

OPINION 6
EXPLORING LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES AMID PLURALISM

WORLD 8
HARRIS CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE TRUCE IN GAZA

MONEY 10
MOODY'S RAISES 2024 GROWTH FORECAST TO 6.8 PER CENT

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SC ends immunity for lawmakers who turn into lawbreakers for Bribe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The privileges enjoyed by MPs and MLAs are "tethered intrinsically" to the functioning of the legislature collectively, the Supreme Court said on Monday while holding that lawmakers taking bribe to vote or make a speech in the House are not immune from prosecution.

A seven-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said members acting as constituents of the legislature may not claim any privilege or immunity unconnected with the working of the House.

To give any privilege unconnected to the functioning of Parliament or State legislature by necessity is to create a class of citizens which enjoys unchecked exemption from ordinary application of law, the bench said. "This was neither the intention of the Constitution nor the goal of vesting Parliament and Legislature with powers, privileges and immunities," said the bench, which also comprised Justices A S Bopanna, M M Sundresh, P S Narasimha, J B Pardiwala, Sanjay Kumar and Manoj Misra.

"We therefore hold that the assertion of a privilege by an individual member of Parliament or Legislature would be governed by a twofold test. First, the privilege claimed has to be tethered to the collective functioning of the House, and second, its necessity must bear a functional relationship to the discharge of the essential duties of a legislator," the court said. It said a House of Parliament or State legislature functions through the collective will of its individual members.

The bench said the evolution of parliamentary privileges as well as jurisprudence of the apex court establishes that members of the House or indeed the House itself cannot claim privileges which are not essentially related to their functioning. "The privileges enjoyed by members of the House are tethered intrinsically to the functioning of the House collectively," it said.

The CJ, who penned the 135-page verdict, said in a deliberative democracy, the aspirations of people are met by discourse in democratic institutions and the foremost among these institutions are Parliament and the State legislatures.

The bench said the object of the Constitution to give life and meaning to the aspirations of the people is carried out by its representatives through legislative business, deliberations and dialogue. "Parliament is called the 'grand inquest of the nation'. Not only can the actions and



legislative priorities of the Government of the day be scrutinised and criticised to hold it accountable, but Parliament also acts as a forum for ventilating the grievances of individuals, civil society, and public stakeholders," it said. "When the space for deliberation in the legislature shrinks, people resort to conversations and democratic actions outside

the legislature. This privilege of the citizens to scrutinise the proceedings in Parliament is a concomitant right of a deliberative democracy which is a basic feature of the Constitution," the bench said.

It said the fulcrum of parliamentary privileges under a constitutional and individually bear a functional relationship to the ability of the House to collectively fulfil its functioning and vindicate its authority and dignity. "In other words, these freedoms are necessary to be in furtherance of fertilising a deliberative, critical, and responsive democracy," it said.

"While some cherished freedoms exercised individually by members of the House, including the freedom of speech, have been undeniably understood to be essential to the functioning of the House as a whole, other exercises such as damaging public property or committing violence are not and cannot be deemed to have immunity," the bench said.

It said the privileges and immunities enshrined in Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution with respect to Houses of Parliament and state legislatures, their members and committees, respectively belong to the House collectively.

Articles 105 and 194 deal with the powers and privileges of MPs and MLAs in the Parliament and the legislative Assemblies.

Continued on Page 2

India bares its fangs at Maldives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Brushing aside recent remarks by Maldives President Mohamad Muizzu that no country has the licence to "bully" his country, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, "big bullies don't provide \$4.5 billion aid." This terse response came in reply to a question regarding whether India was perceived as a bully in the region. Moreover, these observations, in a veiled dig at Muizzu, were against the backdrop of diplomatic tension between India and Maldives.

Jaishankar's remark came after Muizzu, in an indirect reference to India, stated in January that no country had the licence to "bully us," even though it was a tiny nation. Speaking at an event promoting his book 'Why Bharat Matters,' Jaishankar highlighted India's active role in providing timely assistance to its neighbours during crises when asked whether New Delhi was perceived as a "bully" in the subcontinent and Indian Ocean region.

"The big change today in this part of the world is what has happened between India and its neighbours. When you say India is perceived as a big bully, you know, big bullies don't provide \$4.5 billion when the neighbours are in trouble. "Big bullies don't supply vaccines to other countries when Covid-19 is



File Photo / PTI

on or make exceptions to their own rules to respond to food demands or fuel demands or fertiliser demands because some war in some other part of the world has complicated their lives," Jaishankar said at the event last week. The Minister's comments came amid the diplomatic row between India and Maldives that began in January when three Maldivian Ministers were suspended for their derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he posted pictures of his visit to Lakshadweep and pitched it as a tourist destination. "You also have to look today at what has actually changed between India and its neighbours. Certainly, with Bangladesh and Nepal, today

you have a power grid. You have roads which didn't exist a decade ago. You have railways which didn't exist a decade ago. There is a usage of waterways. Indian businesses use ports of Bangladesh on a national treatment basis," Jaishankar said. He stressed that trade and investment with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives have seen a sharp rise over the past few years. "Today, at the connectivity (side), just the volume of people is moving up and down. The volume of the trade and the investments which are there, it's actually a very good story to tell. Not just with Nepal and Bangladesh, with Sri Lanka as well, I would also say even with the Maldives," the Minister said.

BJP hits troubled waters in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A revolt from within the National Democratic Alliance is certain to dampen the BJP's dreams of winning at least one seat in the ensuing Lok Sabha election from Kerala. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed confidence that the NDA would touch the double-digit mark in the Kerala election during last week's whirlwind tour to the State.

On Monday, Tushar Vellappalli, the president of BDJS, the political wing of the Eezhava community's SNDP Yogam, humiliated PC George, the seven-time legislator who had recently joined the BJP.

