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RAHUL RULED OUT, BUMRAH RETURNS: BCCI
11 SPORTS

Sandeshkhali Shaitan Shackled

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ BASIRHAT

In an apparent damage-control exercise, the Trinamool Congress expelled Sheikh Shahjahan, the don of Sandeshkhali, a day after his arrest.

This action comes about two months after his men attacked a raiding team of Enforcement Directorate officials and, notably, a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arambagh in Hooghly district of Bengal.

Speaking about the decision, TMC MP Derek O'Brien and State Minister Bratya Basu said Shahjahan was suspended from the party for six years and challenged the BJP leadership to take similar action against their leader and MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who is accused of assaulting women wrestlers.

"There are two types of parties... One type of party talk, talk and talk while the other types like the Trinamool Congress... Walk the talk," O'Brien said.

Basu alleged that, taking advantage of some stray incidents "against which the TMC always takes a truthful decision," the Opposition parties like BJP were out to malign the Government.

Alleged to be the "fund manager and rigging expert" of his party in large parts of North 24 Parganas, Shahjahan was arrested on Wednesday night about two months after he hit the national headlines when his men beat up and seriously injured a raiding team of Enforcement Directorate officials.

Apart from masterminding the attack on the ED team, Shahjahan, a Trinamool Congress leader and district board member of North 24 Parganas, is also charged with mass land-grabbing and alleged sexual assault on women in Sandeshkhali and the neighbouring riverine islands of the district.

ADG, South Bengal, Supratim Sarkar, said Shahjahan was arrested late on Wednesday night from the Minakhan area, adding that he had been forwarded to Basirhat court. The TMC leader has been remanded to 10 days police custody, sources said.

A few of his cronies, including local TMC leaders Shibu Hajra, Uttam Sardar, and Ajit Maity, had already been arrested earlier.

Earlier, the Calcutta High Court had instructed the police to arrest him without delay.

Sandeshkhali has been in the national news after Shahjahan's men attacked the ED on January 5.

Subsequently, after about a month, emboldened by his absence from the area, hundreds of women rose up in revolt, complaining of land grab, sexual assault, and surrounded the local police station.

Since then, the area has been on the boil with successive visits of national commissions for women, SCs, and STs, almost all of whom have demanded the imposition of President's Rule in the area.

Regarding the TMC leadership's claim that they are the real party with a difference that acts against corrupt members, Bengal BJP president Sukanto Majumdar said, "It is all drama being enacted by Mamata Banerjee... to save her face... Shahjahan had been under TMC's protection for the past two months.

The CPI(M) also said Shahjahan was an asset of the TMC and "the party could not afford to expel him... Not only because his goons rig polls, but also because he knows too much about TMC's money laundering."

Meanwhile, the ED has moved the court, saying Shahjahan could tamper with the evidence for which the agency had raided his house.

The agency could soon seek his custody in the ₹10,000 crore ration scam that has landed senior TMC leader and former Bengal Minister Jyotipriya Mallick in jail.

Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan, accused of sexual violence and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali village, being produced at the Basirhat court, in North 24 Parganas, on Thursday PTI

BJP suggests names of Lok Sabha Contestants

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

From External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to late Sushma Swaraj's daughter Bansuri Swaraj, and Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, were among the names that circulated in the BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC) meeting on Thursday as the party convened to release its first list of candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Sources said the meeting discussed the seats lost in the 2019 General Elections and the margins of victory and defeat to decide on the various sets of names proposed by the ruling party. Prior to the CEC meeting, a five-hour-long session was held at the Prime Minister's residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the party's national president JP Nadda.

As per the first list to be released Modi will be the obvious contestant from his two term Varanasi constituency, Union Home Minister Amit Shah from Gandhi Nagar, Rajnath Singh from Lucknow, Smriti Irani from Amethi, while former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan from Vidisha, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju from Arunachal West, Arjun Ram Meghwal from Bikaner, Gajendra Sekhawat from Jodhpur, Sambit Patra from Puri, Jyotiraditya Scindia from Gwalior, Pratima Bhoumik from Tripura west, Saroj Pandey from Korba, BD Sharma from Khajurao, Ajay Bhatt from Nainital, Ravi Kishan from Gorakhpur, Manoj Tiwari from North East Delhi, Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma from West Delhi, Ramesh Bidhuri from South Delhi, Annapurna Devi from Koderma, Sunil Kumar from Chatra, Nishikant Dubey from Godda, Arjun Munda from Khunti, Kailash Chaudhary from Barmer, Om Birla from Kota, Rahul Kaswan from Churu, Dushyant Singh from Jhalawar, CP Joshi from Chittorgarh.

A decision on candidates for the States of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu has been put on hold. Alliance discussions are in progress in all three States — with Akali Dal in Punjab, Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu.

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Chhattishgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, Devendra Fanavis, Prakash Javadekar, Mansukhbhai Mandaviya, Pushkar Dhami, Pramod Sawant, Bhupendra Yadav, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Keshav Maurya, Yogi Adityanath and others attended the meeting.

NEWS BREAK

India blasts Pakistan for raising Kashmir at UNHRC

UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA: In a strong retort to debt-trapped Pakistan after it raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir at the UN Human Rights Council, India has said it cannot pay any attention to a country which is soaked in red due to the bloodshed from terrorism that it sponsors around the world.

First Secretary in the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in Geneva Anupama Singh exercised India's Right of Reply at the ongoing high-level segment of the 55th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Wednesday. India exercised the Right of Reply to respond to Turkiye and Pakistan after the two countries made references to Kashmir in their statements at the high-level segment.

Cancellation of protesting farmers visas sought

Chandigarh: In a development regarding the ongoing farmers' protest, DSP Ambala Joginder Sharma has revealed that efforts are underway to cancel the passports and visas of individuals allegedly involved in violence. "We have identified involved in violence coming to Haryana from Punjab in the name of farmers' protest. We have identified them with CCTV cameras and drone cameras. We will request the Ministry and embassy to cancel their Visas and passports. Their photos, name and address will be given to the passport office. We are working on canceling their passports", DSP Ambala Joginder Sharma said.

India's infrastructure friendly GDP Soars to 8.4 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth accelerated to 8.4 per cent in the October-December quarter of this fiscal, mainly due to double-digit growth in manufacturing and good showing by mining & quarrying and construction sectors.

The GDP (gross domestic product) growth was 4.3 per cent in the October-December 2022 quarter, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday.

The manufacturing sector's output, as per the gross value added in the third quarter of this fiscal, grew by 11.6 per cent compared to a contraction of 4.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

Mining and quarrying grew at 7.5 per cent in the third quarter, up from 1.4 per cent a year ago.

The construction sector kept the growth momentum at 9.5 per cent against the same growth rate in the year-ago period.

However, the output of the farm sector declined by 0.8 per cent during the quarter compared to a growth of 5.2 per cent a year ago.

The national accounts data showed electricity, gas, water supply, and other utility services segment has grown by 9 per cent year-on-year against an 8.7 per cent rise.

The GVA growth in the services sector — trade, hotel, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting — was 6.7 per cent during the third quarter against 9.2 per cent.

Financial, real estate and professional services grew by 7 per cent in the third quarter over 7.7 per cent earlier.

Public administration, defence and other services posted 7.5 per cent growth against 3.5 per cent in the third quarter of the last fiscal.

The NSO also released the second advance estimate for the current fiscal and pegged the economic growth at 7.6 per cent against 7.3 per cent estimated in the first advance estimate released in January.

"Real GDP or GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of ₹ 172.90 lakh crore, against the first revised estimates of GDP for the year 2022-23 of ₹160.71 lakh crore. The growth rate of GDP during 2023-24 is estimated at 7.6 per cent compared to the growth rate of 7.0 per cent in 2022-23," the NSO statement said.

According to the statement, the nominal GDP or GDP at current prices in 2023-24 is estimated to attain a level of ₹293.90 lakh crore against ₹269.50 lakh crore in 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 9.1 per cent.

It stated that the GDP at constant (2011-12) prices in Q3 of 2023-24 is estimated at ₹43.72 lakh crore against ₹40.35 lakh crore in Q3 of 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 8.4 per cent. The GDP at current prices in Q3 of 2023-24 is estimated at ₹75.49 lakh crore compared to ₹68.58 lakh crore in Q3 of 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 10.1 per cent, it stated.

Congress survives Himachal Tremor

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, HP Congress Committee (HPCC) president Pratibha Singh with central observers and others during a Press conference in Shimla on Thursday PTI

With Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu taking responsibility for Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi's defeat in the Rajya Sabha polls, Priyanka Gandhi, a member of Congress' first family, once again proved to be the saviour for the party in preserving the Government in the state.

After intense deliberations within the party, the nominated central observers, and Priyanka, who serves as general secretary without any specific charge, Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania on Thursday disqualified six Congress MLAs who had cross-voted in the recent Rajya Sabha polls for the lone seat in the state."

They had also abstained from voting on Budget in the Assembly, defying a party whip to vote in favour of the Government on the Finance Bill. The ruling Congress had sought their disqualification on this ground. Following the disqualification of the rebel legislators, the effective strength of the House has reduced from 68 to 62 while the number of Congress MLAs has shrunk from 40 to 34 and the Government is safe as of now though Opposition Leader Jairam Thakur maintained that the Government will fall any day due to the disgruntled legislators and intense internal fighting.

Addressing the media in Shimla, party observers Bhupinder Hooda, D K Shivakumar said after one-to-one meetings with the Congress MLAs and deliberations with Sukhu and State Congress chief Pratibha Singh, differences have been ironed out. He also said it has been decided to form a coordination committee to sort out all internal matters and no leader would go to the press. The political crisis in Himachal Pradesh was triggered by cross-voting by six Congress MLAs in Rajya Sabha elections.

India expands footprint in Indian Ocean region

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and Mauritius are natural partners in the maritime domain to combat traditional and non-traditional challenges in the Indian Ocean region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday after virtually inaugurating a new airstrip, a jetty and six community development projects in the island nation.

The India-assisted projects in Agalega island of Mauritius are seen as significant as they are expected to boost connectivity as well as maritime security and surveillance in the strategic waters in the region.

After inaugurating the projects along with Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, Modi announced that Mauritius will be the first country to join India's Jan Aushadhi scheme, which is an initiative aimed at providing quality medicines at affordable prices.

In his remarks, Modi flagged concerns over challenges in the Indian Ocean region and said India and Mauritius are "natural partners" in the maritime domain to deal with them.

"Many traditional and non-traditional challenges are emerging in the Indian Ocean Region. All these challenges affect our economy. India and Mauritius are natural partners in the field of maritime security to deal with the challenges," he said at the virtual ceremony.

"We are actively working to ensure security, prosperity and stability in the Indian Ocean Region. We are cooperating together in all areas like monitoring of exclusive economic zone, joint patrolling, hydrography, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," he said. Modi's comments came amid increasing concerns in New Delhi over China's growing military forays into the Indian Ocean region which is largely considered as the backyard of the Indian Navy.

He said the inauguration of the airstrip and jetty at Agalega island will further advance the cooperation.

The Prime Minister described Mauritius as an important partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and that the bilateral development partnership has been an important pillar of the strategic relations.

"Our development partnerships are based on the priorities of Mauritius. Be it Mauritius's needs related to EEZ (exclusive economic zone) security, or health security, India has always respected the needs of Mauritius," he said. Modi said the basic objective of India's efforts is to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of common people in Mauritius.

"Today holds a special significance for our development partnership. I am extremely happy that today we are seeing the completion of the commitment I had made in 2015. In India these days it is being called 'Modi's Guarantee'," he said.

The Prime Minister also talked about the "vibrant, strong and unique" partnership between India and Mauritius, adding the island nation is New Delhi's special partner under its vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth For All in the Region).

"Our relations have gained unprecedented momentum in the last 10 years. We have achieved new heights in mutual cooperation," he said.

The inauguration of these projects came weeks after the launch of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) systems and RuPay card services in Mauritius.

"We are making history today on the island of Agalega with the inauguration of a new airstrip, a new jetty and several other development projects," Jugnauth said at the event.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Mauritian counterpart Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurate several India-assisted development projects at the Agalega Island in Mauritius, via a video conference, on Thursday PTI

No shortage of funds for Public welfare schemes: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav graced a mass marriage ceremony held in Ashta and extended his blessings to the newly-weds and wished them a prosperous future. The event saw the solemnization of marriages for 748 girls, adhering to religious customs, with an additional 179 Muslim girls having their Nikah performed. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav also distributed cheques under the marriage scheme to the couples.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Yadav highlighted the significance of mass marriage ceremonies in curbing extravagant spending. He emphasized that adhering to religious customs and celebrating weddings with a limited number of family members not only reduces unnecessary expenses but also allows for saving money, which can be directed towards future plans. Dr. Yadav shared his personal experience, mentioning that his son's wedding was attended by only 200 guests, reflecting the principles he advocates for in mass marriage ceremonies.

Yadav highlighted the disparity in the ability of affluent and poor families to fulfill their children's marriage aspirations. While the former can easily realize these dreams, the latter often struggle, resorting to loans or land sales. In response, the Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah/Nikah Yojana was initiated to facilitate the marriage of daughters from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with traditional grandeur. Chief Minsiter Dr. Yadav expressed satisfaction in alleviating the concerns of poor parents regarding their daughters' weddings, assuring that the government has ample funds for such welfare schemes. He said that under Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana the bride receives Rs. 55,000 from the government, with a cheque of Rs. 49,000 being provided as part of this assistance.

Yadav praised the rapid progress of the state under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, attributing the accelerated development to the "double engine government." He expressed delight that at 4 pm on the same day, Prime Minister Modi would inaugurate and dedicate various development and construction projects worth Rs. 17,500 crore in Madhya Pradesh. He encouraged all citizens to participate in the state's development by joining the PM's programme.

Dr. Yadav also said that on February 28, Prime Minister Modi had transferred the 16th installment of Kisan Samman Nidhi to farmers' accounts, and the Madhya Pradesh government would soon follow the same. Furthermore, he announced that the installment of Ladli Behna Yojana would be deposited into the accounts of Ladli Behnas on March 1, assuring that there would be no lack of funds for schemes benefiting the poor, farmers, and laborers.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that now farmers will not have to wander for nomination transfer after buying and selling of their land. The government has set time for transfer of property , property distribution and land demarcation. Now, along with purchasing the land, arrangements for transfer of name have been made. Farmers will not have to make rounds of Patwari and Tehsildar for nomination transfer. Madhya Pradesh government has now started the system of cyber tehsil, under which the name will start appearing in the account as soon as one applies for name transfer and now the revenue cases will be resolved within the stipulated time.

Hurting public sentiments will not be tolerated<.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that our government is a people's government. The government is of villages, poor and farmers. Running a government means serving the people and alleviating their pain, suffering and solving their problems. Our government is working on enhancing respect and honour of the people.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during a programme 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Madhya Pradesh' at lal parade ground in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Rapist brutally murdered by brother of rape victim

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Panic prevailed in Idgah Hills area after a youth accused of rape was murdered by the rape victim's brother on Thursday, the accused stopped deceased and was stabbed along with his friend.

The matter is of Idgah Hills located in Shahjahanabad area. Both the accused are absconding after the incident.

According to the information, a 20-year-old youth resident of Goyal Dham, Bhopal had left home for work. He used to work as a laborer in Idgah Hills, Sanjay Nagar.

On the way he met Sonu, who lived in the locality. Both of them attacked him with knives. He was stabbed 5 times on his back and waist. Then escaped the spot away and when he was taken to Hamidia Hospital where he died during treatment.

The deceased Sonu had an old acquaintance with the sister of the accused. The girl had filed a case of atrocities against Sonu about one and a half years ago

Sub Inspector Pawan Sen said that the deceased Sonu had an old acquaintance with the sister of the accused. The girl had filed a case of atrocities against Sonu about one and a half years ago. For this reason there was enmity between the two.

Ghanshyam Raikwar, uncle of deceased Sonu, told that his nephew was the only son of the family. Used to work as a labourer. He is having an affair with the sister of the accused. For this reason, he along with his friend murdered him.

The sister of the accused said that Sonu used to harass her and used to say he could do anything. He kept harassing me. Once he even put a knife on her throat. She didn't know anything about this incident and didn't see anything.

After the sensational murder in broad daylight, the police have started searching for the accused. Two teams of the police station are raiding their possible hideouts. In the past the accused has been booked by the police.

14 killed, 20 injured in road accident

Bhopal: Furteen people were killed and 20 others injured when a pick-up vehicle overturned and fell into a deep valley in Madhya Pradesh's Dindori district in the wee hours of Thursday, a police official said.

The accident took place near Badjhar Ghat at around 1.30am when the vehicle's driver lost control over the wheels while negotiating a blind turn. The vehicle then fell into a 40-50 feet deep valley. Fourteen people died on the spot while 20 others were injured, the official said. The deceased included seven men, six women and a minor boy, as per the police.

"The victims were returning to Amhai Devri from Masurghugri village in the district's Shahpura block after taking part in a programme," Sub Divisional Officer of Police Mukesh Avindra said.

After being alerted, Dindori Collector Vikas Mishra and Superintendent of Police Akhil Patel rushed to help the victims. The injured persons were admitted to the Shahpura Community Health Centre for treatment.

Six of them were reported to be in serious condition, an official said, adding that two of them were referred to Jabalpur for treatment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident. "The road accident in Dindori, Madhya Pradesh is very sad. My condolences are with the bereaved families. I wish speedy recovery to all the injured persons. Under the supervision of the state government, the local administration is engaged in providing all possible assistance to the victims," the Prime Minister's Office said in a post on X.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced an assistance of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased. Yadav directed state cabinet minister Sampatiya Uikey to rush to Dindori for the relief work.

More abrupt changes in weather likely

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The weather of the state will change again in the next 48 hours, there is a possibility of thunderstorms and strong storms in the next 48 hours.

The Meteorological Department has issued a yellow alert in 6 districts of the state, apart from this, IMD has predicted rain in 8 districts and there is a possibility of rain and thunderstorms.

Meteorological Center Bhopal released the daily weather report today, while issuing the forecast in the report, it was said that at present a Western Disturbance is around Iran in the form of a cyclonic circulation. It is located between 3.1 kilometers and 9.6 kilometers above sea level. With southwesterly winds bringing moisture from the Arabian Sea, the IMD said another new western disturbance is likely to become active again from March 5.

A new Western Disturbance is going to become active from the night of February 29, it will affect many states, it will also affect some parts of Madhya Pradesh, the Meteorological Department said that the state's Morena, Bhind, Sheopur, Mandsaur, Neemuch, Shivpuri, There is a possibility of rain or thundershowers at isolated places in Gwalior and Datia districts.

The Meteorological Department said that there is a possibility of strong storm, lightning and thunder at some places in Morena, Bhind, Sheopur, Shivpuri, Gwalior and Datia districts, in view of which a yellow alert has been issued for these districts. Dry weather conditions will be witnessed in the state.

Giving information about the weather of the last 24 hours, IMD said that rain was recorded at some places in the districts of Indore and Jabalpur divisions, while the weather remained generally dry in the districts of the remaining divisions. While giving the temperature update, the Meteorological Department said that in Gwalior and Rewa the night temperature was below normal in the districts of the division, while it was above normal in the districts of Narmadapuram division, it was normal in the districts of the remaining division, the highest day temperature of 33.3 degrees Celsius was recorded in Talun of Barwani district and the lowest night temperature was recorded in Talun of Barwani district. Temperature of 8.2 degrees Celsius was recorded in Bijawar in Chhatarpur district.

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan with the High Commissioner of Republic of Singapore Simon Wong during a meeting at his residence in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Ujjain Smart City invites tenders for shops at Prasadam

PNS ■ UJJAIN

Ujjain Smart City has invited tender for shops in "Prasadam" located at the basement parking of Shri Mahakal Mahalok. The initiative aims to enhance visitor convenience.

Every day 1.5 to 2 lakh devotees from India and abroad are coming to Shree Mahakal Mahalok for darshan of Shree Mahakal.

Ujjain Smart City has been taking new initiatives every day to give the devotees a pleasant experience in their religious and spiritual journey.

The country's first healthy and hygiene food street Prasadam built in Shri Mahakal Mahalok has been developed by Ujjain Smart City Limited and FSSAI. Prasadam is a built up area of 900 square meters in which 17 shops have been constructed and arrangements have been made in between for the passengers to sit and eat comfortably. All the parameters under Eat Right Food have been taken special care of. Here visitors will be able to enjoy the famous local dishes and food of Malwa and Ujjain. The special thing about Prasadam will be a plastic free zone. Special care will be taken of cleanliness in Prasadam. All the people working here will take complete care of hygiene like wearing gloves, caps and aprons etc.

Food will be provided in Prasadam only in biodegradable packaging like Dona Pattal etc. Many types of cultural programs like live music, cultural fest and different types of workshops will also be organized here for pilgrims.

Individuals, institutions, partnership firms, companies or authorized representatives are invited to participate in this e-tender process of Prasadam. The facility to submit tenders is available on the e-portal of Madhya Pradesh, https://mptenders.gov.in.

People can also apply for more than one shop. Intending tenderers will be required to submit separate applications for each shop for which they wish to apply, ensuring clarity and specificity in their proposals.

This tender opportunity reflects Ujjain Smart City's commitment to promote accessibility, enhance visitor facilities and foster partnerships that contribute to the overall development of the sacred sites in the region.

For more information and detailed tender guidelines, interested may visit Madhya Pradesh e-Portal https://mptenders.gov.in.

CM condoles deaths

Bhopal: Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has expressed deep condolence over the untimely demise of 14 persons in a vehicle accident in Dindori. He has prayed to God to grant peace to the departed souls and strength to the family to bear the grief.

Yadav said that financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each will be provided to the families of those killed in the accident and Rs 1 lakh each to the injured. Instructions have been given to the district administration to ensure proper treatment to the injured. Yadav has said that Public Health Engineering Minister Sampatiya Uike has been sent to Dindori to ensure proper treatment of the injured.

