political affairs in Andaman and

election in-charge for the Union Territory. BJP national general Dushyant secretary Gautam has been appointed as the election in-charge of Uttarakhand. BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, who is also the party's in-charge for political affairs in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, has been named as the election in-charge for both Union Territories. The party's Rajya Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh, Vijaypal Singh Tomar, will serve as the in-charge for elections in Odisha, while Chhattisgarh MLA Lata Usendi will be the co-incharge. Nirmala Kumar Surana, the BJP's in-charge for political affairs in Puducherry, has been given charge of elections as well.

Nicobar, has been named the

Modi champions unity with call for One World, One Family, One Future

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted a host of measures taken by his government on Saturday to assert that it has empowered the youth and women, emphasising that a developed India will fulfill their dreams. "You are the architect of a developed India," he told youngsters at the annual NCC-PM rally at the Cariappa Parade Ground. PM Modi witnessed a cultural programme and presented the Best Cadet Awards. He also flagged off the Mega Cyclothon by NCC Girls and the Nari Shakti Vandan Run (NSRV) from Jhansi to Delhi. The Prime Minister pointed out that the rally is strengthening the spirit of "one world, one family, one future". He mentioned that in 2014, there were cadets from 10 countries in this rally; today, the number has gone up to 24.

Noting that the historic 75th Republic Day was dedicated to Nari Shakti, Modi said that

strides made by the daughters of India in every walk of life. He praised the cadets who were awarded on occasion and acknowledged the Cycle groups from Vadodara and Kashi, mentioning his being an MP from both places.

Recalling the times when the role of women in society was limited to cultural arrangements

organisations, the Prime Minister said that the world today is witnessing the daughters of India proving their mettle in every field, be it land, sea, air, or space. The number of women in Central security forces has doubled in the last 10 years, Prime Minister Modi said, and added that states are also being encouraged to follow a similar path.

Modi outlined his vision for India's youth, emphasising their pivotal role in shaping the nation's future over the next 25 years. Speaking from the heart, Modi declared,



"This transformative era, the upcoming 25 years, will not only witness the creation of a developed India but will primarily benefit the youth,

Highlighting the youth as the primary beneficiaries of Îndia's development journey,

the Prime Minister remarked, "The biggest beneficiaries of this era are young individuals like you." He underscored the significance of continuous hard work, saying, "It will be imperative for all of you to consistently strive

taking place, benefiting the creativity of the youth the most," he said. A decade ago, people were struggling for 2G and 3G infrastructure, while now, 5G and optical fiber networks are reaching every

village, Modi added.

"A digital revolution has been In a swipe at previous dispensations, he mentioned they deliberately neglected the development of border villages, referring to them as the last villages of the country. Modi said that his Government has taken up their development in a

villages will emerge as prominent tourist centres. He noted that these villages are now seen as the "first villages" of the country. The Government has launched a "vibrant village" programme for their development, he added.

The Prime Minister said India now has the thirdlargest start-up ecosystem, with over 1.25 lakh start-ups and more than 100 unicorns. He mentioned that lakhs of youngsters are getting quality jobs in these firms, asserting that the digital economy will become the new strength and identity of India's young power. worthy government makes decisions in the present while keeping future possibilities in mind and has its priorities clear," he

India has now become the second-biggest mobile phone manufacturer and importer, making it more affordable for the country's youth, he added. Modi said that his mobile data is available at a very affordable rate. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was also present at the event. "The event includes a cultural program on the theme 'Amrit

Kaal Ki NCC, showcasing the contribution empowerment of the Amrit Peedhi," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a release. PMO mentioned that in the true Indian spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", more than 2,200 NCC cadets and young cadets from 24 foreign countries are taking part in this year's rally. The event included a cultural programme on the theme "Amrit Kaal Ki NCC", showcasing the contribution and empowerment of the Amrit Peedhi. As special guests, more than 400 Sarpanches of the Vibrant Villages and more than 100 women belonging to various self-help groups from different parts of the country

will also attend the NCC PM

Very much part of INDIA Bloc at national level: TMC

PTI KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Saturday asserted that its leader, Mamata Banerjee, has never indicated a departure from the Opposition bloc INDIA at the national level, despite recent announcements of the party's decision to contest the Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal alone.

On the ongoing speculation surrounding TMC's stance within the opposition front, spokesperson Kunal Ghosh emphasised that Banerjee only advocated the party's solo participation in the Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal owing to "unreasonable demands" from the Congress

"Mamata Banerjee has never



said that we are not part of the opposition bloc in India. The name 'INDIA' for the opposition front was coined by our party supremo herself. We have only stated our intention to contest alone in Bengal due to unjustified demands

from the Congress and utterances of its state president Adhir Chowdhury," Ghosh

stated. This clarification comes amid the backdrop of an impasse over seat-sharing between TMC and Congress, with

Banerjee's recent announcement of TMC's decision to go solo in Bengal.

In response, the Congress adopted a conciliatory tone, acknowledging Banerjee's significance within the opposition alliance INDIA, and expressing optimism about resolving the seat-sharing deadlock.Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, on Thursday, expressed hope for a solution to the impasse.

Banerjee, while affirming TMC's commitment to the opposition alliance on Wednesday, clarified that the party would remain a part of the 'INDIA' bloc at the national level, indicating that strategic decisions would follow

NCC volunteers join fight against blood disorders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Setting an exemplary initiative among their peers across the country, several volunteers of National Cadet (NCC) from Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have joined forces to spearhead Government's National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission (NSCEM) aiming to eradicate sickle cell disorder by

A pilot campaign was launched recently at the initiative of Major Ġeneral Ajay Kumar Mahajan, Additional Director General in the two States, NCC Directorate involving NCC volunteers organizing various activities, including rallies, distribution of awareness materials, street plays,



and guest lectures by medical

At least 1654 cadets participated in the campaign led by Lt (Dr) Chandra Bahadur Singh Dangi, Associate NCC officer 1 MP CTR NCC, Ram Krishna Dharmarth Foundation University, highlighting the cadets' crucial role in spreading awareness and fostering a collective effort towards elimination of the blood disorder. "With a mission to eliminate sickle cell & thalassemia disorder by 2047, the NCC cadets

have joined the forces to raise awareness and engage communities in the fight against the genetic disorders like sickle cell and thalassemia in the country," said Lt (Dr) Dangi.

"As envisioned by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government is committed to eliminate the disease before India celebrates its Amrit Kaal in 2047. We hope NCC Cadets from other States too will join the campaign and help eliminate these deadly genetic disorders," he added.

In 2023, Modi had launched the NSCEM in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh.

Lt (Dr) Dangi added that around 5614 cadets of Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Raipur etc group in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh directorate participated at rallies, distributed awareness material, and held street plays among others.

"The programmes were in keeping with the Mission's aim of creating awareness in this direction among the masses, especially in tribal regions by ensuring Jan Bhagidari among others," said Lt. (Dr) Dangi who is also associated with Global Research and Welfare Society. The idea is to counter misconceptions among masses and bring them on board to develop a truly participative ecosystem for eliminating the disease, he added.

RFID registration to begin soon: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board will start the in managing long queues and chaotic conditions during peak rush, at Katra railway station soon, an official said on Saturday.

"Safety, convenience and ease of the devotees visiting the shrine remains the top priority of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Śhrine Board (SMVDSB). Soon RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) registration will be started at Katra railway station which helps in managing long queue and chaotic conditions during peak rush," Chief Executive Officer Anshul Garg said.

He said that several counters will be set up at the railway station for registration.

Garg, who is taking forward various development works to make pilgrims the best experience for the devotees coming from across the world, said, "The Board is also planning a laser show at Banganga based on Mata Ki Kahani for the pilgrims adopting conventional

routes for the pilgrimage."
In addition, holding areas are being developed at Adhkuwari having the capacity to accommodate about 2500 to 3,000 pilgrims at any point in time, the official said and added this will provide ease and comfort to the devotees besides ensuring effective crowd management. Garg said the construction of



a new Vaishnavi Bhawan, which can accommodate 300 pilgrims on a daily basis is bound to give a new shape and structure to the comforts and convenience of the pilgrims visiting the holy shrine.

"The building with a timeline of 18 months once completed shall have provisions for Bhojanalya coupled with washrooms, aimed at making the stay quite pleasant and congenial," he added.

Garg said that based on the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Ujjain Mahakaleshwar Dham and Golden Temple, the illumination of façade by digitally-controlled, multi-coloured LED lights will be a permanent feature from the coming chaitra navratri at Darshni Deodi,

Adhkuwari and main Bhawan. These lights will reflect the grandeur of the shrine, he added. Garg underscored that Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board has in its endeavor been developing and continually upgrading the pilgrim-centric facilities and with the determined efforts and blessings of added.

Mata Vaishno Devi, the pilgrimage to the holy cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi had set a remarkable record in 2023 by witnessing the arrival of 95.22 lakh pilgrims, marking the highest number in the past decade.

He added that emphasis has been laid on yatra management for which adequate arrangements have been meticulously executed by the Board. "These include Śkywalk at Mata Vaishno Devi Bhawan and the remodeled Parvati Bhavan which has proven to be instrumental in managing the surge in pilgrims. Besides, with the enlargement of the Atka area, the sitting capacity has been enhanced and every month about 20,000 to 25,000 pilgrims are able to attend the morning and evening prayers," Garg

With the commencement of third langar facility at Bhairon Ji after Tarakote Marg and Sanjichhat, now about 8,000 to 10,000 pilgrims are availing free meals per day on the track, he

Scientists find protein that can help prevent, control dengue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Ccientists have found a pro-Stein in the Aedes aegypti mosquitoes that could one day help prevent and control the infection from dengue virus. Dengue virus — from the genus flavivirus - causes dengue fever in humans and is spread from a bite of an infected female Aedes aegypti mos-

In 2023, over 5 million cases of dengue fever were reported globally. Currently, there is no specific treatment for dengue fever and the only dengue vaccine available, namely Dengvaxia, is for children who have previously been infected with dengue virus and living in areas where dengue is common.

The team from the National University of Singapore (NUS) revealed the structure and function of a pupal cuticle protein found in the exoskeleton -- a hard covering that supports and protects the bodies of some types of invertebrate animals, especially arthropods -- of Aedes aegypti mosquitoes. The findings, which were published in Protein Science, suggest the potential of this cuticle protein as a target for developing innovative methods to control dengue virus infec-

"The findings indicate that



potential target for developing inhibitors or antibodies to control dengue virus infec-tion," said Professor J Sivaraman, from the Department of Biological Sciences under the NUS Faculty of Science.

"These insights contribute to understanding the molecular dynamics of mosquito-virus interactions and open avenues for novel antiviral strategies," he added.

Previous research has found that cuticle proteins from Aedes aegypti play a part in blocking infection of mosquito-borne viruses, such as Zika virus and West Nile virus, by interacting with the proteins on the surface of these virus-

To begin exploring the role of the cuticle protein in inhibiting dengue virus infection, the NUS scientists employed a technique known as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy which uses a powerful magnetic field to analyse the molecular structure of the cuticle protein, and found that the protein takes on a disordered structure.

pupal cuticle protein is a

Bihar political...

However, the son of the late

Ram Vilas Paswan did not disclose the details of his discussion with Shah and Nadda regarding political developments in the State. Paswan and Upendra politically antagonistic to Nitish Kumar, have been approached by the BJP in the last few days. Paswan played a significant role in the JD(U)'s poor performance in the 2020 Assembly polls, leading to strained relations with the BJP before Kumar severed ties and allied with the RJD in 2022. BJP allies are concerned that Nitish Kumar's presence in the NDA may reduce their share of seats in the polls.

On Saturday, Nitish attended a few scheduled public programmes, while his deputy CM from the alliance partner RJD, Tejashwi Yadav, remained conspicuously absent. The attendees, however, included senior BJP leader and Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey.

While the JDU, which was on a defensive note until a day earlier, maintained that the INDIA alliance is intact with the JDU as its major partner, on Saturday, it categorically held Congress responsible for the turn of events. TMC and AAP have also expressed their displeasure and announced plans to go it alone in the Lok Sabha polls this year.

JDU political adviser and spokesperson KC Tyagi told reporters in Delhi that the grand alliance government in Bihar is on the verge of collapse. He accused a section of the Congress leadership of repeatedly "insulting" Nitish the Congress stated that their party chief, Mallikarjun Kharge, made attempts to speak to Nitish Kumar, but each time it was conveyed that the CM was

Mahagathbandhan partners, the RJD and the Congress, engaged in extensive deliberations over the course of action to be followed in the event of Nitish Kumar calling off the alliance and returning to the BJP-led NDA.

Leaders of the RJD also gathered at the residence of national vice-president and former chief minister Rabri Devi, who shares her government bungalow with Tejashwi Yadav, her son, and husband Lalu Prasad, who is the party president. RJD, with 79 MLAs, is the

single largest party in the Assembly and leads the Mahagathbandhan, which includes the Congress and three Left parties. The Mahagathbandhan falls eight members short of the majority in the assembly if Nitish Kumar's JD(U) pulls

Akhilesh offers 11

From Page 1 Elaborating developments, the chief spokesperson of Samajwadi Party, Rajendra (Samajwadi Party) have offered 11 seats to them (the Congress) so that there is a respectable mutual coordination among us, and

Chaudhary also mentioned that the party's top leadership is in continuous contact with the Congress. He clarified that the number of seats offered, currently standing at 11, is not expected to increase

together we can defeat the

in the future. We have allocated 11 seats to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and seven seats to the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), making it a total of 18 seats. The Samajwadi Party plans to contest 62 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha election," said the chief spokesperson of the SP.

In the current Lok Sabha, the Samaiwadi Party holds three seats, while the Bahujan Samaj Party has 10 MPs. Sonia Gandhi is the lone Congress MP from the state, representing the Rae Bareli constituency. The Apna Dal (Sonelal) has two MPs, and the BJP has 64 MPs from the

Amit Shah meets...

From Page 1

Paswan insists that his faction should be given six seats, including Hajipur that his father had held eight times, and where Paras is the incumbent MP. Kumar's return has put Paswan in a corner, since his politics has

centred around confrontation with the Bihar Chief Minister in the past four years.

He had walked out of the NDA in 2020 Bihar Assembly election and his party fielded several candidates against

Speaking to reporters after the meetings with top BJP leaders, Paswan said that his party will take a "final stand" only after Nitish Kumar makes the formal

announcement."We have shared our concerns, which have become more serious, in view of the

few days. Both Nadda and Shah have assured that all the issues we have flagged will be dealt with. So far, the situation is positive in the NDA. Our final stand will be clear in the coming days," he said. Paswan told media he would

events in Patna over the last

first wait to see whether the JDU president joins the BJPled alliance or not before finalising his party's stand on the matter. Son of the late Ram Vilas Paswan however did not reveal what Shah and Nadda told him about political developments in the

INDIAN NAVY...

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

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

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

Congress...

From Page 1 "That is why the BJP is trying

to do too much. The BJP can't do that with us. We don't get scared. We will chase them away. We will take care of the BJP," he said.

The DMK and the Congress, who are partners in the Tamil Nadu government, are set to hold the first round of formal seat-sharing talks for the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Chennai on Sunday.

Kanappan said, "As far as the INDIA bloc is concerned, our leader spoke about it even a day back. Congress is a big and old party. I'm not denying that. But they have lost their

CPI(M) goons attack... From Page 1

Interestingly, earlier this week, Union Minister of State V Muraleedharan had said that the life of Governor Arif Mohammed Khan was in danger and that his security needed to be increased.

The attack on the Governor on Saturday is being viewed as a consequence of the speech he delivered during the Republic Day Parade in Thiruvananthapuram, where he called for a cessation of political and external interferences in institutions of higher learning to maintain their autonomy. A disgruntled popularly known as Karana

Bhoothan, was observed walking away once the function concluded.