"George always cheats the Eezhava community and is not worthy of being included in the BJP. No Christians in the state would vote for George or the candidates for whom he campaigns," said Tushar while speaking to the media. The BDJS has been allocated four Lok Sabha constituencies from Kerala by the BJP, despite the fact that the former is not a force to reckon with anywhere in the State. In the last Lok Sabha election, the BDJS could poll just 1.8 per cent of the votes in the four constituencies from which it contested. Adding to the woes of the BJP, Tushar had been arrested by the UAE Police from Ajman in 2019 following the bouncing of a cheque worth ₹19 crore



issued by him. It was the timely intervention of a UAE-based business tycoon from Kerala that saved Tushar from a prolonged jail term. The business tycoon saved Tushar following an SOS message sent by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to the former. Though Tushar is with the NDA, his father Natesan, who is the general secretary of SNDP, is a close friend of Vijayan and the CPI(M) leaders. He is also accused in the multi-crore microfinance cheating case. The outburst by Tushar has upset the Christian community in the State, which was slowly shifting towards the BJP camp. "What is the relevance of Tushar in the NDA? The BJP can always do without him. By insulting George, he has insulted the Christians in the State," said Kevin Peter, president of the Christian Alliance for Social Action (CASA). An attack on the assistant vicar of St. Mary's Church at

Poonjar by activists of PFI had upset the Christians in the State. Since the assault was carried out by PFI workers, the State administration had directed the police not to take it seriously. The incident was blacked out by the pro-CPI(M) media, and it was George's intervention that brought it to the limelight. Senior BJP leaders bemoaned the silence being maintained by the party's State chief, K Surendran, and Union Minister V Muraleedharan. "It has to do with the community to which the three belong. All of them are from the Eezhava community," said a senior BJP leader in the State. "The BDJS is a pain in the neck for the Hindutva party, as the alliance with the former has not helped the BJP mobilise more votes than what it was getting in the earlier hustings. The chances of the BDJS polling a respectable number of votes in this election too look remote. "It would be better if the BJP dumps the BDJS. The earlier it is done, the better," said the senior party leader.

TMC leader Tapas Roy quits Party on Sandeshkhali issue

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Tapas Roy, a founder member and a five-time MLA of the Trinamool Congress, on Monday quit the party "insulted and hurt" by the top party brass and "upset" about the rising incidents of corruption and the Sandeshkhali land-grab and sexual assault on women. "Some recent incidents have made me take a very painful decision ... I have been deeply shocked and shaken with the way Sandeshkhali incident was handled ... besides corruption has become a major issue for which there was no explanation ... neither there was any attempt to discipline the corrupt," Roy a five-time MLA and a former Deputy Chief Whip — enjoying the rank of a Cabinet Minister — said, adding that he was "deeply upset by the kind of treatment that was meted out to me by the party top brass."

Roy who had won the Baranagar Assembly adjoining North Kolkata seat for three successive times since 2011 on Tuesday resigned as an MLA too. "I had resigned from all the party posts on March 1 ... today I have resigned from MLA ... now I am a free bird," he said. While the veteran leader's resignation led to fervent speculations on whether he was joining the BJP, he said was in the midst of taking some decisions. "I will take a decision in due time," he said. "Referring to a raid conducted

by the Enforcement Directorate in his house allegedly at the instance of TMC leader in Parliament Sudip Bandopadhyay, the Baranagar MLA said, "At least 50 people told me that it is Sudip Bandopadhyay who had got the ED to raid my house ... because he was apprehensive of my rising stature in the party. On why he would not raise the issue with party supremo and

A last minute attempt to revise the situation by sending Minister Bratya Basu and senior leader Kunal Ghosh — who too is not in good terms with Sudip Bandopadhyay — went in vain. "I am disappointed with the way the party is functioning. I am fed up with so many allegations of corruption leveled against the party and the government. I also do not support the way the issue of



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee he said, "Even my political rivals would not concede that I have a tainted past ... after the ED raids I waited for months but none from me up or my family ... but I was shocked when the Chief Minister defended a person like Shahjahan in the Assembly ... but not a single word was spoken in my support ... I was deserted during trying circumstances."

Sandeshkhali was handled," he said. On whether Bandopadhyay would win the North Kolkata parliamentary seat held by the TMC since 2009, Roy said, "It is impossible for him to win this seat ... he will badly be defeated." The TMC however refuted his allegations saying, Roy was giving excuses for leaving the party as there was deal that had been struck between him and the BJP.

Kejriwal reaches out to Women

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a cue from the erstwhile Shivraj Singh Chauhan Government's Ladli scheme in Madhya Pradesh, the Arvind Kejriwal Government in NCT Delhi on Monday announced annual sops of ₹12,000 for the women of national Capital above 18 years of age. The beneficiary must be a voter card holder of NCT Delhi. Women registered as voters in Delhi who are not availing of benefits under any other Government scheme will be eligible under the scheme. The woman should neither be a Government employee nor an income taxpayer. According to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, about 50

lakh women will benefit from this in Delhi. The 'freebie' comes ahead of the Lok Sabha elections when the Kejriwal led AAP is contesting four of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi as an alliance partner of the Congress in INDIA Bloc. Provisions of free electricity, water to certain consumers and free DTC bus ride to women already exist in the system. A data of the Delhi Government showed that it had kept a provision of ₹ 3,250 crore for electricity subsidy in 2023-24, which was ₹3,161 crore in 2022-23. Besides, DTC and DJB are incurring huge losses due to freebies.