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I, Agha Abdul Qayyum, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Place: Bhopal
Dated: March 1st, 2024

Syed Naved Alam
PUBLISHER
THE PIONEER

Keshav Pandey nominated as member of Medical Education Regulatory panel

PNS ■ GWALIOR

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has constituted state and division level authority committees of the medical education department. Commissioner of Medical Education Tarun Pithode has been appointed chairman of the State Authorization Committee. In the regulatory committee of Gwalior-Chambal Division, Dr Akshay Nigam, Dean of Medical College, Gwalior, has been nominated as the president and Dr. Sushma Trikha, HOD of the Medicine Department, has been nominated as the secretary. Apart from these, Keshav Pandey, President of Udbhav Cultural and Sports Institute, has been nominated as a member.

Udbhav Secretary Deepak Tomar, Sharad Dwivedi, Surendra Kushwaha, Manoj Aggarwal, Praveen Sharma, Santosh Vashishtha, Rajendra Mudgal and SK Sharma, Lokhitkari Trust officials Prakash Narayan Sharma, Ganesh Chaturvedi, Vijay Gupta, Usha Chaturvedi and others congratulated Pandey on his nomination.

AIIMS Bhopal will administer cervical cancer vaccine for free

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

AIIMS Bhopal, under the leadership of Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh, Executive Director, is proud to announce a significant initiative aimed at combating cervical cancer, a leading cause of mortality among women in India. Cervical cancer affects approximately 13 lakh women in India annually, claiming the lives of around 80,000 individuals, with Madhya Pradesh bearing a particularly high burden of cases. Recognizing the urgent need for preventive measures, AIIMS Bhopal is spearheading efforts to mitigate the impact of this disease within the community.

In milestone collaboration, Vishwanath Care Foundation has generously provided AIIMS Bhopal with 262 doses of cervical cancer prevention vaccines. These vaccines, valued at approximately ?4000 each, will be administered free of cost to 131 girls aged 9 to 14 years, on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Administered in two doses over a span of 6 months, this vaccination regimen significantly reduces the risk of cervical cancer development in young girls. By making this preventive measure accessible to vulnerable populations, AIIMS Bhopal and Vishwanath Care Foundation are taking proactive steps to safeguard the health and well-being of future generations.

Prof (Dr) Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal, remarked, "Our commitment to advancing public health in Madhya Pradesh remains unwavering. Through initiatives like these, we aim to empower communities with the tools and resources necessary to combat preventable diseases." The partnership between AIIMS Bhopal and Vishwanath Care Foundation underscores a shared dedication to improving healthcare access and outcomes for all residents of the region.

Indore commissioner Malsingh, I G Indore rural range Anurag Collector Dhar Priyank Mishra inspected various spots in connection with C M Mohan Yadav visit proposed on 2nd March in Dhar. Pioneer photo

Average 15% hike in Collector guideline rates likely

PNS ■ INDORE

District Evaluation Committee meeting was held under the chairmanship of Indore Collector Ashish Singh to decide the guidelines for government guideline rate of sale of land and immovable property in Indore district. Senior District Registrar Amresh Naidu, District Registrar Deepak Sharma and DIG Registration Balkrishna Maurya participated in this evaluation committee meeting.

Senior District Registrar Indore, Amresh Naidu, while talking to The Pioneer, said that the guidelines will be increased on 40% of the total immovable properties area in Indore district from April 1,2024 and there will be no increase in the guideline rate on 60% of the remaining immovable properties which are located in both urban and rural areas.

Senior District Registrar Amresh Naidu also informed that the average rate of increase in the guideline rate from April 1,2024 in Indore district will be 15%.

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Time to experience a blend of cultural grendeur, economic self-reliance

MOHAN YADAV

Ujjaini, a city of spiritual, cultural, religious and historical importance in Madhya Pradesh, is now creating a history of economic self-reliance. The Regional Industry Conclave Ujjain will provide employment opportunities to the youth. The state will take a new turn in industrial, technological and economic development.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India is scoring new records of development day by day. India is not only fulfilling its needs with its own resources but has also become an exporter of defense and scientific technology products. All this has been possible due to trust and cooperation of the society towards the efficient leadership, guidance and vision of the Prime Minister. All sections of the society trust Shri Modi ji's guarantee of development. It is now visible across the world.

A new chapter of development of Madhya Pradesh is starting from today. For the first time, "Regional Industry Conclave-2024" on the theme "Madhya Pradesh is the Future Ready State" is starting in Ujjain. Leading industrialists from India including the United States, Canada, Fiji, Germany, Gabon, Israel, Japan, South Korea, more than 30 representatives from Singapore and Zambia and more than 650 leading industrialists will participate. This two-day long conclave will have buyer and seller meet, business to business conference and five theme based sessions to lay the foundation of the golden future of Madhya Pradesh.

It is a coincidence that Vikramotsav is also being inaugurated along with the Regional Industry Conclave in the city of Baba Mahakal. The King Vikramaditya is a symbol of cultural development, bravery and glory of India. He was such a great king of unparalleled valour, justice and good governance who is remembered with reverence throughout the world. Vikramotsav, which will last for 40 days in Ujjain, will be organized with the grandeur, divinity and greatness of King Vikramaditya.

This event focuses on remembering the virtues of Vikramaditya and India's rise, renaissance and knowledge tradition during his era. The great King Vikramaditya started the Vikram era in 57 BC by conquering the Shakas from this Ujjaini. This Samvat is considered to be a universally accepted and universal proof of time calculation and time determination. In the golden age of independence, the Indian chronology system is being restored in the form of Vikramaditya Vedic Clock in Ujjain. In the Vikramaditya Vedic clock based on the Indian astronomical theory, the main bases are Muhurta, Ghati, Pal, Kasta, Prahar, day-night, Paksha, Ayana, Samvatsara, Divyavarsha, Manvantar, Yuga, Kalpa, Brahma. This has been propounded by wise sages. Vikramaditya Vedic clock also includes Vikram Panchang. It will also include Jyotirlingas, Navagraha, constellations, sunrise and sunset of India.

We all are familiar with the glorious past of Ujjaini. Ujjaini, one of the Saptpuris of India, is not only famous for the ashram of Maharishi Sandipani, the place of education of Lord Shri Krishna-Balram, the glory of King Vikramaditya, the knowledge of Bhartrihari, but has also been guiding the world in the field of knowledge and science. It is situated near the Tropic of Cancer. Ujjain has a world famous observatory. Vikram Trade Fair is being organized for the first time in the world famous Ujjaini.

Madhya Pradesh is moving forward on the path of progress under the leadership and guidance of the successful Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Our visionary Prime Minister believes that there comes a time in the development journey of a nation when all circumstances are in its favour. This is the time when that country makes itself strong for many centuries to come. It is an opportune time for India today. This time is unprecedented. This vision of the Prime Minister is such a positive path and guidance for building the future of India, following which the country will achieve the best position in the world and become a world leader.

Madhya Pradesh is moving forward guided by the vision of the Prime Minister and is working for promoting business activities along with infrastructure creation. Regarding the results of the Regional Industry Conclave, I, along with the eight and a half crore people of the state, expect that Madhya Pradesh will become the heart of development through continuous innovations and by fulfilling the resolve of a developed Madhya Pradesh. It will play an important role in building a developed India.

(The writer is Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh)

Chief Commissioner GST CP Goyal, Superintendent Ashish Raidhan and Superintendent Archaeology Manoj Kurmi during the Antiquity handing -over ceremony by Customs and CGST, Bhopal to ASI, Bhopal zone, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Retd IAS officer and writer Manoj Shrivastava in conversation with Rekha Kastwar during a talk show organised by Club Literati at Swami Vivekanand Library in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

400 metric tonne capacity bio CNG unit under construction

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Concrete efforts are being made by the Urban Development and Housing Department to realise Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's dream of Waste to Wealth in the state. Through these efforts, clean energy is being provided to the citizens. With this, special efforts are being made in the field of environmental protection in urban areas. A 400 metric tonne per day capacity bio-CNG unit is under construction in Adampur area of Bhopal, in which an investment of Rs 120 crore is being made. For this, a contract has been signed with Enviro Private Limited on PPP model. Efforts are being made to start operation of the unit soon under this contract. The wet waste generated in urban local bodies in the state is being managed in a better way. Madhya Pradesh is emerging as a model in this matter among other states of the country. For this, a policy decision has been taken to establish multi-purpose units for making bio gas and CNG from urban wet waste. Better work has been done in this direction in Indore.

Indore

In Indore city, units for the production of biogas from wet waste have been established, with a capacity of 20 tonnes per day from Choithram Sabzi Mandi and 15 tonnes per day from Kabitkhedi. An amount of about Rs 15 crore has been invested in these units on PPP mode. Indore Municipal Corporation has established Gobardhan Bio CNG plant with 550 metric tonne processing capacity in Devguradiya. About 17 thousand 500 kg of bio-CNG and 100 tonnes of high quality compost are being produced from this unit. This project has been prepared on PPP model basis with Environmental Infrastructure and Services Limited and German company Proveps.

Gwalior

In Gwalior Municipal Corporation area, efforts are being made to convert the dung obtained from 8 thousand cows into biogas through garbage processing plants. For this, a unit of 100 tonne per day capacity has been built near the cow shed. Along with this, another bio gas plant is being established in Gwalior itself. Its capacity has been proposed to be 435 tonnes per day.

Efforts in other urban local bodies

Efforts are being made towards implementation of small projects for making bio gas from wet waste under the standalone scheme in Morena, Burhanpur, Khandwa, Dewas, Ratlam and Ujjain on cluster basis. Their capacity will be 600 tonnes per day.

Instructions of Urban Development Minister

Urban Development and Housing Minister Shri Kailash Vijayvargiya has given instructions for better management of wet waste generated in urban municipal bodies and preparing proposals for clean energy production units. He said that the state government will provide all possible support to the units proposed by the urban bodies.

Anurag Thakur calls on SOG Federation for dialogue

New Delhi: Union Minister Anurag Thakur, Minister of Sports, Youth Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting, emphasized the importance of addressing concerns within the skill gaming industry during his address at the India National Economic Conclave, themed "Modi's Vision Vikshit Bharat, Challenges & Opportunities."

Hosted by Power Corridors & Interactive Forum on Indian Economy (IFIE), the event commenced on Thursday at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. In his keynote speech, Minister Thakur highlighted the government's commitment to Prime Minister Modi's vision of making India a developed nation and the third-largest economy globally.

He underscored the significance of 'Viksit Bharat' as a transformative agenda, urging stakeholders to actively participate in realizing this vision. He also emphasized that the entire sports and online gaming industry can contribute massively to India's economy.The conclave was attended by representatives from various sectors, including the online skill gaming industry. Gamescraft, Zupee, Bazee Games, Dream11, A23, Games 24x7, and LoCo Gaming were among the big online skill gaming companies that attended the event. However, the most significant development of the day was when Minister Thakur invited the Skillhub Online Games Federation to discuss concerns of the Online Skill Gaming Industry directly with him at his office. This welcome initiative aims to foster dialogue and collaboration between the government and industry stakeholders to address regulatory challenges and find effective solutions.

Furthermore, Minister Thakur emphasized the transformative journey of India under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, highlighting the nation's progress from a state of scams and economic decline to becoming a global powerhouse. He reiterated the government's commitment to transparency, good governance, and economic growth, reflecting on the significant strides made in the past decade.

Addressing concerns raised by the online skill gaming industry, Minister Thakur reaffirmed the government's willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and create a conducive regulatory framework that aligns with industry demands.

Jay Patel recalls conversation with Swami

New Delhi: Reflecting on a cherished encounter in Ahmedabad, following his return from the USA, Jay fondly recalls a conversation with Swamiji where he shared his focus on the technological aspect, particularly space exploration. Swamiji's response was subtle yet deeply insightful, sparking a profound discussion about extending the sacred legacy of revered gurus Param Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj, to the cosmos. This seemingly casual exchange took an extraordinary turn when Swamiji gestured towards a calendar adorned with the serene image of the moon, Bapa's divine countenance, and a celestial temple. He proposed the audacious idea of etching a message onto the lunar surface—a feat unparalleled in human history. Far from mere speculation, Swamiji expressed a resolute commitment to realizing this lofty aspiration in homage to his revered guru and for the noble cause of fostering global peace and harmony.In a historic moment that transcends borders and unites hearts, Intuitive Machines, under the leadership of founder Kam Ghaffarian and CEO Steve Altemus, has embarked on a mission of unprecedented significance. Collaborating with Kush Patel of Relative Dynamics Inc., the team has etched a timeless message of peace, unity, and harmony onto the lunar surface, embodying the teachings of Parampujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Param Pujya Mahant Swami Maharaj and with the guidance of Swamiji Bramvihari. Kush Patel's dedication and unwavering commitment were pivotal in achieving this remarkable feat.

Protest against Sandeshkhali incident

Bhopal: Demanding hanging of those accused of brutalizing women in Sandeshkhali (West Bengal) Women protested against the incident in the state capital.

Women of Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad and Sakal Hindu Samaj Matrishakti took out a rally from Roshanpura intersection to Raj Bhavan. Went to Governor House (Raj Bhavan) and submitted a memorandum to Governor Mangubhai Patel. Sunanda Raghuvanshi, who participated in the protest, said that 'We are demanding to take strict action against the exploitation and inhuman atrocities of women, so that the identity of women can be protected. The incident of women harassment in West Bengal is shameful to humanity.

Women took out a rally in protest against the Sandeshkhali incident and submitted a memorandum to the Governor.

Women of Sandeshkhali raised allegations of sexual assault against TMC leader. In Sandeshkhali of North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, women had made serious allegations of sexual harassment against TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh.

OFFICE OF The Nagar Parishad RAJNAGAR,distt. chhatarpur (MP)
notice-inviting Tender

No./ 3206/UADD/2024//E-tendering Rajnagar Dated – 27.02.2024

Online Percentage rate bids for the following works are invited from registered contractors and Firms of repute fulfilling registration criteria :

S. No. /Pkg/ Code	Name of Work	Uadd online tender no	Probable Amount of Contract (Rs. in rupees)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rupees)	Cost of Bid Document (Rs. in rupees)	Category of Contractor	Period of Completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Construction Work Of CC Road, RCC Drain And Parks At Diffrent Places ULB Rajnagar Under CM Infrastructure Development Scheme (4th Phase)	2024_UAD_339173_1	19202334/-	96011/-	15000/-	C Class & Above	06 Month

1.Interested bidders can view the detailed NIT in the website https://www.mptenders.gov.in.
2.The Bid Document can be purchased only online from 29-02-2024 10:30 AM to 13-03-2024 17:30 PM.
3. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

CHIEF MUNICIPAL OFFICER, MUNICIPAL COUNCIL RAJNAGAR

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Regional office -1st floor, Sai Baba complex, Near GDA building, Phool Bagh, Gwalior. 07512423126

DEMAND NOTICE

Notice U/S 13(2) Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002
60 DAYS NOTICE FOR MOVABLE AND IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Branch: Nai Sadak, Gwalior, Ph.: 9425705171, Cb17785@canarabank.com

Borrower's and Guarantor's Name & Address	Account No. & Outstanding Amount	Details of Mortgage Property
Borrower- M/S SHIVALIK AGRO FARM Add: Purani Chhawni, Near Dauji Ka Mandir, Gwalior (M.P.) Pin-474001 **Partners & Guarantor & Mortgagor- 1. Ashish Sharma S/o Devendra Sharma,** Add: Tyagi General Store, purani Chhawni, Gwalior (M.P.) Pin-474001 **2. Manoj Arya S/o Late Shri Kishori Lal Arya,** Add: Ho No.105 Line No.4 Gird Birla Nagar Gwalior (M.P.)	A/c No. **128000963015 And 182001055385** **₹ 2797291.56** + Interest and other expenses Less Recovery	**Property Owner-** Ashish Sharma S/o Shri Devendra Sharma, Manoj Arya S/o Shri Kishorilal Arya- Diverted Land At Survey No.217/1 Situated At Village Berja Patwari Halka No.118 Tehsil Morar Dist- Gwalior (M.P.), Area-8360 Sqr Mtr, Boundaries- East- Agriculture Land Survey No.215 West- Agriculture Land Survey No.218, North- property Other, South-road

The Borrower mentioned above has availed total credit facilities as mentioned above from CANARA BANK and the mentioned Guarantors provided guarantee and secured by way of mortgaged of abovementioned property. The borrower failed to adhere to terms and conditions of sanction. The account became irregular and classified as NPA as mentioned above as per RBI guidelines. The Bank intends toenforce the said property mortgaged by you and issued Demand Notice as mentioned above for recovery of outstanding amount as mentioned above with interest and expenses thereon under registered post with acknowledgment due which were not served to the borrowers and guarantors. Hence this publication issued. Hereby Borrower/Guarantor are called upon to pay the amount mentioned above with rate of interest (Contractual Rate), costs, charges etc., thereon within 60 Days from the date of publication failing which the undersigned will be constrained to initiate action against mortgaged property under section13(4) and the provision of said Act to realize our Bank's dues. Your attention is invited to provisions of the Sec (8) of Sec (13) of the act in respect of time available to you to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 29.02.2024 Place: Gwalior Authorised officer/CANARA BANK

कार्यालय अधीक्षक यंत्री ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा नर्मदापुरम् मण्डल नर्मदापुरम्
Office Email ID seresnarmda@mp.gov.in, Office Phone No. 07574-250166

क्र. 309/निविदा/ग्रा.या.से./2024 नर्मदापुरम दिनांक 26.02.2024

संक्षिप्त निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना क्र. 07/2023-24 (प्रथम आमंत्रण)

मप्र के राज्यपाल की ओर से जन विकास निर्माण कार्यो की ऑनलाईन मोहरबंद प्रतिशत दर पर निविदायें फार्म "ए" **(Appendix 2.10)** पर जिला बैतूल एवं नर्मदापुरम की म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग के केन्द्रीयकृत प्रणाली में समतुल्य/सक्षम श्रेणी ठेकेदारों **से तीन कवर पद्धति** में ग्रायांसे में प्रचलित एस.ओ.आर दिनांक 11.04.2022 से प्रभावशील दर अनुसूची (निविदा विज्ञप्ति जारी होने की दिनांक तक संशोधित) दर के आधार पर अधीक्षण यंत्री ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा नर्मदापुरम मंडल नर्मदापुरम के कार्यालय में ऑनलाईन आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	सिस्टम टेण्डर नं.	संभाग का नाम	कार्य का नाम	निविदा की अनुमानित लागत (रू. लाख में)
1	2	3	4	5
1	2024_RES_337372	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. कामोद में पुलिया निर्माण काशी के खेत के पास नाले पर	52.21
2	2024_RES_337373	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. टाहली में पुलिया निर्माण देवठान से मिर्जापुर रोड पर।	52.36
3	2024_RES_337374	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत देवगांव में तालाब निर्माण गन्नू के खेत के पास।	53.75
4	2024_RES_337375	नर्मदापुरम	ग्राम हथवास शोभापुर रोड से हरियाली कॉलोनी की ओर से टोला जाने वाली सड़क निर्माण हेतु (काबरा एग्रो के बाजू से)	55.43
5	2024_RES_337376	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत सावरी में सावरी से नांगदेव मंदिर जी. एस. बी. सड़क	56.88
6	2024_RES_337377	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत केकडियाकला में ग्रेवल मार्ग रोहनीखेडा से चिवल	57.44
7	2024_RES_337378	मुलताई	ग्रा.पं. पुसली में ढाने से पचधार एक बड़ी पुलिया मार्ग 2 किमी.	58.78
8	2024_RES_337379	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत परमंडल में परमंडल से बाडेगांव जी.एस.बी. सड़क	61.42
9	2024_RES_337380	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत बारव्ही में गुडी रोड भाबर ग्रेवल मार्ग 3.38 किमी	62.73
10	2024_RES_337381	मुलताई	माडवी में तालाब के पास से पांडुर्णा तक ग्रेवल मार्ग पुलिया संहित	64.16
11	2024_RES_337382	नर्मदापुरम	पांजराकला मुख्यमार्ग से ग्राम मेहराघाट पम्प हाउस मार्ग निर्माण	68.38
12	2024_RES_337383	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. रंभा में सुदुर मार्ग रंभा से झागरी पानी मार्ग 3 पुलिया सहित 2 किमी.	68.61
13	2024_RES_337384	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. बेला में हाईवे भूरापानी जोड से डोल बेला मार्ग ल. 3 कि.मी.	69.44
14	2024_RES_337385	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. बटली में ग्रेवल माग्र चीरा से ढाबन ढाना 2.5 कि.मी.	74.96
15	2024_RES_337386	नर्मदापुरम	ग्राम तिनस्या से बेरखेड़ी पहुँच मार्ग निर्माण कार्य	76.18
16	2024_RES_337387	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत एनस में एनस से जौलखेड़ा जी.एस.बी. सड़क	77.55
17	2024_RES_337389	नर्मदापुरम	ग्राम बांद्राभान में पिचिंग निर्माण कार्य	77.59
18	2024_RES_337390	नर्मदापुरम	ग्राम शिवपुर, ग्राम शिवपुर से बायपास मार्ग 1600 मीटर	78.67
19	2024_RES_337391	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत बिरोली झिल्पा में कोंढर से चिचंड़ा जी.एम.बी. निर्माण	78.96
20	2024_RES_337392	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. कासमार खण्डी में ग्रेवल मार्ग ग्राम पडार से माथनी की ओर	80.16
21	2024_RES_337393	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत रिधोरा में रिधोरा से मयावाड़ी जी. एस. बी. सड़क	80.78
22	2024_RES_337394	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. गरूवा में ग्रेवल मार्ग गुरूवा से महुढाना सांगवानी जोड़	81.07
23	2024_RES_337395	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत निम्बोटी में मल्हारा से पवारढाना जी.एस.बी. सड़क	84.26
24	2024_RES_337396	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत चिल्लाटी में चिचंड़ा से चिल्हाटी व्याहा रेल्वे स्टेशन जी.एस.बी. सड़क का निर्माण	87.25
25	2024_RES_337397	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत बासिंदा में ग्रेवल मार्ग बासिंदा सुखाढाना से बडाकोल	92.97
26	2024_RES_337398	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत चांदू में सुदुर सडक गाडागोहान से उमडा मार्ग पर	97.17
27	2024_RES_337399	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. कुण्डमबकाजन में ग्रेवल मार्ग रामप्रसाद के घर से मेन रोड हाईस्कूल दनोरा 4 किमी	97.13
28	2024_RES_337401	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. चांदू में सुदुर सडक निर्माण ग्राम कोकाढाना से जागो के खेत तक	100.77
29	2024_RES_337402	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत डोडाजाम में ग्रेवल मार्ग बिजोरी से उतरी जोड़	102.4
30	2024_RES_337403	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत बटकी में ग्रेवल मार्ग 3 कि.मी. रतन के खेत से चावडीपाट मेल मार्ग	108.00
31	2024_RES_337404	बैतूल	ग्राम पंचायत बासिंदा में ग्रेवल मार्ग पुलिया सहित भोदलाखेड़ा की ओर	109.31
32	2024_RES_337405	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. चिल्लौर में ग्रेवल मार्ग भवईपुर मेघनाथढाना से चिल्लौर	110.12
33	2024_RES_337406	नर्मदापुरम	पिपरिया बेरसेवा इंटरनेशनल स्कूल बनवाडी रोड को जोड़ने वाला गोहा निर्माण	125.65
34	2024_RES_337407	बैतूल	ग्रा.पं. केकडियाकला में ग्रेवल मार्ग केकडिया से चिवल तक 4 कि.मी.	146.99
35	2024_RES_337408	नर्मदापुरम	ग्राम गुढ़ला में दुकान नर्मदाजी की ओर सड़क, नाली व घाट निर्माण कार्य।	147.78
36	2024_RES_337409	नर्मदापुरम	आरी से बगलौन से मजलपुर से बीकोर पहुंच मार्ग निर्माण कार्य	148.07
37	2024_RES_337410	मुलताई	ग्राम पंचायत बिरोली झिल्पा में परकोलेशन बैंक का निर्माण	153.96
38	2024_RES_337412	नर्मदापुरम	बाबई रजौन पी.एम. सड़क जंक्शन से रजौन मार्ग निर्माण	231.84
			योग -	3321.87

उपरोक्तानुसार निर्माण कार्य की निविदा आमंत्रण की निम्नानुसार तिथियॉ निर्धारित की जाती है :-

क्र	विवरण	तिथि	समय
1	निविदा ऑनलाईन प्रकाशित होने के तिथि	01.03.2024	17:30
2	निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाईन क्रय करने की प्रारंभिक तिथि	01.03.2024	17:30
3	ऑनलाईन बिड प्रस्तुत करने की प्रारंभिक तिथि	01.03.2024	17:30
4	ऑनलाईन बिड प्रस्तुत करने की अंतिम तिथि	09.03.2024	13:30
5	ऑनलाईन निविदा खुलने की तिथि	11.03.2024	13:30

निविदा की शेष शर्ते एवं प्रपत्र (Tender Document) वेबसाईट http://mptenders.gov.in पर ऑनलाईन प्रकाशित एवं डाउनलोड किये जा सकेंगे। निविदा से संबंधित समस्त आवश्यक संशोधन उपरोक्त वेबसाईट पर ही दर्ज किए जाऐंगे। पृथक से समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जाएगा।

अधीक्षण यंत्री
ग्रामीण यांत्रिकी सेवा
नर्मदापुरम् मण्डल नर्मदापुरम

G-25122/23

Modi to launch ₹22,200 crore projects in West Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in West Bengal on March 1 and 2 to launch multiple development projects worth over Rs 22,200 crore, a visit which becomes politically significant as well as it comes amid the BJP's sharp attack on the state government over the Sandeshkhali issue.