Later in the day, Education Minister V Sivankutty and the party's State secretary MV Govindan were deployed by Karana Bhoothan to confront the Governor, which they did with finesse. The duo urged the Centre to

abolish the post of Governor, deeming inconsequential position.

Student wing leader of the CPI(M) PM Arsho blamed the Governor for Saturday's incident. "Arif Mohammed Khan does not possess the qualities to be the Governor

BJP offered 7 AAP MLAs ₹25 crore to quit party: CM

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Amid Bihar political tur-moil in the Opposition's INDIA bloc, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday claimed that there has been a conspiracy to topple his Government and recently and accused the Bharativa Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to "buy" seven Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs with an offer of ₹25 crore each. Kejriwal claimed that the BJP engaged in talks with the AAP legislators and purportedly threatened imminent arrest for the Delhi Chief Minister in connection with the Delhi liquor policy case.

According to Kejriwal, the callers claimed they were in contact with 21 AAP MLAs. The MLAs were allegedly promised ₹25 crore and a BJP ticket each to contest the elections after the toppling of the Delhi government, the AAP leader charged.

Kejriwal added that all the seven AAP MLAs refused to quit the party.

He also claimed that attempts were being made to get him arrested in connection with the alleged liquor scam to bring down the AAP government in Delhi. Several conspiracies were hatched in the past nine years to topple the AAP government in Delhi but they all failed, Kejriwal said. "God and the people always supported us. This time also these people will fail in their nefarious intentions," he said.

The development came at a time when the Opposition bloc



INDIA is on a limb after the AAP in Punjab and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal decided against fighting the Lok Sabha election together. The bloc's internal turmoil also seems to have intensified amid strong indications that Chief Minister and JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar may do yet another volte-face and return to the BJP-led NDA.

In the long post on X, Kejriwal also said, "Recently, they [BJP] has contacted 7 of our MLAs of Delhi and said - 'We will arrest Kejriwal after a few days. After that, we will break the MLAs. Talks have been held with 21 MLAs. Talking to others also. After that, we will topple the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi. You can also come. Will give Rs 25 crore and contest the elections on BJP tick-

Despite the claim of contacting 21 MLAs, Kejriwal insisted that the information available to the AAP suggests that only seven MLAs have been topple the government through the arrest on the pretext of a fake liquor scam." At a press conference here,

Delhi minister Atishi alleged that the BJP has launched "Operation Lotus 2.0" in Delhi. "They had made a similar attempt to poach AAP MLAs last year by offering them money but failed," she claimed. She said similar conspiracies were hatched by the BJP in the past also. In 2022, they tried to break away AAP MLAs and get them join the BJP by promising them money, she added. The Delhi Minister charged that the BJP undertook "Operation Lotus" in states where it failed to form its government. Such operations were conducted in the past in states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, she alleged. Atishi claimed that the recording of one caller who contacted an AAP MLA is available and it will be brought into public domain at the right time.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva hit back saying, "This shows how much politically desperate Kejriwal has become. This unfounded allegation by him is an attempt to keep himself politically alive. The allegation that the BJP wants to break away MLAs of the ruling AAP, having 62 out of 70 MLAs in Delhi, shows his

mental bankruptcy." Delhi BJP vice president Kapil Mishra has also slammed the Kejriwal, saying he had made such baseless allegations in the past without any proof or evi-

Charges false, provide proof or resign, BJP asks Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday rejected as "false" and "baseless" Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's allegation that it was trying to poach AAP legislators to topple his Government and asked him to either give proof to substantiate his claim or

The BJP leaders said he had made similar accusations against the party several times in the past but never provided any proof to bolster them. The Delhi BJP, however, challenged AAP to name the MLAs and the people who allegedly contacted them with the offer. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Kejriwal should stop "lying" and dared him to tell the names of the MLAs who, the AAP chief has claimed, were contacted by the

"Kejriwal's statement shows his political frustration. He said that the BIP wants to break off his party MLAs. This shows his mental bankruptcy and how much a party of 62 MLAs (out of 70 in Assembly) is frustrated after losing its political ground," he said. Addressing a Press conference, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and



Delhi BJP Secretary Ms. Bansuri Swaraj along with Delhi BJP General Secretary Mrs. Kamaljit Sehrawat and Media Head Shri Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that Kejriwal's baseless rhetoric shows that the end of his politics has begun, said that Chief Minister Kejriwal has made "false allegations to defame the BJP".

"He should provide proof of his statement otherwise he should resign from the post of Chief Minister," Bidhuri said, adding that the BJP is consulting experts for legal action in this matter.

He also claimed that Kejriwal's dream of becoming a major political leader in the country was disintegrating as the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was soaring after the consecration of the

BJP is going to win 400 seats in Lok Sabha polls, so AAP is falsely accusing the BJP of poaching its MLAs," he said.

The AAP leaders have also alleged that the BJP was conspiring to get Kejriwal arrested in a "fake" liquor scam case and topple his government by poaching AAP MLAs.

Sachdeva said,"People can see that Kejriwal needs an alliance for survival as his political ground has slipped ahead of Lok Sabha polls. So, he is making such absurd statements so that he can stay alive politically."

The "absurd" claims made by Kejriwal and other AAP including leaders Delhi minister Atishi show that they have lost all their discretion before their imminent fall,

Swarai said. "Keiriwal has now run out of excuses to avoid ED investigation in the liquor scam so he has started resorting to lies," she charged. Kejriwal has so far skipped four notices of the Enforcement Directorate for questioning in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged excise policy scam in his government. Delhi BJP general secretary Kamaljit Sehrawat claimed there was "unrest" among the AAP MLAs and MPs and Kejriwal was accusing the BJP "due to frustration with his

own people". "Kejriwal is levelling wild allegations against the BJP to divert attention from the way opposition bloc Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) was breaking apart in different states," claimed Delhi BJP media cell head Praveen Shankar Kapoor.

Refuting the allegation, Delhi BJP secretary Harish Khurana challenged Atishi to name the MLAs contacted and also those who reached out to them with the offer.

He said AAP was trying to shift focus from Kejriwal skipping ED summons for questioning

Atishi interacts with elderly pilgrims Former Jamia VC Najma continues

approached, and all of them

have firmly declined the tempt-

This means that I am not

being arrested to investigate

any liquor scam but they are

conspiring to topple the Aam

Aadmi Party government in

"In the last nine years, they

hatched many conspiracies to

topple our government. But

they did not get any success.

God and the people always supported us. All our MLAs are

also strongly together. This

time also these people will fail

in their nefarious inten-

tions."Kejriwal added that the

alleged attempts to destabilise

his government are driven by

the AAP's good work in the national capital.

"These people know our gov-

ernment has done so much

work for the people of Delhi.

Despite all the obstacles creat-

ed by them, we have accom-

plished so much. The people of

Delhi love AAP hugely. It is not

in their power to defeat AAP in

Delhi," Kejriwal stated.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The 88th train under the The 88th train unuer me Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Scheme of the Delhi government Kameshwaram with 780 elderly devotees on Saturday. Prior to the journey, a devotional evening was organised at Thyagaraj Stadium for all pilgrims. Revenue Minister Atishi attended, interacted with the pilgrims, and handed them journey tickets and kits. On this occasion, Revenue Minister Atishi said, "I would

like to express gratitude on behalf of all the elderly in Delhi to Chief Minister who Kejriwal, considers all the elderly in Delhi as his own parents and, organising pilgrimage journeys for them in Delhi." She stated that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is modernday Shravan Kumar and has sent over 83,000 elderly individuals on pilgrimage through 87 trains from Delhi



regardless of any obstacles, the series of pilgrimage journeys for the elderly will not be halted, and he will ensure that every elderly In such circumstances, it Station to Rameshwaram. person in Delhi gets the brings great joy that we are Before this, a devotional pilgrimage. The Revenue Minister said

that she is pleased to note that more than 80 per cent of the elderly going on pilgrimage trips in recent times are women.

This is a very positive development because, in citizens to various pilgrimage

pledged that Indian society, a woman often dedicates her entire life to serving her family and tends to put her family ahead of herself.

> have devoted their entire lives to serving their families on a pilgrimage at this stage of life. It is to be noted that under the Mukhyamantri Teerthyatra Ďelhi government has been organizing visits for its elderly

sites across the country for the past two to three years. As part of this series, on Saturday evening, a train departed Safdarjung Railway Thyagaraj Stadium by the Delhi Government.

The aim was to provide an opportunity for pilgrims to connect with their fellow travelers, who are embarking on a spiritual journey, and to find inner peace. "Playing the role of Shravan Kumar, he has

journeys for nearly 83,000 elderly individuals," she said Under the scheme, the Kejriwal Government sends travelers by AC trains, books AC hotels for them, arranges timely meals, sightseeing, and ensures that there is never a situation where the elderly have to face any issues. The Kejriwal government ensures that all facilities are maintained for the elderly throughout the entire journey. Delhi Government

facilitates visits Rameshwaram Dwarkadhish, Somnath, Nageshwar, Jagannath Puri, Mahakal, Shirdi Tirupati Tamkeshwaram, Ayodhya, Kartarpur Sahib, Mathura-Vrindavan, and Haridwar. Eligible travelers can choose their preferred pilgrimage destination, covers government expenses for the visit.

to stay put in university bungalow

Former Jamia Millia Islamia Vice-Chancellor Najma Akhtar has sought time to vacate the official bungalow saying she needs time to make an alternative arrangement, a senior university official said on Saturday. The university is yet to respond to Akhtar's request which has been pending with the registrar's office for over a month.

The official, said on the condition of anonymity, said "Professor Najma has written a letter to the university administration requesting to get an extension on her stay in an alternative arrangement." According to the Central employee has to vacate the official residence within a month from the date of end of tenure. Akhtar's tenure ended on November 12 last year. Jamia, however, doesn't follow



within which an outgoing Vice-Chancellor must vacate the official residence, an official from the VC office said. Akhtar, when asked, said she had not received any communication by the varsity about eviction. "I wrote to the university for an extension even before my tenure ended. response to the letter," Akhtar

According to her, several Vice-Chancellors in the past continued to occupy the VC lodge for as long as six months after their tenure ended.

Akhtar also said the university administration is yet to clear her dues amounting to ₹9 lakh (this includes ₹1 lakh outstanding as salary and ₹8 lakh for earned leaves). She said, "JMI has retained my

entitlement funds up to ₹ 9 lakh without telling me the reason. Never in the history of Jamia, such a treatment was meted out to an outgoing VC. The university can adjust any bills that apply to my stay here in this amount."

When asked about the pending funds, Jamia's Acting Vive-Chancellor Eqbal that the Hussian said university has received Akhtar's request and it is pending decision. "The letter registrar's office. Akhtar will be liable to pay the electricity bill and any other charges as applicable for her stay at the VC Lodge beyond the permissible time," Hussian told PTI. The process for the appointment of the new Vive-

Chancellor is still underway.

Gang of thieves who posed as deaf, dumb orphans busted

The Delhi Police has arrested one member of a gang of thieves who would pose as deaf and mute orphans to gain people's sympathy and access to their houses, and steal their valuables. The police claimed that with

the arrest of the 19-year-old

Venkatesh, a native of Andhra Pradesh, they have solved five cases of burglaries in Hazrat Nizamuddin, South Campus, Lajpat Nagar and Rajinder Nagar area of Delhi, and one case in Uttar Pradesh's Noida. According to a police officer, a case of burglary was reported in Jungpura of Nizamuddin on January 16 in which the victim, a lawyer by profession, stated that some unidentified persons entered his house and stole his two Apple MacBooks, a Bose portable speaker and several other miscellaneous

A case under sections 380 (committing theft in any building) and 454 (lurking, house-trespass or housebreaking in order to commit offence punishable with imprisonment) was registered at the Nizamuddin police station and a team led by subinspectors Akash Tomar and Jitendra was formed to pursue

the case. With the help of CCTV cameras and local intelligence, the team managed to



Delhi. They recovered the stolen items pertaining to the case, the officer said.

On his instance, other stolen items connected with different cases of Delhi-NCR were also recovered, he said. During interrogation, Venkatesh said he and his associates sought aid financial from

unsuspecting people by showing printed pamphlets which presented themselves as deaf and mute. They would also carry a bag to keep the stolen items.

While roaming in localities between 8 am and 10 am, they targeted the vulnerable houses, which were found to be open, the officer said. During the morning time, the residents usually remain busy in their work and often lower their guards about unknown people at the door, the officer

further said. Posing themselves as deaf and mute and standing at the door of houses with pamphlets in their hands, they would demand financial aid. By the time the house owner got busy leaving the doors open, the thieves stole their valuables. The pamphlets recovered from

them had messages like "Request to Public" and "issued on behalf of an orphanage charity school" written on it, the officer said. It was written on the pamphlets that the donation was for "deaf and dumb" and "orphans". Venkatesh also told the police

that his other associates are from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and commit similar crimes in various parts of Delhi and NCR, the officer said. Another officer said CCTV footage were scanned during the investigation of the Jangpura case, which also revealed the same person had committed a theft in Lajpat Nagar in May, 2023. He had stolen Apple MacBook and a laptop from there.

Venkatesh has confessed to committing three more similar burglaries in South Campus, Rajinder Nagar and Noida," the officer added.

Seven months old among four die in Shahdara blaze

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Four people, including a seven-month-old girl, died of suffocation when a major fire broke out in a residential building in northeast Delhi's Shahdara area, police said on Saturday. The deceased were identified as Gauri Soni (40), her son Pratham Soni (17), Rachna (28) and her sevenmonth-old daughter Ruhi, they said.

Rachana's husband Vinod said that he works at a shoes printing factory and was at his workplace when the incident took place on Friday. usually come home around 9

pm. But on Friday I came early around 6 pm and saw that fire broke out in our building. I did not get any call from anyone. My wife and daughter were taken to the hospital," Vinod said.

"I later rushed to the hospital and found that they both were declared dead. We live on the second floor of the building on rent for the last two years. I lost two most loving persons of my life," he added. Vinod further said that Ruhi was about to turn one on June 7. Ruhi was his adopted daughter. They adopted the girl from the daughter of Rachana's uncle. Rachana's brother Karan Kumar said that there is a godown on the

ground of the building where

they had stored rubber of the



wiper. "A party was going on the ground floor of the building. I received a call in the evening about the incident. The investigation into the matter will lead to ascertain the cause of the incident. When the fire broke out, nobody called my brother-in-law Vinod about the incident. The owner fled from the building leaving his wife behind," Karan said. There was another family on

the third floor of the building where a woman and her son died in the incident, he added. Gauri and her son Pratham also lost their lives in the incident, while her daughter survived.

Yogesh Soni, the brother-in-law of Gauri, said, "There was a warehouse of wipers' rubber on the ground floor. We heard that someone left a cigarette after smoking and the wipers' foam caught the fire. However, the actual reason will be ascertained after the

"My sister-in-law, nephew

and niece were on the third floor. Among them, my sister-in-law and nephew have expired and my niece has survived. As far as it appears that they have died due to suffocation. They did not get time to go out and died on the stairs," Yogesh said. Yogesh said that his brother

and Gauri's husband Ashutosh Soni works in a private firm at Mandoli and was at his office when the incident took place. They were living in the house for last two years on rent, he added. The nearby people said when the fire broke out, they started dousing the

Harsh Verma, the relative of Ashutosh, said that they tried to douse the blaze, but the smoke engulfed the entire building.

"I was going to my friend's home when I saw that the fire broke out in the building. Before the arrival of the fire brigade, we opened the water pumps of nearby houses and started pouring water. We controlled the fire to an extent, but the smoke was very thick. Everyone around tried their best to save the lives," he said. Fire officials received a call at 5:22 pm about a blaze in a house in the

doused by 6:55 pm.