Continued on Page 2

Modi ka Parivar becomes Desh hai Parivar campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The remarks of 'Chowkidar Chor Hai' by the Congress during the last general elections prompted BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to christen their social media accounts with the prefix 'Chowkidar'. This Lok Sabha, it's 'Modi Ka Parivar'. The ruling party rallied around Modi as its leaders suffixed their names on

social media profiles with "Modi Ka Parivar", a day after RJD chief Lalu Prasad took a jibe at the PM for having no family. Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, and Nirmala Sitharaman, along with BJP chief JP Nadda, were joined by party members from across the country in declaring themselves as "Modi Ka Parivar (Modi's family)" on their social media accounts, as the ruling

party launched a sharp counterattack on the Opposition. Several Modi-supporting social media users also made the same change on their pages. Sudhanshu Trivedi, a BJP national spokesperson, told reporters that Opposition parties have been launching personal attacks against Modi and making such "petty" remarks against him for the past 16-17 years. "In that series, yesterday (Sunday), at a rally in Patna,



once again such petty remarks were made against Prime Minister Modi by Lalu Prasad in the presence of INDIA alliance leaders. This is sad and painful," Trivedi said at a Press conference at the BJP headquarters here. "He (Yadav) has talked about Modi's family. I want to remind (Yadav) that for Prime Minister Modi the entire

country is his family," the BJP leader added. Some Opposition parties have formed the INDIA Bloc to take on the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. The BJP's show of solidarity around its top leader in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections is reminiscent of a similar campaign the party had mounted prior to the 2019 general

elections with the "Main Bhi Chowkidar" addition to their names to take on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "Chowkidar Chor Hai" dig at Modi. The campaign around the Prime Minister's perceived image of honesty and anti-corruption spearhead turned out to be a big success as the Congress' attempts to target him over alleged corruption in the Rafale fighter aircraft deal proved to be a non-starter.

Continued on Page 2

Mamata attacks Centre over fund release

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for peddling lies on issues concerning Bengal and demanded his apology.

Addressing a meeting at Tamluk in East Midnapore she said, "the Prime Minister during his recent visit to Bengal said that Rs 47,000 crore was given to our State and that we have misappropriated the money... but here is the fact that I am placing before you and challenging anyone from the BJP to prove it wrong... from 2014 to 2021-22 the BJP Government gave us Rs 29,834 crore... in Awam Yojna the State Government gave Rs 20,000 crore... between 2021-22 and 2023-24 they gave not a single penny... despite that we constructed 43 lakh houses... this is a fact for everyone to see and available in the public documents... the Prime Minister should publicly accept the lies he sold here and apologise to the people."

Attacking the Centre for stopping funds the Chief Minister said, "the people of the State



pays GST... the Centre collects it and does not give back our share... they have not given the wages for the MNREGA workers... and we have started paying it now... a team of TMC MPs and ministers led by Abhishek Banerjee had gone to Delhi but they were ill-treated there... now it is for the people to decide." Coming down on the BJP Government for using the central agencies to subjugate the opposition leaders Banerjee said, "they are sending the agencies to the houses of opposition leaders... the ED officials who know us have expressed their helplessness... they say that they have nothing to do about this as their hands are tied and they

are forced to conduct raids in our houses and coerce the opposition into subjugation... often phone come to the houses of the opposition leaders asking them to join the BJP or face consequences... I will like to challenge them to come openly and fight against us democratically instead of using the Agencies." Warning the BJP against using agencies against the opposition parties she said, "they should understand that today they are using the agencies to force the opposition leaders to change parties but tomorrow when they will not be in power the same agencies may be used against them... then how will they feel."

EC warns Bengal babus against partisan games

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The full bench of Election Commission of India on Monday warned the senior Bengal bureaucrats against playing partisan games ahead of the elections.

In a meeting with the top officials — including SPs and DMs — of North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Jhargram, Raiganj and other places the ECI told that their conduct was being closely watched and if required they would be shifted from their position.

The SP of North 24 Parganas of which the Sandeshkhali blocks is a part, the ECI said the way he handled the situation there was deplorable and he would continue to be under close surveillance of the ECI. Earlier the ECI separately met the representatives of the political parties where the opposition parties including the BJP and the Left complained about manipulation of electoral rolls. "Complaints of bogus names appearing in the voters' list and many genuine names being deleted have been brought to their notice and they have taken cognizance of it," CPI(M)'s Samik Lahiri said.

NC to decide on alliance with INDIA Bloc

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

All eyes are set on the crucial meeting of the National Conference Parliamentary Board (NCPB) in Srinagar on March 5 as it is expected to take a final call on contesting upcoming Lok Sabha polls in alliance with the constituents of INDIA Bloc.

In the absence of any consensus during the informal round of talks between the Congress and the National Conference, the outcome of the Parliamentary board meeting is keenly awaited to chalk out the future course of action.

Last week, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee Chief Vikar Rasool Wani dropped subtle hints about the possibility of formalizing a seat-sharing formula with the National Conference. The parliamentary board of the party is also expected to finalize the names of the party candidates for the Lok Sabha polls. Former Chief Minister and party Vice President Omar Abdullah's name is being considered for the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat while Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi is poised to get a mandate from the party for

the Baramulla seat. If the National Conference relented and agreed to the proposal of the INDIA bloc PDP may be given the mandate to field their candidate from the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. So far the National Conference was firm on contesting the seats it won during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

On the other hand, the top brass of the J&K unit of Bharatiya Janta Party has shifted base to Srinagar ahead of the public rally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 7 at the Bakshi stadium.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar on Monday J&K BJP unit Chief Ravinder Raina said BJP is confident that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would show their love for Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he arrives for a public rally in Srinagar on March 7. "For the people of Kashmir, it is a matter of happiness that PM Modi is coming to the valley on March 7. When the PM comes to Kashmir, more than two lakh people will participate in the rally at Bakshi Stadium. There is a wave of happiness in Kashmir that PM Modi is coming to Kashmir," he added.

