

OPINION 6
TAIWANESE CONUNDRUM
FOR MAINLAND CHINA

MONEY 10
MARKETS FALL DRAGGED BY IT STOCKS,
FOREIGN FUND OUTFLOWS

SPORT 12
SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN
STRONG POSITION ON DAY ONE



RANCHI, FRIDAY JANUARY 26, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Modi Fulcrum of BJP Manifesto

INSPIRES FIRST TIME VOTERS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

At the head of the Lok Sabha elections in April-May this year, BJP president JP Nadda officially launched the party's 2024 election campaign, releasing a video featuring a theme song dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The theme song in Hindi, "Sapne Nahi Haqeeqat Bunte Hai, Tabhi Toh Sab Modi Ko Chunte Hai" (Not dreams, but (we) weave reality, that's why everyone chooses Modi), highlights how Modi delivered on his promises and fulfilled people's dreams after they elected him at a time when the country was in a "bad shape". The campaign song was released by Nadda at an event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed young voters virtually. In a virtual interaction with millions of first-time voters from across 5,800 locations in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the nation's youth on Thursday to contribute to the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He urged them to share their thoughts on the NaMo app. The Prime Minister expressed his anticipation of meeting some of the contributors soon. Additionally, he provided a link to the website narendramodi.in, where individuals can share their inputs for the BJP's manifesto. He



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

ruling party's confidence and emphasises that Modi is all set to become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term. It features a photo of Modi performing dandavat pranam in front of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. The video highlights the government's achievements in various sectors and the launch of schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Har Ghar Nal Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) that were introduced in the last 10 years of the Modi regime.

Continued on Page 2



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

PTI

Gifts Bulandshahr with dream projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BULANDSHAHR/NEW DELHI

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

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

Highways on a high under Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

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



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

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



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

PTI

Kerala Governor delivers knockout punch in Assembly

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Kerala Government found itself in an embarrassing situation as Governor Mohammed Arif Khan concluded his address to the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, the opening day of this year's session. The Governor, after his customary salutations to the House, read out the concluding line of the policy statement and promptly left the House, all within a span of one minute. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (also known as Karana Bhoothan) stood bewildered and perplexed as the Governor exited the House, leaving both the shocked treasury and Opposition benches aghast. This is the first incident of its kind reported from anywhere in the country. There is nothing surprising in this development. The policy statement given to the Governor by the Government for reading out in the House is complete nonsense. The State



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

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

the monthly pension due to him, while the octogenarian Mariyamma, another pensioner, has been going around the state with a begging bowl soliciting financial help from good Samaritans, as the CPI(M) government has failed to reimburse her dues for more than a year," said George. The 63-page-long speech, intended to be read out by the Governor, was full of eloquence on Pinarayi Vijayan and a scathing attack on the Centre. While highlighting NITI-Ayog's praise for the 'unprecedented' progress made by the State in the Human Development Index, the Keralaeyam Global Show, and the Nava Kerala Sadass, which ended in a fiasco, the speech blamed the Centre for every setback suffered by Kerala, pointed out the veteran lawmaker. VD Satheeshan, leader of the Opposition, blamed the CPI(M) and the BJP for the Governor's actions.



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LIC/MT/2023-24/18/Eng

The Pioneer wishes its readers Happy Republic Day. As the offices of The Pioneer will remain closed on the occasion of the Republic Day, the next issue of the paper will appear on January 28

Stringent security protocols in place for Republic Day

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

As the city eagerly prepares to celebrate the 75th Republic Day, authorities have implemented a robust and multi-layered security apparatus to ensure the safety and smooth conduct of the festivities. The district-level main function is scheduled to take place at Gopal Maidan, Bistupur, with the flag hoisting ceremony set for 9:05 am.

To oversee the preparedness for the main function, various committees, comprising officials from the civil and police administration, have been formed. East Singhbhum Deputy Commissioner, Manjunath Bhajantri, emphasised that the parade for the Republic Day main function would be conducted at Gopal



maidan. A diverse and enthusiastic participation is anticipated, with students from 20 schools rehearsing for the parade alongside units of the Rapid Action Force (RAF), Jharkhand Armed Police (JAP), and the district police. Civil organizations, NGOs, social organizations, corporate sectors, and public sector undertakings will also showcase their tableaux during the march past following the flag hoisting ceremony.

In light of the Republic Day celebrations, there will be a no-entry restriction for heavy vehicles on January 26 from 6 am to 10 pm. The national flag is set to be hoisted by Health Minister Banna Gupta at Gopal Maidan, according to sources in the district administration.

Security in Jamshedpur has been intensified with a multi-layered approach, even though specific intelligence reports have not indicated any particular threat perception. A general alert has been sounded across the city, and over a thousand police personnel have been strategically stationed in and around the city, including vital installations.

The Gopal Maidan, the focal point of Republic Day celebrations, is under close watch, with adequate police personnel and JAP commandos deployed to ensure the safety of attendees. Key installations throughout the city are also under vigilant surveillance.

In addition, a special checking drive is being conducted at the city's border areas, with particular attention to strategic locations such as markets, bus stands, and hotels. Hotel authorities have been instructed to promptly report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station.

To further enhance security, police have issued strict instructions against carrying inflammable items, bags, and other potentially hazardous objects into the parade ground. Spectators will undergo police checks before gaining entry to the grounds, ensuring a secure and incident-free Republic Day celebration in Jamshedpur.

Tiger's pug marks found in North division of PTR

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Tiger has resurfaced in the north division of the tiger reserve Palamu.

It was said to be not visible in this division over the last many days but this morning pug marks were discovered.

The discovery of the pug marks of the tiger has been confirmed by the deputy director north division of the tiger reserve Palamu P K Jena.

Jena said "This morning I was informed by my men to have discovered pug marks of the tiger. It was a lovely thing to know." The Pioneer is withholding the name of the location where the pug marks of the tiger have been found, all for the safety of the tiger. Jena further said "We have reports of sightings of tigers in Hazaribag and Gumla districts too. No more elaboration of this any more except that tiger was seen in Hazaribag and Gumla districts."

Chief conservator of forest and field director PTR Kumar Ashutosh had earlier said "We had traces of the pug marks of the tiger at one Pahar, again the full name of the Pahar has been withheld."

IIM Ranchi celebrates 14th National Voters' Day

PNS : RANCHI

The Indian Institute of Management Ranchi joined the nation in commemorating the 14th National Voters' Day (NVD) on Thursday. This day serves as a reminder of the significance of every vote in a democracy and encourages citizens to exercise their right to vote responsibly.

The theme chosen for the NVD celebration this year is "Nothing like voting, I vote for sure", emphasizing the unique power and impact of each vote cast by an individual.

National Voters' Day is celebrated annually on January 25th. The day aims to encourage and educate citizens, especially the youth, about the importance of

participating in the electoral process and exercising their right to vote. The highlight of the day is the administration of the NVD pledge, where citizens commit to upholding the principles of democracy and fulfilling their civic duty.

IIM Ranchi took an active part in the National Voters' Day celebration. The event started with Prof. Angshuman Hazarika highlighting the purpose of the celebration that reinforces the essence of democracy and the responsibility that comes with the right to vote. Prof. Tanusree Dutta and Prof. Prasenjit Chakrabarti played crucial roles in administering the NVD pledge to the faculty, students and staff present on the occasion.



The event at IIM Ranchi aimed to instill a sense of civic responsibility and awareness among the faculty, students and staff. The National Voters' Day celebration at IIM Ranchi reflects the institute's dedication to fostering a sense of citizenship and duty among its community members.

PM and CM visit on same day puts administration in a fix

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

The Prime Ministers' proposed visit to Dhanbad for inauguration of fertilizer plant at Sindri that he had laid foundation in 2018 has been rescheduled to February 4.

Earlier, he was to visit here on January 27 but owing to some other programme the visit has been rescheduled. The PM would also address a public meeting at Sindri air strip.

However, the district administration is in a fix over the programme as on the same day the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is to hold its foundation day in Dhanbad in which the chief minister is likely to address party workers.

The JMMs programme is scheduled at Golf ground around the same time as the PMs programme is scheduled at Sindri around noon.

According to available reports the PM would land at Baliapur air strip around 11 AM to 12 noon and from there inaugurate the plant and later address a public rally as he did in 2018 while laying the foundation of HURL fertilizer factory. Organizing two political programmes in a day at almost the same time has put the administration, especially the police authorities in a fix as security in both programmes happen to be their prime concern.

JMM activists were seen inspecting the Golf ground for the proposed program. The JMM programme in the past used to be held in late evening but this year it has been rescheduled owing to security concerns of the CM.

An attack like no other



GAUTAM ADANI

to handle this situation. Ultimately, our confidence in the solidity of our businesses dictated our largely contrarian strategy. Our very first decision was to protect our investors. After completing the FPO of INR 20,000 crore, we decided to return the FPO proceeds. This move, unprecedented in corporate history, underscored our commitment to investor welfare and ethical business practices.

In the fog of this war, our biggest weapon was adequate liquidity. To augment our strong cash reserves of INR 30,000 crore, we further fortified our financial position by raising an additional INR 40,000 crore, equal to the debt repayment for the next two years, through stake sales in our Group companies to investors of immaculate global standing, like GQG Partners and the QIA. This served the objectives of re-reading an expansive war-chest of cash reserves, restoring confidence in the markets and creating world-class infrastructure assets for India.

By pre-paying INR 17,500 crore of margin-linked financing, we insulated and ring-fenced our portfolio from market volatility. I asked my leadership team to focus on businesses. This catalysed a record-breaking EBITDA growth of 47% in the first half of FY24, with the Adani portfolio delivering its highest-ever quarterly profit in Q3 FY24. Our bat was doing the talking.

We executed an extensive engagement program for our financial and non-financial stakeholders. The finance team alone conducted close to 300 meetings across the world in the initial 150 days, ensuring the affirmation of ratings across 104 entities by nine rating agencies. Banks, fixed income investors, sovereign wealth funds, equity investors, JV partners and rating agencies have always been our key stakeholders, for it is the due diligence, scrutiny and reviews they conduct that underpin our comprehensive and transparent disclosure regime.

We focused on transparently outlining the facts and narrating our side of the story to expose the motives of those who attacked us. This led to a declining influence of negative campaigns against our Group. A testament to the change in public perception is the significant growth in our shareholder base, a primary target of the Follow-on Public Offering. Over this challenging year, our shareholder base expanded by 43%, reaching nearly 70 lakh.

Additionally, we remained committed to maintaining our growth momentum. The Group continued its investments, evidenced by our asset base growth to INR 4.5 lakh crore. This period marked the launch of several key projects, including the world's largest renewable energy generation site in Khavda, a new copper smelter, a green hydrogen ecosystem, and the long-awaited redevelopment of Dharavi.

In hindsight, the crisis uncovered a fundamental weakness that I had let grow – we had not paid enough attention to our outreach mechanisms. Few outside the infrastructure finance community knew of the size, scale and quality of what the Adani Group had done or was doing. We had all along naively believed that all our non-financial stakeholders too knew us and the truth about us – that our financials were robust, that our governance was impeccable, that our roadmap to growth was measured, and that we play an important role in building India's critical infrastructure.

This experience underscored the necessity of engaging effectively with our non-financial stakeholders. We had failed to proactively counter the twisted narratives of our debt levels and unfounded accusations of political partisanship, resulting in the spread of distorted perceptions.

The fact is that, for our class of transport and utility companies, we have one of the lowest Debt-EBITDA ratios. (For the half year ending Sep 2023, this was 2.5x.) Further, with an infrastructure business footprint in 23 Indian states governed by political parties across the spectrum, we are truly politically agnostic.

The trials and tribulations of the past year have taught us valuable lessons, made us stronger and reaffirmed our faith in Indian institutions. While this devious attack on us – and our strong counter-measures – will no doubt become a case study, I felt compelled to share my learnings because, it was us today, it could be someone else tomorrow. I am under no illusions that this is the end of such attacks. I believe we have emerged even stronger from this experience and even more unwavering in our resolve to continue our humble contribution to the India growth story.

THE AUTHOR IS CHAIRMAN OF THE ADANI GROUP. VIEWS ARE PERSONAL.

MoU signed for 175 Cleft surgeries under CSR Initiatives of BSO



PNS : RANCHI

Upholding the IndianOil's core values "Care" and a mission to bring back the smiles on the faces of Children born with cleft deformity, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with "Mission Smile" on 20th January, 2024 at Ranchi for carrying out 175 nos. cleft surgeries of the needy children under IndianOil Madhur Muskan Project in august presence of Dr M R Das, Executive Director (HR), Marketing HO, Sanjeev Kumar Choudhary, Executive Director & State Head, BSO and senior officials of IOCL and Mission Smile.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr M R Das, Executive Director (HR) appreciated the efforts taken by Team BSO to support the needy & deprived people of the society and suggested to further take such health related initiatives in the state. He also suggested all Location in Charges to widely circulate the message to all stakeholders including Contractor workers, loading & unloading staffs, TT Crew members etc so that more nos of such patients can be identified and get benefitted from the CSR project.