Shahdara area. Five fire tenders were pressed into service and the blaze was

Performed last rites for 4,000 unclaimed bodies in two years, claims girl

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Transforming grief into a mission, a 26-year-old woman in Delhi has been performing the last rites of unclaimed bodies for nearly two years now, right after losing her brother to a tragic death.

Pooja Sharma, a resident of the Shahdara locality has performed the last rites of several bodies that remained unclaimed in hospitals for long and possibly had no family connections to give them a dignified funeral. "In the last two years, I have performed the last rites of around 4,000 bodies with no known family connections," claimed.

"I lost my brother on March 13, 2022 to a tragic murder. Since then, I have turned my personal tragedy into a source of solace for others," she added.

Shedding light on the tragic incident that changed the course of her life, Pooja told PTI, "My elder brother, who was 30-year-old, was shot dead in front of me in a small fight and after hearing this news, my father went into

Right after the second day of performing the last rituals for her brother, Pooja made an unwavering commitment to help others.

Since that fateful day, Pooja

has extended her caring touch beyond her immediate family, managing the tasks and responsibilities of those who are left with no one to look after them.

"I used to contact the police and government hospitals to seek information about bodies whose families or whereabouts unknown initially."

However, now the police and government hospitals reach out to me if they have any information about as unclaimed body, she added. Pooja claims to arrange for the last rites of these bodies with her grandfather's pension. "It takes around Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 for performing the rituals. I stay with my father and grandmother, and my father works as a contract-based driver in Delhi Metro.

With my grandfather's pension, everything," she said.

Highlighting the challenges and social prejudice faced by her for doing this work, Pooja said, "Many people see the work that I do as a taboo and my friends' families don't allow them to meet me."

Hand over Gyanvapi structure to Hindus: VHP

The Vishwa Hi Parishad (VHP) Hindu Saturday claimed the ASI survey report "reconfirmed" th that Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi constructed demolishing a "magnificent temple" at the site and demanded that the structure be declared 'a Hindu temple and handed over to the community.

It also demanded that Hindus be permitted to offer "sewa puja" to the 'Shivlinga' found in the "so-called Wazukhana area" at the disputed site. "The evidence collected and the conclusions provided by the ASI do prove that the religious character of this place of worship existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and as at present is of a Hindu Temple," VHP working president Alok



important step

Kumar said.

Gyanvapi

Hindus," Kumar said.

creating amicable relations

between the two prominent

communities of Bharat,"

The VHP's demands came

after the ASI survey report on

complex was made public two

days ago, with the lawyer

representing the Hindu

litigants claiming that the mosque was built after

demolishing a pre-existing temple. "Hand over the

structure

mosque

Gyanvapi

Kumar said in a statement. 'Thus, even as per Section 4 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, the structure should be declared as a Hindu temple," he also demanded.

The VHP also called upon the Intezamia Committee that manages the mosque to agree "respectfully shift" the Gyanvapi mosque to another appropriate place and to hand over the original site of Kashi Vishvanatha to the Hindu

"The VHP believes that this righteous action shall be an constructed after demolishing a magnificent temple". A part of the temple structure,

particularly the western wall, is the remaining part of the Hindu temple, he further claimed. The ASI report also proves that parts of the pre-existing temple including pillars and pilasters were reused with modifications to extend the span of the mosque and in the construction of the 'sahan', he

collected by ASI "reconfirms

that the mosque had been

"The Shivalinga in what was called the 'wazukhana' leaves no doubt that the structure does not have the character of a mosque. The discovery of the names including the Rudra Janardana, Umeswara in the inscriptions found in the structure are the tell-tale evidence of this being a temple," Kumar claimed.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said he was happy that Parliament and State Legislatures were working towards realisation of the goal of `one nation, one legislative platform'. Addressing the 84th All India Presiding Officers' Conference virtually, the PM also rued

(AIPOC) that some political parties defend their members even if they violate the rules of the House, and warned that it did not augur well for Parliament and state legislatures.

"In 2021, during discussions with you, I spoke about 'one nation, one legislative platform.' I am happy that our Parliament and legislatures are now working towards this goal through E-Vidhan and Digital Sansad platforms," the prime minister said. Led by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla a total of 26



participated in the inaugural

Notably, the 'one nation, one legislative platform' project aims at making available the proceedings of all legislatures on a single digital platform. The image of a legislature

depends on the conduct of its members, the prime minister stressed. "There was a time when, if any member in the House broke the rules and action was taken against that member, senior members of the House would talk to him so that in future he did not repeat the mistake and break the rules of the House. Inaugurating the Conference at Mumbai, Birla expressed concern over incidents of indiscipline, disruption of proceedings

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

the executive and people's faith in these institutions will Referring to the role of

parliamentary committees in democracy, Birla noted that parliamentary committees play a vital role in shaping laws and policies in the

present perspective. Parliamentary Committees are actually 'mini Parliaments' and they review these laws, policies and programs on behalf of the Parliament and make them more useful to the public, he added.

Maharashtra Chief Minister, Eknath Shinde; Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Speaker of Harivansh; Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Rahul Narwekar, Chairperson, Deputy Maharashtra Legislative Council, Dr. Neelam Gorhe Deputy Speaker, Maharashtra Assembly, Narahari Sitaram Jirwal graced the Inaugural Session and addressed the distinguished gathering.

Collect data for Digi Yatra with fliers consent: Scindia

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said Digi Yatra is purely voluntary for air passengers and personnel at airports have been directed to collect data for the application only with the consent of passengers. There have been complaints

that biometric data for Digi Yatra were being gathered from passengers without their consent and the issue was flagged to the minister by Rajya Sabha member Saket Gokhale. Digi Yatra, which provides for contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports based on Facial Recognition Technology, is available at a minimum 13 airports for

domestic passengers. In response to the member, Scindia has said that the issue was examined and "airport operators have been advised to sensitise Digi buddies on consent taking process and

To support passengers with of individuals called Digi service, a passenger has to company, is the nodal body

keeping use of Digi Yatra

completely voluntary



available at the airports. The minister, in a letter dated January 24, told Gokhale that Digi Yatra is a voluntary process for seamless and hassle free air travel which is purely voluntary.

"Consent of passenger is prerequisite for taking face biometric on kiosk based registration. Further, the data is automatically purged from the airport system after 24 hours of departure of the flight," Scindia said in the letter, a copy of which has been shared by Gokhale on social media platform X.

The data shared by a passenger for Digi Yatra is stored in an encrypted For availin buddies have been made register his or her details on for Digi Yatra.

DigiYatra app using Aadhaar based validation and a self image capture. In the next step, the boarding pass has to scanned credentials are shared with the airport.

At the airport e-gate, the passenger has to first scan the bar-coded boarding pass and the facial recognition system installed at the e-gate will validate the passenger's identity and travel document. Once this process is done, the passenger can enter the airport through the e-gate.

The passenger will have to follow the normal procedure to clear the security and board the aircraft. Digi Yatra

ensure smooth passage of the

yatra through Bengal and

ensure safety of the yatris,

including Shri Rahul Gandhi.

"I am aware that the Gandhi

cordial relations, and you

would ensure that all security

concerns would be addressed

However, I thought it would be best if I personally write to

you requesting for the same," the Congress president said.
Kharge has earlier spoken to

Banerjee soon after she announced that the

Trinamool Congress would

contest the elections alone

and efforts are on to have a

tie-up with her party and the

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra

entered West Bengal in Cooch

adequately.

Modi to inaugurate Diamond Jubilee celebrations of SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court on Sunday.

Unveiling the 75th year of the Supreme Court, Prime Minister Modi will launch citizen-centric information and technology initiatives that include Digital Supreme Court Reports (Digi-SCR), Digital Courts 2.0 and a new website of the apex court, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He will also address the gathering on the occasion.

The Supreme Court held its inaugural sitting on January 28, 1950. Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court of India on January 28 at 12 noon at Supreme Court auditorium, the statement said.

The Digital Supreme Court Reports (SCR) will make Supreme Court judgments



features of Digi-SCR are that all 519 volumes of Supreme covering 36,308 cases, will be available in the digital format, bookmarked, user-friendly and with open access, the statement said. The Digital Courts 2.0

application is a recent initiative under the e-Courts project to make court records available to judges of district courts in the electronic form. This is coupled with the use of artificial intelligence for transcribing speech to text on a real-time basis.

Prime Minister Modi will also launch the new website of the Supreme Court which will be in a bilingual format in English and Hindi, and has been redesigned with a userfriendly interface, according to the statement. This would Ceremonial Bench of the SC | Maken, flanked by Ramesh, in the CJI Court at 3:30 pm. | joint treasurer Vijay Inder

Congress launches donate for Nyay crowdfunding campaign

The Congress on Saturday launched a 'Donate for crowdfunding campaign for the ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra under which people will get a Rahul Gandhi-signed letter or merchandise in return for their donation. Launching the campaign at the AICC headquarters here

along with Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said the idea behind this initiative and the earlier wider crowdfunding campaign of the party, 'Donate for Desh', was not to get money but to motivate

Under the party's 'Donate for Nyay' campaign, any person who donates Rs 670 or more will get a T-shirt signed by Rahul Gandhi as a gift, Maken said. "Those who donate Rs 67,000 or more will get a 'Nyay Kit' which will contain a T-shirt, bag, band, badge and sticker," he said.

"For anything that one donates, he or she will get a letter signed by Rahul ji and a



Singla and Congress minority He said that under the party's 'Donate for crowdfunding campaign launched on December 18 last year, Rs 20 crore has been collected. Within two hours of launching the 'Donate for Nyay' campaign, Rs 2 crore had been collected, the Congress treasurer said.

Asked about funds collected through the crowdfunding campaign being lower than expectations, Maken said, "We can't contest elections by raising money through our workers. If someone thinks we will get all our funding for the elections through this crowdfunding, he is wrong

It is much more than the Jalpaiguri on Sunday

political party as both the AAP and the BJP had started it but they could not reach even Rs 1 crore.

You cannot undermine the efforts of 3 lakh Congress people who have given money. The idea is not to get money, the idea is to motivate the workers. Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will be going through one part of the country. The rest of the party workers in other parts will be able to participate by giving Rs 67," he said

So, it is a political platform and not a money generation programme, Maken stressed. The Rahul Gandhi-led yatra is on a two-day break from restart from West Bengal's

Ensure smooth Yatra passage through Bengal, Kharge writes to Mamata

PNS NEW DELHI

Apprehending trouble by miscreants during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in West Bengal, Congress West Bengal, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seeking appropriate directions to ensure its smooth passage through the State and safety of the yatris, including Rahul Gandhi. In his letter, Kharge expressed

fear that some miscreants may try to show the state administration in bad light or disrupt the yatra, as had happened neighbouring states. He said the Congress has embarked on the "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra" from Manipur to Maharashtra to spread the message of justice to heal and unite the nation.

Kharge said Rahul Gandhi, who is leading this yatra had walked from earlier Kanyakumari to Kashmir in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, has always maintained that the vatras serves a larger purpose of uniting people who stand divided today by the BJP in the name of religion, caste and creed and to ensure that the weakest are assured of justice social, economic and political.

That is why the yatras have remained apolitical and attracted crores of people across India cutting across all sections of the society who identify with a strong, progressive and secular 'INDIA for All," he said. The Congress president said

the Bharat Jodo Yatra went appropriate directions to across the country without any untoward incident and culminated in a rally in Kashmir. "However, some miscreants

targeted the current Bharat family and you share very Jodo Nyay Yatra in your neighbouring states. This has been done on political instigation but our cadre faced it bravely. "Now the yatra is passing

through Bengal over the next few days. I have been made aware that again some miscreants may foment trouble for the yatra. I am not sure if intention may

be to show the state administration in bad light or

to disrupt the yatra," Kharge "I am writing to request you that you may kindly issue

Behar Thursday morning and after a two-day break would restart from Jalpaiguri with a padayatra. Congress leader Jairam

Ramesh said the yatra will then proceed to Siliguri and Gandhi will address a public rally there. On January 29, the yatra will reach Araria in Bihar and will remain in Bihar's Araria, Purnia and Kishanganj on January 30, where Gandhi will address rallies and padayatras.

On January 30, the yatra will return to West Bengal at night and will be in Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum districts on January 30 and 31, after which it will go to Jharkhand, Ramesh said. He said as some exams are going on in Siliguri, the padayatra will start at 2 pm instead of in the morning.

"Kharge ji has spoken to West Bengal Chief Minister and have given him invitation to her to join the yatra. We feel that going by her statement, her target is the BJP and she is fighting against BJP.

The Congress also wants to defeat the BJP are are on the same page. "The Congress wants that West Bengal chief minister should participate in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and we will welcome her. She should take out some time for the vatra," Ramesh said.

"The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi all respect Manmata ji. And they know that of we have to defeat communal forces and it is important that she should be a partner of the opposition alliance," he said.

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on reviewed the preparations for the seventh edition of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'. "Pariksha Pe Charcha has

become an annual tradition, that exam warriors, parents and teachers all look forward to, to overcome anxiety and come out with their best. There is excitement amongst everyone for the interaction with the Prime Minister, at PPC 2024, for the mostsought after interaction of the year," Pradhan said on Friday. "Pariksha Pe Charcha" (PPĆ) is an initiative led by Prime Minister Modi to address the stress associated with examinations and promote a celebratory approach towards life, aligning with the larger movement of Exam Warriors. Organised by the Ministry of Education, 'Pariksha Pe

Charcha' has been engaging

students, parents, and teachers

for the past six years. Due to

the COVID-19 pandemic, the

fourth edition was held

online, while the fifth and sixth editions returned to the town-hall format. A total of 31.24 lakh students, 5.60 lakh teachers, and 1.95 lakh parents participated in the previous year's edition.

The current 7th edition recorded a remarkable 2.26 crore registrations on the MyGov portal, highlighting widespread enthusiasm among students nationwide,"

Pradhan said. Scheduled on January 29, the event will be held in a townhall format at the Bharat Mandapam. Two students and a teacher from each State and Union Territory, along with winners of the Kala Utsav, have been invited. A hundred students from Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) will attend

for the first time. An online MCQ competition on the MyGov portal from December 11, 2023, to January 12, 2024, determined participants based on their submitted questions. Selected participants will receive a Pariksĥa Pe Charcha kit, including the "Exam Warriors" book by the prime minister and a certificate.

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Government aims to make India a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047, its premier think tank Niti Aayog has decided to reach out to experts to help identify key sectors that have the potential to transform the country into a Global Manufacturing Hub.

favourable "With its demographics, skilled workforce, and increasing economic growth, India can attract significant investments and become a preferred destination manufacturing. In view of this, research studies are

proposed to be undertaken by industry vertical identifying the key sectors for India to become a global manufacturing hub," said an official from the Niti Aayog. As per the Request for Proposal issued recently, the studies will focus on analyzing various factors, including future trends in manufacturing, industrial capabilities, infrastructure, policy framework, and market potential, to determine the sectors that offer the most significant opportunities for India's

manufacturing growth. The researchers have been asked to study around 12 sectors which they feel that can be exploited to boost the investments.

India with high growth

Among others, the study should give details on identification of key sectors in

potential for manufacturing considering the value of manufacturing product, efficiency and global demand. Also, assessment of the existing industrial capabilities, infrastructure, and other factors of production in the identified sectors has also been sought. "Assessing the infrastructure requirements, including transportation, power supply, and digital connectivity, identified sector; examining the policy framework, including environment, tax structure, trade agreements, and ease of doing business, relevant to manufacturing in India,"

The experts will also have to suggest global market trends, competitive landscapes, and export potential for the selected sectors.

needs to be factored in while

submitting the studies.