Vacate party office at Rouse Avenue by June 15: SC to AAP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that the Aam Aadmi Party has no lawful right to continue on the land, the Supreme Court on Monday directed the party to vacate its offices at Rouse Avenue in the national capital by June 15, 2024, after noting that the plot was allotted to the Delhi High Court for expanding judicial infrastructure.

Taking note of the fact that Lok Sabha elections are around the corner, a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra asked AAP to approach Land And Development Office under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry for allotment of land for its offices.

"In view of the impending general elections, we grant time until June 15, 2024, to vacate the premises so that land allotted to expand the district judiciary's footprint can be utilised on an expeditious basis.

"We would request the L&DO to process the application and communicate its decision within a period of four

weeks," the bench said. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the city's ruling party, submitted that AAP is one of the six national parties in the country and it is entitled to land in New Delhi municipal area in accordance with its status.

"They are telling us as a national party we get nothing, I'm given (land in) Badarpur, while everyone else is in better places. A particular government does not want me to be flourishing and working," Singhvi said.

Calling AAP an "encroacher," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the top court that the land allotment to the party was revoked in June 2017.

Advocate K Parameshwar, appointed as amicus curiae to assist the apex court in the matter, informed the bench that by a communication dated June 13, 2017, the Public Works Department of the Delhi government apprised the National Secretary of the AAP that the allotment of Bungalow no.206 at Rouse Avenue stood revoked as per the directions of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

Mound excavations to throw light on Buddhist heritage

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Armed with approval from the top Central wildlife authority, the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) is poised to embark on highly anticipated excavations at a locally acclaimed mound known as Kanhaiya Baba Ka Sathan within the Sohagbarwa Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh. This site located adjacent to village Dharmauli in Maharajganj is believed to hold the key to one of the eight great original stupas where relics of Lord Buddha are said to be enshrined.

Currently, India is home to the relics of Lord Buddha excavated at Piprahwa, considered a part of the ancient Buddhist site of Kapilavastu, while the relics of the disciples are from a monastery at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh.

The recent green light from the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL), led by Union



Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, paves the way for yet another significant endeavour to scout for more relics proposed to be kept at hectares of forest land within the sanctuary. The ASI's upcoming excavation is expected to yield valuable insights into Buddhist heritage, shedding light on the early development and spread of Buddhism across the Indian

subcontinent. Officials from the ASI said the potential of these findings to enrich our understanding of ancient Indian society and culture as well as more artifacts in the treasure trove of the country. The proposal for excavation had already received prior recommendations from various authorities, including the UP Chief Wildlife Warden, the State Board for Wild Life, and

the State Government. Last year, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath too had pushed for excavation and said, "There are uncovered historical facts that need excavation. The Archeological Survey of India is also interested in this."

At the meeting of the NBWL held late last month, the UP Chief Wildlife Warden justifying the endeavour cited the need to ascertain the historical and cultural significance of the region, particularly in connection to Buddhist texts identifying the site as one of the original stupas housing relics of Lord Buddha.

Despite the sensitive nature of the site and its surroundings within the wildlife sanctuary, the NBWL chairman recommended the proposal, acknowledging the sentiments and demands of the local community while ensuring that legal protections and conservation measures are upheld. The ASI has been instructed to conduct the excavation with

utmost care, ensuring minimal disturbance to the sanctuary and its wildlife.

Located on the border area of Uttar Pradesh, the sanctuary has the international Indo-Nepal border in the North and inter-State UP-Bihar border to the East.

The sanctuary shelters rare and endangered species such as tiger, leopard, cheetal, bear, Indian Civet, giant squirrel, hare, wild cat, wild boar, monitor lizard, neelgai, and Indian python among others.

The ASI has also been directed to ensure employing non-disruptive excavation methods, refraining from the use of blasting materials and ensuring that construction materials do not encroach upon wildlife corridors or environmentally sensitive zones.

The aim is to preserve the sanctity of the site while retrieving India's rich cultural and religious heritage, said an official from the Union Environment Ministry.

Modi slams DMK for failing to manage Chennai floods

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lashed out at the DMK dispensation, alleging that the State Government did not do flood management during the severe inundation Chennai faced last December, but instead "managed" the media to send out the message that everything is fine. In his address, the PM alleged: "DMK Government did not do flood management but media management; the Government told the media that all is well during Chennai floods." Furthermore, he claimed that the DMK is upset that it is unable to "make money" out of Central Government schemes. Stating that he shares a long-time bond with Tamil Nadu, Modi claimed that some people in the State today are unable to stomach the BJP's growing



popularity. Speaking of development, the PM said in the mission to build a developed India, the people of Chennai would play a very important role. "Every time I come to Chennai I feel energised by the people. It is great to be here in this city which is full of life. Chennai is also a great hub of talent, trade and tradition," he added.

Also, Modi on Monday visited a nuclear power plant here

where a key procedure regarding power generation commenced.

The commencement of 'core loading' of the country's indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, located about 60 km from Chennai happened in the presence of the PM.

This 500 MWe fast breeder reactor has been developed by Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidut Nigam Limited (BHAVINI). The reactor core consists of control sub-assemblies, blanket sub-assemblies and fuel sub-assemblies.

The core loading activity consists of loading of reactor control sub-assemblies, followed by the blanket sub-assemblies and the fuel sub-assemblies which will generate power.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, among others, accompanied the PM.

BJP leader withdraws from electoral race amid video row

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uppendra Singh Rawat, a BJP Member of Parliament representing Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, has stirred controversy by withdrawing his candidature from the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in the wake of an alleged obscene video scandal.

Initially listed among the BJP's contenders for the forthcoming polls, Rawat found himself embroiled in a scandal following the emergence of a video purportedly showing him in a compromising position with a foreign woman.