Sanjeev Kumar Choudhary, Executive Director & State Head, BSO

while addressing share that through this life transformation project, we will be able to bring back smiles in the faces of 175 children, (55 under Mission Mode and 120 under Outreach Mode) at Devkamal Hospital, Ranchi. He wished every success for the project and advised the BSO team to do the wide publicity of the project through specially designed leaflets so that this noble initiative can reach the intended beneficiaries of the project.

Dr. Anant Sinha, CEO, Devkamal Hospital shared that "Cleft" is one of the rare anomalies that develops at the foetal stage and one of the reasons for it is malnutrition of the pregnant lady. So, we should make them aware of taking nutritious food during the pregnancy period and thereafter.

MoU was signed by Manoj Kumar, DGM I/c (HR), BSO for and on behalf of IndianOil as the First Party of the project and Conrad Dennis, CEO of Mission Smile for and on behalf of Mission Smile as the Second Party of the project. It is worth mentioning here that Mission Smile is a registered medical charitable trust dedicated to provide free life-changing surgeries to children born with cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities.

SAIL, RSP facilitates Motivational Session 'STAR'

PNS : BOKARO

A one day motivational programme "Self Transformation for Achieving Result (STAR)" was organised at CPIT Centre of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant in association with Management Training Institute (MTI), Ranchi on 23rd January 2024. Ajit Kumar Shah, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Steel, Government of India was the Chief Guest of the programme. Dr. Pranab Kumar, GM (Academic) and Senior Faculty (MTI, Ranchi) was the faculty for the session. 27 employees including one executive from BSCL attended the programme.

The main objective of the was to 'Enhance the Self Motivation of the participants so that they can exhibit higher engagement at work for better performance and result.

The subjects covered during the programme were challenges before BSCL, Self motivation and its importance in life and work, sustaining self motivation through positive attitude, growth mindset and emotional intelligence, and personal development plan for self motivation for higher performance.

At the outset H Pati, GM (HRD), RSP welcomed the gathering while L Marandi, Senior Manager (HRD) proposed a formal vote of thanks and coordinated the programme.



National Voters' Day celebrated at ULC

PNS : RANCHI

National Voters' Day was celebrated at the University Law College, Hazaribag on Thursday. NSS Program Officer Dr. Laxmi Singh emphasized encouraging new voters to register and providing maximum facilities. This day commemorates the establishment of the Election Commission of India on January 25, 1950. Dr. Jaydeep Sanyal urged youth to participate in the electoral process, emphasizing that voting is not only a right but a fundamental one.

Principal Rashmi Pradhan highlighted India's democratic nature, stressing every citizen's right to choose leaders capable of addressing issues and bringing about change. National Voters' Day is crucial for determining the country's future through elected representatives.

Oseta Kirti, an alumna, shared the theme



"Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure" dedicated to voter empowerment and expressing individuals' sentiments and aspirations in the electoral process. Member Neha Anjum emphasized the main goal of Voter's Day is to raise awareness for people to register in the voter list. Students Abhishek Basant and Dilkhus shared their thoughts. Thanks and recognition were given by Dr. Urmila Kumar, inspiring students to vote impartially. This year, students actively participated, and the oath to vote was administered.

SBPS celebrates Annual Day -- 'Shraddha'

PNS : RANCHI

Marking the completion of a successful academic year dedicated to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, Sarala Birla Public School, Ranchi celebrated the Annual Day 'Shraddha' on the theme 'Mera Sara Tujhpe Wara: the patriotic journey of Sardar Uddham Singh' with great elation and gusto. The spectacular evening commenced with the welcome of the Chief Guest, Babul Marandi, Member of the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly (Ex. CM), Prof. (Dr.) Savita Sengar, Vice Chancellor, Jharkhand Rai University, Ranchi and other dignitaries followed by auspicious lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the eminent guests. This was followed by the inauguration of the heritage book- Ranchi, my city. The cultural programme began with the welcome song



'Subh Swagatam' accompanied by the Orchestra. The audience was highly appreciative of the soulful symphony of the budding musicians. The highlight of the programme was the dance drama which depicted the patriotic bravery of Shaheed Uddham Singh. The act also depicted the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters for the freedom of our country.

The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and sacrifices of great leaders like Bhagat Singh along with the revenge

of Shaheed Uddham Singh were the pivotal part of the narrative. Beats of Bhangda, symphony of orchestra, synchronisation of steps in Chhau, Ghatka, Kalaripayattu, cultural dances of various foreign countries reverberated in the air. The title song 'Mera Sara Tujhpe Wara' diffused in the air and captivated the audience. The tiny tots dressed up as various freedom fighters, unsung heroes and Bharat Ratna achievers, paid tribute to them.

The Chief Guest appreciat-

ed the concerted efforts of entire SBPS fraternity. He also thanked the teaching community and education system for instilling such great values in the present generation.

School Head Personnel & Admin., Dr. Pradip Varma, appreciated the efforts of the school for conducting such a successful event.

Principal, Paramjit Kaur, lauded the efforts of the SBPS fraternity and wished everyone on the occasion of 15th Foundation Day. She also remarked that today's youth should take inspiration from Uddham Singh's life so that twenty years later their life becomes a message for the upcoming generation. Further, she said that they should remain focused and should not be deviated by the temptations that come their way and promoted the judicious use of technology and encouraged them to appreciate the beauty of Nature.

Annual Athletic Meet organised at DVC Plus Two high school

SURESH NIKHAR : BOKARO THERMAL

DVC plus two high school, Bokaro Thermal organised the 65th Annual Athletic Meet here on Thursday at the school, the sports complex of the school.

The athletic meet is organised every year to promote physical fitness, foster teamwork, and provide a platform for students to showcase their athletic talents.

The 68th Annual Athletic Meet was inaugurated by General Manager S.Bhattacharya and special guest Dy General Manager B. G. Holkar. While the school principal delivered the welcome address and extended his best wishes to the participants.

The oath-taking ceremony was then led by the General manager. The oath-taking ceremony in sports holds great significance as it symbolizes the values, principles, and spirit of fair play that are integral to the essence of sportsmanship. The annual sports competition was



held in four groups in which Senior Boys Group Albert karkatta, Senior Girls Group Riya Kumari and Sonali Kumari, Junior Boys Group Prince Kumar, Junior Girls Group Aliya parwin, became champion.

All the track and field events were smoothly conducted under the supervision of Ramesh Kumar. While three external judges meticulously evaluated

the performances of the participants to select the winners. After all the events were conducted, the winners were awarded prizes by chief guest and special guests S Bhattacharya and BG Holkar and all the participants were encouraged for their active participation.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Sukesh Prajapati and sports in-charge Ramesh Kumar.

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY

Rise above caste, religion, vote without any inducement: Governor

Collective voter oath taken with enthusiasm during the program

PNS : RANCHI

A state level Voter's Day program was organized at Aryabhata Auditorium of Ranchi University on Thursday. Governor CP Radhakrishnan was present as the chief guest at the event. Addressing the 'National Voters' Day' programme, he said that voting rights are a powerful weapon for voters in a democracy. People should rise above caste, religion, sect and temptation and exercise their right to vote. This will strengthen democracy. The Election Commission of India has been continuously working for a strong and powerful democracy since its inception and continuous work is being done to make the voters aware. This year's theme has been kept by the Election Commission - 'There is nothing



Governor CP Radhakrishnan greets an elderly voter during the 14th National Voters' Day celebrations in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

like voting, we will definitely vote'. He said that to make this theme successful, vote in maximum numbers and also motivate people to vote. He said that the basis of democracy is public opinion and the basis of

public opinion is voting. Voting for a qualified person strengthens democracy. Technology is also being used by the Election Commission to make voters aware. C-Vigil, Voter Helpline App, Suvidha App etc. are

2 hashtag campaigns of State bag national awards

PNS : RANCHI

The social media campaigns recently run in the state of Jharkhand under the direction and guidance of Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar were appreciated across the country. In the national program organized in Delhi on the occasion of National Voters' Day, the Innovative Award was given to S.N. Jameel, System Analyst of Chief Electoral Officer's Office,

Ranchi, by the President of the country, Draupadi Murmu. The award was given for the social media campaigns "ProudOfMyBLO" and "SeniorVotersvoice" run on voter awareness. Kumar said that this National Award is an award for every person who took part in these hashtag campaigns. Therefore, the credit for this award goes to all the participating voters of the campaign.

examples of these. He said that the results of this voter awareness have also been reflected. He said that his name has also been included in the voter list

of Jharkhand and he will definitely exercise his franchise. He distributed 'Voter Photo Identity Card' to new voters and called upon everyone to



Governor CP Radhakrishnan presents a certificate to an official during the 14th National Voters' Day celebrations in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

exercise their franchise. On the occasion, the officials who did excellent work in the elections were honoured and 'Voter Pledge' was taken by everyone. Aditi Kumari, Aditi Sneha, Lavanya Singh, Harshita Gupta, Aditya Kumar

Deputy Commissioner, Serakela-Kharsawan, Ananya Mittal, District Election Officer-cum-Deputy Commissioner, West Singhbhum, Vipin Kumar Dubey, Electoral Registration Officer, 73 Manika (SC) Assembly Constituency, Dipankar Chaudhary, Electoral Registration Officer, 15 Deoghar (SC) Assembly Constituency, Mukesh Machhuwa, Electoral Registration Officer, 54 Jagannathpur (SC) Assembly Constituency, Bandhan Long, Deputy Electoral Officer, West Singhbhum, Shailesh Kumar Singh, Deputy Election Officer, Deoghar, Devdas Dutta, Under Secretary-cum-Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, Nutan Kumari, Cabinet (Election) Department, Jharkhand, Chandan Thakur, District Election Office, Omkar Mishra, District Election Office.

Guv expresses displeasure over FIR against CRPF personnel

JMM accuses Governor of behaving like a political person



Governor CP Radhakrishnan during a programme in Ranchi. (File Photo)

PNS : RANCHI

Governor C P Radhakrishnan on Thursday said that registering an FIR against senior CRPF officers and jawans, a day after the Enforcement Directorate's questioning of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, is a government "mistake".

The Ranchi district administration on January 21 lodged an FIR against senior CRPF officers for "violating" prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPc during the questioning of Soren by the ED in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

Speaking to the reporters, on the sidelines of the celebration of National Voters' Day here, Radhakrishnan said, "Unnecessarily, a large gathering in front of the CM's house had been organised. That is why the CRPF had to come. This was the government's mistake. This type of attitude should be stopped".

The Ranchi district administration had imposed prohibitory orders near Soren's official residence, where he faced the ED questioning on January 20 from 7 am to 11 pm, disallowing any demonstration and public meetings.

An FIR was also lodged against JMM workers and 'Bhim Army' supporters for violating the orders.

Reacting to the Governor's statement, the ruling JMM termed it "unexpected and unnecessary". JMM said that the Governor should not express his displeasure on

public platforms. JMM has accused the Governor of behaving like a political person. It was also said that the Governor's statement seems to be a translation of what BJP State President Babul Marandi had said on this issue a few days ago. JMM said that being the highest Constitutional post in the state, the Governor will have not only legislative but also executive knowledge. In such a situation, it was unnecessary to criticize JMM workers by terming the FIR against CRPF as wrong.

JMM has made a series of attacks on the Governor. JMM said that the Governor should know that during the interrogation of the Chief Minister on January 20, CRPF jawans reached the Chief Minister's residence without his knowledge and tried to capture it. JMM said that the Governor is aware of the executive powers. There are clear instructions in the executive that if any disaster occurs in any state or law and order is not under control, then the District Magistrate demands paramilitary forces, army or NDRF, but nothing like this was done on January 20. On the Governor's issue of creating ruckus by JMM workers, party General Secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya said that they had not called the supporters. They came voluntarily. The police had also stopped him. Supriyo Bhattacharya said that our supporters were very disciplined.

Not free for questioning till March, CM to ED

PNS : RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren is likely to skip the fresh summons issued to him by Central probe agency—Enforcement Directorate (ED) in which he has been asked appear before probe agency between January 27 and 31 for further questioning in connection with the agency's money laundering probe into an alleged land scam, sources said.

Sources said that Soren has told in advance that he may not be available till March due to tight official schedules and engagements.

The CM reportedly told ED officials that he has a very busy official schedule till March dropping enough hints that he is not ready for another round of questioning.

Earlier, Soren was questioned on Saturday for nearly seven hours after he skipped seven summons. The ED has said the agency needs clarifications on issues related to its probe into the alleged scam linked to the ownership of 7.16-acre land in Ranchi.

The land was allegedly acquired through proceeds of crime involving the illegal sale of army land. Soren has maintained the case is unclear and the details of his assets have been made public.

The agency has arrested

14 people in the case, including bureaucrat Chhavi Ranjan, and businessmen Amit Agrawal and Bishnu Agrawal, who own shopping malls in Ranchi.

The ED served him the first summons on August 14 last year. Soren ignored the summons and questioned the legality and motives of the agency. Lastly, the ED in a tersely written letter cum summons gave him the last opportunity and warned him of serious consequences resulting in his arrest if he continues to disobey summons.

However, during questioning Soren denied and said that he neither grabbed any land nor the aforesaid land is under his possession. But ED said that they have sufficient evidence to nail him.