An official statement said that on March 2 Modi will launch many development projects, worth over nearly Rs 1.83 lakh-crore, from Bihar for across the country in his first visit to the state after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar quit the opposition bloc and joined hands with the BJP.

While the projects to be launched from Bihar are meant for regions spread across the country, a sizeable part of them will be based in the state. The prime minister will inaugurate and lay foundation of numerous development projects worth over Rs 35,700 core in Jharkhand too on March 1, the statement added.

In Bengal, he will attend public programmes in Arambagh on March 1 and Krishnanagar on March 2, while in Bihar he will visit Aurangabad and Begusarai, it said.

His visit to Bengal comes amid rising political heat in the state after many women in Sandeshkhali accused ruling Trinamool Congress strongman Shajahan Sheikh and other members of the party of land grab and sexual assault, an issue seized by the BJP to corner its rival.

Giving details of the project, the PMO said Modi will inaugurate the Sindri fertiliser plant of the Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Ltd (HURL) in Jharkhand.

The statement said the PM will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of several rail projects worth more than Rs 17,600 crore in Jharkhand. Another key project to be inaugurated in the state is the Unit 1 (660 MW) of North Karanpura Super Thermal Power Project (STPP) in Chatra.

In Arambagh in West Bengal, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of developmental projects related to sectors like rail, ports, oil pipeline, LPG supply and wastewater treatment. He will inaugurate Indian Oil's 518-km Haldia-Barauni crude oil pipeline developed at a cost of about Rs 2,790 crore. This pipeline passes through Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal and will supply crude oil to Barauni, Bongaigaon and Guwahati refineries in a safe, cost-efficient, and environment-friendly manner, the statement said.

He will also launch multiple projects for strengthening of infrastructure at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata worth about Rs 1000 crore. In Krishnanagar, the statement said he will lay the foundation stone of Raghunathpur Thermal Power Station phase II (2x660 MW) located at Raghunathpur in Purulia district.

This coal based thermal power project of the Damodar Valley Corporation employs highly-efficient super critical technology. The new plant will be a step towards strengthening the energy security of the country, it said.

Among other projects, he will inaugurate the flue gas desulfurization (FGD) system of the unit 7 & 8 of the Mejia thermal power station developed at a cost of about Rs 650 crore and the road project for four laning of Farakka-Raiganj section of NH-12 developed at a cost of about Rs 1,986 crore.

In Bihar's Aurangabad, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for several national highway projects worth more than Rs 18,100 crores.

He will also lay the foundation stone of the six-lane bridge across Ganga that will be developed as a part of the Patna ring road. It will be one of the longest river bridges in the country and help decongest traffic through the capital city and provide faster and better connectivity between the north and south regions of the state.

He will also inaugurate 12 projects under Namami Gange in Bihar that have been developed at a cost of about Rs 2,190 crore.

In Begusarai in Bihar, the projects to be launched will witness a significant boost to the energy sector in the country as he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for multiple oil and gas projects worth about Rs 1.48 lakh-crore. The projects are spread across the country in various states like Bihar, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka along with KG Basin.

The oil and gas sector projects worth about Rs 14,000 crore will be taken up in Bihar. This includes foundation stone laying of the expansion of the Barauni refinery with project cost of more than Rs 11,400 crore.

He will also inaugurate the HURL's fertiliser plant in Barauni which has been developed at a cost of over Rs 9,500 crore. The prime minister will launch several railway projects worth about Rs 3,917 crore as well, the statement said.

Deployment of 3.4 lakh CAPFs for polls to begin from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first phase of deployment of more than 3.4 lakh central armed police forces (CAPFs) for the upcoming general elections in the country and Assembly polls in few States will begin from Friday. According to the plan, about 2,000 companies will be mobilised as part of the pre-poll deployment in sensitive and hyper-sensitive constituencies beginning March 1. About 1.5 lakh personnel will move through roads and rail as part of this mobilisation, sources in the government said.

The first CAPF units will start reaching the states affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), apart from West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir, later this week, they said. The second phase of inducting the poll companies will be initiated from March 7, followed by some last units moving in their designated locations in the second and third week of March, they said.

The commanding officers of these units have been issued the movement orders and directed to familiarise their troops about the areas they are going for polls duty apart from the general instructions issued by the Election Commission, a senior CAPF officer said.

In the first phase, companies deployed for law and order duties in various states and those in reserve like training exercises are being sent. Some units deployed for regular duties like border guarding and security will be withdrawn and deployed during the later phases, the sources said. The troops of these CAPF companies are drawn from the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF and SSB.

As many as 3,400 companies of the CAPFs and state police forces have been requisitioned by the EC for ensuring free and fair polls during the upcoming general elections and assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim. The poll panel is expected to announce the phases and poll dates in March. It has also directed the railway board to ensure "smooth and hassle-free" train movement for the troops and officers of these security forces.

India trying for discharge of 20 nationals working as Russian Army support staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said it is trying its best for an "early discharge" of around 20 Indian nationals who are working as support staff to the Russian army.

"It is our understanding that there are 20-odd people (Indians) who have gone their to work as support staff or as helpers with the Russian army," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing here.

"We are trying our level best for their early discharge," he added.

Jaiswal said the "20-odd people" contacted the Indian embassy in Moscow.

According to media reports, many Indians recruited as security helpers in the Russian military, have been forced to

even fight with Russian soldiers in certain areas along Russia's border with Ukraine.

"We are trying our best to get them out. We are trying to get them discharged and support them," Jaiswal said.

"They are at various places and our embassy is in touch with the Russian authorities," he added.

Jaiswal said India is in regular touch with Russian authorities, both in New Delhi and Moscow, to ensure the return of the Indians. "We told people not to venture into the war zone or get caught into situations which are difficult. We are deeply committed for the welfare of all our people," he said.

On Monday, the MEA said several Indians who worked as support staff to the Russian army were discharged following India's demand.

It said India remains committed, as a matter of "top priority", to actively pursuing with the Russian authorities all the relevant cases of Indian nationals for an early discharge from the Russian army.

On the safety of the Indians going to Israel, Jaiswal said nobody has gone to that country after the provision of a recent inter-governmental framework for mobility of people.

Civilian team reaches Maldives to replace military staff: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said its first civilian team of technical experts has reached the Maldives to replace the military personnel operating an advanced light helicopter in the island nation.

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu had set March 10 as the deadline for the withdrawal of the first group of Indian military personnel from his country.

"The first team of technical personnel to operate the advanced light helicopter has reached the Maldives. It will replace the existing personnel who were operating this platform," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

Following a second meeting of the high-level core group that was set up to address the issue of withdrawal of the Indian military personnel, the Maldivian foreign ministry had said India will replace all its military personnel in two phases by May 10.

The second meeting of the core group took place in Delhi on February 2.

The two sides decided to set up the core group following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Muizzu on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai in December last year.

At present, around 80 Indian military personnel are in the Maldives, primarily to operate two helicopters and an aircraft that have carried out hundreds of medical evacuations and humanitarian missions.

The ties between the two countries came under some strain since Muizzu came to power in November last year.

Widely seen as a pro-China leader, Muizzu maintained after assuming charge as the president that he will keep his election promise of evicting Indian military personnel from his country.

Muizzu, 45, defeated India-friendly incumbent Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the presidential runoff held in September last year.

Ranjan Dimri / The Pioneer

Telangana BRS MP Ramulu joins BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BRS MP from Telangana Pothuganti Ramulu joined the BJP here on Thursday, quitting his party ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Along with Ramulu, his son Bharat Prasad and several other BRS leaders from Telangana, also joined the BJP in the presence of senior party leaders, including Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and party in-charge for Telangana Tarun Chugh.

BJP national vice president D K Aruna and the party's OBC Morcha chief K Laxman were also present at the BJP headquarters on the occasion.

Welcoming the politicians to the BJP fold, Laxman called Ramulu, a BRS MP from Nagarkurnool Lok Sabha constituency, the "most dedicated Dalit leader" in Telangana. "I welcome Ramulu to the BJP on behalf of the party chief J P Nadda. I also welcome other leaders of the BRS joining the BJP along with him. All these leaders have quit BRS and joined the BJP," Chugh told at a press conference at the party headquarters here.

He said the leaders joined the BJP as they were impressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies and work that his government has done for the development of the country.

"From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kutch to Guwahati, every day some or the other big leaders, social workers, doctors, engineers, who have dedicated their lives for the society, are joining the BJP," Chugh added. Chandrasekhar said, "I am happy and grateful that they have joined Team Modi."

"In Prime Minister Modi's efforts, vision and 'sankalp' (resolve) to create a viksit bharat (developed India), we all will work together as party workers and leaders to deliver on that goal of our prime minister," the MeitY MoS added.

PM SHRI schools: Centre concerned over five States not signing MoU

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has expressed strong concerns about five States not signing MoUs with the Education Ministry for PM SHRI schools and Punjab not implementing it despite continuing to take funds under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, sources said on Thursday.

Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi have not yet signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Education, while 30 states and union territories (UTs) have done so.

The scheme targets to upgrade 14,500 schools and is expected to benefit 1.8 million students. It also aims to ensure these schools serve as model institutes and encapsulate the

spirit of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The government has already selected 6,448 schools from 28 states and UTs for the upgrade in the first round.

"Despite taking funds from Centre for Samagra Shiksha Scheme, the refusal of five States/UTs, namely Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi to sign MOUs for PM SHRI schools reflects a troubling pattern. Punjab, after initially signing the MoU, stopped the implementation of PM SHRI," government officials said.

"It is a clear politicization by the States/UTs, where they accept funds under Samagra Shiksha but resist signing an MoU for PM SHRI," the source added.

Asked about if the Centre can halt funding under Samgra Shiksha scheme for these states, the source said "nothing can be ruled out". The Samagra Shiksha Scheme is the largest Central government scheme for school education for universalisation of education.

The scheme also supports the states in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009; and Strengthening and up-gradation of State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and other agencies for teacher training. In the financial year 2023-23, the Centre set aside Rs 37,453 out of Rs 68,804 allocated for the school education in its budget.

Work is done anonymously in CBI: Sood

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CBI Director Praveen Sood on Thursday said the Central probe agency is a place where work needs to be done anonymously and silently while staying away from seeking recognition through external platforms,.

Addressing investiture ceremony of sub-inspectors at the CBI Academy in Ghaziabad, Sood said young officers must strive to do their work by employing out-of-the-box thinking and looking for achieving better results through approaching their tasks differently. "This will do away with the mundane work by replacing the same with smart work which will yield better results," he said.

The officers have been inducted after a 38-week training in different disciplines and specialisations. Among the 30 passouts, Sood awarded medals and trophies as well.

Jumrani Prince Omprakash was awarded 'DP Kohli Award for Best All-Round SI Trainee', Vicky Raj got 'DCBI Trophy for Indoor Studies' and 'Trophy for Cyber Crime Investigation. While Sudhanshu was selected for the 'John Lobo Trophy for Best Outdoor' and Ankit Tanwar received the 'CBI Academy Trophy for Dedication and Exemplary Conduct'.

The CBI chief told the new recruits that the agency offers multiple specialisations in investigations of various crimes like anti-corruption, cyber crime, economic offences, special crime and they should work in a manner that they are equipped with specialization of their choice in the next four-five years.

"Noting that most of the officers are from technical background, he underlined that the knowledge and learning acquired during academics and during the training, will come handy as the officers embark on real part of their learning process when they assume charge," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

The director said that as CBI officers, the new inductees are going to be the brand ambassadors of the organization as their conduct and work will always be up for scrutiny by the court and public which will reflect upon the agency.

"Calling upon the officers to maintain good conduct throughout the service, the director emphasized that CBI is a place where work needs to be done anonymously and silently, staying away from seeking recognition through external platforms," the statement said.

Indian scientists develop wound dressing material with banana fibers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have developed an innovative cost-effective wound dressing material using banana fibers, a byproduct of the extensive banana farming industry in the country.

Led by Prof. Devasish Chowdhury and Prof. (Retd) Rajlakshmi Devi, along with research scholar Mridusmita Barman, the team has repurposed banana pseudostems, typically discarded as agricultural waste, to create an eco-friendly wound dressing solution. By combining banana fibers with biopolymers such as chitosan and guar gum, the researchers engineered a versatile patch with superior mechanical strength and antioxidant properties.

Additionally, the patch is loaded with an extract from the Vitex negundo L. plant, showcasing its potential as an effective drug release system and antibacterial agent in vitro. Importantly, all components used in manufacturing the dressing material are natural and readily available locally, ensuring a straightforward, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly production process.

The development of this sustainable wound dressing material not only addresses the need for effective wound care solutions but also presents a novel application for banana plants, potentially benefiting farmers and reducing environmental impact.

Places of Worship Act must be repealed, says historian

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Historian Vikram Sampath has demanded that the Places of Worship (special provisions) Act, 1991 must be repealed in the light of the findings by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) in the Gyan Vapi Mosque on the order of the court.

The historian has also stated that the law enacted by parliament in the backdrop of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and against the Babri Mosque is draconian for the Hindus to reclaim their places of worship in the country.

In his book, 'Waiting for Shiva; Unearthing of the Truth of Gyan Vapi', Sampath writes: "Draconian laws like the Places of Worship Act, 1991, precent Hindus from even seeking peaceful, legal reclaim of what has been forcibly snatched away from them. Which justice-abiding democracy in the world would have made such provisions?"

The Places of Worship (Special Provisons) Act, 1991 was enacted by the Congress-led Government at the Centre which was headed by former Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao.

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government at the Centre has left the 1991 law untouched even while the splotlight from within the saffron outfits is now shifting to Kashi and Mathura after the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Sampath also made reference to Turkey converting historic churches into mosques to argue for a revisit of the 1991 law which calls for status quo in matters of religious places.

Air India fined ₹30 lakh for not providing wheelchair to elderly passenger who died

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 30 lakhs on Air India after an incident of non-availability of a wheelchair to an 80-year-old passenger who collapsed and died after walking from the aircraft to the airport terminal at Mumbai. The incident occurred on February 12, when a passenger requested a wheelchair upon arrival in Mumbai. While his wife was already using a wheelchair, Air India allegedly asked the elderly passenger to wait due to "heavy demand" for wheelchairs. The passenger reportedly opted to walk instead, ultimately collapsing and passing away during the immigration process.

"However, the airline failed to show compliance of the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) as the airline did not provide any wheelchair to the elderly passenger," the regulator said. "Further, Air India did not inform about any action taken by the airline against the erring employee(s) and the airline also failed to submit any corrective actions taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in the future." "Accordingly, a financial penalty of Rs. 30 lakh has been imposed on Air India as per Aircraft Rules, 1937 for violating the provisions of the aforementioned CAR," the DGCA said.

The regulator further said that an advisory had also been issued to all airlines to ensure that an adequate number of wheelchairs are available for passengers who require assistance during embarking or disembarking from the aircraft during their journey.

Issuing an official statement, the airline had said that the passenger's wife had been provided a wheelchair and staff had asked him to wait while they arranged another one. But he instead chose to walk to the terminal with his wife.

Temple Bill passed in Karnataka Assembly again after its defeat in Council

PTI ■ BENGALURU

A bill that sought to collect funds from temples with over Rs 10 lakh annual income, which was defeated by the opposition BJP-JD(S) combine in the legislative council last week, was taken up for reconsideration and passed by the legislative assembly once again on Thursday.

The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill, 2024, will now be sent to the Governor directly for his assent, following which it will become law.

The bill was defeated by a voice vote in the upper house, where the opposition has a majority, on February 23, after it was passed by the assembly on February 21. Piloting the bill in the assembly on Thursday, Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy said: "the bill was passed by the assembly earlier, but was defeated in the council, I request the assembly to once gain pass the bill.

"Speaker U T Khader then put the bill for vote and it was passed by a voice vote. 'Muzrai' refers to grants made by the government for religious and charitable purposes as well as the upkeep of religious and charitable institutions, according to the Karnataka Government Gazetteer. The department of Religious and Charitable Endowments is, hence, popularly known as the Muzrai department. It administers about 35,000 Hindu religious institutions which receive grants from the Government of Karnataka Opposition BJP and JD(S) were not present in the assembly when the bill was passed on Thursday, as they had staged a walkout earlier in the day, demanding the Congress government's resignation for its "inaction" in nabbing the culprits who allegedly shouted the 'Pakistan zindabad' slogans, after Congress member Syed Naseer Hussain was declared elected to the Rajya Sabha.

The Muzrai department's amendment bill had created a huge controversy, as it angered the opposition, especially the BJP, which has claimed that the ruling Congress was trying to fill its "empty coffers" with temple money.

The Congress then sought to turn the tables on the saffron party, pointing out that it had effected an amendment in 2011 to seek funds from high-income Hindu shrines.

The bill among other things, proposes to collect five per cent from temples whose gross income is between Rs 10 lakh and less than Rs one crore and 10 per cent from temples whose income is above Rs one crore, to be put into a Common Pool Fund, administered by 'Rajya Dharmika Parishath', which is proposed to be used for Archakas' (priests) welfare and upkeep of 'C' category temples (state controlled) whose annual income is less than Rs five lakh.

The act that was earlier amended in 2011 had made way for five per cent of the net income of temples with annual income between Rs five lakh and Rs 10 lakh and 10 per cent of the net income of temples with annual income of over Rs 10 lakh to come into the fund.

Protection bund coming up along IB for safety of border farmers in JK: IG BSF

PTI ■ SAMBA/JAMMU

Encouraging border residents to cultivate their land ahead of border fence, a top BSF officer on Thursday said the Home Ministry has approved a plan for the construction of a protection bund along the International Border for the safety of farmers and it will be completed within next five years.

Inspector General of Border Security Force (BSF), Jammu frontier, D K Boora was speaking at a function organised at Chamliyal village near the zero line in Samba district to hand over a cheque of Rs 3 lakh to a villager who helped in the recovery of a grounded Pakistani drone in January.

Samba Senior Superintendent of Police Vinay Kumar and other prominent people attended the function.

"We want the farmers to tend their land ahead of the border fence as the BSF is there for your protection. We will provide you with all the assistance and if you are concerned that you won't be able to cultivate your produce, we will not allow such a situation to develop in the first place," the BSF officer said.

Boora, however, said in case the farmers on the Indian side are not able to reap their produce, the BSF will not allow the other side to cultivate as well.

He said the home ministry has already approved a proposal for the construction of a protection bund along the IB for the safety of the farmers working in their fields ahead of the border fence.

"The protection bund will be completed within the next four to five years, depending on the availability of the funds. After the completion of the protection bund, you can carry out your work easily without any threat (from the enemy)," he said.

Boora said there are rules in place while moving ahead of the border fence and "we need to follow those rules. BSF is deployed on the borders in J-K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and all these areas are protected by border fences and the rules are the same everywhere."

Boora said the central government has announced many schemes for the development of border villages and the impact of these schemes will be visible on the ground in the next five years.

Highlighting the importance of border residents in safeguarding the country, border security is incomplete without the cooperation of the border population.