Despite vehemently refuting the video's authenticity, Rawat opted to step down from the electoral race, acknowledging the need to address the swirling controversy surrounding him. In response to the scandal, Rawat promptly filed a First Information Report (FIR) with local law enforcement, alleging that the video had been doctored and maliciously circulated to tarnish his reputation.

Taking to his social media platform, Rawat directly addressed the issue on Monday, stating, "An edited video of mine is being made viral which is generated by DeepFake AI technology, for which I have lodged an FIR. In this regard, I have requested the Honorable National President to get it investigated. I will not contest any election in public life until I am proven innocent."

This development unfolds shortly after the BJP's announcement on February 2 of its initial roster of 195 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, including 34 incumbent Ministers.

Kejriwal reaches out to...

From Page 1

Presenting the Budget outlay of ₹ 76,000 crore which is 1.47 per cent higher than the Revised Estimates of ₹ 74,900 crore of the year 2023-24 for the year 2024-25, in Delhi Assembly which it claimed to be inspired by the vision of 'Ram Rajya', Finance Minister Atishi announced that the Kejriwal Government will give of Rs 1,000 per month to women above 18 years, having voter identity cards from the national Capital.

Kejriwal called it the "world's biggest programme" for women empowerment and asserted that the Government is inspired by the ideals of Ram Rajya. The new initiative is strikingly similar to Madhya Pradesh's Ladli Behna Yojana which was launched by the then Shivraj Singh Chouhan Government in March last year, under which women from lower and middle-class homes would receive a monthly transfer of Rs 1,000 into their accounts.

Interestingly, the overall Budget for the financial year 2024-25 has witnessed a 3.7 per cent reduction compared to Rs 78,800 crore allotted in the preceding fiscal. The allocation for health and education sectors also reduced in the latest budget.

According to Budget document the Kejriwal Government has earmarked Rs 2,000 crore under the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana'. Under the scheme Rs 1,000 per month to be given to women, who is above 18 years in the national Capital. "When money comes into

the hands of a common man, they go to the market. This creates demand in the market and leads to progress of the country. The Budget of Delhi Government is inspired by the concept of Ram Raj. In this, all sections and all sectors have been taken care of," he said.

Further, the Government has allocated Rs 16,396 crore for the education sector, slightly down from the previous fiscal's allocation of Rs 16,575 crore. Similarly, the health sector's outlay of Rs 8,685 crore is less than Rs 9,742 earmarked in the previous Budget.

As per the Budget document, 6731 crore earmarked in the Transport Sector, Rs 8,241 crore for the local bodies, Rs 7,195 crore for the Delhi Jal Board, Rs 6,216 crore for various schemes under the Social Welfare Department, Women and Child Development Department and SC/ST/OBC Welfare Department, Rs 5,702 crore for transport sector, Rs 3,500 crore for the Delhi Government bus services towards the next financial year, Rs 3,353 crore for the power sector, Rs 1,768 crore for road and flyovers, Rs 664 crore for all the nutrition-related schemes, Rs 902 crore for unauthorised colonies, Rs 850 crore for the MCD, Rs 510 crore for induction of electric buses in DTC and cluster buses fleet and Rs 500 crore for the Delhi Metro. According to Budget document, establishment expenditure and other committed liabilities are proposed to be increased Rs 43,600 crore in the approved Budget estimate.

Ready to answer ED questions via video conferencing, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After skipping the eight summons issued to him, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has written to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), in connection with the Delhi excise policy case, saying that he was ready to answer the probe agency's questions. "Even though the summons are illegal, I am ready to answer the questions, Kejriwal is learnt to have told the ED. Seeking a date after March 12, Kejriwal has said he will respond to questions via video conferencing," sources in the AAP said.

According to sources the agency was examining Kejriwal's response. The agency might not allow Kejriwal's request to appear virtually and might issue a ninth summons to him for questioning in the case, they said. Another source said the agency wants to physically interrogate the chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy case.

Kejriwal, in a press conference, said it was written in law that ED proceedings are like judicial proceedings. "That means the agency is like a court. In a court, any party is allowed to be present through video conferencing. If I am asking for video-conferencing, which is my right, I hope they will allow it," he said.

Kejriwal, who has consistently labeled the summonses as 'illegal', had chosen not to appear before the ED on multiple occasions, asking the agency to



wait as the matter is sub-judice. The AAP has alleged that the probe agency's intention is to arrest party national convener Kejriwal in the "middle of the Lok Sabha polls". The schedule for the polls expected to be held in April-May is yet to be announced by the Election Commission.

In his latest reply to the ED, the sources said, Kejriwal has stated that the summonses are "illegal" but still he is ready to answer the questions of the probe agency. Kejriwal also has to appear before a city court on March 16 as it has sought his personal appearance in a complaint filed by the ED over skipping of its summonses by him.

The AAP demanded that Kejriwal be questioned by the ED through video-conferencing and it be live telecast. Hitting out at the chief minister, BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said no further relaxation should be given to him.

Lokpal asks CBI to probe within six months benami properties of JMM chief Shibu Soren

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal on Monday directed the CBI to probe within six months alleged benami properties linked to Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) chief Shibu Soren, according to its order. The direction came while disposing of a complaint filed by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who represents Jharkhand's Godda constituency in Lok Sabha, on August 5, 2020.

Hearing the matter, a bench of Lokpal directed the Central

Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to "carry out the investigation as expeditiously as possible and complete the investigation within a period of six months from the date of this order".

The Lokpal also asked the CBI to apprise it of the progress the investigation makes by way of sending monthly reports. "The first such report is due on or before 30th April, 2024," said the order issued on Monday by the division bench of the Lokpal comprising Justice Abhilasha Kumari and non-judicial members Archana

Ramasundaram and Mahender Singh.