The move comes amid various reports stating India has the potential to become a Global Manufacturing Hub, and by 2030 it is expected to add more than US\$ 500 billion annually to the global economy. As per FICCI president Anish

Shah, India's manufacturing sector will transform into a global powerhouse in the next five years, aligned with the country's goal of reaching a USD30 trillion GDP by 2047. India can become a manufacturing hub for the world and that is going to drive manufacturing growth faster, he had said.

Houthi missile hits tanker, crew put blaze off No evidence of

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

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

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

class destroyer, had to shoot down a Houthi missile target-

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

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

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



the naphtha on board.

The ship, managed by a British firm, is carrying the Russian naphtha bound for Singapore, the company said. It described the flammable oil as being purchased below the price caps set by G7 sanctions placed on Russia over its ongo-

ing war on Ukraine. It wasn't clear what environmental impact the attack had caused.

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

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

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

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

death toll in the war rose to

26,257 as of Saturday, with 174

deaths over the past day, the

Health Ministry in Gaza said.

The ministry does not distin-

Beijing remains a major buyer of Western-sanctioned Iranian oil. But Russia so far has condemned the US and the United Kingdom for carrying out its strikes targeting the Houthis, while also meeting with the rebel group in Moscow in

recent days.

The US Navy's top Mideast commander told the AP on Monday that the Houthi attacks were the worst since the socalled Tanker War of the 1980s. It culminated in a one-day naval battle between Washington and Tehran and also saw the US Navy accidentally shoot down an Iranian passenger jet, killing 290 people in 1988.

Meanwhile Saturday, authorities reported a separate incident in which a vessel in the Arabian Sea reported seeing people armed with assault rifles and a rocket-propelled grenade

ians. Israel says its air and

ground offensive in Gaza has

illed more than 9,000 militants.

wife, a son and a daughter in

Saturday's strike in Rafah, a

town on Gaza's border with

Egypt, said the decision by the

world court meant little since it

"No one can speak in front of them (Israel). America with

all its greatness and strength can do nothing," he said as he stood

beside the pile or rubble and

twisted metal that was once his

home. "What can people do,

who have no power or any-

thing?" He said his family was

asleep when their residence was

struck. Rafah and its surround-

ing areas are crammed with

more than 1 million people

after the Israeli military ordered

civilians to seek refuge there

from the fighting elsewhere in the territory. Despite those

orders, the designated evacua-

did not stop the war.

Bilal al-Siksik, who lost his

POWs killed in Russian plane crash: Ukraine

AP KYIV (UKRAINE)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gunmen kill

9 on Iran-Pak

Trump ordered to pay \$83.3m in

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

defamation case

ly assaulted her in a Manhattan department store. The award, when

coupled with a USD 5 million sexual assault and defamation verdict last year from another jury in a case brought

lion what Trump must pay her. Protesting vigorously, he said he would appeal. Carroll, 80, clutched her lawyers' hands and smiled as

by Carroll, raised to \$88.3 mil-

the seven-man, two-woman iury delivered its verdict. Minutes later, she shared a weepy three-way hug with her attorneys.

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

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

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

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

self on her. In May, a different jury awarded Carroll USD 5 million. It found Trump not liable for rape, but responsible for

sexually abusing Carroll and then defaming her by claiming she made it up. He is appealing that award, too.

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

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

Israel presses on with war against Hamas

AP RAFA (GAZA STRIP)

 $T^{\text{wo women and a man were}}_{\text{killed early on Saturday in}}$ what witnesses said was an Israeli airstrike on a home in the southernmost part of Gaza, as Israel pursued its military offensive against the Palestinian The strike came less than a

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

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

people, a charge Israel vehemently denies. The war has killed more

than 26,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, destroyed vast swaths of Gaza

guish between combatants and civilians in its count, but has said and displaced nearly 85 per

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

about two-thirds are women and children. It said the total number of wounded surpassed

Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties, say-

tion areas have repeatedly come under airstrikes, with Israel say-

ICJ ruling vindicated us: SA Prez Ramaphosa

Mandela made 30 years ago when he was border area

AP ■ TEHRAN

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

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

No official news outlet reported the shooting and no group has yet taken respon-

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

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

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

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

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

ing the militants embed them-selves in buildings used by civiling it would go after militants as POW agency, said.

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

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

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

suant to Article 9 of the (1948 Genocide) Convention, it has jurisdiction to adju-

dicate our application. The effect of the order that the ICJ has granted today is that there is a plausible case of genocide. This follows the unprecedented action taken by South Africa to take another country Justice," he said. The president said the ICJ

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

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

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

"The court has concluded that pur- our beloved leader Oliver Tambo and others, others were jailed, like the father of our democracy (Nelson Mandela) and

others were maimed," Ramaphosa said. He said, "We, as South

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

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

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

Paraphrasing a statement by Nelson



that following this judgment there should now be a more concerted effort towards

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

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

Pak seeks \$2 billion loan from China

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ LAHORE

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

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

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

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



Czech Republic on Saturday. The carnival is part of a centuries old tradition called the Shrovetide Procession which takes place in Eastern Bohemia near the end of winter and before Christian Lent. Experts trace the event, also known as Masopust, with its vibrant colors and archaic masks to pre-christian paganism, then common in the area.

Tuvalu's PM loses his seat in crucial poll

AP ■ SYDNEY

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

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

comers win seats, according to Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island that China claims as its territory.

official diplomatic relations with

the top job, the reelected Finance Minister Seve Paeniu, has said he wants to review Tuvalu's relationships with both Taiwan and

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

The elections come as China,

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

Natano is a supporter of Taiwan. Another contender for

Budget expectations: Income tax benefits, support to women entrepreneurs

An increase in income tax exemption limits, support to women entrepreneurs, a long-term taxation policy and steps to boost consumption and savings are among the expectations of experts from the interim budget which will be presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 ahead of Lok Sabha elections

They also demand for parity in taxation among companies, partnerships and limited liability partnerships.

"This is going to be an interim budget but at least there may be some indications of full-budget benefits. There may be some concession to be offered to individual taxpayers under section 87A under which the overall tax exemption limit may be increased to Rs 8 lakh from now Rs 7 lakh, inclusive of rebates," All India Federation of Tax Practitioners national president Narayan Jain said.



Bharat Chamber of Commerce president N G Khaitan said there is a need for a long-term taxation policy and parity in taxation among companies, partnerships and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) for a level playing field for small and medium firms.

MSMEs, which have a huge

contribution to the country's GDP and employment generation, are subjected to higher taxation, he said

Khaitan also expects some actions to mitigate the burden on salaried persons with a reduction in the personal taxation front and boost consumption and savings.

Bengal Chamber Commerce's fiscal affairs and taxation committee chairperson Vivek Jalan expected that a simplified "single hybrid scheme" for personal income taxation incorporating certain deductions could be rolled

The government needs to pri-

'Vasudeva Kutumbakam' (the whole world is one family) roadmap and India's leadership role in green manufacturing, the expert said

Jalan hoped that customs duty on capital goods and raw materials like lithium-ion cells for electric vehicles to propel green energy initiatives could be

A government-facilitated settlement mechanism for cus-toms disputes and a dedicated tribunal for handling GST-related cases may see the light

Radhika Dalmia, chairperson of FICCI Ladies Organisation (Kolkata chapter), advocated tax relaxations for women entrepreneurs and more paid holidays for working mothers.
"Increasing the Rashtriya
Swasthya Bima Yojana allowance and enhancing education benefits for girls are crucial steps. Strengthening financial inclusion and healthcare infrastructure along with prioritising education, particu-

larly for girls, is vital for a more inclusive Bharat," she said. Mjunction services MD and CÉO Vinava Varma, in his expectations, said, "I think the role of export on e-marketplaces will become important with the government's focus on Made in India. Therefore, a regulatory framework that acknowledges e-marketplaces as responsible players in facilitating cross-border payments, potentially granting them specific roles in the release or hold ing of funds based on predefined criteria and agree-

ments, will be welcome." The executive of the company, the B2B e-commerce joint venture by Tata Steel and SAIL said that the interim budget must prioritise sustainable energy, digital adoption in manufacturing, and increased credit for MSMEs.

The government must review TDS which is obligatory on us (eCommerce platforms) to deduct and deposit for payments made by the buyers," he

Every partner needs to collaborate for India to become third largest economy by FY28: Sitharaman

 $F_{ ext{Sitharaman on Saturday}}^{ ext{inance Minister Nirmala}}$ said the initiatives of Customs department like Faceless Assessment and Single Window Clearance need to evolve with the overall objective of growth of trade as every partner needs to collaborate to ĥelp India's GDP surpass USD 5 trillion by 2027-28.

In a written message on the occasion of 'International Day Customs 2024', Sitharaman said with a common purpose of ease of doing business for nation building during India's 'Amrit Kaal', all the stakeholders need to come together and contribute for benefits to citizen of India. She said this year's theme of

International Customs Day which is "Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose" resonates with the Motto of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Every partner needs to collab-

orate to put India on course to becoming the third-largest economy by 2027-28, with a GDP surpassing USD 5 trillion," Sitharaman said.

Many initiatives taken by Customs such as Faceless Assessment, Direct Port Delivery, Single Window Clearance, AEO Scheme need to evolve with overall objective of growth of trade and business, she added.

Special focus on MSMEs, new startups and inclusivity will align with the vision of the prime minister, Sitharaman

Fund inflow in real estate from foreign

investors dips 30

per cent last year

The inflow of funds in Indian real estate from

foreign investors fell 30 per cent to USD 2.73 billion last

year, but the influx jumped

more than two times from

domestic players to USD 1.51

billion, according to real estate

consultant Vestian. According to Vestian data, the total institutional invest-

ments in real estate declined

12 per cent to USD 4.3 billion

in 2023, from USD 4.9 billion

The consultant highlighted

that investments from for-eign funds fell 30 per cent

annually because of their cau-

tious approach, but rose 120

per cent from domestic

Domestic investors pumped in USD 1,511 million (USD 1.5

billion) last year, as against

in the previous year.

investors.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Centre to help Maharashtra cooperative sector: Verma

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: 1.65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the abusing secure of which has been taken by the Authorities Officer of the

the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the

the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as Is where Is", "as Is what Is" and "whatever there is" basis on 29.02.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 13,20,942/- (Rupees Thirteen Lakh Twenty Thousand Nine Hundred Forty Two only) pending towards Loan Account No. H-LLMOD00316819, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 23.01.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 24.01.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from AMIT KUMAR PANDEY and AJAY KUMAR (GUJARANTOR).

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 8,20,000/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Twenty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 82,000/- (Rupees Eighty Two Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

FLAT NO. GF-3 (L. I. G), HAVING COVERED AREA OF 400 SQUARE FEET ON GROUND FLOOR, (BACK SIDE), CONSTRUCTED UPON PLOT NO. C-8/2, DLF ANKUR VIHAR, PARGANA AND TEHSIL LONI, GHAZIABAD - 201020, UTTAR

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided

APPENDIX IV-A

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) an Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] and Indiabulls Asset Reconstruction Company Limited [CIN: U67110MH2006PLC305312] acting as a Trustee of Indiabulls ARC- XXXI Trust (both IHFL and IARCL) are jointly and

severally referred to as **("Secured Creditor")**, the **physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on **"as is**

where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 29.02.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of the following amounts due to IHFL and IARCL:

DUES OF INDIABULLS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY LIMITED:

The Loan Account No. HHEDMT00404509, along with all right(s), title(s), interest(s), underlying security(ies), pledge(s) and / or guarantee(s) including the Immovable Property, has been assigned by IHFL to and in favour of Indiabulls Asset Reconstruction Company Limited ("IARCL") vide Assignment Agreement dated 21.08.2023, and the same has been renumbered by IARCL and bears new Loan

Account No. D008XXXI. Consequently, IARCL has also become a Secured Credito

for the said assigned Loan Account. IARCL has given its consent to IHFL to issue this

The amounts mentioned in both the tables given above are pending towards the

respective Loan Accounts of IHFL and IARCL, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 24.01.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement(s) and other related loan document(s) w.e.f.

25.01.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges, due to the Secured Credito

DUES OF INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED:

Loan Account Number

HHLDMT00404521

D008XXXI

HHEDMT00404509)

from DILEEP VERMA and VIMAL VERMA.

No

on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshome bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

Place: GHAZIABAD

PTI NASHIK

Union minister BL Verma on Saturday said the Centre will provide all help for the development of the cooperative sector in Maharashtra

The Union minister of state for cooperation was speaking at the Maharashtra State Urban Cooperative Banks Conference (MSUCBC) 2023-24 being held

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and guidance of Union Minister for Cooperation Amit Shah, many steps have been taken for development in the country through the medium of cooperation. The Union government will provide all help for development of the cooperative sector in Maharashtra," Verma said.

He said the Narendra Modi government had created a separate ministry for cooperation, which was ensuring all stake-

holders were getting support and solutions were being found for problems facing the sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Union minister of state for health Bharti Pawar said the government must provide help to the Nashik District Central Cooperative Bank so that the institution can tide over prob-

Pawar is Lok Sabha MP from Dindori in the district.

Maharashtra has a glorious tradition of cooperation and cooperative institutions, which have contributed greatly in the development of the nation, state cooperation minister Dilip Walse Patil said.

"The state government has prepared a scheme to protect depositors of cooperative credit societies and has allotted Rs 100 crore for it. The Union government must also give Rs 100 crore so that these institutions can be strengthened," he said.

Authorized officer Indiabulis Housing Finance Limited

Outstanding Amounts (in Rs.) as on 24.01.2024

Rs. 20,46,232/- (Rupees Twenty Lake Forty Six Thousand Two Hundred

Thirty Two only)

Outstanding Amounts (in Rs.) as on 24.01.2024

Rs. 16,78,788/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh

Seventy Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Eight only)

Government working on SEZ reforms: Commerce Secretary

PTI KOLKATA

 $T^{he\ government\ is\ working} \\ T^{on\ reforms\ in\ the\ Special} \\ Economic\ Z^{one}\ (SEZ)\ domain$ so that movement of goods between domestic tariff area (DTA) and SEZ space is carried out smoothly without affecting the competitiveness of goods in the export markets, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Saturday

During the pandemic two years ago, many office spaces in the SEZ areas had been vacated due to 'work from home' practice initiated by the occupants. Barthwal said this had led to the

demarcation of SEZs into SEZ and DTA spaces.

"Scale economies have become very important nowadays. Reforms in the SEZ are in the offing so that movement of goods from SEZ to DTA and vice-versa are not affected rendering goods produced become less competitive", Barthwal said at a symposium organised by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce. The official said that the foreign trade policy (FTP) of the government had been framed keeping in mind the global value chain.

the global value chain. The trade becoming an important industry, which had always sought protection in the past, will now have to integrate with the global value chain and look at where the competitive advantage lay", he added.

Stating that the target of achieving USD two trillion exports by 2030 is possible, Barthwal said that USD one trillion will be forthcoming from merchandise exports and another USD one trillion from services.