"We are proud of our border population in Jammu region who are nationalist by core," he said, adding that in neighbouring Punjab, drug smuggling from across the border is a major challenge.

"The drugs are coming by drones and other means in Punjab because there are some elements who are promoting the business. When our own people are involved in such criminal activities, it becomes difficult (for the law enforcing agencies to tackle the situation)," he said, adding that when the border residents are nationalists, the entire focus of the border guarding forces remains on the front rather than looking behind.

Highlighting the cooperation of the border residents in securing the borders of the country, he said Dass had done a very good job for which he was rewarded.

SSP Sharma said the police headquarters had announced rewards to anyone sharing information regarding anti-national activities and Dass was handed over the cheque of Rs 3 lakh for helping in the recovery of enemy drones in January this year.

He said there is also a reward of Rs 5 lakh for anyone who locates the trans-border tunnel, used by anti-national elements to tranship terrorists, explosives, and contraband consignments into Jammu and Kashmir from across the border.

"People have always been supportive in providing information to the forces. The rewards were announced just to glorify, certify and celebrate such people," he said.

Dass thanked the BSF and the police for rewarding him and said it is the duty of every individual to expose the enemy conspiracies and safeguard the country alongside the forces.

"I was doing spray in my agriculture land on January 17 when I found a drone lying on the ground. I immediately informed BSF who later gave me Rs 50,000," he said, thanking police for the reward of Rs three lakhs.

Caste census report submitted amid objection by Lingayats, Vokkaligas

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The much awaited Socio-Economic and Education Survey report, generally known as the 'caste census', was submitted to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah by Chairman of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes K Jayaprakash Hegde on Thursday.

The report comes amid objections to its findings by certain sections of society and even within the ruling Congress. "We don't know what is in the report.

The government has received the report, it will be placed before the cabinet, and will be discussed and decided there," Siddaramaiah told reporters after receiving it. People of Karnataka's two dominant communities — Vokkaliga and Lingayat — have expressed reservations about the survey, calling it unscientific, and have demanded that it be rejected and a fresh survey conducted. According to some analysts, successive governments have been shying away from releasing the report as the findings of the survey are allegedly contrary to the "traditional perception" of the numerical strength of various castes in Karnataka, especially the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, making it a politically sticky issue. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress President, is from the Vokkaliga community.

He was a signatory, along with a couple of other ministers, to a memorandum submitted by the community to the chief minister, requesting him to reject the report along with the data.

The All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha, the apex body of Veerashaiva-Lingayats, has also expressed its disapproval over the survey, calling it unscientific, and demanded that a fresh survey be conducted.

The Lingayat body is headed by veteran Congress leader and MLA Shamanuru Shivashankarappa. Moreover, several Lingayat ministers and MLAs too have raised objections to the survey and its findings, putting the Congress government in a tough spot.

In 2015, the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government of 2013-2018 had commissioned the 'caste census' in the state at an estimated cost of Rs 170 crore. The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes under its then chairperson H Kantharaju was tasked with preparing the Socio-Economic and Education Survey Report.

The survey work was completed in 2018, towards the end of Siddaramaiah's first tenure as chief minister, but the report was not accepted or made public.

The commission under its current Chairman Jayaprakash Hegde was to submit the report in November last year. However, as some more time was sought, the government had extended his tenure for the submission of the report.

With pressure mounting on the Siddaramaiah government from certain sections to make the survey findings public, following the release of the Bihar government's caste survey report a few months ago, the chief minister had earlier said that a decision would be taken once he receives the report.

But the survey was mired in controversies even before the report was submitted to the government, amid deep divisions within the ruling Congress, stiff opposition by the two dominant communities against its acceptance, and the survey's original 'work-sheet' copy going missing. As the two politically influential communities of Vokkaligas and the Lingayats have expressed strong disapproval of the survey, the caste census report seems to be a political hot potato for the government.

It may set the stage for a confrontation, given that Dalits and OBCs among others are demanding for it to be made public. Political parties in the state have indulged in a blame game over successive governments not acce

10 customs stations in NE digitised to expedite clearance process in cross border trade

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday virtually inaugurated Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) at 10 land customs stations (LCS) in the northeastern region to expedite the clearance process in cross-border trade.

The process was till now undertaken in the manual mode, which took more time.

"EDI implementation is poised to empower members of the trade community and all stakeholders in the customs clearance process through reduction in dwell-time and costs associated with cross-border trade," North East Commissioner of Customs (Preventive) M Rahman told reporters here.

Onboarding these LCSes into the department's electronic ecosystem compliments the government's Act East Policy, committed towards optimisation of market linkages and development in the region, he added.

Most of these LCSes had been notified from 1948 onwards to facilitate trade and movement of people across the international borders, the official said.

"Out of the 10 LCSes, nine are along the Bangladesh border, namely Baghmara, Bholaganj, Borsora, Dawki, Ghasuapara and Shella Bazar in Meghalaya; Golakganj and Karimganj Steamerghat in Assam, and Khowaighat in Tripura, which collectively covers around 1,640 km," Rahman said.

Besides, one LCS, Zokhawthar in Mizoram along the India-Myanmar border, covering roughly 900 km, has also been digitised, he added.

"The export basket at these LCSes comprises mainly of minerals and agricultural produce, while the import basket comprises processed food items, cement and plastic products," Rahman said.

The linking of these LCSes onto the EDI platform will enable a more secure and seamless ecosystem for paperless transactions of documents and enable online payments of duty and refund, he added.

Divisiveness is in Congress DNA: BJP MP

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Bharatiya Janata Party MP Tejasvi Surya on Thursday claimed divisiveness is "inherent in the Congress' DNA," amid allegations of pro-Pakistan slogans being raised in the corridors of the Karnataka legislature complex.

Addressing a press conference in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, the Lok Sabha member from Bengaluru South alleged that Congress is the original party "responsible for dividing the country."

He also said that BJP president JP Nadda will address a rally of the 'Namo Maha Yuva Sammelan' organised in Nagpur on March 4. More than one lakh youth from Maharashtra will participate in the congregation, the BJP's Yuva Morcha president said.

On Tuesday, supporters of Congress leader Syed Naseer Hussain allegedly shouted "Pakistan zindabad" slogans after his Rajya Sabha election victory at the Karnataka Vidhana Soudha, which houses the legislature and state secretariat.

Asked about it, Surya alleged that Congress is the original party "responsible for dividing the country."

"Divisiveness is inherent in the DNA of the Congress party. It would be a mistake to hope for anything else other than this from the Congress," he claimed.

He said south India will be the BJP's fortress in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The BJP will win all the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka and get a historic mandate in Telangana and Tamil Nadu, Surya said.

He said the BJP will also have Lok Sabha members from Kerala and the party's vote percentage will increase in Andhra Pradesh.

The country's youth made a big contribution in the BJP's win in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls, he said, adding that most of them were first-time voters who wanted a change.

The youth empowered and energised BJP's win. The development made by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been youth-centric in the last 10 years, Surya said.

MATHURA SHAHI IDGAH CASE

Suit seeking removal of mosque barred by law of limitation: HC told

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The counsel for the Shahi Idgah managing committee on Thursday argued in the Allahabad High Court that the suit seeking "removal" of the mosque adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple in Mathura is barred by the law of limitation.

The limitation law sets a specific time period to seek a legal remedy.

Taslima Aziz Ahmadi, appearing for the Muslim side, told the court that the two parties in the case entered into a compromise on October 12, 1968, which was confirmed in a civil suit decided in 1974.

The limitation to challenge a compromise is three years but the suit was filed in 2020 and thus the present suit is barred by limitation law, she told the court.

The high court was also informed that the suit has been filed for possession after the removal of the Shahi Idgah structure as well as for "restoration of the temple and for a permanent injunction".

The prayer in the suit shows the structure of the mosque is there and the committee of management is in possession of the same, Ahmadi said.

"In this way, a question/dispute has been raised on Waqf property and thus provisions of Waqf Act will apply and in such it is the Waqf tribunal who has jurisdiction to hear the matter and not a civil court," she said.

After hearing the argument, the High Court fixed March 13 as the next date of hearing the plea regarding the maintainability of the suit seeking "removal" of the Shahi Idgah mosque, which the Hindu side claims has been built on 13.37-acre land of Katra Keshav Deo temple.

In May last year, the high court transferred to itself all 15 cases related to the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Masjid dispute.

If I am arrested, crores of Marathas will go on hunger strike: Jarange

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Quota activist Manoj Jarange on Thursday claimed that if he is arrested, crores of Marathas will stage a hunger strike.

Talking to reporters at a private hospital in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, where he is currently undergoing treatment after ending his fast at his native Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna three days back, Jarange said the Maratha community is fighting for its rights.

The government still has a chance to implement the "sage soyre" (blood relatives of Kunbi Marathas) draft notification. The community will appreciate it, he said.

The draft notification was issued in January for issuing certificates to eligible Kunbi (OBC) Marathas.

Jarange has reiterated his opposition to the 10 per cent quota granted to the Maratha community recently by the Maharashtra legislature under a special category.

The activist has been under fire for using intemperate language against Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday as he alleged the BJP leader was trying to kill him.

Assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar on Tuesday directed the state government to set up a special investigation team (SIT) and conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the Jarange's remarks against Fadnavis.

"The Maratha community and I will not give up the demand of quota for the relatives (of Marathas who have Kunbi certificates), even if I am put in jail. It seems the report (of SIT) is about to get ready before the inquiry. No matter wherever they keep me, I am ready to go anywhere," he said.

"I am not greedy even for a single rupee. Let them arrest me. The route by which I will be taken to jail, they (government) will find crores of Maratha community members sitting on hunger strike along the route," Jarange added.

The activist claimed nearly 1.5 crore persons have got reservation till now as about 57 lakh records of 'Kunbis' have been found so far, and that he has been demanding reservation for the remaining people.

"They (those in the government) expect that we should talk to them respectfully. When our people are getting arrested without any fault, why should we? What was the reason that curfew was imposed in Antarwali Sarati?" he asked.

Jarange said the 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community is acceptable if facilities for the SEBC (Social Economic Backward Class) are included in it.

"This 10 per cent reservation should be included in the OBC quota," he added.

On the Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi's proposal that Jarange contest the upcoming Lok Sabha poll from Jalna, the activist said he respects the VBA chief as he has supported their agitation since the beginning.

"But contesting elections is not my way. I will keep working for my community," he added.

Upmanship

Both TMC and BJP rush forth to claim credit for fugitive Sheikh Shahjahan's arrest after 55 days

The arrest of Trinamool Congress strongman Sheikh Shahjahan, who was wanted for the Sandeshkhali infamy involving the charges of gang rape and landgrab, is likely to further muddy political waters in West Bengal and intensify the bitter war of words between the Mamata Banerjee-led State Government and the BJP. On the run for 55 days following a mob attack on Enforcement Directorate officers during a raid at his house on January 5 in a ration scam case, Sheikh was finally taken into custody within 24 hours of the Calcutta High Court stating that the CBI, ED or State police could arrest him. However, the delayed development has opened a can of worms in political circles. While the ruling TMC maintains that Sheikh was apprehended now since the High Court had cleared the ambiguity on a stay on his arrest, the Opposition BJP claims that the accused was being shielded by the police and his arrest was "scripted" because of the "intense pressure brought on the Government by us". As the drama unfolds in West Bengal, one thing remains clear: Sheikh's arrest has ignited a firestorm, with both the main players vying for supremacy in the State's ever-evolving political milieu. While the development has sent shockwaves across the State, the political manoeuvrings have understandably quickened as both the TMC and BJP seek to capitalise on the situation, especially since the Lok Sabha elections are very much in sight, and Sandeshkhali and its aftermath could be a game changer for both parties. For the TMC, it presents an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to combating corruption and upholding the rule of law. The party has wasted no time in touting the arrest as a testament to its dedication to clean governance and accountability.

On the other hand, the BJP has seized upon the arrest as evidence of its growing influence in West Bengal's political arena. The party sees it as vindication of its anti-corruption stance and validation of its claims of rampant corruption within the TMC-led Government. However, under the surface lies a deeper struggle for supremacy in the State's tumultuous political arena. The fierce battle for electoral dominance has only intensified with Sheikh's arrest, with each party seeking to leverage the situation to bolster its poll prospects. However, amid the political grandstanding, it is important not to lose sight of the broader implications of the fugitive strongman's arrest. Beyond being a mere pawn in the State's political underbelly, Sheikh's case underscores the pervasive issue of corruption that continues to plague governance in West Bengal. His arrest serves as a stark reminder of the challenges facing the State in its quest for clean and transparent governance, irrespective of political affiliations. Amid the cacophony of competing claims and counterclaims, the true test lies in the ability of Bengal's political class to address the underlying issues of corruption and criminalisation of politics, which continue to undermine the State's progress and development.

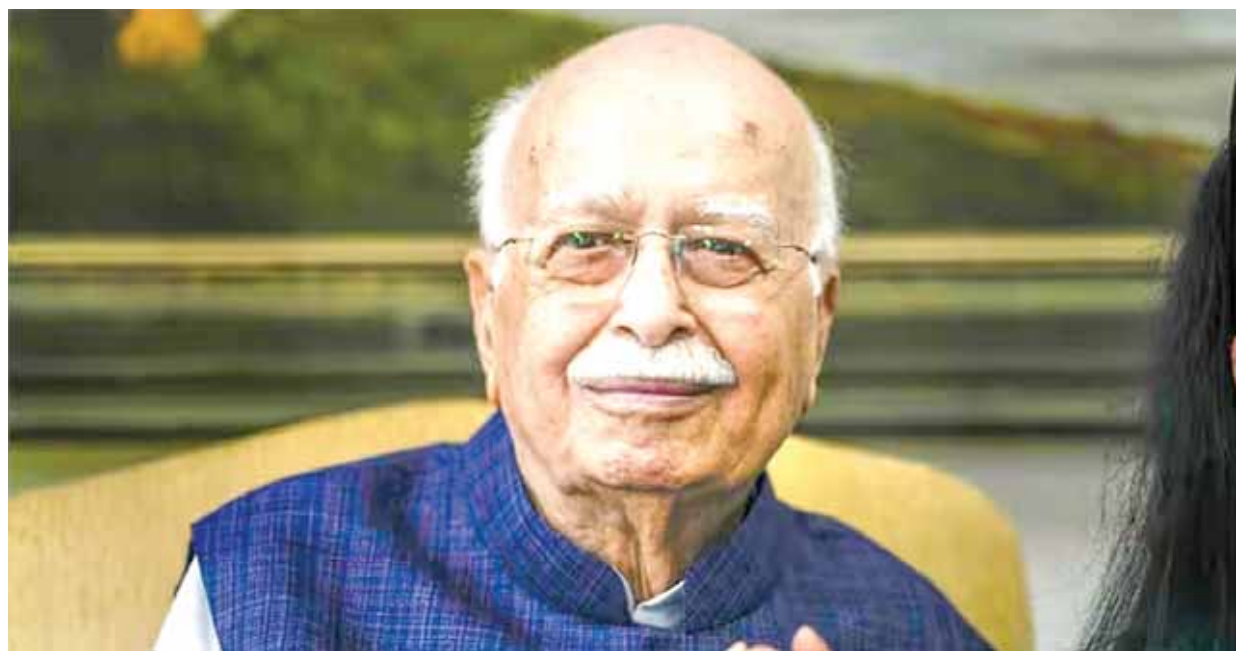
PICTALK

A local artiste with long mustache poses for photos, in Bikaner PTI

LK Advani: A Ratna of Bharat

PRAFULL **GORADIA**

From attacking pseudo-secularism to pan-India moderation, it was as if Advani had given up his yesterday for the sake of the BJP's and the country's tomorrow



The biggest sacrifice Lal Krishna Advani made was to distance himself from the culmination of the Babri edifice at Ayodhya. Understandably, the Hindu public was disappointed; Advani's followers were heartbroken. Many of them went to the extent of alleging that he had let down the cause.For a conscientious leader, this was like cutting his nose and throwing it away. During the spring of 1991, Advani told me that it was Ayodhya that had made him a national figure. Until his leading the Rathyatra from Somnath to hopefully reach the birthplace of Shri Ramchandra—which was intercepted by Lalu Prasad Yadav at Samastipur in 1990—Advani was merely a senior party apparatchik.

It was his taking up the cause of the Ramjanmabhoomi that catapulted him to the gallery of national figures.When, therefore, Advani spoke to the press saying that December 6, 1992, was the darkest day of his life, he knew what he was throwing away. Soon thereafter, accompanied by friends, I called on him at the Irrigation Department's guest house near Jhansi, where he along with a few other senior BJP leaders had been kept under house arrest, following the demolition of the Babri edifice on that fateful day of December 6 that year. Advani told me that after seeing my letter published in the Pioneer, wherein I had in rejoinder to his remark written that "There have been darker days", he knew I had come to protest against his statement. It took him quite a while before he came around to believing my denial. He was right to the extent that I continued to hold the view (which I of course, still do) that the Babri edifice was a baggage of dacoity and had to be confiscated.

Advani then went on to explain: Whatever my explanation, I had to realise that party unity, regardless of anything else, was our uppermost duty. Atalji (Vajpayee) was our seniormost leader, and no party member should differ with him publicly on such a matter of policy. Should party members flagrantly violate their party's commitment made to the Supreme Court, that the edifice would be safe? Its future was for the court to decide. First, who then would ever again have faith in the word of a BJP leader?

Secondly, the opposing parties would go to town saying that the BJP was a party ridden with factions. Its top leader does not believe in masjid-hunting while one of its chief ministers practices the exact opposite.

Thirdly, an upright party is a united party, and we are known as a party with a difference. Becoming a faction-ridden party is not the difference between our aspirations. Fourthly, discipline has been our hallmark. Did the karsevaks at Ayodhya behave in a disciplined way, by going against the leadership and demolishing a place of worship of another community?

In April 1998, I became the party's Member of the Rajya Sabha through a bye-election. Among members generally, it seemed that interest in Ayodhya had waned. The case lay in court without active hearings. When I thought of the vanished edifice, I did wonder whether at that rate the Congress with a clever leader might just snatch the issue out of the BJP's hands and use it for electoral benefit. How popular the issue was kept becoming clear over and over again.

> 'IF THERE IS TO BE ANOTHER LEADER IN THE FUTURE, HE SHOULD HAVE THE WIDE ACCEPTANCE AND LOYALTY THAT ATALJI COMMANDED. THAT IS WHAT A DIVERSE COUNTRY LIKE OURS NEEDS', ADVANI OPINED

Meanwhile, many more pilgrims continued to visit the holy city.One day in July 1999, Advani called me to his room in Parliament House for a chat over toast and coffee. He opened up by showering praise on Vajpayee's tactful leadership of a coalition of so many parties with so many different political ideologies ranging from the Shiv Sena on the one hand to the DMK on the other.

There was no doubt that Vajpayee was running a complex government very successfully. Advani was full of praise for his leadership. If there is to be another leader in the future, he should have the wide acceptance and loyalty that Atalji commanded. That is what a diverse country like ours needs, Advani opined.

All of us in our party should give up small differences and think of large policy issues. Automatically, such a leader and his party would attract votes as well as an ongoing following.

He went on to say that India's future lies in the integrity of politics.Rather than recommending any shift towards moderation or 'soft secularism', Advani stressed the unity of thought, policy and leadership. By implication, he was asking for a united party under a broadminded leader. He was repeatedly emphatic about parties rather than the party.

Even dynastic parties are not free of factions and breakups, and it is the BJP alone that has admirably avoided going that way. It seemed as though he wanted to give up all he had stood for earlier and espouse a new cause, not only for the BJP but for the sake of the country.

As I knew him, I can state that this was no mere shift but a sacrifice. From his eloquence of attacking pseudo-secularism to pan-India moderation, it was as if Advani had given up his yesterday for the sake of the BJP's and the country's tomorrow. It could not have been easy for him, but that is what he is.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

Empowering grassroots innovation for progress

BIJU **DHARAMAPALAN**

Science and technology stand as the twin engines propelling our nation towards progress, but they must address the needs of society

Science and technology serve as the driving force propelling our nation forward, akin to the wheels of progress. However, the efficacy of these wheels determines the speed of our journey. Since independence, Bharat has experienced significant advancement, largely attributable to strides in scientific innovation undertaken by our scientific community. This progress is evident across various sectors crucial to human life, including agriculture, food, healthcare, infrastructure, and communication. Yet, the translation of scientific innovations into societal benefits often encounters challenges, primarily due to a disconnect between scientific research and grassroots needs.

While many innovations originate from peer-reviewed publications, often authored by Western scientists, they may lack relevance to local contexts. Consequently, solutions to everyday challenges remain elusive, despite remarkable achievements in space and technology. This reliance on external sources creates a bottleneck in developing disruptive discoveries tailored to local needs. Historically, groundbreaking innovations were not solely the domain of trained scientists but also arose from the keen observations and creativity of untrained naturalists.

Preceding the advent of modern science, human civilizations thrived for millennia, leveraging state-of-the-art technologies of their time. Many contemporary innovations find their roots in ancient technologies, underscoring the contributions of our forebears.

However, the contemporary scientific community often falls short in generating truly novel ideas, frequently resorting to replicating concepts from Western literature. This approach results in innovations primarily catering to industrial needs rather than addressing societal issues. The critical distinction between invention and utility underscores the necessity for originality and societal relevance in innovation.

Grassroots innovators emerge as pivotal agents in bridging this gap, offering solutions rooted in local contexts and addressing specific community needs. These individuals possess an intimate understanding of their environment, enabling them to develop tailored interventions that resonate with the realities of daily life. Their localized approach ensures solutions are not only relevant but also sustainable, addressing root causes rather than superficial symptoms.

By empowering grassroots innovators, communities can leverage their inherent knowledge, creativity, and resourcefulness to solve their challenges. This bottom-up approach fosters ownership and collective responsibility, driving more effective and sustainable solutions. Initiatives such as those facilitated by the National Innovation Foundation-India exemplify the government's commitment to promoting grassroots innovation and integrating it into the mainstream.

While India has made significant strides in fields like space science, vaccine development, and agriculture, persisting societal challenges necessitate a collaborative approach between scientific institutions and grassroots innovators.