The recording of the statement did not finish that day (January 20), and hence, the chief minister has been asked to join the probe again, they said. The agency is understood to have put about 25-30 questions to Soren during the last week questioning in the money laundering case linked to alleged instances of illegal land deals. After the ED officials had left, the chief minister had said a conspiracy had been hatched against him. Soren, 48, who is also the executive president of the Jharkhand .



National Voters' Day celebrated in Lohardaga

VINOD PRASAD : LOHARDAGA

On the occasion of National Voters' Day, a program was organized in the Collectorate premises on Thursday. On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Dr. Waghmare Prasad Krishna first made all the voters take a pledge to exercise their franchise with full faith in democracy. He said that in a democratic country Every citizen of 18 years of age has the equal right to vote. All of you will follow the pledge taken today on Voters' Day in letter and spirit. If we exercise our right to vote in elections, the country will reach the highest level of progress.



Republic Day celebrations to showcase democratic values

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will lead India in celebrating the 75th Republic Day with an imposing display of its rising military might and rich cultural heritage during a 90-minute parade at the majestic Kartavya Path on Friday. The grand celebrations, with an overarching theme of projecting the nation's women power and democratic values, will be graced by French President Emmanuel Macron as the chief guest. The armed forces will display an array of home-grown weaponry and military equipment such as missiles, drone jammers, surveillance systems, vehicle-mounted mortars and BMP-II infantry combat vehicles at the parade. For the first time, an all-women tri-services contingent will be part of the country's biggest ceremonial event. In another historic first, Lieutenants Deepthi Rana and Priyanka Sevd,

who are among 10 women officers commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery for the first time last year, will lead the Swathi weapon locating radar and Pinaka rocket system at the parade. The parade will be heralded by over 100 women artistes playing Indian musical instruments such as Sankh, Naadsawaram, Nagada for the first time instead of the traditional military bands. Around 15 women pilots will also enthral the audience during the Indian Air Force's fly-past, representing 'Nari Shakti' (women power). The contingents of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) will also consist of only women personnel. The Republic Day parade will commence at 10:30 am and will run for a duration of around 90 minutes. The ceremony will start with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he will lead the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.



Minutes later, President Murmu and her French counterpart Macron will arrive in the 'traditional buggy', a practice that is making a comeback after a gap of 40 years, the defence ministry said. The national flag will be unfurled followed by the national anthem with a booming 21-gun salute to be given with indigenous gun system 105-mm Indian Field Guns.

Four Mi-17 IV helicopters of 105 Helicopter Unit will shower flower petals on the audience present at Kartavya Path. This will be followed by 'Aavaahan', a band performance by over 100 women artistes playing various types of percussion instruments. The parade will then commence with President Murmu taking the salute.

The parade will be commanded by Lieutenant General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area. The Kartavya Path will be witness to a march past by a combined band and marching contingent of the French Armed Forces. A 30-member band contingent will be headed by Captain Khoumda and will be followed by a 90-member marching contingent from France. Six Indians will be part of the French marching contingent. The Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent will comprise 144 airmen and four officers, and it will be led by Squadron Leader Rashmi Thakur. Squadron Leaders Sumita Yadav, Pratiti Ahluwalia and Flight Lieutenant Kirti Rohil will march past as supernumerary officers behind the contingent commander. The celebrations will end with the fly-past by 46 aircraft of the Indian Air Force. The IAF fleet will include 29 fighter jets, seven transport aircraft, nine helicopters and one heritage plane. All these aircraft will operate from six different bases. Fifteen women pilots, including six from the fighter streams, will oper-

ate various IAF platforms during the fly-past. For the first time, indigenously-built Tejas aircraft will fly in a formation of four aircraft. There was a previous occasion of one Tejas jet being part of the Republic Day parade. But for the first time the aircraft will fly in a formation. Over 2600 women personnel from CRPF, BSF and SSB will exhibit the country's 'Nari Shakti' by carrying out daredevil stunts during the motorcyclist display. A total of 16 tableaux from states and Union territories and nine from central ministries and departments will roll down the Kartavya Path during the parade. The states and Union territories are: Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Ladakh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana.

26 tableaux to showcase women empowerment on Kartavya Path

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

From women's roles in socio-economic activities to contribution of women scientists, 26 tableaux are set to roll down the Kartavya Path highlighting "women empowerment" this Republic Day. The Centre has already announced that the 75th Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path will be women-centric with 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat - Loktantra ki Matruka' to be the main themes. Highlighting women's crucial roles in socio-economic activities, the Manipur tableau will feature women working with delicate fibres of lotus stems and making yarns using traditional 'charkhas'. The front side of the tableau will feature a woman collecting lotus stems from Manipur's Loktak lake. Women riding on boats and collecting lotus stems will be displayed on the sides of the tableau. A replica of 'Ima Keithel' - a unique all-women market - has been made behind the Manipur tableau. The market is several centuries old and is run entirely by women. The tableau from the northeastern state will also feature popular fabrics innovated by Manipuri women. The process of making lotus silk was innovated by Bijayshanti Tongbram, India's first lotus silk maker. Besides displaying critical systems and technologies, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is set to portray the significant contribution of its women scientists in core areas of defence research. From an anti-satellite missile to



a third generation anti-tank guided missile and light combat aircraft Tejas, women's involvement in DRDO will be prominently highlighted in their tableau. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will showcase one of its biggest feats, Chandrayaan-3, at its landing site Shiv Shakti point on the Moon. The tableau of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways will display the development of India's maritime sector - from rise in the number of women seafarers to development of lighthouse and cruise tourism. The Madhya Pradesh tableau, on the other hand, will showcase the state's achievement of women's integration directly into the development process through its welfare schemes. Highlighting the self-reliant and progressive women of Madhya Pradesh, the tableau will focus on the active participation of women in the areas from modern service sector to small-scale industries and traditional domains. The tableau will have Madhya Pradesh's first woman fighter

pilot, Avani Chaturvedi, of Indian Air Force (IAF), who will be seen standing beside a fighter plane model. It will also feature women artists painting on pots, the Badal Mahal gate of Chandneri and the weavers of globally renowned Chandneri, Maheshwari and Bagh print sarees. While Odisha's tableau will display women's involvement in handicrafts and handloom sectors, Chhattisgarh's tableau will reflect female dominance in the tribal communities of Bastar. A tableau on Dhordo village in Kutch, which recently made it to the list of 54 best tourism villages, will be showcased in the Republic Day parade in New Delhi, the Gujarat government said on Monday. An official release said, "Dhordo: Global Identity of Gujarat's Border Tourism" will be the theme of the tableau to be showcased during the parade on the Kartavya Path on the 75th Republic Day celebrations on January 26. Dhordo, which the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) included on the list of 'best

tourism villages of 2023', will take centre stage in showcasing "the unique blend of tradition, tourism and technology that defines the essence of a developed India", the release said. The Tamil Nadu tableau will showcase the polling process implemented during 10th century Chola era, by displaying leaf ballots in pots. Rajasthan's tableau will be a demonstration of the development of women's handicraft industries along with the festive culture of the state. The tableau will portray the famous 'Ghoomar' dance of Rajasthan, depicted through a mannequin of a dancer. It will also have a beautiful statue of Meera Bai, who is considered to be a symbol of devotion and power. The tableau will also display a glimpse of the rich handicraft traditions, including bandhej, bagru print and applique work. Haryana's tableau will display empowerment of women in their state through the government programme 'Mera parivar - Meri pehchan'. The tableau will feature Haryana's women holding digital devices to symbolise how the Digital India initiative enabled them to access government schemes with just one click. The Chhattisgarh tableau will reflect female dominance in the tribal communities of Bastar. It has been decorated with bell metals and terracotta artefact to display their traditions. The tableau of Andhra Pradesh this year is on the subject of transforming school education and making the students globally competitive. The Ladakh tableau will showcase Indian women's ice hockey team which comprised Ladakhi women.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Several elected representatives from the Panchayati Raj Institutions, a battery of yoga teachers and farmers and members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) as well as their families will be among the government's special invitees expected to attend the 75th Republic Day Parade Celebrations 2024 in the national capital. Ahead of the general elections slated next few months, the Ministries such as Panchayati Raj, Ayush and Agriculture have taken initiative to ensure that representation of their sector is at the Kartavya Path on the D-Day.

Union Ayush Ministry in a statement said that yoga teachers/instructors from various states of India will witness the Republic Day parade as special invitees. "The Government has invited 291 yoga teachers and Instructors along with their family members for their remarkable contribution in providing primary health care through Yoga at grassroots level across the nation. "These Yoga instructors/teachers are engaged in the primary health care/wellness sector through AHCWs (Ayush Health and Wellness Centres) working under flagship scheme of National Ayush Mission of Ministry of Ayush."

After the Republic Day event all the special invitees will also interact with Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Ayush Minister at his residence. These special invitees will visit different historical places of importance in Delhi. Similarly, about 500 guests, including elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions from across the country and their spouses, have been invited. The selected participants are from those panchayats which have received the National Panchayat Awards in the previous years, or their panchayats have done remarkable work, said an official from the Panchayati Raj Ministry.

"The objective is to provide an opportunity to the panchayat representatives to take part in the national festival, in line with the government's vision of 'Jan Bhagidari'. This initiative holds immense significance as it reinforces the democratic ethos by recognising and involving panchayat representatives in the national celebration," said the official. After attending the Parade, they will meet Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Giriraj Singh at his residence. Minister of State for Rural Development Faggan Singh Kulaste and Minister of State for Panchayati Raj Kapil Moreshwar Patil will also be present at the interaction.

Shettar returns to BJP, quits Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Karnataka chief minister Jagdish Shettar, who had quit the BJP to join the Congress ahead of the state assembly polls last year, rejoined his old party on Thursday. Shettar cited his long association with the BJP and said many of his well-wishers wanted him to join back the party. The Lingayat leader joined the party in the presence of former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, Union ministers Bhupendra Yadav and Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra and its media head Anil Baluni. Party sources said Shettar had met Home Minister Amit Shah and its national president J P Nadda as he was persuaded to rejoin the saffron organisation which he had quit in a huff after being denied a ticket to contest the assembly polls. Shettar also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, saying India has been strengthened under him.



The 68-year-old Shettar, a staunch RSS man and a senior BJP leader, switched to the Congress after he was denied a ticket during the 2023 assembly election. The Congress has, however, made him a MLC, a position he has now quit to join the BJP. When he left the BJP in April 2023, he said he was humiliated by the senior leaders of the BJP and that his decision to quit the saffron party was final. "How the BJP leaders treated me in the last few days is nothing but

a humiliation. I was ill-treated by the party members which forced me to announce my resignation. Some leaders in the state are misusing the BJP system," Shettar said at that time. Shettar has contested the 2023 Karnataka Assembly Elections as a Congress candidate from Hubli-Dharwad-Central. Shettar suffered defeat. He was beaten by the BJP's Mahesh Tenginakai by over 34,000 votes, after which he blamed "money power and pressure tactics". Shettar, a six-time MLA, served as the Karnataka Chief Minister for 10 months between 2012 and 2013. He began his political career in the 1980s and held various positions within the BJP, including state president and leader of the opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. The 67-year-old Lingayat strongman held various ministerial positions in the Karnataka government, including the portfolio of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj.



Government ready to discuss all issues in Parliament as per rules, says Meghwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Ahead of Parliament's Budget session, Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Thursday said the government was ready to discuss all issues as per rules. The Budget session of Parliament, the last of the present Lok Sabha before parliamentary elections are announced, begins on January 31 and will conclude on February 9. Responding to a question on the opposition's allegation that the government was not allowing it to raise issues in the House, the minister of state for Parliamentary Affairs said, "We are ready to discuss every issue that the speaker of the Lok Sabha and the chairman of the Rajya Sabha decide under the rules." "We have always done this. We appeal (to the opposition) to give notices to the speaker and the chairman and if they accept, then, we are ready for discussion," Meghwal told PTI-Video.

Asked about his expectations from the session, he said it will be a short session. The President will address the joint sitting of the two Houses. The Interim Budget will be presented on February 1. There will be a debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address followed by a discussion on the Interim Budget, he said. "I think everyone should participate in this discussion," he added. Responding to a question on the opposition raking up the issue of suspension of nearly 150 MPs from both the Houses, Meghwal, who also heads the law ministry, said all parties had agreed with the speaker on not bringing placards in the House. Despite the assurance, they displayed placards and disrupted proceedings. "The Lok Sabha speaker warned them but they persisted. They didn't even listen to the speaker. The speaker had to take action then. The Rajya Sabha chairman also took similar action," he said.

'Risk of death drops 2 per cent with every additional year of education'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Risk of death drops by two per cent with every additional year of education or simply put those who completed six years of primary school had a lower risk of death by an average of 13 per cent, according to the largest study of its kind published in The Lancet Public Health. The decline in death risk is regardless of age, sex, location, and social and demographic backgrounds, according to the researchers. They found that after graduating from secondary school,

the risk of dying was cut by nearly 25 per cent, and 18 years of education lowered the risk by 34 per cent. Researchers also compared the effects of education to other risk factors such as eating a healthy diet, smoking, and drinking too much alcohol, and they found the health outcome to be similar. For example, the benefit of 18 years of education can be compared to that of eating the ideal amount of vegetables, as opposed to not eating vegetables at all. Not going to school at all is as bad for you as drinking five or more alcoholic drinks per day

or smoking ten cigarettes a day for 10 years. "Education is important in its own right, not just for its benefits on health, but now being able to quantify the magnitude of this benefit is a significant development," said Dr. Terje Andreas Eikemo, head of Centre for Global Health Inequalities Research (CHAIN) at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). While the benefits of education are greatest for young people, those older than 50 and even 70 years still benefit from the protective effects of education.