Services appear to be intangible, but there is a huge scope to grow. We should look at the impediments which are preventing the growth of the ser-

APPENDIX IV-A

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and

Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and

Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulla Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor").

the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as Is where is", "as Is what Is" and "whatever there is" basis on 29.02.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of

Rs. 15,38,296/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakh Thirty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Six only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLDMT00458627, by way of

outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till

23.01.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 9,30,000/- (Rupees Nine Lakh Thirty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be

Rs. 93,000/- (Rupees Ninety Three Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

RESIDENTIAL FLAT BEARING NUMBER G. F-2, L. I. G. GROUND FLOOR

(WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS), FRONT RIGHT HAND SIDE, HAVING TOTAL AND COVERED AREA OF 400 SQUARE FEET I. E 37.16 SQUARE METER, BUILT ON

RESIDENTIAL PLOT NUMBER A-7/10 MEASURING TOTAL AREA OF 209 SQUARE METER IN "D. L. F ANKUR VIHAR", SITUATED AT VILLAGE LONI,

PARGANA AND TEHSIL LONI, DISTRICT GHAZIABAD, GHAZIABAD - 201102

PLOT NUMBER A-7/10 MEASURING TOTAL AREA OF 209 SQUARE METER ON

EAST : COMMON PASSAGE, WEST : ROAD 9 METER WIDE, NORTH : FLAT NUMBER G. F-1 (L. I. G), SOUTH : PLOT NUMBER A-7/9

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided

Authorized officer Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

NORTH: ROAD 12 METER WIDE, SO FLAT NO. G. F-2 IS BOUNDED AS FOLLOWS:

on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullsh bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

constituency of Almora district under

the state sector.

charges due to the Secured Creditor from VIMAL VERMA and DILEEP VERMA.

part of the growth engine, both the industrial and foreign trade policies are now intertwined. He said that there is an increas

ing demand by countries to ink free trade agreements (FTAs) with India. In bilateral and multilateral agreements, the most important aspect is to understand the policy of 'give and take'. If one has to take something, he also has to give something, he Barthwal said both the UK and

the US are raising the standards by bringing in sanitary and phytosanitary issues in imported goods. "We will have to adhere to these

exporters to take advantage of Barthwal said with external increasingly difficult", he said. The deposit growth came at loan growth.

APPENDIX IV-A

Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and

the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as Is where Is", "as Is what Is" and "whatever

there is" basis on 29.02.2024 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery or

Rs. 16,16,275/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Sixteen Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Five only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLDCP00384965, by way o

outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 23.01.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 24.01.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from BHAGWAT YADAV and DEEPAK KUMAR.

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 10,30,000/- (Rupees Ten Lakh Thirty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be

Rs. 1,03,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Three Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% or

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

RESIDETIAL FLAT BEARING NUMBER SE-4 HAVING TOTAL COVERED AREA

OF 325 SQUARE FEET I. E. 30.19 SQUARE METER, L. I. G, SECOND FLOOR WITH ROOF, REAR LEFT HAND BACK SIDE, IN "SLF VED VIHAR" SITUATED ON PLOT NUMBER A-80, HAVING AREA OF 167.22 SQUARE METER, KHASRA NUMBER 399, HADBAST VILLAGE SADULABAD, PARGANA AND TEHSIL LONI,

COMMON PASSSAGE AND FLAT NUMBER SF-1 (H. I. G)

Authorized office

Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

Govt. Undertaking

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided

Winter Season)

DISTRICT GHAZIABAD, GHAZIABAD - 201102, UTTAR PRADESH.

ROAD 9 METER WIDE, BADHUA PARK S BOUNDED AS FOLLOWS :-

on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomel

PLOT NUMBER A-79. OTHER'S LAND.

PLOT NUMBER A-79

FLAT NUMBER SF-3 (L. I. G)

read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"),

Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002

Yes Bank posts ₹231 crore profit for October, December quarter

PTI MUMBAI

Yes Bank reported a net profit of Rs 231 crore for the October-December quarter of 2023-24 on Saturday. The city-headquartered private sector lender had reported a post tax net profit of Rs 52 crore for the year-ago period, heavily impacted by money it had to set aside following the transfer of sour loans to an asset reconstruction company.

In the preceding September quarter, the bank's net profit was Rs 225 crore.

Its core net interest income grew 2.3 per cent to Rs 1,971 crore in the reporting quarter on the back of 11.8 per cent growth in advances and a 0.10 per cent narrowing in the net interest margin at 2.4 per

The non-interest income grew 12.1 per cent to Rs 1,195

Total net income grew by 5.8 per cent to Rs 3,211 crore in the third quarter of FY24 against Rs 3,036 crore in the

13.2 per cent for the quarter. However, echoing peers who have been flagging risks on the deposits front, the bank's managing director and chief executive Prashant Kumar said the bank will have to be conscious of ensuring that the base keeps growing to ensure that credit growth of around 15 per cent can be sustained. On the asset quality front, the fresh slippages were Rs 1,200 crore, of which over Rs 1,000 crore came from retail alone. The bank has already recovered Rs 3,800 crore of assets in the first nine months of the fiscal and is confident of surpassing its Rs 5,000 crore target on the same for FY24.

The gross non-performing asset ratio was stable at 2 per Given the regulatory concerns

on the unsecured lending and the prevailing market conditions, the bank has reviewed its underwriting practices to be more cautious on the front. a senior official told reporters on the earning call. Kumar added that the stance

PUBLIC NOTICE

The to the General Public that Mrs. And the General

USD 687 million in the 2022 calendar year. However, the inflow from foreign funds stood lower at USD 2,733 million last year, as against USD 3,926 million in 2022. Accordingly the domestic investors increased to 35 per cent in 2023 from 14 per cent in 2022. Shrinivas Rao, CEO of

Vestian, said, "Despite uncertainty in demand across the real estate sector, investments remained robust throughout the year. The optimism of domestic investors kept the real estate market buoyant, as they continued to show confidence in India's growth

PUBLIC NOTICE Information is given to general public at large that my clients Mr. Harjit Singh Flora, Seetal Singh Flora and Amrik Singh Flora who are the owners of Upper Ground Floor, House No. 3013/9c, Plot No. XVII/3013/9C, area

Khaitan & Khaitan A-38 Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110048, Ph. No: 011-49774545

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Anta Chauhan is the owner of A Freehold House Built on Pit On Admeasuring ares 62.2 Soyaft be 52.02 Sount to tof Knesra N. 667 Sibusted at Village Roja. Jalat Pur Tehsil Dadri Dist Gaulambuth Nagari (J.P.), vide registered sale Geed date: 22.12.2021 Book No 01, vio No 19527, Document No 42074 Pagi Caulambuth Nagari (J.P.), vide registered sale Geed date: 22.12.2021 Book No 01, vio No 19527, Document No 42074 Pagi No 291130 Mrs. Richa Dev Willow H. Jalchard Singh Ail Person are hereby informed that Imr. Seela Devi & Mr. Ramayar Singh are mortgaging the sald property with HINDUJA HOUSING FINANCE LTD. General public hereby informed the in Chain documents Sale Deed Dated 11.01.2008 Executed by Mr. Rajvers (18) GPA Holder of Mrs. Kashirmer Dev but as per Khabon Mr. Jagad Singh Also legal Heir of Late Mr. Shritgh of on case his share if anybody has any chargefiniterestriff in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the before mentioned actorses within 70 days of the present. Email: sgassoclatespi@amail.com, Phr. 7911/17746, 8139200637

NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that my clients Sanjeev Kumar, Santosh Sunsunwal, Yashwanti Devi , Yogesh Kumar Inheritance the Property bearing No.230-A, Measuring 110 Sq.Yds approx., situated at Chirag Delhi, New Delhi-110017, after the demise of Sh. Jai Bhaqwan Singh who died on 12.05.2014 and inlend to get the financial assistance from Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited will provide the financial assistance. If any person(s) /institution has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property may please contact us within 07 days property may please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the address

mentioned herein below, failing which my dient(s) shall not be held responsible in any

measuring 100 sq. yds., built on freehold Piece of land area measuring 100 sq. yards, out of Khasra No. 52, situated in the area of Shadipur Ranjit Nagar, Delhy virtue of WILL dated 21.05.1974 executed by Mrs. Sardarni Swaran Kaur who was the owner through Sale Deed dated 18.12.1963 executed by Mrs Charan Sale Deed dated 18.12.1963 executed by Mrs Charan Kaur. After the demise of Swaran Kaur my clients inherited the said property. Any person(s), institution(s) having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 14 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person(s)/ institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser. JOESCOTICS// INSURGATION CO. STATE OF STATE CO. STATE CO

VIRTAIN N. 32.7, VIRTAIN N. 9. 110055 4E/9, 2nd Fl, Jhandewalan Extn., N. 0. 110055 L. Line No. 011-35668622



Date: 25.01.2024 Place: GHAZIABAD

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora

Date: 25.01.2024 Place: GHAZIABAD

Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com Dated: 25/01/2024

WEST

Letter No.: 471(I)/ Nivida-01/2023-24 NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)

Short Term E-TENDER NOTICE The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated

29/01/2024 & onwards on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in Name of Work Cost of Validity Time of Contractor's Money of Category of Tender No. Completion (Rupee in Registration Tender Form lakh) for tendering PD PWD Ranikhet ₹ 6.93 120 15 Month Class "A" & Higher in Road work in Improvement & Damarikaran of Bajkhet 5000.00 Lakh (Including Days With Raining Central Govt./Any Kankot Toulbudhani Turachora Motor + 18% state Govt./Any Road in Km. 19 to 23.200 in Salt Season and

2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के तहत् सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स अग्रवाल चैनल मिल्स

पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.) //सर्व संबंधित को सूचना// भारत सरकार पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण महल

प्राईवेट लिमिटेड, इण्डस्ट्रीयल ग्रोथ सेंटर सिलतरा, फेस-॥, तहसील व जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.) में Expansion of production facilities of Induction Furnace with CCM from existing 59,500 TPA to 2,89,400 TPA, MS Billets along with total Re-rolled Steel Production capacity of 2,72,000 TPA, out of which 2,42,000 TPA through Hot Charging and 30,000 TPA through existing BRF based rolling mill के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 29.02.2024 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे से स्थल-पंचायत

भवन परिसर, ग्राम–मुरेठी, सिलंतरा (औद्योगिक क्षेत्र के समीप), जिला–रायपुर (छ.ग.) नियत की गई है। यह भी सचित हो किः लोक सुनवाई के दौरान सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों को फिजिकल/सोशल डिस्टेंसिंग का पालन

लोक सुनवाई में सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों द्वारा मास्क का उपयोग किया जावेगा तथा समय

समय पर सेनेटाईजर का उपयोग किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

लोक सुनवाई स्थल पर सम्मिलित होने वाले व्यक्तियों की बैठक व्यवस्था कम से कम 02 मीटर की दरी रखना अनिवार्य होगा।

कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु केन्द्र सरकार तथा राज्य शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशो का अक्षरशः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा। ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 14 सितम्बर, 2006 (यथा-संशोधित) के अनुसार संबंधित व्यक्तियों के

ग्वलोकन/पठन हेतु ड्राफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा तथा सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) डायरेक्टर, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवाय परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, एकीकत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, रायपुर,

जिला–रायपुर, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारों, जिला पंचायत–रायपुर, जिला–रायपुर, मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, जिला-रायपुर, मुख्य कार्यपालने अधिकारी, जनपद पंचायत रायपुर, जिला–रायपुर, कार्यालय, सरपंच, ग्राम पंचायत सिलतरा एवं मुरेठी, तहसील–धरसींवा, जिला–रायपुर क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, न्यू ऑफिस बिल्डिंग, रिंग रोड नं. 02, टाटीबंध रायपुर, जिला–रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षेण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर–19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर में रखी गई है। सदस्य सचिव छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,

नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

on to www.auctionfocus.in SD/-AUTHORIZED OFFICER INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED Date : 25.01.2024 Place : GHAZIABAD

The Reserve Price for the Immovable Property will be Rs. 22,40,000/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lakh Forty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 2,24,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Twenty Four Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY PLOT NO. A-83, HIG FLAT NO. FF-2, FIRST FLOOR BACK SIDE, BLOCK - A,

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the vebsite of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshome

KHASRA NO. 399, SLF VED VIHAR, VILLAGE SHADULLABAD, GHAZIABAD UTTAR PRADESH - 201102.

Sreeja advances to quarterfinals

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

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

However, the world No. 66 Indian looked in complete control of the next two games and clinched the match 3-1 (12-10, 8-11, 11-8, 11-8) to reach the quarterfinals. "In 2021, I had lost to the

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



Akula said after the win. "She was really aggressive and I focused on putting the ball

on the table and choosing the

right ball to attack which worked in my favour. I will be

well prepared for the upcoming match as well." The tournament is co-hosted by Stupa Sports Analytics and Ultimate Table Tennis Batra (WR 38) went down 1-under the guidance of the 3 (11-9, 11-13, 7-11, 9-11) to

Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI).

On the other hand, India's top-ranked singles paddler

the world No. 13 Xiaoxin Yang of Monaco despite winning the first game of the contest.

In the other women's singles pre-quarterfinal, youngster

to South Korea's Jeon Jihee by 1-3 (11-13, 11-9, 6-11, 4-World No. 8 Shin Yubin of

South Korea continued her positive form to defeat Sweden's Christina Kallberg 3-1 (11-5, 11-6, 10-12, 11-6), whereas Chinese Taipei's Cheng I-ching (WR 18) beat Yang Ha Eun of South Korea by 3-0 (11-8, 11-9, 11-9). In the last-16 stage of the men's singles category, world No. 8 Felix Lebrun of France extended his sparkling form to register a comfortable 3-0 (11-3, 12-10, 11-9) win against Sweden's Ruls

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

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

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

Rhythm, Ujjwal win mixed team pistol gold

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

was 14-14. On match point, Mcintosh showed her class and hit a 10.9 and despite solid 10s from the Indians, the British pair snatched the

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

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

Rajeshwari Kumari was 13th with a score of 110 while Manisha Keer (109) and Bhavya Tripathi (106) finished 15th and 18th

women's

700 wrestlers to compete in senior nationals: WFI president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

The national body was

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

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

"The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is organising its National Senior Wrestling Championship in Free Style, Greco Roman & Women Wrestling. Women Wrestling. The panel to manage t Championship is being day affairs of WFI.



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

"Around 700 Wrestlers across the country are participating in this mega event. All affiliated state units of Wrestling Federation of India have entered its teams for participation in the event except Punjab & Odisha."

Olympic Indian Association (IOA) then on the behest of the ministry formed a three-member panel to manage the day-to-

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

AP MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Sabalenka is the first woman since Victoria Azarenka in 2012 and '13 to win back-toback Australian Open titles, and the fifth since 2000 to win championship here without dropping a set - a group that includes Serena Williams. The 21-year-old Zheng was making her debut in a major

final and playing an opponent ranked in the top 50 for the first time in this tournament. It was the second time in as many majors their paths had met in the second week. Sabalenka beat Zheng in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

February 18. India will take on the United States, the Netherlands, China, Sinner's serve. Consider: This was the first completed match in a Grand Slam career and Australia twice each across

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

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

Gukesh draws with Alireza to drop to second spot

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

game in his ravour.
"I felt relieved because if I don't find that move, I think I am just worse. I was thinking am just worse. I was thinking for like 40-50 minutes, trying to figure out if there is something and I couldn't find anything. I thought I just have a lost position, if I don't find something right now," Gujrathi said after the game. "So I spent the time there and this move struck me like Qe7. After that Black is better. I don't know if it's winning but he collapsed because he had he collapsed because he had very low time and then my attack was just too strong." Gukesh was up against a Grunfeld defense against

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

check to force a draw.

Praggnanandhaa was held to
a draw by Donchenko in a Queen's 'Gambit accepted structure. The Indian tried to make a breakthrough but Donchenko held on to his own and drew after 60 moves. In the challengers' section, India's Leon Luke Mendonca remained in the hunt for top spot but he needs a sort of miracle. Mendonca scored a crushing victory over Mustafa Yilmaz of Turkey but French GM Marc Andria Mariuzzi maintained his full point lead on 8.5 points by defeating Liam Vrolijk of Holland.