In his complaint, Dubey had said that Soren and his family members indulged in rampant corruption and amassed huge wealth, assets and properties, disproportionate to their known and declared sources of income, by adopting unscrupulous and corrupt means, in his own name and the names of his family members, friends, associates and various companies in various districts of Jharkhand, including Ranchi, Dhanbad and Dumka, among others.

Rigalia held at VPS, Anand Vihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A Holi-themed event, "Rigalia", featuring coloring and drawing inter-school competitions was held on Sunday at the Vivekananda Public School (VPS) in Anand Vihar here where young artists filled their paintings with vibrant colors while giving shape to their dreams. On the occasion, the school's Executive Principal,

Nancy Khanna, said that "competitions are a strong medium to showcase children's talent. The colors filled in the paintings on the canvas or drawing sheets are a beautiful expression of children's emotions." The main attraction of the competition was a baby show for kids up to 2 years old, along with coloring and drawing competitions, a magic show, and cartoon characters, among other activities.

SC ends immunity...

From Page 1

The bench noted that evolution of parliamentary privileges in various parliamentary jurisdictions has shown a consistent pattern that when an issue involving privileges arises, the test applied is whether the privilege claimed is essential and necessary to the orderly functioning of the House or its committee.

"The Houses of Parliament or Legislatures, and the committees are not islands which act as enclaves shielding those inside from the application of ordinary laws. The lawmakers are subject to the same law that the law-making body enacts for the people it governs and claims to represent," it said.

Modi ka Parivar...

From Page 1

Modi led the BJP to a bigger win in the polls while the Congress was decimated one more time in 2019. The Prime Minister has been asserting that the entire country is his family, a point he made again at a rally in Adilabad in Telangana on Monday where he said that 140 crore people of India are his family.

Soon after the rally, BJP leaders added "Modi Ka Parivar" to their profiles. Modi also attacked "dynastic parties" in the country, saying they may have different faces, but "jhoot and loot" was their

common character. Lalu, while addressing an INDIA Bloc rally in Patna on Sunday, had slammed Modi for raising the issue of dynastic politics and asked why the Prime Minister does not have a family.

Asked about the BJP's campaign, Congress general secretary organisation KC Venugopal said, "You could see the enthusiasm among the public in Patna. Everyday INDIA Bloc is growing, that is why the BJP people are annoyed."

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh took a dig at the BJP, saying "now they cannot talk about parivarvad (nepotism)".

City Government to strengthen GST administration to boost revenue: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will strengthen its Goods and Services Tax administration, making it faceless to boost revenue, Finance Minister Atishi said while presenting the annual budget 2024-25, envisaging Rs 76,000 crore outlay on Monday. The government will source Rs 41,000 crore through Goods and Services Tax (GST) and VAT, which will be 70 per cent of the total tax revenue of Rs 58,750 crore estimated in budget 2024-25. In fiscal 2023-24, the GST and value-added Tax (VAT) collections until January 2024 witnessed a growth of 13.96 per cent year-on-year to Rs 31,445 crore, Atishi said. "Now, the next step of the Kejriwal government is to make the IT infrastructure of GST state-of-the-art and the entire GST Tax Administration faceless," the finance minister said.

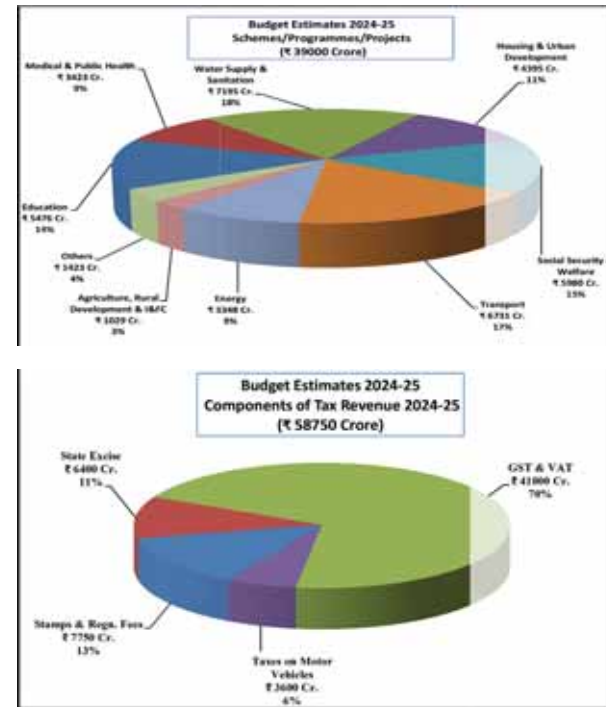
artificial intelligence and data analytics, besides reducing processing time and errors in files, she said. The budget estimates of Rs 76,000 crore for 2024-25 was 3.7 per cent less than Rs 78,800 crore in 2023-24. However, it was 1.47 per cent higher than the revised estimates of Rs 74,900 crore in 2023-24. "The budget estimate was a bit higher last year. But, the final (revised) estimate is 74,900 crore for 2023-24, which has been enhanced by Rs 1,100 crore to estimate the budget 2024-25," Atishi said in a press conference, pointing that the GST compensation of Delhi stopped in the last two years. There is no other state in the country, which has not taken a loan to manage its budget deficit after scrapping GST compensation. The Delhi government is the only government that honestly raises its own resources and still remains fiscal surplus despite providing free-of-cost facilities like electricity, water and bus rides to women, she said. Delhi has mopped up Rs 30283 crore as GST and VAT during the current fiscal and is 24.22



percent over the previous year, Finance Minister Atishi said on Monday. She said the government has taken many measures to facilitate taxpayers and to increase the revenue. In each tax ward, the government has initiated Monthly Performance