Researchers found no significant difference in the effects of education between countries that have reached different stages of development. This means that more years of education is just as effective in rich countries as in poor countries. The study identified data from 59 countries and included over 10,000 data points collected from over 600 published articles. Most of the studies reviewed for this study were from high-income settings, highlighting the need for more research in low- and middle-income countries, particularly from sub-Saharan and north Africa where data is scarce.

NHRC to extend probe after Indore orphanage torture report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Taking suo motu cognizance of reports that the children were being subjected to torture at an orphanage in Indore, Madhya Pradesh and the police has registered an FIR in the matter; the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has decided to extend its enquiry beyond the specific case and look into the status of minor inmates in other branches of the same organization

located in different states. The move aims to probe into the potential widespread nature of the issue and ensure the well-being and rights of children in various facilities associated with the orphanage. The Indore police had registered an FIR on the basis of the complaint registered by the State Children Welfare Committee. Reportedly, apart from Indore, the orphanage has its branches in Jodhpur, Surat, Kolkata and Bengaluru under four states of Rajasthan, Gujarat,

West Bengal and Karnataka. Accordingly, the NHRC has issued notices to the Chief Secretaries and the Directors General of Police of the States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Karnataka seeking an action taken report in the matter after conducting an enquiry/ inspection of the branches of the orphanage mentioned in the reports. The authorities have been asked to submit a report in this regard within the next four weeks.

The Commission, in its statement issued here said that, "if the contents of the news report, if true, amounts to serious violation of human rights of the inmates at the orphanage. It has noted that taking lawful action, an FIR has been registered by the police at Indore, but the matter has inter-state ramifications. Therefore, an enquiry/ inspection of the other branches of the orphanage, situated outside Indore is also necessary." As per the NHRC, it found that the media report had quoted the District Collector of Indore saying that the CWC team has found violations of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and they have sealed the hostel and shifted the children to government facilities.

UP DGP Kumar awarded President Medal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Couple of days after providing a safe and secure security system at Ayodhya during the Ram Temple consecration, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (Law & Order) Prashant Kumar has been conferred with the President's Medal for gallantry on Republic Day (Friday) for his bravery in the encounter of a dreaded criminal when he was ADG (Meerut). While the award is also bestowed on the then SSP Meerut Mrs Manzil Saini for her bravery, the 2024 President's gallantry medal will be Prashant Kumar's fourth of the total of 109 various national and state level commendable and exemplary services as police officer. Prashant has also received cash awards twice by the State government. Born and brought up in Bihar, the 1990 batch IPS of UP cadre, Prashant Kumar holds the distinction of being awarded the gallantry medal for three consecutive years (2020, 2021 and 2022 and now in 2024). "Indeed it's a proud moment for me, my family and above all my department led by the State Government in extending full cooperation and giving me a free hand to work as a uniformed man in service of the people. Wish I continue to meet the expectations of people in providing a safe and secure atmosphere in the State and now particularly in Ayodhya where millions of



devotees will turn for darshan of Lord Ram. Jai Hind," Prashant told The Pioneer when sought his remarks on yet another award for distinguished services. As ADG, Prashant Kumar was conferred with the President's Police Medal for meritorious services in 2007 and President's Medal for distinguished services in 2014. He, along with nine other policemen, received a reward of ₹3 lakh each as Chief Minister's Appreciation on January 7, 2022 for bravery in the encounter of dreaded brigand Uday Bhan Yadav alias Gauri Yadav on October 30, 2021. Uday Bhan carried a reward of ₹5.5 lakh on his head. Prashant Kumar's role for a successful grand ceremony at Ayodhya early this week which handled a host of who's who of the country led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UP CM Yogi Adityanath and more than 10 lakhs visitors in a span of three days has been lauded at various levels as the event was incident free.

New era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir: Shah

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Dedicating a fleet of e-buses to the people of Jammu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed on Thursday that a new era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir. This is marked by a sharp decline in incidents of terrorist violence and civilian killings after the abrogation of Article 370. Shah mentioned that the Narendra Modi government is also rigorously cracking down on terror financing, sealing and freezing the assets of terrorists. Additionally, several terrorist organizations have been outlawed to intensify the crackdown on them. During the event conducted via video conferencing, Shah handed over appointment letters to Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers and compassionate appointees. In his address, the Union Home Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for transforming Jammu and Kashmir, once "known for terrorism," into a burgeoning tourism hub. "I want to inform you that



there has been a 66 percent reduction in terrorism-related incidents. There has been an 81 percent decline in civilian killings and a 48 percent decrease in security forces' casualties after the scrapping of Article 370," he announced to the gathering. "This indicates that a new era of happiness, peace, and normalcy has begun in Jammu and Kashmir," he

added. Sharing related statistics, Shah mentioned that 2,654 organised stone-pelting incidents occurred in Jammu and Kashmir in 2000, but no such incidents took place in 2023. "As many as 132 organised shutdowns occurred in 2010, but there were none in 2023. A total of 112 civilians lost their lives in stone pelting in 2010, but no civilian lives were lost in stone

pelting in 2023. Additionally, a total of 6,235 civilians were injured during that period (2010)," he added. The minister highlighted that terror financing has also been curbed in Jammu and Kashmir. "Properties are being sealed and attached, and many terrorist organisations have been banned to curb their activities," he said. Emphasising the investment

potential, Amit Shah mentioned that Jammu and Kashmir received investments worth Rs 297 crore in 2019-20, which increased to Rs 2,153 crore in 2022-23. "Nearly 6,000 crore of investments are in the pipeline. This demonstrates progress," he added. Jammu and Kashmir's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased from Rs 1 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 2,27,927 crore in 2022-23. Shah further appealed to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to enroll themselves as voters and become part of the democratic setup of the country. "The youth of Jammu and Kashmir, who carry computers in their hands instead of stones, are connected and contributing to the progress of Jammu and Kashmir. Over 7 lakh youths have taken part in sports, and this is significant," he said. Shah mentioned that 173 projects have been completed under the Smart City Mission, and homes for 1,45,000 people have been allocated within a very short period from 2019 to 2024.

TMC: Adhir hurdle in Opp alliance

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has said that Adhir Chowdhury, the president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress, has diminished the chances of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance in Bengal. A day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ruled out any electoral alliance with the Congress, accusing it of not only ignoring her at the instance of the CPI(M), senior TMC leader Derek O'Brien said on Thursday that, apart from the BJP, against which the INDIA alliance had been formed, Adhir Chowdhury was the person who undermined the anti-saffron coalition in the state.

In an apparent reference to Chowdhury's previous remarks that the Congress was not dependent on the TMC, O'Brien said the AICC member was "speaking the language of the BJP," reiterating, "The three reasons for the alliance not working in Bengal are Adhir Chowdhury, Adhir Chowdhury, and Adhir Chowdhury. Not only did O'Brien, the TMC spokesperson, express this sentiment, but Kunal Ghosh, another TMC spokesperson, also stated, "The main dis-



rupter of the INDIA Alliance in Bengal is Adhir Chowdhury, who has been dancing to the tunes of the Left, which itself has zero seats in Bengal. We are relieved and happy because now we will be able to tell the secular voters to choose either between TMC and the Congress-Left, who are zero in Bengal. Zero and zero make for zero only. Adhir Chowdhury is batting for the BJP. Tomorrow, the people of Bengal will not spare him." While Chowdhury had previously called Banerjee an "opportunistic personality who herself cannot remember when she spoke the truth last time," one of his close confidants and former Bengal Minister Manoj Chakrabarty added an appellation for the Chief Minister, calling her a "dala" or agent of the BJP in INDIA who

was "leaking messages to the BJP" to save her and her family's skin. Another senior PCC leader, Soumya Aich, also attacked Banerjee for "literally decimating" the Congress "not through elections but by engineering defections in our party using the police and her goons." Another PCC leader, Kaustav Bagchi, said, "Joining hands with the TMC will be hara-kiri in Bengal, as the revival will be lost. The Congress votes will then go to the Left and even the BJP." Against this backdrop, a majority of the PCC leadership, with a few exceptions like Malda South MP AH Khan Chowdhury, were inclined towards an alliance with the Left, which had recently experienced a significant revival by winning about 21 per cent of the votes, just behind the BJP, in the rural elections last year. However, the State Congress demanded at least 6-8 seats if an alliance were to be imposed on the State party. They sought Darjeeling, Raiganj, Malda North, Malda South, Murshidabad, Jangipur, Behrampur, Basirhat, and Purulia. The TMC, on the other hand, was not willing to concede Malda South and Behrampur, presently held by Khan Chowdhury and Adhir.

Gyanvapi case: 11 applications for copies of ASI survey report

PTI ■ VARANASI

Eleven people, including from both the Hindu and Muslim side, applied for copies of the ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex adjoining the Kashi Vishwanath temple here on Thursday, counsel for the Hindu litigants said. The applicants are likely to get the report either on Thursday or Monday after a scrutiny of the applications, Hindu side counsel Madan Mohan Yadav said. Following an order of the district court passed on July 21 last year, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) carried out a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises to determine whether the mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. "Till afternoon, 11 persons have applied from both sides



for copies of ASI survey report," Yadav said. Yadav said advocates representing the five petitioners from the Hindu side, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid committee, Kashi Vishwanath Trust, the state government, the chief secretary, the home secretary and the Varanasi district magistrate have applied for the copy of the survey report. On Wednesday, District Judge A K Vishvesh ruled that the

ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex will be given to both the Hindu and Muslim sides. After hearing the matter, Judge Vishvesh said both the parties to the suit must be provided copies of the survey report filed by the ASI in the court so that they can file objections against it. The court also allowed the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust, Varanasi DM and the state's home secretary to get a copy of the ASI survey report. The court passed the order on a petition filed by Rakhi Singh and others. The survey was ordered by the court after the Hindu petitioners claimed the 17th-century mosque was constructed over a pre-existing temple. The ASI had submitted its survey report to the district court in a sealed cover on December 18.

High alert in JK for Republic Day

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The entire security grid in Jammu and Kashmir has been kept on a state of high alert in the run up to the Republic Day celebrations in the wake of the prevailing security situation in the region. The security forces are relying on drone cameras to conduct aerial reconnaissance of all the main venues of the Republic Day functions and other vital installations. Special security checkpoints have been activated along the border areas to maintain a tight vigil on the movement of suspected persons in the area. The joint teams of security forces have been kept on high alert and frequently conduct area domination patrols in their areas of jurisdiction. The security in and around the vital security installations has been beefed up as per the standard protocol to prevent entry of any miscreant and anti-national element. Referring to the security arrangements, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police, R R Swain on Thursday asserted that all security measures are in place. Meetings have been conducted at various levels, including discussions with the army, CAPF led by CRPF, and other intelligence agencies to ensure peaceful conduct of the Republic day functions across the Union territory. "We have ensured the security of the venue and considered all potential threat scenarios. We assure you that the celebration will be peaceful, and we



encourage citizens to celebrate it with full fervour", he added. Paying tributes to the martyred police officers, DGP said that in 33 years, J&K Police have lost more than 1600 personnel in Pakistan Sponsored Proxy war which is the largest among security forces in J&K. He said that losing 1600 personnel is the benchmark and watermark in terms of demonstrating the commitment to the national security effort.

an effort to chronicle these stories, individual stories as well as the collective effort of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and members in the fight against terror. DGP said that J&K Police has been honored with 72 gallantry medals by the President of India and the Government of India. "This recognition, as I learned from the Ministry of Home Affairs website, makes us the highest gallantry medal winners among state police forces," he added.

BJP demands apology from Lalu daughter for insulting Bihar CM

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar BJP on Thursday accused RJD supremo Lalu Pasad's Singapore-based daughter Rohini Acharya of insulting Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and demanded a public apology from her. Acharya had used derogatory language against Kumar, also the ruling JD(U) president, in several posts on X, which were deleted later,

Bihar BJP leader Nikhil Anand claimed. Sharing a screenshot of the purported deleted posts, Anand said, "These are like an arrow released from the bow." The BJP leader said if Acharya regrets having used words like 'badtameez' (ill-mannered) against the chief minister in the post, she should publicly express regret and apologise.



A section of the media claimed that Acharya had reacted to Kumar's statement against dynastic politics at a JD(U) rally commemorating former state chief minister and socialist icon Karpoori Thakur's birth anniversary on Wednesday. Thakur was conferred with the Bharat Ratna posthumously earlier this week. While addressing the rally here, Kumar criticised

dynastic politics, stating that JD(U) followed the path shown by the late leader by not promoting anyone from the family in the party ranks. A section of the media claimed that his statement was indirectly aimed at the RJD, an ally of the JD(U) in Bihar's Mahagathbandhan government in which sons of Prasad are ministers. Prasad's younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav

is the Deputy chief minister of the Bihar government, while his elder son Tej Pratap Yadav is a minister in the state cabinet. The RJD president's eldest daughter Misa Bharti is a Rajya Sabha member. Responding to Kumar's comments on dynastic politics, Acharya attacked the chief minister in posts on X but she deleted them later, according to BJP leader Anand.