Renata wins junior girls title, Rei wins boys final

AP MELBOURNE

Top-seeded Renata Jamrichova claimed the Australian Open junior girls' singles title with a 6-4 6-1 win over 15-year-old Emerson Jones on Saturday.
Jamrichova made six aces
and saved five of six break
points to clinch her first
Grand Slam singles' title in
just over an hour on Ped just over an hour on Rod Laver Arena. "I'm just so happy right now," Jamrichova said.

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

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

to beat Jan Kumstat 3-6 7-6(2) 7-5The 17-year-old Sakamoto had to withstand 25 aces from his big-serving Czech opponent, ranked No.42, but

still found a way to wrest In the boys' final, fourth-seeded Rei Sakamoto of Japan rallied from a set down back momentum after losing the first set to win the title in two hours, 11 minutes.

Alireza and this one too was a Do not write off Novak after Australian Open from Russia who won the 2021 ever, unable to make a dent on

AP MELBOURNE

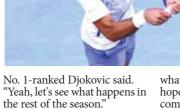
 $\mathbf{I}^{ ext{t}}$ might be tempting to see some tidy symbolism and greater significance in Novak Djokovic's loss to Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open

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

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

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

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



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

the tour.

what's to come, saying: "I just hope that I'll get a chance to come back, to play at least another time and go through the emotions once more." Either way, his takeaway from this particular afternoon was that he played quite poorly -"Everything, you know, was just subpar" - against an opponent who showed off some of his best tennis and was, in a word, "flawless." That's a fair assessment. There might not be a much

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

It was remarkable to see

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

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

Djokovic, the greatest returner For Medvedev, a 27-year-old of his generation and perhaps

spanning more than 400 contests that Djokovic did not manage to earn a single break point. Another unusual sight was all of the miscues coming off Djokovic's racket. He finished with nearly twice as many unforced errors as

many unforced errors as Sinner, 54 to 28.

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

Pope defies India with gritty hundred

England make 316/6 on Day 3

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

llie Pope transformed the RGI Stadium into a gladiatorial fighting arena with a doughty hundred as England reached 316 for six to temporarily resist India's push for a win on the third day of the first Test here on Saturday. Pope (148 batting) and Rehan

Ahmed (16 batting) were guarding England's second innings fort at close and the visitors are now 126 runs ahead of India, unimaginable position at the dawn of the day.
India were bowled out for 436

in their first innings after building a lead of 190 runs. It was quite remarkable how Pope, who generally resembles a cat on a hot tin roof in these conditions mustered fortitude and technical perfection to defy the Indian bowlers, who were

day three itself, reducing England to 163 for five. But Pope and Ben Foakes (34) milked 104 runs for the sixth wicket alliance to keep India at bay, stretching the match

primed to finish the match on

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

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



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

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

individual and the team's score.

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

recovery act.

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

However, credit should also

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

The wicketkeeper-batter is one of better players in this England line-up against spin, as he can read the tweakers

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

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

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

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

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

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

joined the party. Jadeja was the first to get into the act in the post-lunch session, getting rid of Jonny Bairstow

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

But there was more magic in store as Ashwin got the

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

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

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

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

overnight 421 for seven.
Jadeja could not bring up a
much-anticipated fourth Test
hundred, falling leg before to

The left-hander went to front foot to defend a length delivery on off-stump, and the ball took a good amount of turn to hit his pads. Umpire Chris Gaffaney raised his finger as Jadeja opted to review the call.

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

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



India A beat England Lions by innings and 16 runs

PTI AHMEDABAD

 $A_{\text{powered India 'A' to an}}^{\text{fine all-round performance}}$ innings and 16-run win over England Lions in the second 'unofficial Test' here on

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

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

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

Lawes added 14 runs to his overnight score of 18 before Dayal got rid of him with Assah Deep taking the catch. Sarfaraz Khan was adjudged the Player of the Match for his 161-run knock which steered India 'A' to 489 in their first innings. Devdutt Padikkal too flourished with the bat, making 105.

Left-arm spinner Saurabh Kumar was the other star performer as he claimed his 22nd five-wicket haul to put India 'A' on the cusp of the win. Akash Deep snapped six wickets in total to contribute to the team's cause

The first unofficial Test ended in a draw

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

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

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

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

In a dazzling display of skill and ability to extract reverse swing, Bumrah dismissed Ben Duckett and Ioe Root in the middle session of the day.
India's bowling coach Paras

Mhambrey was stating the an all-weather bowler.

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

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

Bumrah's influence percolates to the dressing room too as one of the lead thinkers. "The dressing room conversations

he has, the energy he brings on to the field...he is a part of the discussion when the captain and support staff are around, he's right there with all suggestions," said Mhambrev. Root was all admiration for

Bumrah's impressive skill sets and said his dismissal was a big moment in the context of this Test

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



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

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

amount of skill and pace," said

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

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

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

Later, Mhambrey also allayed any concerns over Bumrah's fitness. The pacer was seen taking some pills towards the fag end of the day, and Mhambrey attributed it



Australia needs 156 runs to beat West Indies

Reaches 60-2 on Day 3 of day night test

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

Australia lost its recently named

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

opportunities to swell its lead beyond 215 runs as it got bowled out for 193 in the last session after No. 11 batter Shamar Joseph had to retire hurt when he injured his right toe off a searing Mitchell Starc yorker. He was adjudged leg before wicket while negotiating Starc's toe-crushing yorker only to see the bowler had over-stepped. Josh Hazlewood picked up 3-23 with his impeccable bowling and

AP BRISBANE (AUSTRALIA) Nathan Lyon grabbed 3-42 with Starc and Cameroon Green

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

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

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

On an oppressively hot and humid day, West Indies lost the initiative through careless batting and some smart catching by the Australians. The tourists were progressing well at 148-4, ahead by 170 runs, when first innings half-century-maker Kavem Hodge was sharply runout by Travis Head.

U-19 World Cup

Unbeaten India take on struggling USA

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

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

India beat Bangladesh and Ireland in their first two games and will top the group if they win against a struggling USA, a squad full of Indian

Americans. The American outfit come into the game after losing both their games to Ireland and Bangladesh. While Bangladesh did put the Indian batters under a bit of

led side hardly put a foot wrong against the Irishmen. The top three teams from group A and B, and, from C and D, qualify for the super

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

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

Opener Arshin Kulkarni pressure, the Uday Saharanwould want to get a big score



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

Skipper Saharan has led from the front with back-to-back fifties and would want to cash in against a weaker team like the USA. Sachin Dhas has played the role of a finisher well by getting the big hits towards the end of the innings. It will be India's third consecutive game at Mangaung Oval. USA will have to punch above their weight to trouble the Indians. Their batting let them down in the first two games and were all out for 105 against Ireland. Squads: India: Arshin

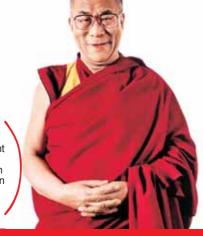
Kulkarni, Adarsh Singh,

Rudra Mayur Patel, Sachin Dhas, Priyanshu Moliya, Musheer Khan, Uday Saharan (c), Aravelly Avanish Rao, Saumy Kumar Pandey, Murugan Abhishek, Innesh Mahajan, Dhanush Gowda, Aaradhya Shukla, Limbani and Naman Tiwari USA: Amogh Arepally, Rayaan Bhagani, Aaryan Bhalala, Batra, Khush Prannav Chettipalayam, Arya Garg, Siddarth Kappa, Bhavya Mehta, Aarin Nadkarni, Manav Nayak, Parth Patel, Rishi Ramesh (c), Utkarsh Srivastava, Ateendra Subramanian, Aryaman Suri. Reserves: Arjun Mahesh, Ansh Rai, Aryan Satheesh.

New Delhi, January 28, 2024

the pioneer

"People take different roads seeking fulfilment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean











illa couple of years ago when asked where I planned to spend the New Year, I would promptly reply Somewhere the mobile doesn't work". It has become increasingly difficult to locate such a place, although I did manage to herald 2006 at a resort near Ranaqpur in Rajasthan where the mobile, somewhat unexpectedly, did not catch the signal.

I thought it would be the same when I planned a trip to Lakshadweep this year. As it transpired, connectivity is no longer an issue even in these far-flung islands that lie between 300 and 500 kms west of the Kerala coast. I had been told that BSNL provides a cellular service to Agatti, the island that has the archipelago's only airfield. What is instantly striking about Lakshadweep is its pristine serenity, untouched by civilisation. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, globally celebrated for creating the world's most famous fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, also wrote a gripping novel, The Lost World — an imagined account of a plateau in the wilds that survived the ravages of man and time to remain home to prehistoric species that were lost to the rest of the world. Purely fictional, it chronicles Sir Doyles's vivid imagination that can be traced to modern-day science fiction films like Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park.

A snorkeling or scuba diving expedition in the marine wilds of Lakshadweep would have definitely spurred the author's powers of imagination. If the phrase "out of this world" could truly be applied to a place very much a part of our Earth, it must be the bountiful marine life throbbing with vitality and variety all along the coral reefs of Lakshadweep's myriad islands. The sheer remoteness of this group of 62 islands, only 10 of which are inhabited, has allowed pristine marine life to prosper in splendid isolation. The sheer tranquility of the tiny islands encircled by emerald blue lagoons and peopled more by swaying coconut palms than humans, makes for a therapeutic holiday for metro rat-

A place of exquisite natural beauty, spellbinding tranquility, rich in an

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

It was the same feeling I got diving

deep in the lagoon off Kavaratti as

fish swarmed around me. I put out my palm at some of them;

thousands of enchantingly multi-hued



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

first-timers, we did not risk diving or snorkelling in the deep seas beyond the coral reef, although diving instructors everywhere assured us that even those (like my wife Shobori) who could not swim had nothing to worry once a life jacket was worn. Apparently, the walls of coral that constitute the reef offer fantastic glimpses of marine life. After a couple of days familiarising with the idiom of deep-sea diving, it's worth stepping into the open sea beyond the reef. At Bangaram, we snorkelled close to the reef on which a ship had run aground 70 years ago. The sights we saw were reminiscent of underwater documentaries you watch on Discovery or National Geographic. Apart from thousands of small, colourful fish, many giant-sized fish have also made the wrecked hull of the ship their home, elegantly sashaying in and out of the protection it offers. A visit to the shipwreck at Bangaram is highly recommended as the water is shallow and one can always stand up in case of any difficulty.

It is indeed a lost world waiting to be discovered in the warm, tropical waters of Lakshadweep. Living corals are rarely seen anywhere in the world today, but the waters off these islands are brimming with them. Islanders, however, mournfully point out that the El Nino of 1997 that brought swirling currents of warm water

caused

widesprea

death and

disaster, for corals here to regain their earlier vitality," a diving instructor said at Kadmat.

Interestingly, it could be dangerous at times to provoke live coral. Clamp corals, for instance, close their apparently inert mouths tight if you happen to put your finger into them. Unless uprooted (which means killed), it isn't possible to make them let go. Moral of the story: Let sleeping corals lie. Similarly, the multifinned Lionfish can release sufficient poison if touched, to disable a human arm for around three hours.

A good diving instructor is one who points to all these facts of underwater life even as he expertly guides you through the depths. We had to learn sign language to communicate underwater even for snorkelling. Making an 'O' by joining your thumb and forefinger is an exclamation of joy, putting your palm out and shaking it as if indicating 'so-so' actually conveys you are not okay, while the thumbs up sign means you aren't comfortable and wish to go up to the surface. Although scuba diving requires some

detailed instructions to be carefully followed and carrying a lot of equipment like air cylinders on your back, it is actually quite simple once you get the hang of it. Personally, I found it easier than snorkelling, which entails pulling air from the surface through a nozzle into your lungs



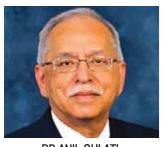
close to the surface. While diving, on the other hand, once you are in water, buoyancy ensures you don't feel the weight of the air cylinders; in fact, a belt studded with metal weights has to be worn so that you can reach the sea floor to get the best view of fish, corals, turtles and even octopuses.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



New Delhi, January 28, 2024

BUDGET EXPECTATIONS 2024-2025

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



DR ANIL GULATI

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



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

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

health The insurance coverage under Ayushman Bharat scheme should be revised / increased for cancer including cancer drugs and supportive care are expensive and the patients despite being the scheme's beneficiary could not afford the anti cancer care. •For patients having their personal health insurance, additional benefits (over and above existing) under section

80 C should be given. • Non-Governmental organizations including private hospitals and institutes should also be made eligible for Government funding for research projects.

ULTIMATE GOAL FOR ALL

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

E M A

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

is seeking:
INCREASING HEALTH BUDGET ALLOCATION: India's public healthcare spending remains low, at only around 1.6-1.8 % of GDP, insufficient to tackle the magnitude of healthcare challenges. NATHEALTH recommends increasing budget allocation to 2.5% of GDP to augment the social insurance schemes, boosting healthcare reforms and infrastructure and fast-tracking digital health services across India. **RATIONALIZATION OF GST:** Although increased budget allocation has been a longstanding request from the sector, there remains another persistent issue concerning the healthcare credit chain through GST. Indirect tax-

•Artificial Intelligence based

software should be installed in

the areas of paramedical

services such as pathology,

•Separate budgetary allocation

should be made for organ

transplant patients across the

country as transplant is a niche

financial assistance is meager.

where Government

radiology etc.

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

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

BOOSTING MEDICAL VALUE TRAVEL: Medical value-added services and Travel is expected to be USD 10 billion. To further aid the growth of this segment the issue of MAT credit needs immediate government attention. It is crucial for individuals to benefit from exports. This move will give them an opportunity to offset it. It will create a more significant value proposition to focus on MVTs and boost capacity.

SEPARATE BUDGET ALLO-

CATION FOR SKILLING AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF **HEALTHCARE WORKERS:** While the government announced the establishment of 157 new nursing colleges in the previous budget, strengthening health workforce situation in India is one such area that needs continuous government and policy focus. India's doctor-to-patient ratio is lower than WHO recommended threshold. NATHEALTH recommends that

the government should allocate funds for training and development programs for doctors, nurses, and allied healthcare workers, putting special emphasis on digital learning stack and smart certification standards.



CHANDRA GANJOO

import bill of over Rs 63,200 bill: government to catalyze domestic manufacturing. This not only reduces the financial strain but also propels India towards self-reliance in

The industry advocates for a comprehensive incentivizing indigenous streamlining processes for faster product approvals, and enhancing infrastructure and skills. Tax incentives for investment in

streamlining bureaucratic procedures, and fostering in dustry - a c a d e m i a collaboration can stimulate domestic manufacturing. This approach should align with global standards and ensure a stable regulatory environment to attract investments.



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

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

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

nominal 10%-15% Duty and a predictable tariff policy

• Correction of Inverted Duty by levying Health Cess of 5% custom duty on balance Medical Devices (this was not earlier applied to all HS Codes). Cess is used for

Ayushman Bharat.

Devices Manufacturing.