Monitoring with 18 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Department of Trade and Taxes is using GST Analytics and Intelligence Network (GAIN)/ Business Intelligence and Fraud Analytics (BIFA) and GST Portal extensively to

effectively analyze and check Anti Evasion activities through surveys/ inspection/ search and seizure. The finance minister said there are a total of 7.88 lakh GST taxpayers in Delhi, out of which 4.82 lakh taxpayers come



under the jurisdiction of the Delhi government. The remaining 3.06 lakh taxpayers come under the central government. Through 167 special audits this year, a total tax deficiency of Rs 5,321 crore has been

detected. On the basis of this ground intelligence, the Kejriwal government has also taken strict action against fake traders. According to intelligence reports, by doing field verification, the government sus-

ended a total of 2,911 fake firms and detected tax evasion of Rs 1,316 crore. The budget estimates for 2024-25 peg the state excise revenue at Rs 6,400 crore, which is 11 per cent of the total tax revenue. Other major components of tax revenue include stamps and registration -- Rs 7,750 crore (13 per cent) and taxes on motor vehicles -- Rs 3,600 crore (6 per cent) of the total tax revenue receipts. The Delhi government is committed to increasing excise revenue effectively. It is committed to putting a stop to illegal liquor trade and quality control of liquor in the city through measures like Faceless Enforcement and strengthening the Excise Intelligence Bureau, she said. The vehicle tax collection in 2023-24 (till January 2024) stood at Rs 2,687.98 crore, with an increase of 11.88 per cent compared to the previous year (till January 2023), while the tax collection of stamp and registration fees (including land revenue) stood at Rs 5,797 crore (till January 2024), an increase of 16.81 per cent year-on-year (till January 2023), the minister said.

Budget: ₹16,396 crore allocated for education

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government allocated Rs 16,396 crore for education in its budget for fiscal year 2024-25 announced on Monday, a slight decline from the previous fiscal budgetary outlay of Rs 16,575 crore. Presenting the budget in the Delhi Assembly, Finance Minister Atishi said the priority of the state government is to focus on providing quality education to the residents of the city. The minister highlighted that the government schools under the Kejriwal-led state government have transformed significantly. "In the last 10 years, major changes have been introduced in Delhi government schools. We doubled the budget for education in the national capital. Today we are proposing a budget of Rs 16,396 crore for education in Delhi," she said. "Before the Kejriwal government, the condition of Delhi government schools was not good. People were forced to go to private schools to study," Atishi, who also holds the education portfolio, added. Atishi said former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had played a significant role in improving the education scenario in Delhi.



She further said the Kejriwal-led Delhi government has been working on teachers' training and has so far regularised 47,914 teachers while the recruitment process for 7,000 vacancies is currently underway. "In 2023, 324 principals were directly appointed from the UPSC for Delhi Government schools for the first time. Additionally, 389 vice-principals were promoted to the position of principal," Atishi said. "In just one year, around 2,121 children studying in Delhi government schools have cleared the JEE and NEET exams. Now, even a poor child will become doctors, and engineers, start their own businesses and this is the true realisation of Ram Rajya," Atishi said. Further, Rs 100 crore has

been allocated to State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Rs 150 crore for construction of new schools and classrooms, Rs 45 crore for maintenance of existing classrooms, and Rs 42 crore for SoSEs this time. The budgetary allocation has set aside Rs 12 crore for Delhi Model Virtual School, Rs 40 crore for School Management Committees, Rs 40 crore for the entrepreneurship development program, and Rs 6 crore for 'Chief Minister Super Talented Coaching Scheme'. For sports education, Rs 118 crore has been allocated, Rs 1,212 crore allocated for higher and technical education, and Rs 15 crore for "Business Blasters Senior". In the year 2023-24, the Delhi education department received the highest allocation of Rs 16,575 crore.

Budget bundle of papers with false announcements: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday termed the Delhi budget a bundle of papers with false announcements. He also said those who have been opposing the Ram temple, are now remembering Lord Shri Ram. Criticising the budget, Bidhuri said in the shameful thing is that in the budget speech, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was compared to Lord Shri Ram while he was unable to answer the many allegations of corruption. Similarly, the comparison of Aam Aadmi Party leader Satyendra Jain, who was in jail on corruption charges and is out on bail on medical grounds these days, with Hanuman Ji is also condemnable, he said. Bidhuri said the BJP legislature party will demand an apology from Finance Minister Atishi on this. While reacting to the budget, Bidhuri first of all termed the use of Lord Shri Ram's name in the budget as disrespectful. He said Kejriwal himself has been opposing the construction of Shri Ram Temple. One of their ministers used derogatory language towards Hindu deities and he remains in the party till date. Not only this, Congress raised questions on the existence of Lord Shri Ram and opposed



the construction of Ram temple in the court. Till date Congress leaders have not gone to Ayodhya to have darshan of Shri Ram. Today, Aam Aadmi Party is contesting the elections along with the same Congress and when the whole world is bowing down before Shri Ram, then hypocrisy is being done to make Delhi's budget with praise of Shri Ram, Bidhuri said. Bidhuri said a total budget of Rs 76,000 crore was presented and it was said to be a profitable budget, but Delhi Jal Board has suffered a loss of more than Rs 76,000 crore and DTC has suffered a loss of Rs 10,000 crore. Therefore, there is no meaning of economic strength or profit budget, Leader of Opposition said. Bidhuri said the announcement of Mahila Samman Yojana of Rs 1000 for women is being called a big achievement but the government should explain why the old age pension already announced

has been stopped by the government. Not a single new old age pension has been sanctioned since 2017. He said the achievements of ten years have been falsely presented in the budget because the people of Delhi consider the scams in education, health, transport, water board, DTC and other departments as the achievements of the Kejriwal government. This government keeps patting itself on the back only based on false propaganda and claims and the same has been done in the budget this time too, he said. Reacting to the statement that the budget is inspired by the vision of Ram Rajya, BJP leader Manoj Tiwari said the state government is using Lord Ram's name as a gimmick for the upcoming elections. "The AAP government is using the word Ram Rajya out of compulsion. But it's a good thing at least the AAP leaders, who only know corruption, are now speaking about Ram Rajya," Tiwari said. "However, at present the Delhi government's budget has no significance. They don't have much time left because I believe in 2025 the residents of Delhi will give them permanent leave," he added. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva slammed the AAP government for slashing the budgetary allocation amount for health and education.