BRO to fence major portion of India, Myanmar border, says top official

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) will fence a major portion of the strategic India-Myanmar border, and a 10-km stretch in Manipur has already been covered, a senior official said. The Ministry of Home Affairs has identified around 1,700 km of fencing that needs to be done, BRO's Additional Director General (East) PKH Singh said. The organisation has already finished fencing 10 km along the border in Manipur's Moreh, which was handed over to the Assam Rifles, Singh told PTI in an interview. Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently said the Centre has decided that the India-Myanmar border will be protected by barbed fencing like the India-Bangladesh border, and the government was rethinking the free movement agreement with Myanmar.

Four Indian states - Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram - share a 1,643-km border with Myanmar. Singh said the next 80-km stretch in Manipur has also been identified and the detailed project report (DPR) submitted to the ministry. Fencing the remaining 250 km, along with its approach roads, is in the planning stage with the DPR under preparation. "The fencing of the India-Myanmar border is an important project for the

BRO, which is now coming up in Moreh. The area around this border has been unfenced since long, and there was a need to check the activities around it," the ADG said. Singh said the BRO has a long-term roll-out plan of nearly Rs 30,000 crore in the northeast over the next five years, and out of this, almost two-thirds is focused in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. The organisation was earlier involved in fencing the India-Bangladesh border along with the BSF, he said. "We are currently executing projects covering a wide canvas of disparate infrastructure development, ranging from connecting far-flung remote areas to building strategic roads for the armed forces, encompassing bridges, tunnels, protection works for landslide zones, airfields, helipads and jetties," he said. Besides the northeastern states, the BRO East is also involved in developing infrastructural facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "In the archipelago, we are at present focusing on the Campbell Bay area where a 40-km stretch at Indira Point was washed away during a tsunami. We are in an advanced planning stage for a runway extension and construction of jetties along with accommodation facilities in the area," Singh said. The BRO has received a lot of requests from CAPFs, the navy and coast guard in the area for various works stretching around 1,600 km, he said.

12 injured in clash between MCC activists and CISF in Dhanbad

PTI ■ DHANBAD

More than 12 people were allegedly injured in a clash between activists of Marxists Coordination Committee (MCC) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel on Thursday in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district, police said. The clash occurred around 9.30 am during gherao of the DVC's Maithon administrative building by MCC workers led by former Nirsra MLA Arup Chatterjee in protest against the eviction notice to the Maithon Dam-based shopowners. Chatterjee alleged that CISF personnel resorted to lathicharge on the activists who were demonstrating peacefully. "More than a dozen MCC activists and shopowners were injured in the lathicharge by the CISF personnel," Chatterjee claimed. The injured persons, mostly MCC workers, were admitted to BP Neogi Hospital in Maithon. CISF DIG Vijay Kajla told reporters that the agitators who were gheraoing the DVC administrative building turned violent all of a sudden and started brickbating



security personnel. "CISF had to resort to mild force to disperse the agitating crowd," he said. Maithon police station officer-in-charge Rajnish Kumar and Gyarahkund block development officer (BDO) Binod Kumar Karmkar also reached the spot and controlled the situation. Asked about lathicharge, Kumar said that they were probing the incident. "We will be able to say whether lathicharge took place or

not only after the investigation gets completed," he said. Earlier, the agitators blocked all entrances to the administrative building, stopping the entry of staff and officials. Chatterjee said, "We were trying to negotiate with DVC officials over eviction notices to Maithon Dam-based shopkeepers. But they did not call us to talk. Today we reached there for a peaceful demonstration when CISF resorted to lathicharge."

Tripura Police strengthened bond between tribals, non tribals: CM Manik Saha

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Holding eaceful assembly elections in February last year and strengthening the bond between tribals and non-tribals were the greatest achievements of Tripura Police in its 150-year-old journey, Chief Minister Manik Saha said here on Thursday. Tripura Police was established by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur in 1873 to maintain law and order in the erstwhile princely state. "Holding incident-free assembly elections in February last was the greatest achievement of Tripura Police. It also facilitated people to cast their votes without any disturbance," he said, after inaugurating the main programme of the force at Prajna Bhavan here. Saha said the state police force has also achieved success by strengthening the bond between tribals and non-tribals by adopting a people-friendly policy. "I had a meeting with senior police officers in the backdrop of the



programme. We vowed to fight against the drug menace in the state," he said. Heaping praise on the role of police, the CM said peace is the precondition of development, growth and prosperity. "If law and order is not conducive, investments for development will not serve any purpose. Therefore, law enforcement agencies must act against those who violate the law of the land. Police should also adopt a pro-people policy to win the hearts of people," he said. DGP Amitabh Rajan and additional DGP Anurag Dhankar also attended the function.

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S COMPLEX GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN 2024

India navigates global complexities amid elections and geopolitical uncertainties



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Is the Government's debt sustainable?

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



Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast that India's general government debt - it comprises the debts of the Centre and states - will overshoot 100 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the financial year (FY) 2027-28. Responding to this, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) clarified that this wasn't under a 'baseline scenario' - a jargon to describe normal economic conditions. It added the IMF was referring to a 'worst-case scenario' wherein a global shock would equally affect all countries. Is the government's debt sustainable? The government's debt is linked with how it manages its total expenditure vis-à-vis its total receipts or fiscal deficit (FD) which is excess of the former over the latter. The expenditure and receipts are broadly of two types viz. revenue and capital. Revenue expenditure (RE) is essentially consumption expenditure which does not result in the creation of assets. It includes expenses for the normal running of government departments and various services, interest charges on debt incurred by the government, subsidies and so on. Capital expenditure (CE) includes the money that the government spends on long-term assets such as property, plant, and equipment.

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

In reality, RR have consistently fallen

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

Under the FRBM Act (2003), the Vajpayee government promised the elimination of RD by the year 2008. It also committed to reducing FD to 3 per cent of the GDP. Against these pledges, during 2008-09, RD was 4.7 per cent whereas, FD was 6.2 per cent.

In his budget speech for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the intent of the Modi government to review the FRBM) Act (2003) with a view to making the FD target more flexible. For this, he had set up a committee under Dr N K Singh. The committee recommended a "glide path" for the next six years, i.e., from 2017-18 to 2022-23. It recommended an FD target of 2.5 per cent, RD of 0.8 per cent, a combined Centre-state debt ceiling of 60 per cent, and a central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for the terminal year, i.e., 2022-23. Further, it fixed 3 per cent FD to be achieved during 2018-19. The committee also allowed the Union Government to breach the target - by up to 0.5 per cent - in the case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

NEP: Multidisciplinary approach in higher education

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

At various educational levels, the NEP's approach involves mentors fully engaging in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all students. To enhance students' standards, there is an imperative need for self-academic orientation and excellence, fostering problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities. Introducing a new syllabus can provide a deeper insight into strategic and security-related affairs, offering a roadmap for foolproof encountering strategies. This approach addresses issues such as the rise of terrorism, its causes, and the funding nexus between organised crime and terrorism.

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

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

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

Washington and Baghdad plan to hold talks soon

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States and Iraq expect to begin formal talks soon to wind down the mission of a US-led military coalition formed to fight the Islamic State group in Iraq, both governments said on Thursday.

The US has had a continuous presence in Iraq since its 2003 invasion. Although all US combat forces left in 2011, thousands of troops returned in 2014 to help the government of Iraq defeat IS. In the years since, the presence of US forces, who have remained there to conduct counter-IS missions and training, has been a lightning rod for an increasingly influential faction of Iran-aligned militias and politicians in the country.

In a statement, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the discussions will take place as part of a higher military commission that was agreed upon last summer — before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7 rocked the region — and will discuss the “transition to an enduring bilateral security partnership between Iraq and the United States.”

Iraq’s foreign ministry in a statement said Baghdad aims to “formulate a specific and clear timetable that specifies the duration of the presence of international coalition advisors in Iraq” and to “initiate the gradual and deliberate reduction of its advisors on Iraqi soil,” eventually leading to the end of the coalition mission and a “move to comprehensive bilateral political and economic relations with the coalition countries.”

It added that Iraq is committed to ensuring the “safety of the international coalition’s advisors during the negotiation period in all parts of the country” and to “maintaining stability and preventing escalation.”

Iraqi officials have periodically called for a withdrawal of coalition forces for years, particularly in the wake of a US airstrike in January 2020 that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia

leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside the Baghdad airport.

The issue has surfaced again since Israel launched its major counteroffensive in Gaza following the October 7 Hamas-led attack in southern Israel.

Since mid-October, a group of Iran-backed militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq have launched regular attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria, which the group said are in retaliation for Washington’s support for Israel in the war in Gaza.

Those estimated 2,500 US troops and the bases they serve on have drawn more than 150 missile and drone attacks fired by the militias. Scores of US personnel have received minor injuries including traumatic brain injuries during the attacks.

The US has struck militia targets in return, including some linked to the Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of mainly Shiite, Iran-backed paramilitary groups that is officially under the control of the Iraqi military although in practice it largely operates on its own. Iraqi officials have complained that the US strikes are a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this month, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said that there is no longer justification for the coalition’s presence in Iraq and that the Iraqi army is capable of tracking and fighting the remaining IS cells in the country. “We are a sovereign country, and therefore it is only natural that we moved towards this position,” he said. “This is a request from the people, and this is a democratic country.”

An Iraqi government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists about the matter said that Iraq had sent a written request for the withdrawal of the coalition forces to the White House in November 2023.

Czech lawmakers reject int’l women’s rights treaty

Prague (AP): Czech lawmakers have voted against ratifying an international treaty on women’s rights. Only 34 of the 71 Senators present in the upper house of the Czech Parliament late Wednesday voted in favour of the treaty known as the Istanbul Convention. The result was two votes short of the majority needed to pass. After the vote, the lower house of Parliament will likely not deal with the treaty and the Czech Republic will be among those countries that have signed the document but not ratified it.

The Council of Europe adopted the document in 2011 in a bid to deter violence against women throughout Europe. The Czech Republic, also known as Czechia, signed it in 2016. The vote reflected a split between conservative and liberal lawmakers. Conservatives have argued the document challenges traditional roles for men and women in society and that its ratification in other countries didn’t help reduce violence against women there.

Despite 2 losses, Haley tries to claim victory in Republican presidential race

AP ■ NORTH CHARLESTON

Despite losing both Iowa and New Hampshire to Donald Trump, Nikki Haley is nevertheless trying to frame those losses as a victory and vowing to head off a “coronation” of Trump as the 2024 Republican nominee. The path through the next states to vote, however, may not be any easier.

“We were thrilled,” Haley said during a rally before hundreds of sign-waving fans on Wednesday night in North Charleston, South Carolina, casting her second-place New Hampshire finish as a win given how little support her campaign had in its early days.

“We got out there, and we did our thing and we said what we had to say, and then Donald Trump got out there and just threw a temper tantrum,” Haley added, referencing Trump’s primary night remarks in which the former president repeatedly insulted her in a speech far angrier than his remarks after his Iowa victory. Haley did

perform better in Tuesday’s New Hampshire primary than she had in the Iowa caucuses a week earlier, where she finished third, well behind Trump and only slightly down from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has since shuttered his campaign.

But Haley had been banking on a stalwart showing in New Hampshire, a state where her attempt to appeal to independents and more moderate-leaning Republicans appeared to take root. Trump still won by double-digits on Tuesday night, leaving some to wonder whether she would keep going.

Haley has affirmed that she will do just that, speaking virtually to Republican voters in the U.S. Virgin Islands — which hold their caucuses Feb. 8 — before flying from New Hampshire to South Carolina.

The Wednesday night event served two purposes for Haley. It was a welcome-home gathering for the South Carolina resident and an opener for her campaign in the first-in-the-South GOP voting state, which has historically been influential

in determining the party’s nominee. Since 1980, only one winner of South Carolina’s Republican balloting has lost the nomination.

Since his 2016 primary win there helped cement Trump’s dominance in that year’s race, South Carolina has stayed loyal to him. For the 2024 campaign, he boasts endorsements from all but one of the state’s U.S. House Republicans, as well as the governor, lieutenant governor and both US senators.

“Trump is in a commanding position in South Carolina,” one of those senators, Lindsey Graham, said Wednesday at the U.S. Capitol, commending Haley’s effort but forecasting her loss in their home state. “I think for all practical purposes, the primary is over.”

Outside Haley’s rally, several dozen Trump supporters waved flags and made their presence known, albeit from a marked-off zone away from the ballroom entrance. Ahead of New Hampshire’s vote, the super PAC supporting Haley’s candidacy was quick to point

out that President Joe Biden, the Democrat she hopes to face in the general election, hadn’t been successful in the first several contests of his 2020 bid, but ultimately won the nomination. That comparison, however, doesn’t take into account the fact that Black voters propelled Biden’s ultimate victory once he reached the South, a factor not expected to weigh heavily in the GOP primary.