Celebrating National Science Day under the theme 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat' provides an opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of grassroots innovators. Their selfless dedication to improving their communities exemplifies the spirit of innovation and underscores the potential for transformative change when science aligns with grassroots needs.

In conclusion, the journey of progress propelled by science and technology requires not only scientific excellence but also a deep-rooted connection to societal needs.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

14 BANK HOLIDAYS IN MARCH

Sir — People who are planning to visit banks in the first week of March and thereafter will have to plan very well in advance. Locker operation for the marriage will have to gear up early. The banks across the country will remain closed for 14 days on various counts due to holidays and the end of the financial year at the fag end of March. According to the bank calendar released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the coming weeks of March and April will witness over seven days of holidays.

These include all Sundays, the second and fourth Saturdays, public holidays, and regional holidays. In the state of Maharashtra, the bank is closed on March 8 as well for Mahasivarathiri, March 25, Monday for Holi second day, and March 29 for Friday. People with pending work related to the banks also need to note that there will be only two days when the banks will continue their services between March 27 and April 4 will remain shut as it will be the last day of the financial year (FY 24). In April, the banks will be shut down to close their yearly accounts. April 2 will be a holiday on account of Good Friday while the services will be affected further.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | *Mumbai*

RARE DISEASES

Sir — Autoimmune disorders, inherited cancers and congenital conditions are not uncommon. Across the globe, some three fifty million people live with about seven thousand of what are called "rare diseases". A disease is "rare" when it affects fewer than one in two thousand people. More than seventy per cent of these diseases begin in childhood. Insufficient knowledge on the part of the doctor and lack of awareness among the patients render these rare diseases challenging. That more than seventy-five per cent of rare diseases are of genetic origin, and fifty per cent are present from birth further complicates things.

Besides misdiagnosis leading to inadequate treatment, crippling pain and discomfort are unpleasant companions of the patients with rare diseases. 'Rare Diseases Day' on February 29 aims at achieving "true equity" for those afflicted by rare conditions. Equity in health access, treatment, and social opportunities is crucial for patients with rare diseases. In India, one in twenty suffers from rare diseases. All this said, the biggest difficulty that arises in the management of rare diseases is their treatment, which takes a heavy financial toll on the patients as well as their relatives. Moreover, treatment is long and tiring, so patience and equanimity among all stakeholders can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | *Akola*

THE HUMAN COST OF UKRAINE WAR

Sir — Ukrainian President Zelensky told reporters on February 22, in the second year of the Russian invasion, that Ukraine had lost more than 31 thousand soldiers in the war. The lives of civilians would have been even greater than this. On Monday evening, French President Emmanuel Macron indicated that he was willing to send his troops to Ukraine. But immediately after his statement, almost all EU and NATO member countries distanced themselves from Macron's suggestion. All refused to deploy their troops in Ukraine. Whereas just two days ago, US President Joe Biden's views were being read on his social media platform 'X' in which he wrote, "When Putin ordered his tanks to enter Ukraine, he thought the world would bow down.

To provide "so that the Ukrainian troops have the necessary weapons and ammunition to defend themselves". The Second World War also ended only when all the Allies entered the field together, otherwise before that the German victory campaign was uninterrupted. Was moving forward. According to the latest data, Ukraine is losing more and more of its territory to Russia. Kyiv is facing a shortage of military equipment as well as trained combat soldiers. In such a situation, if Ukraine has to save its existence, then NATO's soldiers will have to be fielded in the region to fight Russian invaders.

Jang Bahadur Singh | *Jamshedpur*

Reservations rendered ineffective

The struggle for reservation is carried forward by many castes. A few individuals whip the sentiments of the concerned people and involve them in a struggle by which the individuals gain fame and benefits. Reservations are sought to get admission to educational institutions and to gain jobs in government institutions. But everyone talking about reservations should, first of all, analyse how many vacancies in government institutions are filled and how many have been recruited permanently on reservations in the last 10 years.

The recruitment in government offices is filled on casual, contingent, daily wage, contract or outsourced basis. Under these systems, reservations have no relevance. Recruitment is carried on only for the top layer posts where reservations have their place. PSUs were recruiting employees under the rules of reservation. Now they are either closed or facing closure. Moreover among the unemployed lot, more than 40% are educated youth. In this background fighting for employment opportunities is all the more important. The present struggles resemble searching for fuel sticks in a desert land. Leaders and followers should think before embarking upon a struggle. Struggling for reservations is struggling for non-existing jobs.

AG Rajmohan | *Anantapur*

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FIRST COLUMN

DOMESTIC POLITICS AMID GLOBAL AGENDA

India advocates for a balanced voice in shaping a multilateral world order

KUMARDEEP **BANERJEE**

As elections draw closer, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been frequenting India's south more than championing the causes of the global south across available diplomatic platforms. One reason is that his party seems to have a weaker presence down south. Earlier, as a strategic choice, PM Modi chose to inaugurate a Hindu temple in a Muslim country during his last foreign trip in the current tenure. Even as he did so, statements regarding continuity of policies and outlook were subtly delivered when PM Modi confidently told his audience that he already has invitations from several foreign governments for the middle and latter part of 2024, indicating confidence in his potential third term.

A third term for Modi would have wider ramifications for a whole bunch of issues, not to mention foreign policy, given India's rising economic clout and confidence, making it a significant player in global affairs. India is expected to be the third-largest economy after the US and China in PM Modi's next term, which, besides putting a couple of stars on the shoulder, will also mean a heavy lift of responsibilities.

One of the significant achievements for Mr. Modi, particularly during his second term, has been uplifting the India-US relationship and situating it in the Indo-Pacific context. While the India-US bilateral is by far at its strongest ever in history, the two nations have managed to work through several plurilateral platforms, the most important being the QUAD (a grouping of the US, India, Australia, and Japan), each having significant stakes and interests in the Indo-Pacific, while also wary of the dragon in the region, never stopping short of using any overt or covert means to push its assertive agenda.

While some of the world's finest diplomats, policymakers, and think tanks were deliberating on global issues last week, EAM Jaishankar found some time to speak to a whole bunch of policy strategists on the relevance of QUAD and the way forward. EAM highlighted the changing nature of India's foreign policy outlook over the last decade when he mentioned "remarkable changes in India's bilateral relationships with its three Quad partners. With the US, we put behind ideological hesitations of history. With Japan, we gave longstanding goodwill much more practical shape. And with Australia, we actually made a real beginning in seriousness." Even though there hasn't been a QUAD leaders summit since May last year, backroom meetings between foreign ministers from the member countries to discuss issues of regional and global importance haven't taken a backseat. Given the political compulsions, it might be difficult for India to host the QUAD leaders summit this year, as it will be too close to the US elections by the time the new Indian government is in place. However, the significant targets India aims to achieve through the QUAD group, as highlighted by EAM, namely, "it reflects the growth of a multipolar order. Two, it is a post-alliance and post-Cold War thinking. Three, it is against spheres of influence. Four, it expresses the democratizing of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral, approach. And five, it is a statement that in this day and age, others cannot have a veto on our choices," shall remain in focus. It is this message of continuity of policies that the Indian government is highlighting to the domestic and international audience at a time when instability is the norm for most, including powerful nations in the world.

India has effectively managed the QUAD as a non-military arrangement, unlike NATO, with shared interests of all members in the region. Mr. Jaishankar highlighted in his address, "Among Quad countries, there is a growing comfort in working with each other given the strong consensus we have in our strategic outlooks. India's bilateral partnerships with each of these three Quad countries have also transformed in recent years." The message is clear: India will continue to push for a multilateral world order with a fair share of voice on international forums.

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

Protests stress need for climate-smart agriculture

KOTA **SRIRAJ**

There is a pressing need for proactive measures aimed at protecting both farmer livelihoods and national food security

The ongoing farmer protests that began on February 13th have already claimed five lives and resulted in Delhi bearing the brunt of economic losses to the tune of 300 crores as nearly five lakh traders who did regular business in Delhi from adjoining states suspended their businesses given the unrest. Since 2020, farmer protests have unfortunately assumed a regular frequency not only in Delhi and Punjab but across India. According to consultancy firm Verisk Maplecroft estimates, India has accounted for the biggest global share of farmer protests in the past three years.

The farmer protests 2.0 again highlight the fault lines in India's agricultural viability and this time the farmers are demanding conclusive government action. The protesting farmers want a firm minimum support price (MSP) that is backed by a legal guarantee for all crops. Another demand is to implement the recommendations of the MS Swaminathan committee on agriculture which will enable increasing MSP to 50 per cent above the weighted average cost of production. Other demands include better sugar cane prices and a pension of Rs 10,000 a month for every farmer above the age of 60.

The government is engaged in feverish negotiations with the farmer unions to break the impasse. However, a breakthrough achieved may be short-lived, as the government would have only successfully attended to the symptoms and not to the problem itself. India's agri sector contributes only 15 per cent to the GDP but engages 58 per cent workforce. This lopsided proportion is made worse by the fact that 85 per cent of the farmers operate in less than five acres of land half of which in many parts of India may be dry and barren. This translates to low yields, low earnings and high debt and when combined with increasing challenges of climate change on agriculture, the problem assumes a much larger and ominous proportion.

Climate change whether it is unseasonal rain, hailstorms, floods, or drought, India's agri-sector has seen it all. The lingering uncertainty due to environmental issues keeps the farmers on their toes leading to income insecurity and mounting debt. An example is the casualty in the current protests of a marginal farmer whose 8-acre agricultural land had 8 lacs of debt on it, making it virtually impossible for the farmer to pay it off and continue with another crop. Climate change-driven issues such as these have made the farmers demand an MSP law to act as a safety net for the time, effort and risk they invest in farming.

> BEST FARMING PRACTICES NEED TO BE PROMOTED ACROSS THE SECTOR TO ENSURE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

The perennial shortage of water resources is the first symptom of climate change's impact on the agri sector. According to Rainfed Atlas, it is estimated that between 52% and 55% of the farming community have no means of irrigation and are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. But due to climate change temperatures are spiralling and rainfall has become more erratic, with longer dry spells resulting in droughts and shorter periods of more intense rainfall causing floods. This results in a domino effect whereby crop yield is adversely impacted while high Co2 levels cause low nutritional value of crops. This translates to low marketability of the produce therefore causing financial distress and rising debt for the farmers.

The impact of climate change on the agri-sector and the sluggish government response in managing its fallout has come as a double whammy for the farmer community. The lack of robust insulation measures that seek to protect the sector from the vagaries of climate extremities is now having a telling impact on productivity. The cereal crop productivity of most cereals is slated to decrease due to an increase in temperature and CO2 levels, and the decrease in water availability. According to estimates, there will be a projected loss of 10-40% in crop production by 2100 if no climate change adaptation measures are taken. A one-degree Celsius increase in temperature may reduce yields of major food crops by 3-7%. Given these troubling projections, the government must extricate the agri-sector from the clutches of climate change. This alone can ensure the best interests of farmers, safeguard national food security and protect livelihoods.

An audit of the agri-sector at the micro-level is essential to identify and remove processes that are detrimental to natural resources. This will ensure weeding out of inefficient water-intensive practices and allow optimal use of the precious resource. Similarly, best farming practices need to be promoted across the sector to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation in the sector. For example, the raised-bed planting of wheat in the Indo-Gangetic plains enables 20-25% savings in irrigation water and also helps in reduced herbicide use. Measures such as these combined with water accounting methodologies can build long-term sustainability, efficiency and resilience of the agri-sector besides immensely benefiting the marginal farmers.

The government must also initiate climate-smart agriculture strategies which aim at adapting agriculture to climate change. This can be done by implementing technologies that help farmers plan crops by considering the climate specifics of their area through easy-to-use apps on their smartphones. This can be done by prioritising botanical research to develop crop species that are more tolerant to water deficiencies and extreme temperatures. Additionally, ecologists can evolve effective soil management methods that reduce the depletion of topsoil, promote carbon sequestration, and reduce chemical application. Advanced farm irrigation technologies can also help proper water saturation levels in the soil, prevent water flooding, and help avoid top-soil runoff.

The government must focus on specially developed software solutions for agriculture that can help in real-time monitoring of the crops and allow farmers to accurately calculate the required inputs, which reduces costs in the short term and protects nature in the long term. Technology-assisted cover crops for instance can not only help prevent soil erosion, and promote water retention and nitrogen fixation but also serve as organic manure for fodder. Smart agri-software can help farmers implement differentiated applications of fertilisers which can help decrease soil pollution and increase crop nutrient levels. The software can also have in-built weather-related tools that provide timely alerts of extremities, elaborate weather forecasts to schedule farming events and enable prediction of general climate change tendencies by analysing historical weather data.

Currently, the agri-sector problems and farmer grievances are dealt with on a reactive basis; this is evident in the form of chronic farmer agitations that come back every year. The government must realise that a lasting solution is only possible if actual problems, including the impact of climate change on agriculture, are addressed with the participation of all stakeholders of the sector. The collaboration of farmers, policymakers, environmentalists, botanical scientists and technology experts can help chalk out long-term strategies and solutions and ensure a robust agri-sector that is resilient against climate change onslaughts. Farmer protests are a symptom of climate change's impact on agriculture. Protecting the sector from adverse impacts will automatically ensure farmer well-being and prosperity.

(The author is a policy analyst. The views are personal)

New India: *Roti, kapda, makaan, vigyan* and *aatmasamman*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has prioritised inclusive growth and sustainable development, empowering every section of society

ANIL **AGRAWAL**

The Modi government's comprehensive strategy for tackling fundamental aspects of development such as food security (Roti), clothing (Kapda), housing (Makaan), science and technology (Vigyan), and self-respect (Aatmasamman) stands as a remarkable example of effective policymaking. These initiatives have not only brought about socio-economic transformation but have also significantly contributed to the nation's advancement. The Modi government has aimed to uplift and empower every section of society. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India has prioritised inclusive growth and sustainable development. Through numerous flagship schemes, significant strides have been made towards building a stronger, more resilient India.

As we reflect on the journey of India's transformation over the past decade, it becomes evident that the Roti, Kapda, Makaan, Vigyan, and Aatmasamman initiatives have played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's socio-economic landscape. Moving forward, it is imperative to build upon these foundations and continue striving towards a more prosperous and equitable future for all. Through revolutionary initiatives, the government has aimed to enhance agricultural productivity and bolster the textile industry, thereby encouraging research in science and technology, stimulating economic growth, and creating employment opportunities for Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

A pivotal aspect of the Modi government's initiatives has been the empowerment of Bharat, ensuring self-reliance and dignity for every citizen. This vision extends to promoting social justice, gender equality, and skill development, encapsulating the ethos of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat." Initiatives aimed at uplifting marginalised communities exemplify the government's commitment to fostering an inclusive society.

Roti: Transforming Food Security in India

The Modi government has taken a multifaceted approach to food security, encompassing macro and micro levels. Initiatives like PMGKY and ONORC have bolstered vulnerable groups' food access, provided relief during crises, and built resilience. Prioritising nutrition through POSHAN Abhiyaan demonstrates a commitment to tackling deficiencies.

Kapda: Enhancing Textiles and Khadi

The remarkable growth in Khadi's turnover, from Rs. 31,154 crores in 2013–14 to Rs. 1,34,630 crores in 2022–23, underscores its economic revitalization. This surge in demand has propelled production and employment opportunities, reflecting the government's commitment to nurturing indigenous industries. India's textile exports have increased from $12 billion in 2010–11 to $39.2 billion in 2017–18. The textile industry in India is currently a $75 billion industry and is expected to grow to $300 billion by 2025–26.

Makaan: Revolutionising Housing

In a nation as vast and diverse as India, characterized by historical socioeconomic disparities, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) has emerged as a transformative force. This initiative transcends mere housing provision; it catalyses profound change. Through Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), expansive coverage underscores the unwavering dedication of the Modi government and the vision of converting mere structures into cherished homes and dreams into tangible realities, marking a testament to the government's commitment to the well-being and prosperity of its citizens nationwide. The "Housing for All" scheme represents a multifaceted approach to address the critical issue of housing in India. The Light House Projects (LHPs) stand as a pioneering initiative under the visionary Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC-India), spearheaded by the Government of India since its launch in 2019.

Vigyan: Advancing the Space Sector

India has emerged as a prominent space power in the world, with significant global implications. Chandrayaan-3 hailed as India's lunar triumph, reaffirms India's technological prowess and solidifies its position as a leader in space exploration, paving the way for future lunar endeavours, including human exploration. Aditya-L1, a state-of-the-art coronagraphy spacecraft meticulously crafted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), embarked on a pioneering mission to explore the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere, particularly focusing on the corona and chromosphere.

Aatmasamman: Empowering Bharat

Once an individual has secured all the necessities for a comfortable life, the concept of "Aatmasamman," or self-respect. Beyond material needs, self-respect becomes the cornerstone of emotional and psychological well-being, encompassing a profound sense of dignity, worth, and integrity. Stand Up India Scheme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme, Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) have been supportive of empowering numerous sections of society.

(The author is a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, views are personal)

Israeli forces fire on crowd waiting for aid, 100 killed

Palestinian deaths in Gaza pass 30k

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli troops fired on a crowd of Palestinians waiting for aid in Gaza City on Thursday, witnesses said. More than 100 people were killed, bringing the death toll since the start of the Israel-Hamas war to more than 30,000, according to health officials. Hospital officials initially reported an Israeli strike on the crowd, but witnesses later said Israeli troops opened fire as people pulled flour and canned goods off of trucks.

Israeli officials acknowledged that troops opened fire, saying they did so after the crowd approached in a threatening way. The officials insisted on anonymity to give details about what happened, after the military said in a statement that "dozens were killed and injured from pushing, trampling and being run over by the trucks". Gaza City and the surrounding areas in the enclave's north were the first targets of Israel's air, sea and ground offensive, launched in response to Hamas' Oct 7 attack. The area has suffered widespread devastation and has been largely isolated during the conflict. Trucks carrying food reached northern Gaza this week, the first major aid delivery to the area in a month, officials said Wednesday.

Palestinians living in Lebanon hold placards and their national flags during a protest to demand a ceasefire and support Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, in front of the headquarters of U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut, Lebanon on Thursday. *AP/PTI*

Aid groups say it has become nearly impossible to deliver humanitarian assistance in most of Gaza because of the difficulty of coordinating with the Israeli military, ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order, with crowds of desperate people overwhelming aid convoys. The UN says a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians face starvation; around 80% have fled their homes.

Kamel Abu Nahel, who was being treated for a gunshot wound at Shifa Hospital, said he and others went to the distribution point in the middle of the night because they heard there would be a delivery of food. "We've been eating animal feed for two months," he said.

He said Israeli troops opened fire on the crowd, causing it to scatter, with some people hiding under cars. After the shooting stopped, people went back to the trucks, and the soldiers opened fire again. He was shot in the leg and fell over, and then a truck ran over his leg as it sped off, he said.

UK descending into mob rule: Sunak

Critics accuse him of undermining protest rights

AP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Britain is descending into "mob rule" because of the pressures created by protests against the Israel-Hamas war — words criticised as alarmist by a human rights group. Sunak told a meeting of police leaders on Wednesday that there was a "pattern of increasingly violent and intimidatory behaviour" that's intended to "shout down free debate and stop elected representatives doing their job".

"There is a growing consensus that mob rule is replacing democratic rule," he said, according to a transcript released by the prime minister's office. "And we've got to collectively, all of us, change that urgently."

Tom Southerden of Amnesty International said Thursday that talk of mob rule "wildly exaggerates the issue and risks delegitimising the rights of peaceful protest." Mass protests have drawn hundreds of thousands of people to central London almost weekly to call for a cease-fire in a conflict that has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. Israel says Hamas killed 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, and abducted roughly 250, in the Oct. 7 attack.

The protests have been overwhelmingly peaceful, though there have been dozens of arrests over signs and chants allegedly supporting Hamas, a banned organisation in Britain. Jewish organisations and many lawmakers say the mass marches have created an intimidating atmosphere for Jewish Londoners — though members of the Jewish community have been among those on pro-cease-fire marches.

Divisions over the conflict in Gaza have convulsed British politics, with some lawmakers saying they fear for their safety after receiving threats over their positions on the war. Reports of both antisemitic and anti-Muslim abuse in Britain have soared since Hamas' Oct 7 attack on Israel, which triggered Israel's invasion of Gaza. A debate last week in the House of Commons on whether to call for a cease-fire descended into chaos amid allegations the speaker of the house had bent parliamentary rules in response to pressure from pro-Palestinian activists.

During the debate, protesters projected "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" — a slogan some see as calling for the destruction of Israel — onto Parliament's Big Ben clocktower. On Saturday, Sunak suspended Conservative lawmaker Lee Anderson from the party for saying London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who is Muslim, was controlled by Islamists and had allowed them to take charge of the city.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators protested at the house of a Conservative lawmaker earlier this month, while environmental activists have targeted Sunak's family home in northern England.

The prime minister met police chiefs after announcing a 31-million-pound ($40-million) fund to step up security for lawmakers after politicians reported threats and intimidation connected to the war.

At Wednesday's meeting, the government told police chiefs that protests at politicians' homes "should generally be cosidered to be intimidatory." Sunak told officers to take a "robust approach...to protect our democratic processes from intimidation, disruption, from subversion."

British lawmakers have a tradition of meeting regularly with constituents in their local communities, but security has been tightened after several attacks in the last decade.

In 2016, Labour lawmaker Jo Cox was killed by a far-right extremist, and Conservative David Amess was murdered in 2021 by an attacker inspired by the Islamic State group. Sunak's comments follow several years of increasingly stringent restrictions on peaceful protest by the Conservative government.

It has passed new laws to clamp down on broadly defined "public nuisance," punishable by up to 10 years in prison, and giving police more powers to restrict protests judged to be disruptive. Hundreds of environmental activists have been arrested and sometimes jailed for blocking roads and other nonviolent acts.

"Freedom of expression and assembly are absolutely fundamental rights in any free and fair society," said Southerden, law and human rights director at Amnesty UK.

"The UK has undergone a major crackdown on protest rights in recent years, with peaceful protest tactics being criminalised and the police being given sweeping powers to prevent protests taking place," he said.