DOCTORSPEAK

TIPS TO KEEP YOUR NEWBORN SAFE DURING WINTER

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



DR RAGHURAM MALLAIAH Senior Director Neonatolgy Fortis la femme, New delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contrary to some beliefs, it is perfectly safe to continue giving your baby oil massages and warm baths even during winters. Just remember to keep the bathroom warm and experience. A warm bath and massage before

If your baby develops a fever or cough, which

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

DR MAYANK SOMANI CEO & Managing Director, Apollomedic

As we look ahead to the 2024 Budget, we foresee major advancements in fortifying the hospital industry. The Budget

is not merely a fiscal plan but

an opportunity to shape a incĺusive, robust, technologically advanced healthcare system. The healthcare ecosystem anticipates increased funding for healthcare and pharma, emphasizing innovation, R&D, digitalization. Expectations include favorable policies, reduced taxes on highend equipment, and incentives for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model hospitals which will help leverage the private sector expertise to improve health services. Encouragement for health with a focus on extending benefits to non-metro areas through strategic hospital projects. The industry looks forward to comprehensive supporting measures advancements, accessibility, and sustainability in healthcare

The MedTech industry in India holds high expectations from the Budget. With an alarming 80-85% dependence on imports, resulting in a massive



Group Chief Executive Officer, Trivitron Healthcare

medical technology.

strategy: R&D and production, regulatory technology, advanced

 Trade Margin Capping by monitoring MRP of Imports (if over 10 - 20 times of CIF)

• Income Tax benefits for project investments in Medical

Unlike other sectors, most medical devices have a high infections is higher. value but are produced in low volumes. It may therefore not be economically viable healthy and well-nourished. manufacture all devices in a with highly

single geographical area. Even countries developed medical manufacturing hubs like the USA, Japan, Germany, etc. also rely on imports to cater to the healthcare needs of their country.

PAVAN CHOUDARY

Chairman of the Medical Technology

Association of India (MTal)

In recent years, the Medical

Device industry has benefited

hugely due to noteworthy

initiatives by the government,

such as the National Medical

Device Policy (NMDP), the

Promotion of Research &

Innovation in the Pharma-

scheme, the establishment of

medical device parks and

elevation of branding and promotional strategies for the

That said we must also be

cognizant of the nuances of the

medical device sector which

comprises mechanical and

engineering complexities.

MedTech sector

growth of the sector.

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

bedtime can promote better sleep as well.

are more common in winters, it is important to consult a paediatrician immediately. Prompt medical attention will help identify and address any potential health concerns.

BOOK REVIEW

Fostering Collective Prosperity Through Cooperatives

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

BY ARCHANA JYOTI

The coffee table book 'Collective ■ Prosperity: The Legacy of Indian Cooperatives', is all about recognizing and celebrating the achievements of Indian cooperative societies over the 75 years, taking readers on a tour of as many successful cooperatives from diverse

Recently unveiled by Union Home and Coperation Minister Amit Shah in the national capital, the book is compiled by Pune-based Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (Vamnicom), a national institute under the aegis of the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT) and promoted by the Union Cooperation

The volume is the maiden effort by the institute highlighting the best practices in the sector to help the other aspirants to take a cue

One is therefore little surprised, as we delve into its pages, we embark on a journey treaded by historic cooperatives to the likes of India Coffee House, lesser known gems Looms of Ladakh to the Uralungal Labour Cooperative and iconic ones including Amul, IFFCO, Krishak Bharati Cooperativm and National

Consumer Cooperative Federation (NCCF) to name a few. Spread throughout the landscape of the country, these entities are silently working to bring prosperity while opening new opportunities for the individual and for the group to reach their individual and common goals, aligned with the vision of "Sahakar se Samriddhi " as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as also has been pointed out by Vamnicom's Director Hema Yadav who has played a significant role in the book's preparation. It is a valuable resource for

individuals and communities looking to actively participate in cooperative endeavors.

The remarks of Union Cooperative Secretary Gyaneshwar Singh in his Foreword rightly emphasize the significance of the Indian cooperative system which is one of the biggest in the particularly in supporting agriculture and allied sectors with almost 30 crore members forming the backbone of the rural ecosystem serving mainly

Publisher: HarperCollins

small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, handloom weavers, fishermen, rural and urban poor, SCS, STs and other

Author: Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of

Cooperative Management team

Pages: 217 | Price: ₹799

backward classes. It needs to be mentioned here that India is home to staggering 8.5 lakhs such entities in the world. Cooperation has undoubtedly been a way of life for our forefathers who advocated vasudhaiva kutumbakam' from times immemorial. Some of the world's best known cooperatives in various sectors are in India which are continuously transforming the lives of our local communities. For instance, Asia's first cooperative sugar factory, Padmashri Dr Vithalrao Vikhe Patil Sahakari Sakhar

Karkhana Limited is at a

small village Pravaranagar,

Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Similarly, India's first women's federation, the Gujarat State SEWA Women's Co-operative Federation Limited was formally established with an aim to support its members in capacity-building for management, marketing and policy and advocacy interventions with key

The Dhundi Solar Pump Irrigators' Cooperative Enterprise (SPICE) established in 2016 at Dhundi, in Anand district, Gujarat is the world's first-ever

stakeholders.

cooperatives- comprising one- enterprise to use solar power to run their to the people and the farmers despite the fourth of the total number of such irrigation pumps while SWaCH is supply chain being disrupted by the country's first wholly-owned cooperative of self-employed waste collectors in Maharashtra. Kerala-based AYCOOPS is India's first cooperative media production house in the cooperative sector which, unlike the traditional cooperatives, operates like a New-age Eco-friendly Cooperatives.

Commendably, these cooperatives belong to different parts of the country, which is an indicator of a fair distribution of development across the

land even though a lot still remains to be done in this respect.

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

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

lockdown. The narrative also touches upon the

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

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

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

Balochistan trapped in geopolitical flames of Pakistan, Iran

The Baloch crisis once again came to the limelight this month. It all happened because of crossborder military strikes by Pakistan and Iran in each other's territories. However, the military intervention in their neighbours' boundaries is largely termed as simply targeting Baloch terror targets. What surprises the international community is that, with a bloody war between the state of Israel and Hamas entering more than three months since October 7 last year, the emerging conflicts between Iran and Pakistan might trigger a new zone of tension in Asia. Iran launched a missile attack

on Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan on January 16. Iran attacked the alleged strongholds of the militant group called Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) in Baluchistan. Precisely, a wider war in West Asia does not guarantee security to Iran. However, it may happen that Tehran gets some temporary outlets to flex its military muscles and warn its counterparts at the same time. The day before the strikes on Pakistan, Iran also launched ballistic missiles at Syria and Iraq. Sources confirmed that Iran was only targeting anti-Iran groups and active spy bases for Israeli forces in these countries.

Meanwhile, Washington is trying to prevent Iran-backed Houthi attacks on ships passing through the Red Sea. This occurred shortly after the Israel-Hamas war started, with the aim of stopping ships heading towards the ports in Israel. The Houthi rebels, who now control more than half of Yemen and the capital city of Sanaa, are a Shia Muslim group fighting against the Saudi-UAE sponsored Hadi Government in exile since 2011, at the onset of the historic Arab Spring. Their conflict with the Saudibacked Yemeni Government has brought them closer to Iran. However, it is not entirely accurate to say that the Houthis are direct proxies of Iran, as they are largely dominated and guided by



locally defined interests. The Houthis are attacking ships in the Red Sea as retaliation against Israel's ongoing war against the Palestinians.

Pakistan's retaliatory military strike inside Iranian territory heightened regional tension in West and Central Asia. Pakistan states that it conducted military strikes in Sistan and Baluchistan provinces of Iran solely to target the bases of two Baloch terror groups and their camps. The separatist groups that the Pakistan Army focused on were the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) based in these areas. According to reports from Iranian media houses, the Pakistani operation resulted in the deaths of nine people, including women and children. However, Islamabad claims that it targeted and killed a few Baloch terrorists. The Pakistani Foreign Ministry officials have asserted that they have already informed Iran about the presence of Baloch separatists and their activities in the country, but no actions

rebels so far. Consequently, Pakistan justifies its military actions in Sistan and Baluchistan provinces of Iran. What do these separatists want? The main aim of the Baloch separatist groups is to break their province away from Pakistan. This separatist insurgency has been ongoing for more than 75 years since 1948. To them, the central government based in Islamabad exploits their resources, and in return, the Baloch people are not adequately rewarded. Initially, BLF cadres targeted gas projects, infrastructural projects, and central security agencies, but now they have expanded their operations beyond Baluchistan. They also attack Chinese projects and their workers in the province, despite the security guarantee offered to China by the Pakistan military.

Baluchistan has a long history of resistance and is not aligned with what Islamabad and Rawalpindi do. It is the largest province of Pakistan located in the western part, possessing significant resources both in reserve and have been taken against the in use. Unfortunately, it is the

least developed area of the country, comprising almost 44 per cent of the total landmass of Pakistan. However, the reality is that most of its lands are arid and largely uninhabited. It has a distinct cultural and historical identity within and outside Pakistan. Its people are spread across three sovereign nations Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. Thus, the problem lies in the coordination and realisation of these three nations about the future of the Baloch people and their continued

Baluchistan stems from the Baloch tribe, which has inhabited the area for centuries. Nearly 10 million Baloch people reside in the region, encompassing lands in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The majority of them live in Baluchistan, with some residing in the Sindh of Pakistan. province Although clear data is not readily available, historically, areas traditionally claimed as indigenous lands by the Balochs were either occupied

struggle to maintain their

distinct regional identity.

The very identity

or under the control of the Persians and the British Empire.

The real tragedy is that the southeastern part of Iran and the western areas of Pakistan, where the Baloch people inhabit, are the most impoverished parts of both countries. Another potential threat on both sides of the border is that they live in a porous and dangerous territorial tract, which automatically facilitates unhindered movements of the ordinary Baloch people and especially their separatist groups. Of course, strict surveillance systems are installed by Iran and Pakistan

in these borderlands. The crucial question is whether the Baloch people will receive justice. A highhanded military, known as the "Deep State" of Pakistan and often referred to as a "state within a state", is well aware of the intricacies of the issue. Politicians in that country will likely play a minimal role in resolving the Baloch crisis. For decades, it has been the all-powerful Rawalpindi that has dominated the Baloch

The relationship between the Baloch people and the ruling military and political elite of Pakistan has been fraught for a long time. For over two decades, Pakistan has been engaged in fighting Baloch insurgents. Islamahad frequently blames Indian intelligence agencies for funding and monitoring terror groups and their activities in Baluchistan. The Government of Pakistan has even presented documents to the UN regarding India's alleged support for Baloch separatists in Pakistan. However, Delhi vehemently denies any involvement in Baluchistan.

Clearly, Baluchistan and its people's desire for a homeland are misunderstood by successive regimes in Islamabad. For the Pakistani military and the majority of its elites, Baluchistan is seen as a dark war zone. Mere Chinese investments in the province, under the banner of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of Xi Jinping's vast Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), will not be sufficient to quell the separatist tendencies among the Baloch insurgents.

Since 2022, the Baloch people living in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province have faced particular issues from Iranian authorities and security services. The main reason behind this is that many of its residents participated in a nationwide protest against the death of a young woman in police custody named Mahsa Amini. She became a victim of Iran's religious police for not wearing the veil in public places. While the protest gained international attention, authorities cracked down heavily on the protesters and selectively targeted groups like the Baloch in Iran. According to Amnesty International's report, security forces killed about 80 people on September 30, 2022, in the city of Zahedan in Sistan-Balochistan Province. This incident gained global

The reality is that Iran and its proxies must be stopped without any Simultaneously, Israel must facilitate immediate dialogue to prevent further hostilities in Palestinian territories. As of now, more than 24,000 Palestinians have lost their lives since the offensive against Hamas began in October. It is time for Washington to convince Tel Aviv to draw a thin red line and come to the negotiating table. Otherwise, considering the ongoing unrest in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen involving major world powers, West Asia should not be pushed further into a wider war. Despite fears of the Iran-Pakistan conflict escalating into a new war zone and spreading to South Asia, both countries are currently maintaining a calibrated response. Now, Iran has its hands full

recognition as Black Friday.

Currently, the Israel-Hamas

war is taking a troubling turn.

on many fronts - fighting ISIS at home, backing Hamas and the Houthis in two foreign lands, and, above all, sponsoring its proxies across West Asia to counter the US and its allies. On the other hand, Pakistan is in a dire economic situation. It is facing a significant threat from its homegrown Islamic jihadist factory and engaging in constant frontier battles with once-friendly Taliban forces. The ruling mullahs in Afghanistan are literally shaking its caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar until the new election results are out.

Hopefully, both nations will understand their limits and control their military might for now to avoid a larger regional catastrophe. In the midst of this, the genuine concerns of the Baloch people, spread across three neighbouring countries, should not be sidelined.

(The writer is a Senior Faculty at the Department of Political Science in the School of Liberal Education, Galgotias University, Greater Noida.)

The Baloch crisis has recently gained global attention due to crossborder military strikes between Pakistan and Iran. The Baloch people's identity is rooted in the Baloch tribe, with a history of resistance. Amid geopolitical complexities, the Baloch people's desire for justice remains a significant challenge in the



region

MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE •

Human impact on earth's vital systems

In the throes of a climate crisis, the convergence of El Niño, surging global temperatures, and humaninduced factors paints a dire picture. With El Niño intensifying impacts worldwide, from disrupted weather patterns to water shortages, urgent collective action is paramount



announced on Tuesday that 2023 is globally the warmest year on record, and the average global temperature is 1.48 degrees Celsius higher than the average temperature recorded in the second half of the 19th century. The Indian Meteorological Department had previously declared on the eve of the New Year that 2023 was the second warmest year in India, following 2016. Last year, i.e., 2023, missed breaking the 2016 record by 0.07 degrees Celsius.

Climate scientists and researchers express no surprise that unabated emissions of greenhouse gases are the cause for the warming trend reaching new highs. Furthermore, these numbers indicate acceleration of the planet's warming. Carlo Buontempo, Director of the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, stated during the briefing, "When news briefing, scientists combine their satellite readings with geological evidence of the climate's more distant past, 2023 appears to be among the warmest years in at least 100,000 years."

El Niño and La Niña are El Niño pattern weakens the climate patterns in the Pacific Ocean that influence climate conditions worldwide. While La Niña benefits India, El Niño creates warmer winters and drier, hotter summers. While 2022 was a La Niña Despite El Niño, we year, 2023 was an El Niño year. The weather pattern, especially between July and December 2023, was heavily impacted by El Niño

monitor rainfall deficit across the country. The impact of El Niño conditions in 2023 will also be felt in 2024, at least in the first quarter of the year. The deficient rainfall has led to nearly half-empty reservoirs across the country, thereby impacting Rabi crops like wheat, potato, etc., and a drop in production is predicted. El Niño occurs every 2 to 7

years, lasting for nearly 9 to 12 months. El Niño conditions are likely to continue until the first quarter of 2024. Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said, "The onset of El Niño will greatly increase the likelihood of breaking temperature records and triggering more extreme heat in many parts of the world and the ocean." During La Niña years, cold sea surface temperatures

(SST) in the eastern Pacific and warm temperatures in the west create a strong east-towest SST gradient, and the wind blows strongly from east to west. In El Niño years, the eastern Pacific is warmer than normal, and the western Pacific tends to be cooler, with a rainfall deficit over Indonesia and Australia. The east-to-west SST gradient and further weakens the wind. It enhances warming in the east and cooling in the west, which is critical for the development of El Niño.

experienced heavy monsoons in the northwestern part of the country and the Western Himalayan States that breached infrastructure and communities. National and international tourists also faced the brunt. Raghu Murtugudde, a professor of atmospheric and oceanic science and earth system science at the University of Maryland, explained in one of his columns the cloud bursts and unprecedented rainfall in Kashmir, Jammu and Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan Gujarat, and during June 2023.

His analysis revealed that the El Niño pattern was superimposed by global warming, producing relatively flat east-west SST gradient, resulting in constructive interference and heavy downpour in the region. The professor further adds that there are few examples of this pattern and phenomenon of constructive interference between global warming and El Niño, and hence it is not fully

understood. Researchers at the Indian Tropical Institute of Meteorology in Pune have found, in their studies, that an increased level of tiny pollution particles known as sulfate aerosols contributes to intensifying conditions and further decreasing rainfall. These aerosols result from the increased levels of sulfur dioxide emissions, especially in South Asian countries. Regarding the issue of

depleted reservoir levels, the

The European Union's conditions, resulting in a disrupted the lives and tightrope walk in managing hills in the background tower," and all rivers forest ecosystems with the livelihoods of local resources during the summer appear barren, dampening originating there are potential to conserve water, is resources during the summer months. They must navigate conflicts between the requirements for drinking water, crop irrigation, and power production.