Nonetheless, during a call with reporters on Wednesday, Mark Harris, chief strategist for that super PAC, SFA Inc., insisted that Haley “has a path” to the GOP nomination, regardless of Trump’s two early wins. Casting South Carolina as the campaign’s next “battleground” of the Trump-Haley direct matchup — Nevada’s GOP caucuses are Feb. 8, but Trump has already claimed victory there since Haley isn’t participating — Harris noted that its open primary means that any Democrats who opt not to participate in their party’s Feb. 3 contest can choose to support Haley in the Feb. 24 vote.

‘Shooting of US-Palestinian teenager was unprovoked’

Ash-Sharqia (West Bank) (AP): The fatal shooting of an American-Palestinian teen driving a pickup truck in the West Bank was unprovoked, the sole passenger told The Associated Press, describing apparent Israeli fire hitting the back of the vehicle before it overturned several times on a dirt road.

At least 10 bullets struck the truck, which was seen by The Associated Press after Israeli investigators examined it. Most hit the back windshield and truck bed, supporting 16-year-old Mohammed Salameh’s account of the incident that killed his friend, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, 17, a Louisiana native. In an initial statement, Israeli police said Friday’s shooting targeted people “purportedly engaged in rock-throwing activities along Highway 60,” a main West Bank thoroughfare. Police didn’t identify who fired the shots.

4 Indians die in mass drowning

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Four Indians, including three women, on a family day out were killed when they drowned at an unpatrolled beach in Australia in the worst tragedy in the state of Victoria in almost 20 years, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday at Phillip Island, Victoria and a close relative, who was devastated on Thursday, confirmed the names of the victims to the Australian media.

The four were identified as Jagjeet Singh Anand, a 23-year-old man; students Suhani Anand and Kirti Bedi, both 20-year-old women; and Reema Sondhi, a 43-year-old Indian national who was visiting her family in Australia.

The three younger victims lived in Clyde.

Anand, a Melbourne-based nurse, was a permanent resident in Australia. Bedi and Suhani were on student visas.



Sondhi, who was from Punjab, arrived in Australia two weeks ago for a holiday. All four are believed to be related, news.com.au website reported.

The victims were part of a group of about 10 people who had been enjoying a day out at the beach, the report added.

Victoria Police Eastern Region Assistant Commissioner Karen Nyholm said the victims entered the water near Forrest Caves — close to Cape Woolamai on the Bass Strait side of the Phillip Island’s south-eastern peninsula — on Wednesday afternoon.

Off-duty lifeguards surfing nearby rushed to their aid after the group got into difficulty, pulling three people from the water unresponsive.

Life Saving Victoria commander Kane Treloar said lifeguards from Cape Woolamai were called at about 3.40 pm on Wednesday and a rescue boat retrieved the fourth person. All required CPR. Three of the victims were pronounced dead at the scene while one of the 20-year-old women was resuscitated and flown to The Alfred. She died in hospital, police said on Thursday morning.

The Indian High Commission in Canberra on Thursday posted on X, the tragic drowning.

“Heartbreaking tragedy in Australia: 4 Indians lost their lives in a drowning incident at Phillip Island, Victoria. Deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

@cgimelbourne team is in touch with friends of the

deceased for all necessary assistance @MEAIndia @DrSjaishankar,” the High Commission posted.

On Thursday, Treloar said it was the worst drowning incident the state had seen in decades.

“We all worked tirelessly to help those people,” Ambulance Victoria manager Paul James said. “It’s tragic... only a week ago we had three other separate drownings here in Gippsland.”

Life-Saving Victoria operations general manager Liam Krige said 19 people had drowned in Victoria since December 1 — two more than during the same period last summer.

“Behind each one of these drownings there is a family; there’s a brother, there’s a sister, there’s a mother, there’s a daughter,” he said at a press conference at Forrest Caves car park on Thursday.

“It is extremely tragic and our heartfelt condolences do go out to those victims.”

China accuses US of ‘abusing’ int’l law by sailing in SCS

AP ■ BEIJING

China accused the US of abusing international law with its military maneuvers in the western Pacific, one day after an American naval destroyer sailed through the politically sensitive Taiwan Strait. While China welcomes military-to-military communication with the United States, Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said Thursday that US warplane and warship activity “on China’s doorstep” is the root cause of the problems between the two military powers.

“The United States side should stop abusing international law, cease all dangerous and provocative behaviour, and strictly restrain the activities of front-line troops, which is the fundamental way to avoid accidents at sea and in the air,” he said at a monthly briefing. The

USS John Finn sailed Wednesday though the 160-km (100-mile)-wide waterway that separates China from Taiwan, a self-governing island that China claims as its own territory. China agreed to resume military contacts with the US at a meeting last November between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in California. In part, the argument for doing so was to be able to manage an unintentional collision or other incident that could happen as both sides hold drills and patrol the waters in regional hotspots including the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

The US defends its actions as in line with international laws that guarantee freedom of navigation. “No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms,” the US Navy’s 7th Fleet said in a news

release on the John Finn’s transit of the Strait. “The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows.”

China’s rise has given it the ability to project military power into the western Pacific, which brings it into conflict with the United States, long the dominant military power in the region. The American military activity is aimed in part at deterring China from launching any attack on Taiwan or using its strength to enforce its territorial claims in disputes with smaller neighbours such as the Philippines.

Chinese and Philippine ships clashed last year as disputes over shoals and other outcroppings in the South China Sea flared. China has blamed US support, such as recent joint patrols with the Philippines, for emboldening the latter.

Poland’s pro-EU govt, oppn disagree on whether pardoned lawmakers can stay on

AP ■ WARSAW

The fate of two Polish opposition politicians became the focus on Thursday of a running feud between the country’s new pro-European Union government and conservative opposition as the sides disagreed whether they can remain lawmakers. The weeks-old government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has moved to reverse policies of his predecessors that were deemed harmful and led to clashes with the EU, especially in the judiciary.

However, the previously ruling right-wing Law and Justice party, frustrated over its loss in the October parliamentary elections, has been protesting the moves.

As the lower house of parliament, or Sejm, convened on Thursday, officials and experts were divided on whether two



Poland’s President Andrzej Duda, center, poses with former deputy interior minister Maciej Wasik, left, and former interior minister Mariusz Kaminski, right, in Warsaw, Poland on Tuesday. AP

senior Law and Justice lawmakers, who served in the previous government, can attend the proceedings. Parliament Speaker Szymon Holownia had stripped them of their mandates after they were convicted in December of abuse of power.

They were released from prison on Tuesday, after President Andrzej Duda pardoned them and after spending two weeks behind bars.

Law and Justice and their ally Duda insist the two — former Interior Minister Mariusz

Kaminski and his former deputy, Maciej Wasik — may continue to sit in the Sejm. The two were not present at the session start on Thursday.

Experts say the dispute exposes the extent to which Law and Justice had bent Poland’s legal system to serve its own political interests during its eight years in power that ended in December.

Tusk recently criticized Law and Justice, saying it puts its political goals above the law.

“We are facing the need to reconstruct the legal order in a way that will put an end to the constant and glaring conflicts of interpretation,” Tusk told a new conference this week. Kaminski and Wasik were convicted of abuse of power and forging documents for actions taken in 2007, when they served in an earlier Law and Justice-led government.

S Korean lawmaker attacked

Seoul (AP): South Korean police say a governing party lawmaker is being treated at a Seoul hospital after being attacked by an unidentified man who struck her head with a rock-like object. A police official in Seoul’s Appu-jeong district said a suspect was arrested at the scene after the attack on Thursday on lawmaker Bae Hyunjin in southern Seoul.

The severity of Bae’s injury wasn’t immediately clear. The police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorised to talk to the media, said Bae was conscious as she was being taken to the hospital. South Korean media reported that her condition wasn’t life threatening, citing her aides. Calls to Bae’s office weren’t immediately answered. The attack comes weeks after a man stabbed South Korean opposition lawmaker Lee Jae-myung.

Greece students protest plans to introduce private universities

AP ■ ATHENS

Several thousand university students and supporters took part in a protest in central Athens Thursday to oppose plans by Greece’s conservative government to allow privately run universities. The protesters, chanting “Students, United, Will Win,” filed past the main Athens University building and statues of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates as they marched through central Athens and riot police took up positions in nearby side streets. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ centre-right government is pushing through several key pieces of legislation early in the new year, taking advantage of a landslide reelection in 2023, and a huge lead in



opinion polls. It argues the measure would stop thousands of Greeks going abroad each year to study, and would keep vital skills in the country.

But opponents say it would undermine public universities, which are already facing funding difficulties.

The government has faced a series of protests by various professional groups in recent weeks, triggered by the legislative reforms and the cost of living crisis. In central Greece Thursday, farmers used tractors to block sections of a highway, demanding additional financial support from the government to reduce production costs. Farmers’ groups told The Associated Press that they were holding meetings Thursday to consider further action

Alabama set to execute inmate with nitrogen gas

Montgomery (US) (AP): Alabama, unless blocked by the US Supreme Court, will attempt to put an inmate to death with nitrogen gas on Thursday night, a never before used execution method that the state claims will be humane but critics call cruel and experimental. Kenneth Eugene Smith, a 58-year-old convicted killer whose 2022 lethal injection was called off at the last minute because authorities couldn’t connect an IV line, is scheduled to be executed at a south Alabama prison.

Alabama plans to put an industrial-type respirator mask over Smith’s face and replace his breathing air with pure nitrogen gas, causing him to die from lack of oxygen. The execution will be the first attempt to use a new execution method since the 1982 introduction of lethal injection, now the most common execution method in the

United States. “It’s an experiment,” said the Rev Jeff Hood, Smith’s spiritual advisor and a death penalty opponent. Smith’s attorneys on Thursday asked the US Supreme Court to halt the execution to review claims that the new method violates the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment and deserves more legal scrutiny before it is used on a person.

“There is little research regarding death by nitrogen hypoxia. When the State is considering using a novel form of execution that has never been attempted anywhere, the public has an interest in ensuring the State has researched the method adequately and established procedures to minimize the pain and suffering of the condemned person,” Smith’s attorneys wrote.

Justices on Wednesday rejected Smith’s argument that it would be unconstitutional to

make another attempt to execute him after the failed lethal injection. Smith is one of two men convicted in the 1988 murder-for-hire slaying of Elizabeth Sennett. Prosecutors said he and the other man were each paid \$1,000 to kill Sennett on behalf of her pastor husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect on insurance.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said Wednesday night that he believes the courts will allow the execution to proceed. My office stands ready to carry on the fight for Liz Sennett. Two courts have now rejected Smith’s claims. I remain confident that the Supreme Court will come down on the side of justice, and that Smith’s execution will be carried out,” Marshall said. Alabama plans to strap Smith to a gurney in the execution chamber — the same chamber where he was strapped down for several hours during

the lethal injection attempt — and place a “full facepiece supplied air respirator” over his face.

After he is given a chance to make a final statement, the warden, from another room, will activate the nitrogen gas. The nitrogen will be administered through the mask for at least 15 minutes or “five minutes following a flatline indication on the EKG, whichever is longer,” according to the state protocol.

The execution is scheduled to begin at 6 pm local time but could be delayed until because of legal action or preparation. The state has until 6 am Friday to carry out the execution. Some states are looking for new ways to execute inmates because the drugs used in lethal injections, the most common execution method in the United States, are increasingly difficult to find.

Pakistan Army chief takes a dig at Iran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Taking a dig at Iran, Pakistan Army chief Gen Asim Munir has said that those who “backstab” the country will get a “befitting reply”, days after the two neighbours conducted tit-for-tat military strikes at alleged terrorist bases in both countries. During an interaction with students from public and private sector universities nationwide here on Wednesday, Munir mentioned about the recent missile attacks by Tehran within Balochistan and said that no one would be allowed to breach Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Thursday.

“You cannot backstab us, and if you do, you will get a befitting reply,” he said. Earlier this month, Pakistan conducted “precision military strikes” against what it called “terrorist hideouts” in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province that killed 9 people. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan’s unruly Balochistan province.

Munir claimed that the insurgency in Balochistan has long been supported by Afghanistan, and the western neighbour has never shown friendship towards Pakistan. Afghanistan was the only country that opposed Pakistan’s admission to the United



Nations after independence, he said. Referring to the Taliban-led administration of Afghanistan, the army chief warned, “Do not look towards Pakistan. We are ready to sacrifice anything and everything.” “When it comes to the safety and security of every single Pakistani, the whole of Afghanistan can be damned,” he said. The army chief said Pakistan provided food for five million Afghan nationals for 50 years, but “when it comes to our children, we will pursue those who attack them”.

Pakistan has refused to negotiate with the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), whose terrorist activities in Pakistan have increased manifold since the return of the Afghan Taliban to power in August 2021. Islamabad has also applied its economic leverage to force Kabul to take action against terrorists attack-

ing on its soil from Afghanistan. There has been an increase in militant attacks in Pakistan since November 2022, when the TTP, a close ally of the Afghan Taliban which seized power in Afghanistan, ended a months-long cease-fire with the government. During the interaction, Munir also ruled out reconciliation with India. “India has not reconciled with the concept of Pakistan, then how can we reconcile with it?,” he was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune.