Voters in the town of Rochdale in northwest England went to the polls Thursday to elect a lawmaker, after a chaotic special election campaign dominated by the Gaza war. The Labour Party disowned its candidate, Azhar Ali, for claiming that Israel allowed Hamas' Oct 7 attack to happen as a pretext to invade Gaza. His name remains on the ballot, alongside candidates including George Galloway, a former Labour lawmaker who is campaigning against Labour's stance on the Israel-Hamas war, and Simon Danczuk, yet another former Labour legislator who now represents the right-wing Reform UK.

Sunak calls on police chiefs to get tough on 'mob' protests

London (PTI): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called on the country's police chiefs to use the full spectrum of their powers to ensure that protests are not allowed to descend into "mob rule".

The British Indian leader was speaking after a meeting at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday during which ministers and senior police chiefs agreed to sign up to a new "democratic policing protocol".

It comes in the wake of growing security concerns for British MPs and some violent incidents during large-scale marches on the streets of the UK in protest over the raging Israel-Hamas conflict.

White House: Biden doing everything to improve visa process

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden is doing everything he can to improve the process related to the sought-after H-1B visa, Green Card backlog and other issues related to the country's legal immigration system, the White House has said.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

"One of the steps, if we look at the H-1B visa process, we have taken action to improve that and the process and backlog for lawful permanent residents (Green Card) who are eligible to become US citizens," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at her daily news conference on Wednesday.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently.

Jean-Pierre was responding to questions about the feeling among a section of Indian Americans that the president is not putting as much effort into addressing the woes of legal immigrants as he is doing for illegal immigrants.

Biden heads to the southern border with Mexico in Texas on Thursday."Just last month, for example, as a part of our efforts to strengthen the integrity of our immigration system and reduce the potential for fraud, the Department of Homeland Security published a final rule relating to H-1B visa," Jean-Pierre said.

"So, the changes promote fairer and more equitable outcomes and, so, we will continue our work to improve the system within our authorities and that has certainly been a priority," she said and added that the administration takes that "very seriously" and is continuing to do everything that it can to improve the visa process.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced the launch of myUSCIS organisational accounts that will allow multiple people within an organisation, as well as their legal representatives, to collaborate on and prepare H-1B registrations, H-1B petitions and any associated Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service.

A new organisational account is required to participate in the H-1B Electronic Registration Process starting in March 2024, the USCIS said.

"We are working expeditiously to address any technical issues that may arise for legal representatives whose accounts migrated when they logged into their online account on or after February 14, 2024, including impacts on cases other than H-1B filings," it said.

The initial registration period for FY 2025 H1B cap will open at noon Eastern on March 6, and run through noon Eastern on March 22.

During this period, prospective petitioners and their representatives, if applicable, must use a USCIS online account to register each beneficiary electronically for the selection process and pay the associated registration fee for each beneficiary, its media alert said.

SC sets April arguments over whether Trump can be prosecuted for election interference

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to decide whether former President Donald Trump can be prosecuted on charges he interfered with the 2020 election, calling into question whether his case could go to trial before the November election. While the court set a course for a quick resolution, it maintained a hold on preparations for a trial focused on Trump's efforts to overturn his election loss.

The court will hear arguments in late April, with a decision likely no later than the end of June. That timetable is much faster than usual, but assuming the justices deny Trump's immunity bid, it's not clear whether a trial can be scheduled and concluded before the November election. Early voting in some states will begin in September.

The court's decision to intervene in a second major Trump case this term, along with the dispute over whether he is barred from being president again because of his actions following the 2020 election, underscores the direct role the justices will have in the outcome of the election. Trump's lawyers have sought to put off a trial until after the election. In the end, the timing of a possible trial could come down to how quickly the justices rule. They have shown they can act fast, issuing a decision in the Watergate tapes case in 1974 just 16 days after hearing arguments.

The decision in Bush v. Gore came the day after arguments in December 2000. By taking up the legally untested question now, the justices have created a scenario of uncertainty that special counsel Jack Smith had sought to avoid when he first asked the high court in December to immediately intervene. In his latest court filing, Smith had suggested arguments a full month earlier than the late April timeframe. Trump wrote on Truth Social that legal scholars "are extremely thankful" the court stepped in to decide on immunity. "Presidents will always be concerned, and even paralyzed, by the prospect of wrongful prosecution and retaliation after they leave office," he wrote.

A Smith spokesperson declined to comment. The trial date, already postponed once by Trump's immunity appeal, is of paramount importance to both sides. Prosecutors are looking to bring Trump to trial this year while defense lawyers have been seeking delays in his criminal cases.

'At least two dozen migrants died off Senegal's northern coast trying to reach Europe'

Dakar (Senegal) (AP): At least two dozen people died off Senegal's northern coast and many others were injured when their boat capsized, officials said, underscoring the danger of the route used by an increasing number of migrants seeking to reach Spain from West Africa.

The boat was bound for Europe and capsized near the town of Saint-Louis, where bodies washed ashore Wednesday afternoon and the fire department was alerted, said Alioune Badara Sambe, the local governor.

The injured are being treated in a hospital in Saint-Louis and an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident has been opened, he said.

The number of migrants leaving from Senegal on rickety wooden boats surged last year, and nearly 1,000 people died while trying to reach Spain by sea in the first six months of 2023, according to the Spanish migration advocacy group Walking Borders.

Factors such as youth unemployment, political unrest and the impact of climate change push migrants to risk their lives on overcrowded boats.

Senegal has been thrown into turmoil as elections meant for February were delayed by the president, sparking deadly protests.

US Pres continues to be fit for duty, says his physician

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden "continues to be fit for duty" and "fully executes" all of his responsibilities, his physician has said after an annual health checkup, asserting that the 81-year-old US President does not have any major health concerns. The White House on Wednesday shared a memo with President Biden's "current health summary" following his annual routine physical at Walter Reed National Military Medical Centre. Biden, whose health has been under scrutiny ahead of November's presidential election, underwent the assessment on Wednesday. "He continues to be fit for duty and fully executes all of his responsibilities without any exemptions or accommodations," Dr Kevin O'Connor, physician to the US President, wrote in a memo shared with reporters. Biden's annual medical checkup included speciality consultation with several Presidential Specialty Consultants.

These specialities included Optometry, Dentistry, Orthopedics (Foot and Ankle), Orthopedics (Spine), Physical Therapy, Neurology, Sleep Medicine, Cardiology, Radiology and Dermatology.

Soon after his return from Walter Reed, Biden told reporters that doctors told him he looked too young. The think you look too young," he said amidst laughter. "No, there is nothing different than last year. Everything is great," the president said, responding to questions on his health checkup.

It is a White House tradition to publicise the annual health checkup of the US President in the form of a memo from the president's physician.

The White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at her daily news conference that Biden's doctors decided against a cognitive test. Such a test is being demanded by several of his political opponents, including Indian-American Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley.

"The President doesn't need a cognitive test. That is not my assessment. That is the assessment of the President's doctor. That is also the assessment of the neurologist who has also made that assessment as well," Jean-Pierre said.

"The President's doctor has said, if you look at this, the President, who is also the Commander-in-Chief, passes a cognitive test every day, as he moves from one topic to another topic, understanding the granular level of these topics," she said.

"You saw him talk about a fighting crime today. Tomorrow, he's going to go to the border. Next week, he's going to give a State of the Union Address," she added.

Asserting that this is a very rigorous job, she said that Biden has been able to do it every day for the past three years. "And let's not forget, he is also leading a historic presidency, which is also important to note in everything that we've been able to do — he's been able to get done over the past three years," the press secretary said.

Biden is the oldest president in the history of the United States.

The president's health was in the news earlier this month after a special counsel investigating Biden for improperly storing classified documents suggested he was suffering from mental decline due to his age.

I2U2 continues to be priority for Biden admn

Washington (PTI): The grouping of India, Israel, the UAE and the US continues to be a priority for the Biden administration and is not on the back-burner due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, the White House has said, underlining that the President is "deeply committed" to making sure that the I2U2 initiatives make progress.

The I2U2 grouping was conceptualised during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the four countries held on October 18, 2021. The I2U2's first summit was held on July 14, 2022, to establish the group.

The grouping remains critically important, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at the White House here on Wednesday.

Asked if the grouping is now on the back-burner or no longer active because of the Israel-Hamas conflict, the official said, "No, not at all, still a priority".

"The I2U2 remains critically important and the president is deeply committed to making sure that we continue with the I2U2, obviously with our partnership among our four countries and beyond through innovative, inclusive and science-based solutions to advance... let's not forget, enhance food and energy security space operations and other ventures, advancing projects on water conservation, waste management and other areas," Jean-Pierre said. So, there is a strong future for the I2U2 and "we're looking forward to continuing that partnership" and it has not taken on the back-burner, the White House official said. "It certainly continues to be a priority," Jean-Pierre said.

EU to release billions of frozen euros to Poland

Brussels: The European Union's powerful Commission announced on Thursday that it will begin releasing billions of euros to Poland that were frozen over the previous government's policies that the bloc said amounted to widespread backsliding on fundamental democratic principles.

The move had been expected after Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promised "good news" last week to reward Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk for his efforts to overturn a series of measures imposed by the previous conservative government that went against EU judicial cornerstones. Thursday's move cemented a sea change in relations. Both sides had openly clashed. *AP*

Macron says he will swim in River Seine

Paris (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron boldly promised to swim in the River Seine being cleaned up for the Paris Olympics as he toured the new complex that will house athletes on Thursday. Macron cited pollution-reduction in the Seine as one of the Games' positive long-term impacts. He noted "extraordinary" public-funded investments being poured into making the river — largely off limits to bathers since 1923 — swimmable again.

Asked by a journalist whether he would bathe in it, Macron replied, "Me, yes, I'll go."

But he refrained from saying when. "I'm not going to give you the date: There's a risk you'll be there," he said.

Regardless of whether he does indeed don trunks, Macron's visit to the future high-security Olympic village served to highlight how the Paris Games are helping to transform some disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the French capital's poorer suburbs.

The eco-friendly village led to nearly 2,000 jobs being created, with 1,136 going to local residents. It cost about 2 billion Euros (USD 2.2 billion), most of it investment by property developers but also including 646 million Euros (USD 700 million) from public funds. The Olympic construction company, Solideo, transferred the village to Paris Games organizers on Thursday, symbolically handing over a large key, with Macron watching.

"It's a very big day," Macron said. "It's a demonstration that France is a nation of builders."

Idaho halts execution by lethal injection after 8 failed attempts to insert IV line

AP ■ KUNA

Idaho halted the execution of serial killer Thomas Eugene Creech on Wednesday after medical team members repeatedly failed to find a vein where they could establish an intravenous line to carry out the lethal injection. Creech, 73, has been in prison half a century, convicted of five murders in three states and suspected of several more. He was already serving a life term when he beat a fellow inmate, 22-year-old David Dale Jensen, to death in 1981 — the crime for which he was to be executed.

Creech, one of the longest-serving death row inmates in the US, was wheeled into the execution chamber at the Idaho Maximum Security Institution on a gurney at 10 a.m.

Three medical team members tried eight times to establish an IV, Department of Correction Director Josh Tewalt told a news conference afterward. In some cases, they couldn't access the vein, and in others they could but had concerns about vein quality. They attempted sites in his arms, legs, hands and feet. At one point, a medical team member left to gather more supplies. The warden announced he was halting the execution at 10:58 a.m.

The corrections department said its death warrant for Creech would expire, and that it was considering next steps. While other medical procedures might allow for the execution, the state is mindful of the 8th Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, Tewalt said.Creech's attorneys immediately filed a new motion for a stay in US District Court, saying "the badly botched execution attempt" proves the department's "inability to carry out a humane and constitutional execution." The court granted the stay after Idaho confirmed it would not try again to execute him before the death warrant expired; the state will have to obtain another warrant if it wants to carry out the execution."This is what happens when unknown individuals with unknown training are assigned to carry out an execution," the Federal Defender Services of Idaho said in a written statement. "This is precisely the kind of mishap we warned the State and the Courts could happen when attempting to execute one of the country's oldest death-row inmates." Six Idaho officials, including Attorney General Raul Labrador, and four news media representatives, including an Associated Press reporter, were on hand to witness the attempt — which was to be Idaho's first execution in 12 years.The execution team was made up entirely of volunteers, the corrections department said.

Those tasked with inserting the IVs and administering the lethal drug had medical training, but their identities were kept secret.

Pak's newly-elected lawmakers sworn in

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's newly-elected lawmakers were sworn in on Thursday during Parliament's maiden session after President Dr Arif Alvi summoned the National Assembly after delaying the process for several days. The National Assembly was summoned after Alvi's initial refusal due to differences with the caretaker government over the issue of former prime minister Imran Khan's party-backed candidates being allotted the reserved seats.

The opening session of the 16th Parliament, headed by the outgoing Speaker of the previous Parliament, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, began after a delay of more than an hour. Ashraf administered the oath to the newly-elected lawmakers amidst unruly scenes as 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed lawmakers chanted slogans against alleged vote rigging in the February 8 general elections. After the oath-taking, the lawmakers signed the register roll of the National Assembly to officially become members.

The new oath-taking lawmakers included the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari.

Early on Thursday, Alvi approved a move from the caretaker parliamentary affairs ministry to summon the newly-elected National Assembly's first session on February 29, according to a statement posted by the president's X account.

"Subject to some reservations, President Dr Arif Alvi has summoned to convene the National Assembly on February 29 in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 54(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the statement said.

It said that the president accorded his approval keeping in view "the mandate and implications of the timeline given in Article 91 (2) and subject to some reservations and expecting the resolution of the issue of the reserved seats before the 21st day [after the general elections]."

The late-night statement also took issue with the tone of the summary sent to Alvi by the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, adding that the president was calling the session as he expected that the issue of reserved seats would be settled by the 21st day after the polls, as envisaged in the law.

According to constitutional provisions, the meeting of the National Assembly must be convened within 21 days of the elections, and February 29 is the mandated date under Article 91. The newly-elected National Assembly will elect the new speaker and deputy speaker. The election for the post of prime minister is expected on Saturday, and former premier Shehbaz Sharif is poised to be elected as the new leader of the House under a post-election deal between the PML-N and the PPP.

On Monday, Alvi, a close aide of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and a former senior member of his party, rejected a move from the caretaker parliamentary affairs ministry to summon the National Assembly's first session, maintaining that all reserved seats be allocated before its summoning.

Winning independent candidates of former-cricketer-turned-politician Khan's PTI joined the rightwing Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to receive the party's share of reserved seats for women and minorities in the national and provincial assemblies. Candidates of the PTI fought as independents after the party could not directly participate in the February 8 elections due to the non-allotment of its iconic electoral symbol - the cricket bat.

A five-member bench of the Election Commission of Pakistan began the open hearing on the SIC's plea seeking allocation of reserved seats and the counter-pleas filed against it earlier this week.

The House was already meeting at 10 am on Thursday as National Assembly outgoing Speaker Ashraf decided to convene the lower house of parliament session after Alvi's denial.

Alvi's statement said that returning the move for a National Assembly session was "very much in accordance with the provisions of Article 48(1)" of the Constitution.

"It is not understood on what grounds it has been taken as a partisan act, though it was also aimed at the completion of the National Assembly in accordance with Article 51 of the Constitution," it said. Alvi's decision not to summon the session was heavily criticised by the PML-N and the PPP parties, whose leaders on Tuesday warned that it might lead to "legal consequences".

The PTI had alleged massive rigging in the election and vowed to raise their voice inside and outside the Parliament.

'Sending Western troops to Ukraine risks global N-conflict'

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed on Thursday to fulfil Moscow's goals in Ukraine and sternly warned the West against deeper involvement in the fighting, saying that such a move is fraught with the risk of a global nuclear conflict.

Putin's warning came in a state-of-the-nation address ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win, underlining his readiness to protect Russian gains in Ukraine. In an apparent reference to French President Emmanuel Macron's statement earlier this week that the future deployment of Western ground troops to Ukraine should not be "ruled out", Putin warned that it would lead to "tragic" consequences for the countries who decide to do that.

Putin noted that while accusing Russia of plans tp attack NATO allies in Europe, Western allies were "selecting targets for striking our territory and selecting the most efficient as they think striking assets and talking about the possibility of sending a NATO contingent to Ukraine".

"We remember the fate of those who sent their troop contingents to the territory of our country," the Russian leader said. "Now the consequences for the potential invaders will be far more tragic."

Speaking before an audience of lawmakers and top officials, Putin said the West should keep in mind that "we also have the weapons that can strike targets on their territory, and what they are now suggesting and scaring the world with, all that raises the real threat of a nuclear conflict that will mean the destruction of our civilisation".

"Don't they understand it?" he said, alleging that Western leaders are playing with options of deeper involvement in the conflict, as in a simulation. "Those people haven't been through any tough challenges and they have forgotten what war means."

The strong statement followed earlier warnings from Putin, who has issued frequent reminders of Russia's nuclear might since he sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 as he sought to discourage the West from expanding its military support for Kyiv.

Putin emphasised that Russia's nuclear forces are in "full readiness," saying that the military has deployed potent new weapons, some of them tested on the battlefield in Ukraine. The Kremlin leader said they include the new Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missile that has entered service with Russian nuclear forces, along with the Burevestnik atomic-powered cruise missile and the Poseidon atomic-powered, nuclear-armed drone, which are completing their tests.

He added that the Kinzhal and Zircon hypersonic missiles have proven their efficacy on the battlefield in Ukraine. At the same time, he rejected Western leaders' statements about the threat of a Russian attack on NATO allies in Europe as "ravings" and again dismissed Washington's claim that Moscow was pondering the deployment of space-based nuclear weapons. Putin charged that the US allegations were part of a ploy to draw Russia into talks on nuclear arms control on American terms even as Washington continues its efforts to deliver a "strategic defeat" to Moscow in Ukraine.

"Ahead of the US election, they just want to show their citizens, as well as others, that they continue to rule the world," he said. "It won't work."

In his speech that focused heavily on economic and social issues ahead of the March 15-17 presidential vote, Putin argued that Russia was "defending its sovereignty and security and protecting our compatriots" in Ukraine, charging that the Russian forces have the upper hand in the fighting. He hailed Russian soldiers and honoured those who were killed in fighting with a moment of silence.

Putin has repeatedly said that he sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022 to protect Russian interests and prevent Ukraine from posing a major security threat to Russia by joining NATO. Kyiv and its allies have denounced it as an unprovoked act of aggression. The Russian leader has repeatedly signalled a desire to negotiate an end to the fighting but warned that Russia will hold onto its gains.

Putin, 71, who is running as an independent candidate in the March 15-17 presidential election, relies on the tight control over Russia's political system that he has established during 24 years in power. Prominent critics who could challenge him have either been imprisoned or are living abroad, while most independent media have been banned, meaning that Putin's reelection is all but assured. He faces token opposition from three other candidates nominated by Kremlin-friendly parties represented in parliament.

Russia's best-known opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose attempt to run against Putin in 2018 was rejected, died suddenly in an Arctic prison colony earlier this month, while serving a 19-year sentence on extremism charges.

Russian rocket successfully puts Iranian satellite into orbit

Moscow (AP): A Russian rocket on Thursday successfully put an Iranian satellite into orbit, a launch that underlined increasingly close cooperation between Moscow and Tehran. Russia's state-run Roscosmos corporation said that a Soyuz rocket blasted off from the Vostochny launch facility in the country's far east to carry the Iranian satellite and 18 Russian satellites into orbit. The Iranian state TV said the 110-kg (242-pound) satellite has three cameras to take images for environmental, agricultural and other purposes. Iran's state TV said the satellite will be put into orbit around the North and South Poles, synchronised to be in the same fixed position relative to the Sun, and will be fully functional after a calibration of its systems. Thursday's launch comes after Russia put into orbit the Iranian Khayyam satellite in 2022.

Russian onslaught targets more Ukrainian towns and villages

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces are pushing hard against more Ukrainian towns and villages in eastern and southeastern Ukraine as Moscow tries to press its current advantage in weapons and troops, Kyiv officials said Thursday. Despite Russia's apparent offensive momentum on the ground, Ukraine claimed it has shot down 11 Russian warplanes in less than two weeks as the Kremlin's forces pushed forward.

With the war starting its third year, Russian forces have been bludgeoning some Ukrainian defensive positions into submission, deploying overwhelming amounts of artillery and troop numbers in an effort to punch through defensive lines at targeted points. Though Russia's gains have been small, slow and costly, Ukraine doesn't have enough reservists and has a severe shortage of artillery shells as the supply of military aid from Western partners has waned. The Russian army is trying to seize the towns and villages of Tonenke, Orlivka, Semenivka, Berdychi and Krasnohorivka in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine's army chief Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi said on social media.

Those are places where Ukrainian military officials had said they would form a new line of defence after Ukrainian troops pulled out of Avdiivka on Feb 17. In the southeastern Zaporizhzhia region, Russian forces are focusing on retaking Verbove and Robotyne, towns that Ukraine won back in last summer's counteroffensive in 2023, Syrskyi said.

Syrskyi, who was appointed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to lead the country's military on Feb 8, accused some of his commanders of making "miscalculations" in assessing the enemy and taking countermeasures.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's air force commander Mykola Oleshchuk said his units shot down two Russian Su-34 jets overnight. That made a total of 11 warplanes, including an early warning and control A-50 plane, that Ukraine claims to have downed since Feb 17.

"The enemy has increased its air presence in the east. Our top military leadership reacted accordingly," air force spokesman Yurii Ihnat said on national television. A major question for Kyiv officials is how they can unlock further military help from their partners. Emergency US national security funds for Ukraine are still on hold amid a political dispute in Washington.

The Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, Ruslan Stefanchuk, addressed an open letter to US House Speaker Mike Johnson asking him to put to a vote the Biden administration's proposal to send $60 billion of aid to Ukraine.