The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB) have already expressed concerns about the upcoming summer and have urged the Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Limited, Water Resources Department Karnataka, to prioritise water requirements for Bengaluru city and reserve it at the KRS and Kabini reservoirs. Currently, both reservoirs have 30 tmcft of water, and BWSSB has requested the reservation of 12 tmcft to maintain the present level of water supply at 1450 MLD.

It is understood that several other agencies across the country have expressed similar concerns to their respective governments.

While the plains in north India are experiencing cold temperatures, states in the Western Himalayan region, such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, are facing a deficiency in snowfall and dry weather. The winter rains that were previously experienced are absent this year, adversely affecting crop production. Agriculture in these regions relies on rainfall, and farmers are currently in distress.

Gulmarg, an international tourist destination renowned its snow-covered landscapes and white-peaked agencies responsible for water supply to municipalities, mountains during this time of year, has lost its charm. The towns, and cities face a

appear barren, dampening the enthusiasm of tourists. Adventure sports like skiing, typical during this season, are also absent.

Chilling climate is crucial for the production of crops such as wheat, peas, and potatoes, as well as for the flowering and fruiting of apples. Apples significantly contribute to the economy of the farming community, as well as that of the states and Union Territory. This year's winter temperatures have been nearly 3 degrees Celsius higher than last year, and in the absence of the chilling climate, agricultural and horticultural crops are suffering.

To attain the appropriate chilling climate, apple farmers have been abandoning their farms and relocating to higher altitudes, establishing new farms for nearly two decades. This process incurs environmental and economic costs. The twigs from old plantations are burned, akin to stubble burning by farmers in Punjab and Haryana, leading to a surge in the Air Quality Index-a health hazard for the community due to the inhalation of poisonous gases trapped in the lower atmosphere. When vertical circulation of air is restored, these gases escape into the upper atmosphere, increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide equivalent. The more carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, the greater its impact on our lives and livelihoods.

The Himalayas are often referred to as the "water originating sustained by the melting of

In El Niño years, there is a deficiency in snowfall, which ultimately depletes the flow of water in streams, tributaries, and rivers. This has the potential to impact life in regions along the foothills of the Himalayas.

The dryness of the climate and the deficiency of rainfall and snow lead to prolonged forest fires in the hill region. As the planet warms, forests are subjected to frequent and destructive fires, creating a vicious cycle: the more the warming, the more the forest fires. Forest fires constitute a double whammy; the destruction of trees in the fire results in a loss of the carbon sequestration potential of the forests, and the burning releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Forest burning also adversely affects flora and fauna, with the young regeneration of many tree species disappearing, leading to the degradation and fragmentation of forests. Damage is inflicted on reptiles, amphibians, as well as the cubs and young ones of large mammals. Another disturbing trend is

observed in the Himalayas, anthropogenic where pressures on Oak forests have led to their degradation and subsequent replacement by pine forests. A study by Uma Shankar Singh of Vanashakti NGO in Nainital forests, published in "The Applied Biology and Chemistry Journal," reveals that Oak, an important component of hill

being replaced by pine forests. This is an irreversible and undesirable change in the ecosystem, and forest managers are held responsible for hastening the process. The author concludes that temperatures are rising rapidly, and rainfall is receding in Nainital, thereby impacting its flora and fauna. The impact of warming on Earth's boreal forests, which encircle the northern reaches of the planet just south of the Arctic treeless Tundra, covering areas such as Alaska, Canada, Scandinavia, and Siberia, has been studied by Ronny Rotbarth and others from Wageningen University. As the planet warms, these forests are shrinking. Vast expanses of forests pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and use it to grow roots, trunks, and leaves, enriching the soil with carbon when the trees decay.

reveal evidence of tree cover in some pockets of the region north of the tree line, but there are no expansions in other pockets. In the southern, hotter, and drier regions, tree growth has been reduced, and trees have been killed as a result of the planet's warming. There is thus a net loss of tree cover in these forests. Wildfires and logging account for additional loss in the southern region of boreal

Studies using satellite data

(The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest Force)

























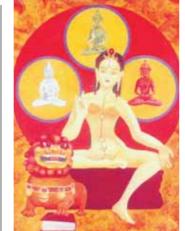




ARIES March 21-April 19

This week heralds a promising phase for financial advancement. Anticipate travel, primarily for work-related reasons, but be ready for some unexpected challenges. You might face delays or financial issues, like trouble with bank transactions, which could be frustrating. However, your resilience and problem-solving skills will see you through these hurdles. Professionally, new opportunities are on the horizon, potentially elevating your career. In your personal life, exciting proposals, possibly romantic or even life-changing, may emerge. Those feeling disheartened will experience a surge of positivity. For couples, this period strengthens bonds, bringing joy and deeper understanding. As the week wraps up, keep an eye on your spending. The temptation to splurge on gifts, fragrances, or a picturesque getaway might be strong, but balancing your budget is key.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Fuchsia Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week, you're set to experience a period of significant abundance and creativity. Your innovative ideas and resourcefulness will shine, greatly benefiting your personal and professional life. Your dedication to your family's well-being is evident, and your efforts will be met with appreciation and cooperation, especially in family discussions where your input will be crucial. Financially, the period looks promising, opening doors to potential investments in property or business expansion. For those with children, there may be exciting opportunities for them, like educational pursuits abroad or significant career advancements. However, towards the week's end, it's wise to exercise caution. Be aware of potential conflicts or misunderstandings, possibly fueled by others' envy. It's advisable to steer clear of any activities that could be deemed controversial or unethical, to maintain your positive trajectory.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Jade Green Lucky day Tuesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

In times of difficulty, remember that challenges often bring growth and learning. This week might bring feelings of rejection, sadness, or a sense of betrayal. While these experiences are tough, they are essential for personal development. Without such trials, life would lack depth and meaning. Midweek, you might find yourself seeking answers in solitude, striving to rise above immediate desires and emotions. This period of introspection is crucial for overcoming external chaos. It's a time to discover inner strength and resilience, proving to yourself that you can overcome any obstacle. If you're grappling with feelings of betrayal and doubting your capacity to love again, embrace this challenge with an open heart. Remember, even when the skies are grey, the sun is always waiting for its moment to shine through.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Coral Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you'll be engaged in lively social gatherings, with a focus on entertaining those close to you. Your energy will be high, driven by interactions with family and friends, and you might even reconnect with an old friend. You'll experience a sense of joy and creativity, and there will be a harmonious balance at home. Your loved ones will be doing well, and your personal health and finances are looking up. However, be cautious towards the week's end. Challenges may arise, particularly in your closest relationships, and could impact your well-being. It's important to stay mindful and take care of yourself. Embracing a sense of inner calm and spiritual connection can help you navigate these challenges. Remember, it's better to be proactive in maintaining harmony than to fix

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Tangerine Lucky day Monday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you are endowed with an innate ability to persevere and excel. Your objectives are crystal clear, and your resolve to meet them is unwavering. Exceptional communication abilities will be your strongest suit, aiding you in reaching impressive heights professionally. Your robust inner strength will provide a sense of security and invigorate you. If you're involved in business ventures, expect substantial gains. Financially, it's a promising time with timely returns and profitable transactions. Relationships, be they professional partnerships or personal bonds, are likely to be harmonious, with support coming from family and influential figures in your life. Fortune seems to be on your side. Those in romantic relationships might need to exercise patience. This period calls for self-reflection. Instead of holding back your feelings, embrace openness and adaptability. approaching situations with maturity.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Mustard Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You're entering a phase where taking a step back for some self-care is essential. Embrace this opportunity to rejuvenate both physically and mentally. Be prepared for a scenario where clarity emerges, revealing a significant truth. Stav observant, as such revelations can be pivotal in overcoming challenges that might otherwise lead to prolonged uncertainty. As the week progresses, a shift towards a more positive outlook is likely. You'll find yourself contemplating a new venture. This is your moment to shine - your capabilities are perfectly aligned to initiate and see through this exciting journey. There's also a hint of new beginnings in your personal life, possibly relating to family expansion. This surge of fresh energy and creativity is a powerful force. Embrace it fully and channel it towards maximizing your potential and seizing new opportunities.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Mauve **Lucky day** Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

In the coming period, individuals born in late spring will experience a significant shift, leading to professional growth such as salary increases and recognition. The clarity in goals will drive focused progress, marking a time of reaping rewards for past efforts. Midweek, a surge of energy, creativity, and generosity will be evident, alongside a pursuit of deeper, spiritual fulfillment. This phase also strengthens familial ties, especially with siblings, and fosters better understanding in business partnerships. Those in corporate roles may anticipate favorable changes like promotions or desired relocations. It's a prime time for harnessing and utilizing innate talents effectively. Additionally, this period encourages a balance between material success and personal well-being. Acts of kindness and charity will not only benefit others but also enrich your own life experience

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Burgundy



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

You may encounter a period of emotional challenges, potentially leading to personal growth. Embracing these challenges can transform them into a source of strength, preparing you for future hurdles. Remember, true bravery emerges from confronting and overcoming fear. When opportunities arise, embrace them with confidence and determination. This is a pivotal moment to pursue your aspirations with renewed vigor, setting aside any uncertainties. Should you feel dissatisfied with your current achievements or if your efforts seem less impactful than anticipated, consider reevaluating your strategies. Exploring alternative approaches could steer you towards a more fulfilling path. As the week progresses, keep an eye out for promising developments in your financial or professional life, as there is a possibility of encountering beneficial prospects.

Lucky number 9 | **Lucky colour** Jade Green **Lucky day** Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Embrace the inner light that you've previously overlooked. Trust in your abilities and in the unseen forces that guide you. The power of belief can turn dreams into reality. Feel the surge of inspiration and strength within, a strength that grows in moments of vulnerability. This is a time of spiritual liberation and transformation. Let go of outdated perspectives and welcome a fresh outlook. Your intuition is heightened, guiding you toward the fulfillment of your deepest desires and aspirations. This period marks the beginning of new connections brimming with potential, paving the way for profound joy and affection. Open your heart to the transformative energy of love. Your sensitivity and spirituality are heightened, resonating with a deep emotional and intuitive understanding. Revel in this harmonious phase of personal growth and emotional fulfillment

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Lavender Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week, you may find yourself grappling with inner turmoil, particularly at night, as concerns about the future and well-being of younger family members weigh on your mind. Expect some delays in resolving these issues Additionally, the health of an elderly female relative might require your attention. For women, this period may bring heightened emotional sensitivity, possibly linked to natural physiological changes. Engaging in yoga or meditation could be beneficial, helping to strengthen mental resilience and providing the courage to face these challenges. As the week concludes, you'll likely experience a shift in perspective, heralding the start of a new chapter. This transition enables you to move past current emotional complexities and make significant, positive life decisions.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Aquamarine Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, your inner strength and clarity of purpose are your guiding forces. Embracing both your aspirations and fears, you integrate them into your being, emerging more resilient. Your confidence in your capabilities is evident, enabling you to effectively navigate various aspects of life, balancing rationality with emotion, and thought with action. Your objectives are well-defined, reminding everyone that mere wishing is futile without decisive action. The key to success lies in not just the desire to create, but in the capability to do so. As you step out to pursue your goals, your determination sets the stage for everything to align according to your vision. Remember, you are the architect of your destiny; your life is a reflection of your choices and efforts.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Violet Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Amidst a hectic life, it's easy to overlook the richness that surrounds you, focusing instead on unfulfilled desires. True fulfillment often lies in appreciating what you already possess. Embracing gratitude for these plessings is key to contentment. This week, prepare for significant shifts in your routine. These changes are linked to life's unpredictable nature and your understanding of it. Adapting to these shifts depends on your readiness to accept and understand them. A highlight of this period is the potential merging of two unique paths. This could manifest as a romantic, friendly, or professional partnership, requiring mutual adjustments. The success of this union relies on clear intentions and sincerity, offering a stable foundation amidst life's changes.

ucky number 1 | Lucky colour Turquoise

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ruman mind is driven by sense of relativity, which makes you look at the same issue in different perspectives, sometime even strikingly opposite. That puts you in a comparison mode when you start weighing and judging to form your individualistic perception. That varies from person-toperson according as indwelling thought construct in mind developed during a long stretch of time in the past. That makes each being unique, reflecting varying mind traits - desire trends, likes, dislikes, prejudices, passions, and such habit tendencies. That induces each unitary mind conduct a particular way. Being in comparison mode breeds in sense of divide, which remains the cause of all internal and societal conflicts. Internal conflicts coupled with desire element often leads to such unseemly and untimely acts as would cause failures and frustrations, and thereby self-invited

pains, and sufferings in life. Amidst all the conflicting views, we are to make choices, an exclusive human privilege. For, all other species are bound by their predetermined nature, with no scope for making any exception. They go by their instinct. They can't judge whether their actions are right or wrong. So, the law of Karma doesn't apply to them. Human beings on the contrary are bound by cause-effect chain. For, whenever choice comes into play, the probability of its use and misuse becomes equal. And there is no scope for having a free lunch in this life. We will have to own up responsibility for the choices made and actions thereto, and bear with its consequences - good or bad - which runs in succession. To overcome this vulnerability, human beings are also empowered with the faculty of discriminate intelligence. Applying which, you can dispassionately analyse,

Shed fear and face the challenge head on



see things in the right perspective due, and pick up the most appropriate lead. The irony, however, is that more often our ego consciousness identifies itself with inherent tendencies. And is tempted to passionately pursues them, as if that would be its end game. It doesn't let

discriminatory faculty come into play. We, thus, miss the opportunity to discriminate between 'what we wish' and what is right, and with obvious consequences.

But here again, if we remain alert to keep our discriminatory ability in active mode, we could turn choice option into an asset, for which we seldom remain conscious. For, it also offers the opportunity to reflect upon our own inherent tendencies, identify, and acknowledge them. Following which, we could take corrective initiatives with the aid of fresh educative inputs. That by itself is enough to make us conduct reasonably well. In the process, we also become aware of our unique potential, which if honed further, we could come out with our best. The paradox, however, is that caught up with the usual run of life, we seldom care to use the choice option to our advantage. We then remain slave to our habit

tendencies. And when we meet failure, we find it convenient to coverup our inadequacy with the call of destiny. A couple of months back someone having met with failure in business came asking: "Sir, having tasted success in my business venture, I opened a new branch. But it collapsed following pandemic. What wrong I did in my previous life that I was so fated. I am under heavy debt, not knowing how to come out of this trap. Future looks gloomy. Kindly guide." Well, once you make a choice, the consequences thereof, stretches on for long. Be focused to the business in hand, work out ways to improve earning. It may take little more than 2 years to get out of debt trap. But rest assured, you will finally make it. Now, in so far as the cause of your failure is concerned, there is no fun in relating it to past birth's doing. The present offers the answer. You can't entirely blame yourself. Even the best of

astrologers could not foresee pandemic happening, which brought the whole world to a standstill. The mistake on your part is that you delayed your closure. Also, you raised the business with other's investment without matching equity of

More important now is to be well geared up to meet the present challenge. You, however, seem to be dispirited. For, the sense of fear and insecurity writ large in your construct has raised its head following your failure. Shed fear. And then immense potential within, as would Jupiter's beneficial aspect on mind signifying Moon, and Mercury identified with intelligence, will come into full play. And with time, you will come out of your problem.

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