The army chief briefly mentioned his recent visit to the US and stated that during the visit, he conveyed to Americans that Pakistan is a country with consequences. “There are 80 million middle-income people in Pakistan; with 65 per cent of its population being young, the country is ready to reap benefits from these resources,” he said.

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood has said that he had told the Cabinet of former prime minister Imran Khan how declassification of a diplomatic communication from the country’s embassy in Washington can affect relations with the US.

Recording his statement in the cipher case involving Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who also is a senior leader from his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mahmood said he also advised Khan’s government “to remain engaged with the US.” The cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable — the cipher — that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022, and naming the US, had claimed that it was ‘evidence’ of an “international conspiracy” to topple his government.

Khan and Qureshi, accused of mishandling it for political purposes, were indicted in December 2023 and both have pleaded not guilty. This is the first time that the details of the case are being brought out in the public domain even as Khan and Qureshi continue to face the case along with others bringing no relief to them ahead of the February 8 general elections.

“Purpose of this advice was to protect the relations of Pakistan with an important

country and to avoid public and politicised discussion on a secret and privileged communication,” Mahmood told the trial court on Monday, according to The News International, which said it had accessed a copy of his testimony. The former foreign secretary also shared the details of a cabinet meeting, which was called to discuss “Declassification of cipher telegram” and another meeting held in Banigala residence of the then prime minister. In the cabinet meeting, held on April 8, Mahmood said he had underlined that “declassification of cipher telegram was neither possible nor advisable in view of the cipher security guidelines, the legal position and the foreign policy implications.”

He also told the cabinet that neither there was any past precedent of declassification of cipher nor there was any legal provision in this regard for the primary reason that disclosure of text could compromise the cipher communication system, The News said. “I also added that it could affect the working of the missions and the ministry as the trust underlying confidential exchanges with foreign interlocutors could be undermined. It could also affect relations with the US and some other countries and strained relations with the US could also complicate matters with multilateral financial institutions.”



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

AP/PTI

China expands loan access for property developers

AP ■ BANGKOK

China has rolled out new access to commercial bank loans for property developers as Beijing doubles down on its effort to end a prolonged crisis in the real estate industry. The policies will allow real estate companies to use bank loans pledged against commercial properties such as offices and shopping malls to repay their other loans and bonds and to cover operating expenses.

They were announced late Wednesday by the People’s Bank of China, the National Financial Regulatory Administration and the Finance Ministry. Beijing has moved this week to stabilise ailing financial markets and boost the economy by freeing up more money for lending in various ways. That includes cutting required bank reserves.

The flurry of new measures and pronouncements from senior Communist Party officials about the need to stabilise financial markets and build confidence in the economy, the world’s second largest, appears

to reflect a renewed determination to get growth back on track. Dozens of developers have defaulted on their debts after the government cracked down on excessive borrowing in the industry several years ago. The largest, China Evergrande, is still trying to resolve more than USD 300 billion in debts and a Hong Kong court is due to hold a hearing on its restructuring plans next week. The latest policies are not a full reversal of the effort to rein in debt and control risks in the property industry.

The new rules say the bank loans cannot be used to buy commercial housing or rental housing or to start new construction or buy land. Loans cannot exceed 70 per cent of the appraised value of the property being used as collateral and should generally last a maximum of 10 years, with an absolute limit of 15 years. They also order banks to fully conduct due diligence before and after loans are issued to mitigate and minimise risks.

It’s unclear what impact the new rules might have on the overall crisis gripping the

property market. Land sales have long been a major revenue source for local governments that now are grappling with mounting debts. At the same time, stalled construction of new homes has hit contractors and suppliers of construction materials and home furnishings. In a research note, UBS economists said “the pace and potential size of such loans remain uncertain as banks will likely watch the commerciality and risks of such loans”. But they added that the move was a “significant step” to increase support for developers.

Sales of new homes and home prices have been falling, discouraging consumers from spending since Chinese families tend to have much of their wealth tied up in property. The industry as a whole accounts for about a quarter of business activity in China. “For developer financing to fundamentally and sustainably improve, property sales need to stop falling and start to recover, which could require more policy efforts to stabilize the property market,” the UBS report said.

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/BEIJING

China has said that it stands ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project to deepen the political mutual trust between the two “all-weather” allies, a media report said on Thursday.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said after having achieved the first phase of the CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin while answering a ques-

tion during a briefing on Wednesday said, “China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation.” China has said it is ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the CPEC and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan’s Balochistan with China’s Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). About the recent visit of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan, Wang said, he called on President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Kakar, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani to have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest.

The spokesperson added that the Chinese minister also co-chaired the fourth meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Co-ordination with

Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi. “China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners,” he said. China appreciates Pakistan’s firm commitment to the One-China principle and supports Pakistan in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, stability, development and prosperity.

In Islamabad, Prime Minister Kakar said that after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. “We have already achieved the CPEC’s first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest

projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase,” he said in an interview recorded by CGTN during his recent visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.

The Chinese state-run news outlet ran the interview on Wednesday. Prime Minister Kakar said the CPEC’s second phase required road and air connectivity around industrialisation projects. “Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity — road, air and the rest of the connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another,” he said.

Flight recorders found from plane that crashed with Ukrainian POWs aboard

AP ■ MOSCOW

Investigators have found the flight recorders of a Russian military transport plane that crashed in a border region near Ukraine, Russian media reported Thursday, a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down the aircraft, which it said was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war.

The Il-76 crashed in a huge ball of fire in a rural area of Russia on Wednesday, and authorities said all 74 people on board, including the POWs, six crew and three Russian servicemen, were killed. Ukraine’s president has demanded an international investigation into the episode, which has triggered a spate of claims and counterclaims. Russian officials accused Kyiv of shooting down the plane with two missiles and said the prisoners of war were headed for an exchange. They offered no evidence for their allegation.

The Associated Press could not independently confirm who was aboard or how the plane was downed. The commander of Ukraine’s air force accused Russia of “rampant...propaganda” — though he did not specifically address the allegations. Ukrainian authorities confirmed a prisoner exchange was due to happen Wednesday, and that it was called off, but said they had no information about who was on the plane.

“We haven’t seen any indication that such a large number of people was on that plane, Ukrainian citizens or not,” Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine’s human rights ombudsman, said on national television Thursday. Ukrainian officials noted that Moscow didn’t ask for any spe-



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

tional audience, attempting to discredit Ukraine in the eyes of the global community”. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who turned 46 on Thursday, didn’t directly address Moscow’s allegation but said Ukraine would push for an international investigation. “It is necessary to establish all the facts, as much as possible, considering that the plane crash occurred on Russian territory — beyond our control,” he said in his nightly video address late Wednesday. “It’s obvious Russians are playing with lives of Ukrainian POWs, with the feelings of their relatives and the emotions of our society.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which was expected to take place on Thursday afternoon in New York. Andrei Kartapolov, head of the defense affairs committee in the lower house of the Russian parliament, said Russia would continue exchanging prisoners despite the crash. “We can’t abandon our boys and so we will speak to the devil himself to get them out,” he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Ukraine’s largest oil and gas company, Naftogaz, said Thursday that one of its data centres had come under a large-scale cyberattack that shut down the company’s web sites and call centres. Ukraine’s national postal service, Ukrposhta, also reported a major technical failure of its IT systems. It didn’t specify whether the issue was caused by a cyberattack. Ukraine’s State Service for Transport Safety also reported a technical failure of its data center that shut down its web-site and other services.

information to troops on the ground. The discovery of the transport plane’s flight recorders was reported Thursday by the state-owned RIA Novosti news agency, citing emergency services. However, there is slim hope that the circumstances of the crash and the Russian allegations will be clarified. The war has often featured conflicting accusations, used as ammunition in the bid to sway opinion at home and abroad.

On Thursday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated the allegation that Ukraine had downed the plane, describing it as “a totally monstrous act”.

Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukraine’s Air Force Commander, alleged that “rampant Russian propaganda is directing a fake stream of information to the interna-

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

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal has asked Russia to send back hundreds of Nepali nationals who were recruited to fight against Ukraine and repatriate the bodies of those who died in the conflict, Nepal’s top diplomat said on Thursday.

The Russian army is estimated to have recruited more than 200 Nepali nationals to fight in Ukraine and at least 14 of them have died there, Nepal’s Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud said in an interview with The Associated Press. “We have asked Russia to immediately stop the recruitment of Nepali nationals in their army, immediately return those who are already serving in the army, repatriate the bodies of those killed, and treat and return those who were wounded in the fighting,” Saud said.

Nepal is also seeking monetary compensation from Russia for the families of those Nepali nationals who were killed in the fight-

ing, Saud said. Among the 14 confirmed killed Nepali nationals, Russia has said it is in possession of 12 bodies. Most Nepali people want the bodies of their deceased relatives to be cremated following religious rituals. “We have information that five of our citizens who fought on behalf of the Russians are being held captive by the Ukraine side. We are asking the Russian side to take initiatives to get them freed,” Saud said. Russian officials have not commented on the recruitment of foreign nationals for military service in Ukraine, but media reports have said that along with Nepal the Russian military has recruited some people from Cuba. Russian law allows foreign nationals to enlist in its army after they sign a contract with the Defence Ministry. In September, Cuban authorities arrested 17 people in connection with what they said was a network to recruit Cuban nationals to fight for Russia in Ukraine.

Separatist leader who called Putin cowardly sentenced to prison

Tallinn (Estonia): The Moscow City Court on Thursday convicted a former Ukraine rebel leader who called President Vladimir Putin cowardly of extremism and sentenced him to four years in prison. Igor Girkin, who used the surname alias of Strelkov (shooter), was the most prominent leader of Russian-backed separatist fighters in Ukraine’s Donetsk region in 2014, when rebellion arose after the ouster of Ukraine’s Russia-allied president.

He briefly became the self-declared separatist government’s defence minister, but left the post in August 2014 after rebel forces shot down a Malaysian passenger airliner over Donetsk, killing all 298 people aboard. He was convicted in absentia of murder in the Netherlands, where the flight had originated, for his role. He returned to Russia and became a nationalist commentator and activist. He supported launching Russia’s war in Ukraine, but sharply criticised authorities for being inept and indecisive in carrying out the fight. Girkin called Putin a “nonentity” and a person of “cowardly mediocrity”. He was arrested in July on extremism charges and remained in custody since then.

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

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
No.CE/PRO/ACCTS-44/73/26 dtd.19.01.2024
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
Name of the work: **Construction of Compound Wall, Drain adjacent to PMR and along RRS-I & II tracks at MCHP area.**
Estimated Cost: **Rs.3,05,60,262.83.** Last Date & time of submission : **08/02/2024 up to 17.00 Hrs.**
Refer our website for details: **eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.**
SD/- Executive Engineer, PRD, PPA
PPA/PR/80/2023-24 dtd.24.01.2024

United Textiles Limited
Regd. Office 7th K.M. Stone, Barwala Road, Hisar - 125001 (Haryana)
CIN: L17115HR1993PLC032092
Notice
Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, Notice is hereby given that the Meeting of Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024 at 11.00 AM at the Regd. Office of the Company to consider the Unaudited Quarterly Results for the Period Ended 31st December, 2023.
Further as per the Company’s Code of Conduct for Prevention of Insider Trading, the trading window for dealing with securities of the Company will remain close from 31.12.2023 to 48 hours after the declaration of the Financial Results. The said information is also available on Company’s Website **www.unitedtextileslimited.com** and also on the website of stock exchanges at **www.bseindia.com**.
For United Textiles Limited (Vivek Aggarwal)
Whole Time Director
Dated 24.01.2024 (DIN 07079208)

NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN
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Website: **www.nagarnigamdehradun.com** Email : **nagarnigam.ddn@gmail.com**
Nagar Nigam Dehradun invites Request for Proposal (RFP) Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of two (02) Nos. of New Mechanical Road Sweeper Machines with 5 years comprehensive Operation and Maintenance (further extendable for 2 year) under SBM-U/NCAP in Dehradun form eligible bidders having experience as indicated in the RFP document. Interested bidders are requested to procure the RFP document up to 25.01.2024 from e-tenders portal of government of Uttarakhand. Pre-bid meeting is scheduled at 12:00 noon on 01.02.2024. Any Addendum/Corrigendum including date of extension will be uploaded only on **www.uktenders.gov.in**. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online submission of bids is 14.02.2024 at 3:00PM.
No 28/SBM-U/NCAP-MRS/2023&24 Date: 25.01.2024
Municipal Commissioner Nagar Nigam Dehradun



STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

Rourkela Steel Plant

Rourkela - 769 011, Odisha, India

REF. NO. - WC / 5203

DATE: - 18-01-2024

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The application forms containing of the terms and conditions for allotment of kiosk (TOP-II KIOSK near TOP-II area) on license basis is available in the office of GM (PL - IR, ER, C, T & M) on payment of Rs.200/- (Rupees two hundred only) including all taxes towards cost of application papers. The application papers can also be downloaded from our website <https://sailtenders.co.in>. In such case, the duly filled in application form shall be treated as valid application and should be sent along with the receipt of Rs.200/- (Online deposit through SB collect).