Office of the Superintending Engineer
3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh
Email : sepwdpth@rediffmail.com
उत्तराखण्ड राज्य

Letter No. : 1064 / 13 P.I.U.-03/2024 Dated : 29/02/2024

National Competitive E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering **(Two Bid System)** on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" for following works. All other information will be available online from date **05-03-2024** at 5.00 PM onward on website **http://www.uktenders.gov.in**

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (₹)	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction of (03 no.), 24.00 mtr. Span R.C.C. Bridges, reconstruction of damaged walls & other protection work in Tanakpur-Jauljivi Motor road along Indo-Nepal Border in District Champawat of Uttarakhand State. (km. 12.000 to 55.000).	68.30	5000.00 +18% G.S.T.	120	12	Category 'A' & higher for Road & Bridge works, in State Govt./ Govt. of India

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SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66
Notice Inviting Tender www.verka.coop

e/sealed tenders are hereby Invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
1.	For Verka Head Office, Chandigarh Empanelment of statutory auditor for Verka Jalandhar Dairy.	2023-24 to 2025-26
2.	For Verka Chandigarh Dairy a) Sealed tender for hiring of five seater Tata Xenon / Mahindra Bolero Pickup or equivalent vehicle along with driver. b) e- Tender for providing Manpower as per reqirement of milk plant, Chandigarh/ Milkfed Head Office, Sec-34, Chandigarh.	01No. -
3.	For Verka Mohali Dairy a) Hiring of:- • Passenger vehicle/taxi for officers in Delhi area. • Insulated vehicles of minimum 01 MT capacity for 2nd leg delivery of verka milk and milk products in Delhi-NCR area. • Insulated and refrigerated vehicles for the supply of Verka milk and milk products in Punjab, Tricity & adjoining areas and Rai (Sonipat) area.	02 No's(no. may increased or decreased) 08 No's(no. may increased or decreased)
4.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy a) Manpower required for job Contract. b) Hiring of:- • Insulated vehicles for supply of packed milk and fresh milk products in Milk shed area. • Vehicles for Sale Depot, Bathinda & Verka Bathinda Dairy for Supply of Ghee, Butter, Powder, Panjiri, Tetra Pack & other Products all Punjab & other Sates. • Road Milk Tankers for transportation of Milk within/outside Punjab.	Annual One year with extension up to one year/ 05 No's. As per requirement Capacity 15 tons and above
5.	For Verka Hoshiarpur Dairy Disposal of the unserviceable material.	One time Basis/ Annual
6.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy a) Sealed tender for hiring of godown for storage of skimmed milk powder. b) e-tender for hiring of :- • Deep freezer (Cold Store) for storage of White Butter at -18°c or below. • Refrigerated Contaioner. c) Steam Coal. d) Fabrication of incubation room (including door) with puf panel and Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of heating units. e) Outsourcing of Manpower. f) e-Tender for the purchase of:- • Electronic weighing balance capacity 200kg. • Ventilation fan for Dairy Barn. g) Construction of:- • Boundary Wall approx. 600 feet. • Record Room approx.20x6.35 mtr.	01 No. Annual/01No. 01 No. 1500 MT Complete Job 02 Years 50 No's 100 No's Complete Job
7.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy a) Steam Coal having calorific value not less than 5500kcal/kg. b) Job contract for :- • Pest and Rodent Control services. • Providing labour through service provider who is having is having EPF/ESI no. and Labour proving License.	2000 MT Annual As per requirement.
8.	For Verka Sangrur Dairy Hiring of:- • SS Road Milk tankers Cap.15, 18, 20, 23, 25, 30 kL for transportation of milk from Verka Sangrur Dairy to other plants of Punjab and outside punjab. • Diesel Car. • Mahindra Bolero Camper or equivalent to lift milk product from milk plant/stores to various milk bar field/extension work .	02 No's 02 No's Annual/01 No.
9.	For Verka Ferozepur Dairy a) Hiring of:- •Diesel Car for Marketing Section. • Insulated vehicles for supply of packed milk and Butter ASC Ferozepur and ASC Fazilka Milk in shed area. b) Supply of freshly cut firewood for boiler	01 No. Annual 550 Tons
10.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy Supply, Installation and Commissioning of:- • GLC Machine. • RP-HPLC Machine.	One time purchase 01 No. 01 No.
11.	For Verka Mega Dairy, Bassi Pathana Engaging of outsource agency for providing of Security Supervisor/Guards.	Annual

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

Incharge (Purchase)

Sunni Ittehad Council faces uncertainty over failure to submit member list

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The allocation of reserved seats to Pakistan's Sunni Ittehad Council may be in jeopardy after it was revealed that the right-wing party has not provided its list of members for the reserved seats, it emerged on Thursday.

The religious party of the Sunni Muslim sect came to prominence after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party of former jailed prime minister Imran Khan asked its independently elected members to join SIC to claim its share in the 70 seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the 266-member National Assembly. However, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has been refusing to allocate the reserved seats to the party, prompting the PTI to express outrage and protest at the maiden session of Parliament on Thursday.

Speaking on the floor of the Assembly, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Khawaja Asif questioned how the PTI could demand reserved seats when the SIC had not submitted a list of its members on reserved seats before the ECP.

Legally, every party should provide before elections a list of members it wants to be elected on reserved seats.

Separately, ECP on Wednesday reserved its judgment on the petitions relating to the allotment of reserved seats to the SIC after hearing arguments from the parties. A five-member commission headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja heard the petitions.

The News International reported that during the hearing, CEC Raja handed over a letter written to the ECP by the SIC to PTI lawyer Senator Barrister Ali Zafar and said they don't want reserved seats and you are forcing it.

The CEC said the Council head wrote a letter to the ECP on February 26 and said they don't have a list of reserved seats since no one contested the election from the SIC platform.

Barrister Ali Zafar expressed ignorance about the letter and said that the SIC did not inform the PTI about any such letter and asked the ECP to consider the extraordinary situation faced by the PTI and allot reserved seats to the SIC after independent members joined it.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) lawyer Farooq H Naek started his arguments and said that no SIC member won the general seat, and the Council did not submit any priority list to the ECP. Under Section 104 of the Elections Act, the new list could not be submitted after the expiry of the nomination papers date and the existing list could be changed.

He also maintained that if a name was deleted from the current list for reserved seats, the political party could give more names. The ECP could not issue a directive to ask the SIC to seek a priority list at this time. According to the formula given in Article 51 of the Constitution, seats were allotted. "If the stipulated time passes, then the list cannot be given," Naek added.

PML-N lawyer Azam Nazeer Tarar said the SIC did not participate in the general elections. The ECP wrote a letter to all political parties about the implementation of election rules, but the Council replied that their party did not field any candidates.

Tarar said, "The Section 104 clearly states that whoever is participating in the elections, under Section 104, must have a priority list for reserved seats. If a political party has been rejected by the people, then how can independent members go and ask for reserved seats." The ECP bench reserved its verdict on the petition after hearing the arguments of the parties.

Pakistan National Assembly to meet after session summoned by Prez

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's newly-elected Parliament will meet on Thursday for its maiden session as President Dr Arif Alvi finally summoned the Assembly after differing with the caretaker government over the issue of former prime minister Imran Khan's party-backed candidates being allotted the reserved seats.

Early on Thursday, Alvi approved a move from the caretaker parliamentary affairs ministry to summon the newly-elected National Assembly's first session on February 29, according to a statement posted by the president's X account.

"Subject to some reservations, President Dr Arif Alvi has summoned to convene the National Assembly on February 29 in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 54(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the statement said. It said that the president accorded his approval keeping in view "the mandate and implications of the timeline given in Article 91 (2) and subject to some reservations and expecting the resolution of the issue of the reserved seats before the 21st day [after the general elections]."

The late-night statement also took issue with the tone of the summary sent to Alvi by the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, adding that the president was calling the session as he expected that the issue of reserved seats would be settled by the 21st day after the polls, as envisaged in the law. According to constitutional provisions, the meeting of the National Assembly must be convened within 21 days of the elections, and February 29 is the mandated date under Article 91. The newly elected Parliament will meet on Thursday for its maiden session amidst a row over the alleged rigging of votes.

In the opening session, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, the outgoing Speaker of the previous Parliament, would administer the oath to the new members and adjourn the session for the next Assembly to elect the new speaker and deputy speaker.

The election for the post of prime minister is expected on Saturday, and former premier Shehbaz Sharif is poised to be elected as the new leader of the House. On Monday, Alvi, a close aide of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and a former senior member of his party, rejected a move from the caretaker parliamentary affairs ministry to summon the National Assembly's first session, maintaining that all reserved seats be allocated before its summoning.

Kishida vows no more fundraising parties

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's beleaguered prime minister renewed his apology over his governing party's corruption scandal, promising to not hold any more parties himself as leader during a political ethics committee Thursday. Fumio Kishida has fought against plummeting support ratings since his governing party's corruption scandal rocked the government. The scandal, considered the biggest in decades, centres on political funds raised through party event tickets bought by individuals, companies and organisations. It led to 10 people — lawmakers and their aides — being indicted in January.

While Kishida himself is not the focus of the scandal and was not even invited to the hearing, the surprise announcement of his personal appearance broke a deadlock between the opposition lawmakers and his governing party Wednesday when the five implicated attendants refused to go public, holding up a hearing. Kishida expressed a "sense of crisis" that the deadlock on the hearing would further deepen the public's distrust in politics.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's resistance to have a fully open session fuelled public criticism that Kishida's party is taking the corruption lightly and trying to hide something.

Kishida's action could help ease criticisms that he was too slow and lax in addressing the public's distrust and taking anti-corruption measures. In his opening statement, Kishida renewed his apology for triggering public distrust in politics, and promised to take leadership in reforming his party, saying seniority-based tradition, lack of compliance and a sense of privilege among lawmakers need to be removed if they were part of the problem.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
MARINE DEPARTMENT
No. MD/AACTS/WK/R-07/2023/247 Date: 26.02.2024
e-Tender Call Notice (e-TCN) No.MD/ ACCTS/WK/R-07/2023/74 dtd.16/01/2024
Name of the work: Engagement of 01 no. All Weather Steel Hull Vessel along with Manning Crew on hire for a period of 5 (five) years for deployment at Paradip SPMs on round the clock 24x7 basis Pollution Response-cum-SPMs Security Duties. Estimated cost put to tender: Rs.42,91,10,000/-. Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 15:00 hours on dt.18.03.2024. For further details, please log on to the website: https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app
Sd/- Deputy Conservator,
Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/92/2023-2024 dtd.28.02.2024

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Cabinet nod to ₹1.26 lakh crore chip making units

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved setting up three semiconductor-making units by firms, including Tata Group and Japan's Renesas, at an investment of Rs 1.26 lakh crore as part of an attempt to cut India's dependence on imports to meet requirements of chips.

The units which will make chips for sectors including defence, automobiles and telecommunications, will begin construction within the next 100 days, Telecom Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

The three units will be set up under the 'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem' programme that provides government support of up to Rs 76,000 crore.

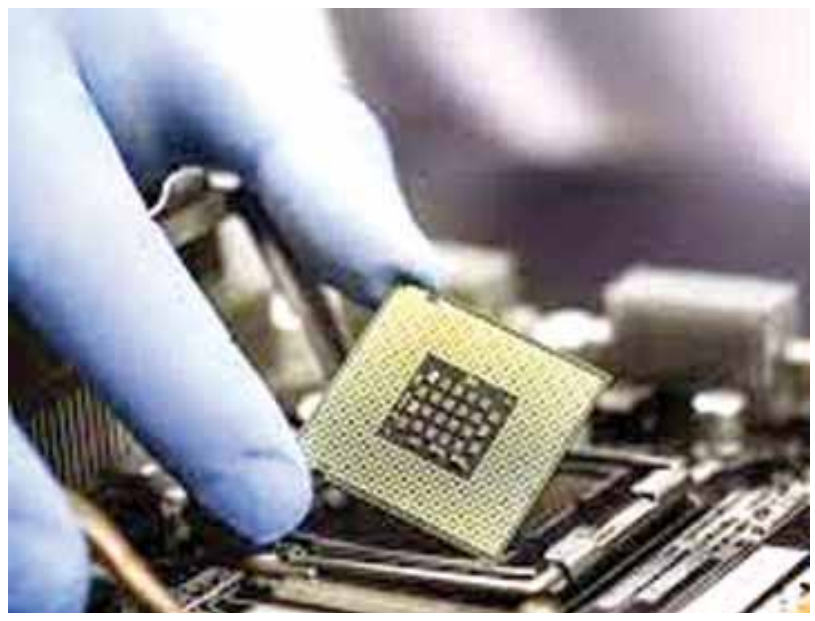
Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd will set up a semiconductor fab in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera in Gujarat. The plant will have a capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and will involve an investment of Rs 91,000 crore.

Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) will set up a semiconductor unit in Morigaon, Assam, at an investment of Rs 27,000 crore. CG Power in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics of Thailand will set up a unit in Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of Rs 7,600 crore.

In June last year, the Cabinet approved a proposal of Micron for setting up a semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat.

The approvals are part of the Modi government's ambitions to make India a chipmaker for the world and cutting reliance on countries like Taiwan.

Vaishnaw said the Tata plant at Dholera will produce high-performance compute chips with 28 nm technology for electric vehicles (EV), telecom, defence, automotive, consumer electronics, display and power electronics.



The unit in Assam will have a capacity of 48 million per day for automotive, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, telecom, and mobile phones. The CG power semiconductor unit will manufacture 15 million chips for consumer, industrial, automotive and power applications.

"Within a very short time, India's semiconductor mission has achieved four big successes. With these units, the semiconductor ecosystem will get established in India. India already has deep capabilities in chip design. With these units, our country will develop capabilities in chip fabrication. Advanced packaging technologies will be indigenously developed in India with today's announcement," he said adding the three units will generate direct employment of 20,000 advanced technology jobs and about 60,000 indirect jobs.

These units will accelerate employment creation in downstream automotive, electronics manufacturing, telecom manufacturing, industrial manufacturing, and other semiconductor-consuming industries.

Construction of Micron's Sanand unit is progressing at a rapid pace and a robust semiconductor ecosystem is emerging near the unit, he said.

Tata Electronics' partner PSMC is renowned for its expertise in logic and memory foundry segments. PSMC has 6 semiconductor foundries in Taiwan. Power management chips the two will manufacture are high voltage, high current applications.

TSAT semiconductor is developing indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies including flip chip and ISIP (integrated system in package) technologies.

Renesas is a leading semiconductor company focussed on specialised chips. It operates 12 semiconductor facilities and is an important player in microcontrollers, analogue, power, and System-on-chip ('SoC)' products.

Sebi bans entities for manipulative trades in V Marc India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday barred 12 entities, including promoter of V Marc India Ltd, from the securities market for engaging in a fraudulent scheme to manipulate volumes and price of the company's shares.

Additionally, the regulator impounded wrongful gains of Rs 6.38 crore made by some of the entities from the manipulative scheme, according to an interim order.

This case primarily deals with fraudulent and manipulative trading in the scrip of V Marc India Ltd, listed on NSE's SME segment, prima facie orchestrated by the promoter and company management, along with connected parties.

In its order, Sebi, prima facie, found that V Marc's promoter and MD Vikas Garg and Sandeep Kumar Srivastava, former Whole Time Director of the company-- engaged the services of Prijesh Kurani to 'operate the market'.

It further noted that Kurani, in turn, in addition to using his own and his connected entities' trading accounts, engaged accounts of persons connected to Garg to manipulate the scrip. Further, Garg and the company management channelled funds through their connected entities to Kurani for executing the fraudulent scheme.

The alleged fraudulent scheme was set in motion as soon as the scrip was listed on April 8, 2021. "The impact of this alleged fraudulent scheme is evident in the manner volumes surged and prices increased after which most of the entities -- PV Manipulators-- as well as the IPO subscribers - exited fully. The shares offloaded were purchased by public shareholders leading to the increase in their numbers as well," Sebi said.

Accordingly, Sebi has restrained 12 entities "from buying, selling or dealing in the securities market or associating themselves with the securities market, either directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever until further orders". Apart from Garg, Srivastava and Kurani, the other entities barred by Sebi are -- Sudhir Gupta, Dharini Kurani, Rekha Kurani, Surbhi Aggarwal, Vinod Vilas Sable, Seema Garg, Madhu Srivastava, Jai Kishorr Singhal and Seema Agarwal.

Sebi's examination which covered the period from April 9-30, 2021, was aided by data obtained from the mobile device of Kurani, seized following the 'search and seizure operation' carried out by the regulator at his residence in May 2022, in the context of investigation into the matter of 'Front Running of Trades of Axis Mutual Fund'.

The data from the device, particularly messages exchanged on WhatsApp involving entities referred to in this order, including a copy of a signed agreement between certain entities, has served as important evidence in this case.

Royalty rates for critical, strategic minerals approved

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the amendment in the MMDR Act to specify the royalty rate on 12 critical and strategic minerals, an official statement said. A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Mines said in a statement.

"The Union Cabinet... Approved the amendment of Second Schedule to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) for specifying rate of royalty in respect of 12 critical and strategic minerals," the statement said.

The 12 critical and strategic minerals are beryllium, cadmium, cobalt, gallium, indium, rhenium, selenium, tantalum, tellurium, titanium, tungsten, and vanadium, it said.

This completes the exercise of the rationalisation of royalty rates for all 24 critical and strategic minerals, the Ministry said.

The government notified the royalty rate of four critical minerals, namely glauconite, potash, molybdenum and platinum group of minerals on March 15, 2022 and of 3 critical minerals lithium, niobium and rare earth elements on October 12, 2023.

As per the statement, the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023, which has come into force from August 17, 2023, had listed 24 critical and strategic minerals in Part D of the First Schedule of the MMDR Act.

The amendment provided that mining lease and composite licence of these 24 minerals shall be auctioned by the central government.

The approval for specification of rate of royalty will enable the Centre to auction blocks for these 12 minerals for the first time in the country.

Royalty rate on minerals is an important financial consideration for the bidders in auction of blocks, the statement said.

Further, manner for calculation of Average Sale Price (ASP) of these minerals has also been prepared by the Ministry of Mines, which will enable determination of bid parameters, it said.

The Second Schedule of the MMDR Act provides royalty rates for various minerals.

Markets close higher, RIL gains after mega merger

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed with gains on Thursday in a highly volatile trade amid the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 195.42 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 72,500.30. During the day, the benchmark oscillated between a high of 72,730.00 and a low of 72,099.32.

The broader Nifty of NSE gained 31.65 points or 0.14 per cent to close at 21,982.80.

"Domestic benchmark traded near a flat-line trend throughout the session, but some buoyancy emerged by the end of the day. Investors adopted a cautious wait & watch approach on the verge of a heavy economic data week," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among Sensex shares, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Tech, Power Grid, Maruti, State Bank of India, Titan, Asian Paints, Nestle and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers.

Reliance Industries climbed nearly 2 per cent intra-day before closing more than half-a per cent higher after the company and Walt Disney announced the signing of binding pacts to merge their media operations in India to create a Rs 70,000 crore behemoth.

Hindustan Unilever, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, ITC, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

"Markets traded volatile on the monthly expiry day but managed to end marginally higher," said Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.84 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.50 per cent. Among the indices, services jumped 1.46 per cent, power climbed 1.01 per cent, commodities (0.79 per cent), industrials (0.74 per cent), metal (0.74 per cent) and capital goods (0.65 per cent).

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower while Shanghai ended in the green. European markets were trading mostly in the green. The US markets ended marginally lower on Wednesday. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,879.23 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark fell by 790.34 points or 1.08 per cent to settle at 72,304.88 on Wednesday. The Nifty slumped 247.20 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 21,951.15.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.43 per cent to USD 83.32 a barrel.

FDI inflows decline in April, December 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in India declined 13 per cent to USD 32.03 billion in April-December 2023, dragged down by lower infusion in computer hardware and software, telecom, auto, and pharma sectors, according to the latest government data.

FDI inflows stood at USD 36.74 billion during the corresponding nine months of the preceding fiscal.

Inflows during the October-December quarter of the current fiscal, however, rose by 18 per cent to USD 11.6 billion as against USD 9.83 billion during the same quarter of 2022-23.

The total FDI — which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital — declined by about 7 per cent to USD 51.5 billion during the period under review against USD 55.27 billion in April-December 2022, the data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) showed.

During the nine-month period of this fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Singapore, the US, the UK, Cyprus and the UAE. Investments fell significantly from the Cayman Islands and Cyprus to USD 215 million and USD 796 million, respectively, during April-December 2023 as against the two comparative figures of USD 624 million and USD 1.15 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

However, inflows increased from Mauritius, the Netherlands, Japan and Germany.

Protect investors in small, midcap schemes: Sebi to mutual funds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has asked mutual fund houses to put in place a framework to safeguard investors, who invested in smallcap and midcap schemes, amid a "froth building up" in these categories.

Also, the regulator has suggested steps such as restrictions on inflows in these segments, portfolio rebalancing, and laying guidelines to safeguard investors from the first-mover advantage of redeeming investors.

This came in the backdrop of strong flow in the small and midcap schemes of mutual funds over the last few quarters.

In a communication to Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) on Tuesday, Sebi asked the industry body to inform trustees of all the mutual fund houses to frame a policy to protect the interest of investors of smallcap and midcap schemes.

"In the context of the froth building up in the small and mid-cap segments of the market and the continuing flows in the small and mid-cap schemes of mutual funds, trustees, in consultation with unitholder protection committees of the AMCs shall ensure that a policy is put in place to protect the interest of all investors," the regulator said.

The market regulator said that "appropriate" and "proactive measures" should be taken by Asset Management Companies (AMCs) and fund managers to protect investors.

Key infrastructure sectors growth slows to 15 months low in January

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The growth of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed to a 15-month low of 3.6 per cent in January, on account of poor performance of sectors like refinery products, fertiliser, steel and electricity, according to the official data released on Thursday.

The growth of eight core sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity — was 4.9 per cent in December.

It was 9.7 per cent in January 2023. The previous low level of growth rate was recorded at 0.9 per cent in October 2022. Cumulatively also, the growth rate in the output of these sectors slowed down to 7.7 per cent as against 8.3 per cent in April-January 2022-23.

The output growth of refinery products and fertiliser was in the negative zone. And the pace of increase in the output of coal, steel, and electricity decelerated during the month under review.

However, crude oil, natural gas, and cement production recorded positive growth in January.

The eight core sectors contribute 40.27 per cent to the country's Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Lagged deposit growth to constrain credit growth for banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Lagging deposit accretion poses the risk of constraining credit growth for banks in FY25, India Ratings and Research said on Thursday.