Applications will be accepted up to 3.00 PM of 16-02-2024.

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75वां गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं

विनोबा भावे विश्वविद्यालय पिछले तीन दशकों से शिक्षा को माशाल जलाते हुए शिक्षा जगत में नए कीर्तिमान स्थापित करने में सफल रहा है।

कला, विज्ञान, भाषा विज्ञान, संस्कृति परंपरा में बिखरे हुए ज्ञान के प्रत्येक बिन्दु को महासिंधु बनाने की ओर अग्रसर।

सबका साथ, सबका विकास के कथन को चरितार्थ करते हुए 75वां गणतंत्र दिवस के पावन अवसर पर पूरे प्रदेशवासियों को हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं एवं अभिनंदन।



श्रीमती सुमन कैथरीन किशोरा

कुलपति,

विनोबा भावे विश्वविद्यालय, हजारीबाग

आपका: विनोबा/वि/स्पा/237/2024, दिनांक: 25.01.2024



26 INDIA REPUBLIC JANUARY DAY

G.M. Group of College

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G.M. College of Nursing & Pharmacy

Gyan Jyoti College of Nursing

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G.M. Inter College

G.M. Evening College

A thousand salutes to this amazing nation of ours. May it become even more prosperous. I wish you a very Happy Republic Day!

With Best Wishes

Shambhu Kumar



सभी देशवासियों को गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक बधाई एवं शुभकामनाएं



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KSHITIJ HOSPITAL

Markets fall dragged by IT stocks, foreign fund outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Thursday due to selling in IT stocks and continuous foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 359.64 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 70,700.67. During the day, it plunged 741.27 points or 1.04 per cent to 70,319.04. The Nifty fell by 101.35 points or 0.47 per cent to 21,352.60. Among Sensex shares, Tech Mahindra fell by over 6 per cent after the company reported a 60 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 510.4 crore in the December quarter.



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75वें गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



विद्युत वितरण बोर्ड

आप सभी देशवासियों को बौद्धिक हजारीबाग अंचल के तहत से जुड़ने वर्ष 75 के गणतंत्र दिवस का हार्दिक बधाई एवं मंगल शुभकामनाएं. आज ही के दिन 26 जनवरी 1950 को हमारा भारत पूर्ण गणतंत्र बना था। आज का दिन हम सभी देशवासियों के लिए नव का दिन है। हम देश के प्रगति और उन्नति में विदेशी सहयोग देते एवं अपने आदर्शों को बेहतर से बेहतर सुविधा प्रदान करने के लिए कृतसंकल्प हैं. बौद्धिक वितरण बोर्ड देशवासियों के लिए सभी वैश्विक आधुनिक सेवाएं जैसे कृषि संवर्धन कृषि, रचना कृषि, सुदृढ़, लघु एवं मायम व्यवसाय कृषि, आवास कृषि, वाहन कृषि, व्यक्तिगत कृषि के साथ साथ जल धार स्वाता, पी पी एक स्वाता, सुकल्या समृद्धि स्वाता, जीवन बीमा, पेंशन योजना, स्वास्थ्य बीमा, मृत्यु भ्रत फंड, डिजिटल बैंकिंग, एन पी एस, आर बी आई वॉलेंट, एस सी एस एस आदि की सभी सुविधाएं सुचारु रूप से प्रदान करने के लिए हमेशा की तरह वचनबद्ध हैं. बौद्धिक वितरण बोर्ड सभी उत्पाद एवं सेवाएं डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म पर उपलब्ध कराते हैं. हमारे सभी वादकों को सामाजिक ब्याज दर पर कृषि एवं सामाजिक सेवा पर अधिकतम ब्याज दर आदर्शों को प्रदान किया जाता है. बौद्धिक वितरण बोर्ड सभी देशवासियों में जोड़ने चीज कि सुविधा उपलब्ध है। बौद्धिक वितरण बोर्ड सभी देशवासियों को सुदृढ़ आपत्त की कामना करता है।



पी पी कृष्ण किशोर

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बौद्धिक वितरण बोर्ड

हजारीबाग अंचल



75वें गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



लोकनायक जयप्रकाश अहिंसक अग्रणी

आज - बौद्धिक, माया - विचारण, विज्ञान - हजारीबाग (अग्रणी)

- प्रतिष्ठित स्वयंसेवी संस्था लव भारत जगुति केन्द्र द्वारा संवादित और लेख विभिन्न के क्षेत्र में 20 वर्षों से अधिक का अनुभव
- 120 बेड, आधुनिक सुविधाएं, स्वच्छ वातावरण, सुविध्य विभिन्न, मरीजों के रहने-खाते और एम्बुलेंस की उत्तम व्यवस्था
- हजारीबाग, केरेडारी, बडकानगी, बरकतपुर, चतुर्गुहा, चण्डी, बगोटा, चण्डी, केरेडारी और रामगढ़ में निजल सेंटर
- आधुनिक क्षेत्रों में लेख परीक्षण सह गोपनीयता जांच प्रविष्टों का विभिन्न आधुनिक
- प्रति वर्ष लगभग 01 लाख ओपीडी और 15 हजार गोपनीयता ऑपरेशन, 70 प्रतिशत रोगियों का निःशुल्क इलाज, आधुनिक भारत योजना अंतर्गत मानवता प्राप्त अग्रणी
- सरकार से मानवता प्राप्त एलएलजेवी पैमेटिकल डिस्ट्रिक्ट में ओपेरीटिव अग्रिस्टेट डिप्लोमा कोर्स की पदाई



एनटीपीसी NTPC



गणतंत्र दिवस 26 JANUARY



की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



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money 10



समस्त हजारीबाग वासियों को गणतंत्र दिवस की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं



श्री जयंत सिन्हा जी

संसद, हजारीबाग लोकसभा



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26th January 2024



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AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sabalenka beats US Open winner Gauff to reach final

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

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



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

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

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

Bopanna one match away from first Major trophy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna earned himself one more opportunity to win a Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open men's doubles final with Australian partner Matthew Ebden after prevailing in a tense semifinal against Tomas Machac and Zhang Zhizhen here Thursday. The second seeded Indo-Australian pair faced some stiff resistance from their rivals in the third set but eventually the experience of playing Super Tie Breakers helped them nail the finish with a 6-3 3-6 7-6 (10-7) scoreline after two hours and two minutes. Zhang (WR 54) and Machac (Wr75) are quality singles players, featuring in the top-100 list and their powerful hitting from the baseline did make it a tough contest for the experienced Bopanna and Ebden. A day after he was assured of becoming the world number one player, Bopanna as usual served well on big points and also manage to pull out the strokes and tricks when they needed the most. Bopanna has reached the US Open final twice (2013, 2023) but a Major trophy has eluded him in his career. Now at the fag end of his career at the age of 43,

REACHES AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINAL WITH EBDEN



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

big team is part of me. I just made sure I stay focussed on what I need to do get to ready, that is mobility and recovery. I do not look to lift heavy, just do yoga. I feel mental strength helps me." Ebden said winning in front of the home fans is special. "I could not be happier, winning before the home fans is special. These guys are super dangerous players. The doubles specialist against singles specialist is great (contest). It's good for the fans. We have been working hard together for years. One more match to go," he said. After splitting the first two sets, the second seeds were in a spot of bother in the opening game,

down 0-30 but Bopanna's big serve came into play and he managed to make an important hold. A cross-court passing winner between Zhang and Machac was a treat for eyes. Bopanna was all over with his fiery volley winners at the net, pulling the rug from the under the feet of their rivals to get the first break of the set. The break and easy holds gave the second seeds a comfortable lead. Bopanna's sportsman spirit was on display yet again in Grand Slams when he touched net in game seven and himself conceded the point. Soon, the second seeds were serving for the match but suffered a break to allow little opening to their rivals. Bopanna hit a backhand long to be 15-30 and then Zhang found a cross court forehand winner to leave the Indian facing two break points. Bopanna hit his backhand wide on the first to allow the rivals strike back in the match. Zhang though was down 0-40 in next game to offer three match points to Bopanna and Ebden. They unseeded pair saved all three — one on Bopanna's return error second with serve and third with a crushing forehand winner down the line.

MSLTA ties up with Ferrero academy to promote tennis in Maharashtra

PTI ■ PUNE

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

Federer amazed by how much Neeraj has achieved

PTI ■ ZURICH

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



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

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

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



I have not announced retirement: Mary Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Her future is a subject of intense speculation since that final Olympic appearance in Tokyo back in 2021 but celebrated Indian woman boxer M C Mary Kom on Thursday refuted talk of retirement even though she is on the wrong side of the international cut-off age for amateur boxers. The 41-year-old six-time world champion, who won an Olympic bronze in the 2012 London edition, found herself at the centre of a social media storm after reportedly declaring that due to the 40-year age cap for amateur boxers, she has been forced to retire. In a statement this morning, she declared that she had been misquoted and a formal announcement of retirement is still some time away. "I haven't announced retirement yet and I have been misquoted. I will personally come in front of media whenever I want to announce it. I have gone through some media reports stating that I have announced retirement and this is not true," the Manipuri flyweight (51kg) category boxer asserted. She then tried to give context to her earlier comment, insisting that she was merely talking about the international rules and not referring to herself specifically. "I was attending a school event in Dibrugarh (Assam) on 24 January 2024 wherein I was motivating children and I said 'I

still have hunger of achieving in sports but age limit in Olympics doesn't allow me to participate though I can carry on with my sport," she said. "I am still focusing on my fitness and whenever I will announce retirement I will inform everyone. Please do correct this," she added. Mary Kom has not been seen in action since her pre-quarterfinal loss in the Tokyo Olympics, which was her last appearance at the quadrennial showpiece. She attempted to appear for the 2022 Commonwealth Games trials but had to pull out on the day of the selection bouts due to a torn ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) for which she underwent a surgery. However, she resumed training after rehabilitation last year and insisted that she has another 3-4 competitive years left in her even though Olympics was now out of bounds for her. Amid her gradual withdrawal, Nikhat Zareen has taken over the 51kg slot, and claimed two back-to-back world titles, the latest one coming last year. Mary Kom, on the other hand, has been seen in several administrative roles given to her by the Indian Olympic Association. She recently headed an IOA oversight panel which investigated the sexual harassment charges levelled by some top women wrestlers against the then wrestling federation head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Xavi trophy hopes at Barcelona shrink after Copa del Rey exit

AP ■ BARCELONA

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

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

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

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

Avani to lead Indian team at Women Amateur Asia Pacific golf

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN STRONG POSITION ON DAY ONE

India 119/1 after bowling out England for 246



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

After spinners put England batters through a harsh scrutiny, Yashasvi Jaiswal rolled out his own version of 'Bazball' en route to a crushing fifty as India posted 119 for one to take the upper hand on day one of the opening Test here on Thursday.

At close, Jaiswal (76 batting, 70 balls, 9x4, 3x6) and Shubman Gill (14 batting) were at the crease and the hosts are 127 runs in arrears of England's anaemic first innings total of 246, which was built around skipper Ben Stokes' hardheaded 88-ball 70. India were comfortably placed at 119 for one at stumps after bowling out England for 246 on the opening day of the first Test here on Thursday.

Around Stokes, England batsmen crumbled as the spin troika of Ravichandran Ashwin (3/68), Ravindra Jadeja (3/88) and Axar Patel (2/33) rudely nudged them back to reality of batting on an Indian pitch that offers barrowful of turn and grip even from day one.

But when the Indian openers came out bat the RGI Stadium, pitch appeared to have lost its bite and the England tweekers looked like a defanged lot.

Jaiswal wrapped himself with the leader's cape despite the presence of his captain Rohit Sharma (24, 27 balls) at the other end, tearing into England bowlers with gusto.

The gap between runs and balls could give the left-hander's innings a hue of carelessness but it was anything but that. Jaiswal started his and the team's innings with a clipped boundary to square leg off pacer Mark Wood, but that was just the appetizer as the left-hander offered a harsh welcome to Tom Hartley to international cricket. The 22-year-old smashed the England left-arm spinner for two sixes in his first over, one over long-on and the other in front of the square.

His twinkling feet and fast hands made it tough for the England spinners to settle into a rhythm against him.

Jaiswal and Rohit added 80 runs in just 12.1 overs to give their side a wonderful launching pad.

It came to an end when Rohit gave a catch to Stokes off left-arm spinner Jack Leach while trying to clear him over the long-on.

But for the rest of the innings, it was a futile toil for the English bowlers as this could be the beginning of a long and tiring tour for them.


To make it even more exasperating for them, they have already exhausted all the three reviews for this innings as well.

However, the whole atmosphere was different when the Indian spinners were operating - the ball bounced, turned and gripped to leave the English batters an edgy group except a few small passages.

One of them came in the post-lunch session when Joe Root (29, 60 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (37, 58 balls) added 61 runs for the fourth-wicket as England attempted to stay above the fast-rising water.

Root and Bairstow, generally, relied on sweep and the reverse avator of that shot occasionally to gather runs. However, Root was culpable of being too pre-meditative and it eventually led to his downfall.

Jadeja hit a fuller length which resulted in a top-edge off Root's bat that flew to short fine leg where Jasprit Bumrah did not have to strain himself much to complete the catch.



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