Maintaining its "neutral" outlook on the banking sector for FY25, the agency said the deposit growth is likely to moderate to 12-13 per cent in FY25 from the 13.8 per cent estimated for ongoing fiscal year. The loan-to-deposit ratio for the sector is at a five-year high of 81 per cent, which makes deposit growth as a crucial part in banks' credit book expansions, it said.

The agency said it expects credit growth to come at 20.5 per cent in FY24, including the positive impact of the HDFC twins merger, and added that the same number will come at over 15 per cent in FY25.

The loan book mix for banks is likely to change in FY25 due to the dip in shares of exposures to the retail and non-bank lenders segments, the agency said, adding that a revival in private capex will help increase the share of corporate lending in the overall pie.

Agritech startup Otipy joins ONDC to sell fruits, vegetables

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Agritech startup Otipy on Thursday said it has joined Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to sell fruits and vegetables to consumers in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai.

In a statement, Otipy said this integration ensures its catalogue is visible on various apps, making it easy to discover and enabling smooth transactions on the growing network.

As Otipy onboards ONDC, it is set to expand its customer reach, making its products available to a wider audience through popular ONDC seller apps like Pincode (by PhonePe) and Paytm apps.

This move aims to strengthen the brand's presence in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai, the statement said.

Moreover, Otipy will also focus on bulk procurement directly from farmers and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

"As we join the ONDC Network, it helps us in expanding our reach to varied customer segments. Through the network, we not only plan to enrich buyer choices but also elevate the shopping experience, facilitating inclusivity in a dynamic e-commerce landscape," Varun Khurana, Founder and CEO of Otipy, said.

"With Otipy on the Open Network, it not only stands to benefit from an extensive reach of the network but also reinforces its commitment to fostering a sustainable and inclusive e-commerce framework," T Koshy, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of ONDC, said.

Cabinet okays ₹75,000 crore rooftop solar scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday approved a rooftop solar scheme, PM-Surya Ghar: Mufti Bijli Yojna, with an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore, to provide up to Rs 78,000 subsidy for the installation of solar plants and 300 units free power for one crore households.

Briefing media after the Union Cabinet meeting, I&B Minister Anurag Thakur informed that approval has been given for the scheme for installing rooftop solar and providing free electricity up to 300 units every month for one crore households.

"The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana with a total outlay of Rs 75,021 crore for installing rooftop solar and providing free electricity up to 300 units every month for one crore households," an official statement said.

The Prime Minister launched the scheme on 13th February 2024.

The scheme provides a central financial assistance (CFA) of 60 per cent of system cost for 2 kW systems and 40 per cent of additional system cost for systems between 2 kW to 3 kW capacity. The CFA will be capped at 3 kW.

At current benchmark prices, this will mean Rs 30,000 subsidy for 1 kW system, Rs 60,000 for 2 kW systems and Rs 78,000 for 3 kW systems or higher.

The households will apply for subsidy through the National Portal and will be able to select a suitable vendor for installing rooftop solar.

The National Portal will assist the households in their decision-making process by providing relevant information such as appropriate system sizes, benefits calculator, vendor rating etc.

Households will be able to access collateral-free low-interest loan products of around 7 per cent at present for installation of residential RTS (rooftop solar) systems up to 3 kW.

Other Features of the scheme include a Model Solar Village to be developed in each district to act as a role model for adoption of rooftop solar in rural areas.

Besides, Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions shall also benefit from incentives for promoting rooftop solar (RTS) installations in their areas.

The scheme provides a component for payment security for renewable energy service company (RESCO) based models as well as a fund for innovative projects in RTS.

Even Rohit, Kohli should play domestic cricket when free: Kirti

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Member of the 1983 World Cup-winning team Kirti Azad on Thursday backed the BCCI's directive for cricketers to play Ranji Trophy, saying it's a good move and the rule should be applicable to every India team player, including Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

The out-of-favour duo of Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were excluded from the list of centrally-contracted players after they ignored the directive to play Ranji Trophy.

"It (directive) is a very good move. Everybody should be playing Ranji Trophy cricket, but currently the emphasis is on the IPL. It is good, it is entertaining but the real cricket is the (five) days' cricket. Playing in domestic cricket is good, it keeps you in touch.

"But whenever you are free, even if you're a Rohit Sharma or a Virat Kohli, you should go back and play domestic cricket for the state. That (state) gave you the opportunity to be a player, get selected and then play for the country.

He felt that penalising just Ishan and Iyer wasn't right.

"Just to penalise the two is not correct, I think everybody should be penalised. Everybody should be seen with the same mirror," Azad told PTI Video.

Azad declined to comment on whether this was the potential end of the road for Ishan and Iyer after their names were excluded from the list of centrally-contracted players.

"My question is, are they playing enough domestic cricket? They are playing T20 cricket, nowadays and every other state has a T20 cricket league. Back in the days when we were starting our careers, players like Bishan Singh Bedi, Madan Lal, Surinder Amarnath, Mohinder Amarnath, Chetan Chauhan, Sunil Gavaskar, Sandeep Patil, Karsan Ghavri played alongside youngsters like me and Ravi Shastri.

"All these senior Test team players would play for their sides, would play for the pride of their state which seems missing in the youngsters nowadays," he added.

He questioned why India players had issues playing domestic cricket while England cricketers willingly played county cricket when not in the national side.

"Look at county cricket; there are 20-plus counties and there are numerous three-day and four-day games along with T20 cricket, but every player is involved there. If a player is left out of the Test squad, then he returns to play for his county.

"So why can't we have our players playing those domestic matches, that's the big question," he added.

He praised players like Dhruv Jurel and Sarfaraz Khan for finding the balance between T20 cricket for their IPL teams and playing Ranji Trophy.

"There are players like Jurel, Sarfaraz who do play T20 cricket but, at the end of the day, are also representing their states in the Ranji trophy. The bowlers also get into the rhythm of bowling longer spells when they regularly play domestic cricket. It (Ranji) is not a form of slam-bang and thank you," he said.

RAHUL RULED OUT OF FIFTH TEST, BUMRAH RETURNS: BCCI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior India batter KL Rahul will not feature in the fifth and final Test against England in Dharamsala owing to an injury while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will return to the team, the BCCI said on Thursday.

Rahul, who continues to feel sore in his right quadriceps, has travelled to London to get an expert opinion on his injury.

The wicketkeeper-batter became unavailable after the series-opener in Hyderabad in January and as per the BCCI, he was 90 per cent fit before the third Test in Rajkot earlier this month.

"Mr. KL Rahul, whose participation in the final IDFC First Bank Test was subject to fitness, has been ruled out of the fifth and final Test in Dharamsala. The BCCI Medical Team is closely monitoring him and coordinating with specialists in London for further management of his issue," the Board said in a release.

Meanwhile Bumrah, who was released from the squad for the fourth Test in Ranchi in line with the team's workload management policy, will link up with the squad in Dharamsala for the final Test, beginning March 7.

India have already taken an unassailable 3-1 lead, following the victory in the fourth Test in Ranchi.

Rahul's absence from the final Test means Rajat Patidar remained with the squad but the MP batter can't be sure of his place in the playing eleven, having aggregated only 63 runs in six innings.

All-rounder Washington Sundar has also been released from the squad.

"He will join Tamil Nadu - his Ranji Trophy side - for their Ranji Trophy Semi-final fixture against Mumbai, starting March 2nd, 2024. He will join the India squad after the completion of the domestic fixture for the fifth Test, if need be," the BCCI said.

Rahul needs to be fully fit before the IPL where he will lead Lucknow Super Giants and is expected to bat in the middle order to bolster his chances of making the India squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean.

It is the same quadriceps injury that had sidelined Rahul for almost four months last year.

Having got injured during the IPL, Rahul returned to action during the Asia Cup in September last and made instant impact. In the Test tour of South Africa last year, Rahul was the only century-maker for India in the drawn series.

The BCCI also said senior pacer Mohammed Shami is recovering well after undergoing a surgery on February 26 for his right heel problem.

"He is recovering well and will soon head to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to commence his rehabilitation process," the Board said of Shami.

India's updated squad for fifth Test: Rohit Sharma (C), Jasprit Bumrah (VC), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Devdutt Padikkal, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep.

Australia 279-9 on Day 1 of 1st Test against New Zealand

AP ■ WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND)

The sun came out around lunchtime at the Basin Reserve on Thursday. Its appearance at first breathed life into New Zealand's bowling performance on the first day of the first cricket Test against Australia.

Then the tall West Australian Cameron Green took the upper hand for Australia with an unbeaten 103, reaching his second test century in the last over of the day. At stumps Australia was 279-9 and Green appeared to have wrested control of the match from New Zealand at the last minute.

Green was reluctant to say so.

"The match is pretty close," Green said.

"They're probably just on top. They've got a quality batting lineup and we've got to bowl well tomorrow. It's a lot about the overhead conditions and we've got to wake up tomorrow and see how the overheads are."

New Zealand had bowled unproductively on a cool, overcast morning and Steve Smith and Usman Khawaja had looked like carrying Australia to lunch without loss after it had sent in on a green pitch.

As the sun broke through the clouds and began to warm a capacity crowd at the inner-city oval, New Zealand's luck changed. After going 24 overs without a breakthrough in the morning, Matt Henry dismissed Smith (31) 10 minutes before lunch.

Marnus Labuschagne (1) fell just after the resumption, then Khawaja (33) and Travis Head (1) were out as Australia slipped from 61-0 to 89-4.

Mitch Marsh and Green counter-attacked with a partnership of 67 for the fifth wicket before and directly after tea. Marsh made 40 from 39 balls with six fours and a six but he also fell to Henry. Green went on to turn the tide of the first day with his century from 154 balls. He lashed three late boundaries to do so, reaching his century from the penultimate ball of the day.

When the covers came off at the Basin Reserve about 8 am Thursday after light rain overnight and in the early morning, the pitch looked bright green and moist. With the two teams captained by faster bowlers in a rarity for Test cricket it was inevitable the team that won the toss would bowl.

Pat Cummins called tails, it was a head and Tim Southee said New Zealand would field, saving his batters from the need to face Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc and what looked like a green seamer.

As it turned out, the pitch was not as lively as it appeared, at least at first. There was a bit of grass to aid seam, a little swing in overcast conditions but not as much pace at it might have seemed.

Smith and Khawaja were bent on surviving the morning, not too concerned with runs and they came within minutes of doing before Henry struck just at the sun began to shine.

Henry had Smith caught by wicketkeeper Tom Blundell with a good length ball that just left the batter, sending Blundell diving across first slip. Australia went to lunch at 62-1 and New Zealand may have felt the morning was less productive than it should have been.

कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद मंडीदीप जिला-रायसेन

दूरभाष एवं फैक्स नम्बर 07480-407022 Email - cmomandideep@mpurban.gov.in

क्र./6431/न.पा.प./2024 मंडीदीप, दिनांक 28.02.2024

// ई-निविदा सूचना //

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Kiran opens new avenue for UP Warriorz

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Kiran Navgire would not have opened but for a freak shoulder injury to Vrinda Dinesh and now her bruising fifty against the Mumbai Indians might just prompt UP Warriorz to rework their combination at the top in the ongoing Women's Premier League.

Navgire struck a 31-ball 57 and combined with Alyssa Healy (33) to help UPW overhaul a 162-run target in just 16.4 overs against the defending champions last night.

It could shake things up in the line-up, which has till now worked around the far more traditional opening pair of Healy and Vrinda.

"When the innings ended the head coach (Jon Lewis) came up to me and said I had to open. I was happy, because I opened the batting in domestic cricket, and I had the chance to do that here," Navgire said in the post-match press meet.

Range hitters are a rare breed in women's cricket and Navgire has opened that option for the UP outfit. The Warriorz have been notoriously slow starters in the WPL with their middle-order batters creaking under massive run-rate pressure.

In their first match against Royal Challengers Bangalore, UP made 36 for 1 and they were 21 for three against the Delhi Capitals in the second game.

But with Navgire coming in as opener, UP made 61 for no loss in the Power Play segment. It was their fastest start, for that matter any team's, in this edition of the WPL.

Navgire, a big fan of former Indian captain MS Dhoni, is not new to opening the innings. She garnered instant attraction during the 2021-22 domestic season as a guest player for Nagaland.

She hammered 35 sixes in the Senior Women's T20 league that season, the most ever in the history of that tournament.

The 29-year-old, who hails from Maharashtra, also became the first Indian woman to score a 150-plus score in T20 when she blasted a 76-ball 162 against Arunachal Pradesh.

Her approach is as simple as the big shots she executes.

"I just played the ball on merit (against MI), played my natural game. If the ball is in my arc, it should go into the stands - that is my natural thought," said Navgire.

Her assault on MI pacer Issy Wong in the third over of UPW's chase underlined Navgire's growth into an all-ground batter.

When Wong pitched short, Navgire stood tall and sent the ball to the mid-wicket boundary with a strong pull.

In the next ball, the England pacer pitched the ball further up but Navgire muscled it through mid-off for a four.

MI coach Charlotte Edwards admitted that they were not prepared for Navgire's aggression. "Kiran Navgire played brilliantly and took the game away from us in the period that she batted and we never quite recovered.

"Firstly, I don't think Navgire was going to open. The injury (to Vrinda), I guess, gave them a licence to put her up in the order. We weren't quite planning for her in the batting," said Edwards. Now that Navgire has the licence to kill, the Warriorz can hope for a more productive WPL season.

Irfan questions denial of contracts to Iyer, Kishan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India pacer Irfan Pathan has questioned the BCCI's decision to deny central contracts to Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer for ignoring a diktat to play Ranji Trophy, saying that players like Hardik Pandya have not been judged on the same parameter.

The BCCI on Wednesday terminated Kishan and Iyer's central contracts, while Pandya, who has not featured in Tests since 2018, secured a place in Grade A.

"If players like Hardik don't want to play red ball cricket, should he and others like him participate in white-ball domestic cricket when they aren't on national duty?" he questioned BCCI's decision, in his post on X.

"If this doesn't apply to all, then Indian cricket won't achieve the desired results!" he added. The 25-year-old Kishan did not turn up for Jharkhand throughout the team's campaign in Ranji Trophy despite not being on national duty since leaving from the tour of South Africa in December last, citing personal reasons.

He has instead focussed on preparing for the IPL next month. He is competing in the ongoing DY Patil T20 Tournament in Mumbai and will be turning up for the Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

Iyer did not make himself available for Mumbai's Ranji quarterfinal against Baroda after being excluded from the Indian team following the second Test against England, citing a groin injury.

He, however, has been picked for the Ranji semifinals starting March 2 and will be back to lead Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL beginning on March 22.

Irfan believes that the duo will come back strongly.

"They are talented cricketers, both Shreyas and Ishan. Hoping they bounce back and come back stronger," he said.

The exclusion of Iyer and Kishan is being seen as a stern message to young players unwilling to put in the hard yards in first-class cricket, while chasing white-ball glory and lucrative IPL contracts.

On Wednesday, former India coach Ravi Shastri also backed the embattled duo.

"In the game of cricket, comebacks define the spirit. Chin-up, @ShreyasIyer15 and @ishankishan51! Dig deep, face challenges, and come back even stronger. Your past achievements speak volumes, and I have no doubt you'll conquer once again," Shastri had posted on X.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL

Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Finance Services, (Banking Division)
797-II, Shanti Kunj, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur 482001 (M.P.)

Case No.: OAEX 59/2011 in O.A. No.150/2009

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA Vs SHRI ASHOK SACHDEV AND OTHERS

E-AUCTION NO. 40/2024

Under mentioned properties will be sold by "on line e-auction" through website **https://www.bankeauctions.com** for recovery of a sum of **Rs.14,15,089.00 (Rupees Forteen Lakh Fifteen Thousand Eighty Nine Only)** payable by you/him in respect of Recovery Certificate in **O.A. No.150/2009** issued by the Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur with interest at **9.25%** p.a. with simple Interest from **14-10-2009** and costs payable as per recovery certificate till realization.

Date and Time of E-auction: 05-04-2024 Between 12.00 Hours and 13.00 hours.

SPECIFICATION OF THE PROPERTIES PUT FOR SALE

Open Plot No. 138, Shell City, Phase-1, Situated at Village- Gokanya, Tehsil- Mhow, District- Indore (M.P.) Area admeasuring 2500 sq.ft., Property jointly in the name of **Shri Ashok S/o Shri Kamal Ji Sachdev and Smt. Harsha W/o Shri Ashok Sachdev.**

Upset Price : Rs.12,55,000.00 (Rupees Twelve Lakh Fifty Five Thousand only)

Conditions of Sale: (1) Intending bidders must hold a valid digital signature certificate. For details contact M/s. **C-1 India Pvt.Ltd. website: https://www.bankeauctions.com; Helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithalesh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id- mpcg@c1india.com , E-mail ID: support@bankeauctions.com** (2) Intending bidders are advised to go through website **https://www.bankeauctions.com** for auction bid form and details, terms and conditions of sale before submitting their bids. (3) Bids should be submitted only online in the prescribed form along with a copy of identity document as an attachment to the bid form (refer detailed terms and conditions). Bidder should satisfy them self with regard to correctness, measurement, encumbrances etc by their own sources (Govt. Office) also later on DRT will not be responsible for this. (4) 10% of the upset price i.e. EMD/Bid price **Rs. 1,25,500.00 (Rupees One Lakh Twenty Five Thousand Five Hundred Only only)** must be remitted towards EMD through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the credit of **Account no. 31067074055** in the name of Recovery Officer, E-auction account, DRT Jabalpur with **State Bank of India, Ridge Road Branch, Jabalpur (IFSC Code: SBIN0007208)** and the remittance must be clearly mentioned in the bid form. (5) **Bids should be submitted on or before 17.00 Hours on 03-04-2024 online.** (6) A copy of the bid form along with its enclosure submitted online should be sent to Recovery Officer, DRT, Jabalpur, 797-II, Shanti Kunj, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur so as to reach at the earliest. (7) Online bidding will commence from the highest bid quoted among the bids and the minimum increase for each bid will be **Rs. 15,000/- (Rupees Fifteen Thousand Only).** In case of bid received before closure of Auction window, there shall be an automatic extension of 5 minutes in Auction time by the system. (8) The refund of EMD of the unsuccessful bidders will be remitted to the same account from which the payment has been made and no inquiry in this regard will be entertained, After deposit of EMD by intending bidder they cannot withdraw the EMD amount until they are declared as "Unsuccessful bidder" otherwise the amount will be forfeited. (9) In the case of immovable property listed in the schedule below, the successful bidder shall remit 25% of the bid amount (less EMD) on the next day on declaration, if the sale is knocked down in his / her favour through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer to the Account No. **31067074055** mentioned in SL. No. 4 and in default of such deposit, the property shall forthwith be put up again and resold and amount deposited as EMD will be forfeited. (10) The successful bidder shall remit balance 75% of the sale amount along with poundage of 1% of sale amount plus Rs. 10/- for each property separately within 15 days of auction, to the Account No. **31067074055** mentioned at SL. No. 04 through RTGS/NEFT/Money Transfer, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office working day after 15th day. In default of payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be resold after the issue of a fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit will be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold. (11) Property will be sold **"As is Where is and No Complaint basis".** (12) The properties can be inspected on **22-03-2024** between **12.00 Hrs. to 16.00 Hrs**. (13) Properties will not be sold below the upset price. (14) Recovery Officer have the absolute right to accept or reject the bid or postpone / cancel the sale without assigning any reason. (15) Intending bidders are advised to peruse copies of the title deed available with the **Mani Bhushan, Chief Manager, Mob No. 9343831533** and also check the identity and correctness of the property details and encumbrances etc. from their own sources also. DRT will not be responsible for correctness etc. (16) Details regarding e-auction shall be obtained from M/s. **C-1 India Pvt. Ltd., website: https://www.bankeauctions.com; Helpline No. 0124-4302020/21/22/23/24, for help a bidder in e-auction contact to Mr. Mithilesh Kumar on Mob. No. 7080804466; E-mail id- mpcg@c1indian.com, E-mail ID: support@bankeauctions.com** (17) Further property details if any required shall be obtained from **Mani Bhushan, Chief Manager, Mob No. 9343831533** (18) The bidders may participate in the e-auction by quoting / bidding from their own offices / places of their choice. Internet connectivity shall have to be ensured by each bidder himself. DRT / Bank / Service Provider shall not be held responsible for the internet connectivity, network problems, system crash down, Power failure etc.

Place: Jabalpur
Date: 09-02-2024

Vaatsalya Kumar
Recovery Officer, DRT, Jabalpur (M. P.)

MPIDC
MP INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.

सांस्कृतिक अभ्युदय से समृद्धि के पथ पर आगे बढ़ता मध्यप्रदेश

विक्रमादित्य युगीन भारत उत्कर्ष
नव जागरण और भारत विद्या पर एकाग्र

नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

विक्रमोत्सव 2024 का शुभारंभ

डॉ. मोहन यादव, मुख्यमंत्री

मुख्यमंत्री
डॉ. मोहन यादव
द्वारा

एवं

रीजनल इंडस्ट्री कॉन्क्लेव

- ₹8000 करोड़ से अधिक के विकास कार्यों का लोकार्पण एवं शिलान्यास
- 169 उद्योगपतियों को ₹6774 करोड़ की भूमि का आवंटन

उज्जयिनी विक्रम व्यापार मेला

- वाहनों के आरटीओ पंजीयन पर 50% की छूट
- हथकरघा एवं हस्तशिल्प की दुकानें आकर्षण का केन्द्र

विक्रम सांस्कृतिक पर्व

- 1 मार्च से 9 अप्रैल तक विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन
- भारत के कालजयी महानायकों की तेजस्विता के संग्रहालय 'वीर भारत न्यास' का शिलान्यास
- उज्जैन के रामघाट पर 25 लाख दीपों का प्रज्वलन एवं उज्जयिनी गौरव दिवस का आयोजन

का उद्घाटन

तथा

1.29 करोड़ लाड़ली बहनों को ₹1576 करोड़ का अंतरण

अब तक दी गई कुल ₹ 13,082 करोड़ की सहायता

1 मार्च, 2024 - प्रातः 10:30 बजे - कालिदास अकादमी, बहिरंग, उज्जैन

मध्यप्रदेश शासन

D-11221/23

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जनसम्पर्क द्वारा जारी

आकल्पन : म.प्र. माध्यम/2024