₹1,768 crore earmarked to upgrade, beautify Capital roads

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to upgrade and beautify roads in the national Capital, Rs 1,768 crore have been earmarked for the year 2024-25. This initiative is part of the 10-year plan with an anticipated budget of Rs 19,466 crores. Announcing this during her budget speech, Finance Minister Atishi said apart from the upgradation and beautification of existing roads, the government will also give a major push to the construction of 26 new flyover/underpass/bridge projects that are in the pipeline. Out of these, 10 projects are under construction, 11 projects have been sent to UTTIPEC for design approval and 5 projects are under the process of tendering. These include some landmark projects such as Barapullah Phase 3 flyover from Sarai Kale Khan to Mayur Vihar, flyover from Punjabi Bagh to Raja Garden, and elevated road at Najafgarh Phirni. When completed, these flyovers/underpasses/bridges will substantially shorten the daily commute of lakhs of residents and tourists in the national capital, while also easing traffic congestion and vehicular pollution.

"Usually, we see that when a flyover is constructed in other states, the construction work till its completion. But Delhi is the only state in the country where the cost of construction of flyovers has not increased, but by working honestly and efficiently, the government has saved ₹ 536 Crore of the public," Atishi said. She also proposed Rs 772 Crore for new flyovers/underpasses/bridge projects in FY 23-24. 16 41. Our government in collaboration with DMRC is also in process to construct three unique double decker flyovers in the capital at Bhajanpura to Yamuna Vihar, Azadpur to Rani Jhansi intersections, and from Saket to Pul Prahaladpur. Vehicles will run on the lower desk of these double decker flyovers, while the Metro rail will run on the upper deck. "These flyovers have been designed in such a way that it will save Rs 121 Crore of taxpayers' money. I propose Rs 320 Crore for the three double-decker flyover projects in FY 23-24. 42. I propose a total budget of Rs 3,126 Crore for all the above projects of roads and bridges," she said.

Power Department allocated ₹3,553 crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Equating supplying 24x7 free electricity to over 40 per cent of domestic consumers in Delhi with "Ram Rajya", Finance Minister Atishi announced an allocation of Rs 3,553 crore for the city government's Power department in the 2024-25 Budget tabled in the assembly on Monday. During her maiden Budget speech in the assembly, Atishi said people lit lamps and celebrated Diwali after Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after defeating Ravana. "It is said that 'Ram Rajya' is where every house is illuminated. Now, people in Delhi don't have to wait for Diwali to illuminate their homes because electricity is available 24x7," she said. Announcing the continuation of the city government's free electricity scheme, the minister said around 3.41 crore "zero bills" were issued to domestic consumers in 2023. "It is nothing short of a miracle that the (Arvind) Kejriwal government is able to provide 24-hour electricity in Delhi while offering the most affordable electricity in the country with more than 22 lakh families getting 'zero bills'," she said. In order to promote the use of solar energy, the Kejriwal government has proposed the Delhi Solar Policy - 2023, which is currently in the process of gazette notification, she added.

₹902 crore for uplift of unauthorised colonies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has made a provision of Rs 902 crore in its 2024-25 Budget for the uplift of unauthorised colonies in the national capital. Presenting the Budget in the Delhi Assembly on Monday, Finance Minister Atishi said water pipelines have been laid on a war-footing in unauthorised colonies and slums. "There is likely no slum cluster in Delhi where water pipelines have not reached every household. Today, 99.6 per cent of unauthorised colonies have water pipelines," she said. There is a 4.243-kilometre sewerage network to which 1,031 unauthorised colonies are now connected. After 2014, the Arvind Kejriwal government laid 2,422 kilometres of new water pipelines and 3,100 kilometres of sewer pipelines so that every Delhi resident can get the basic facilities, the minister said. The life of Lord Ram has taught that "we must think first about those who are the most neglected in society". Drawing inspiration from this, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has worked on a war-footing to change the situation of unauthorised colonies in Delhi, she added. A large part of Delhi's population resides in unauthorised colonies. There are approximately 1,800 unauthorised colonies in the national capital,



hosting 30 per cent of Delhi's population, Atishi said in her speech. There was a time when the attitude of governments towards the residents of unauthorised colonies was "highly indifferent and they were left to fend for themselves", the minister claimed. During that time, governments only remembered them when seeking votes. There was no drinking water, there were no roads, sewerage network or drains in these colonies. These colonies were surrounded by filth and garbage, she alleged. Most inhabitants of these colonies were migrants who had come to Delhi with dreams of a better life but were "compelled to live in standard conditions". Even basic amenities were lacking for them, the finance minister said. In 2015, when the Kejriwal government assumed power, "we prioritised providing the residents of these colonies with all facilities".

Business Blasters scheme gets ₹40 crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Monday allocated Rs 40 crore for the 'Business Blasters' scheme for student startups in its Budget 2024-25 tabled in the assembly on Monday. It also made a budgetary allocation of Rs 15 crore for the 'Business Blasters Senior' programme slated to be launched in Delhi government-funded universities soon. Presenting the budget in the Delhi Assembly, Finance Minister Atishi announced an allocation of Rs 16,396 crore for education. Speaking on the success of the 'Business Blasters' programme, the minister said that in the academic year 2023-24, around 2,40,000 students formed 38,000 teams and worked on their business ideas. Atishi, who also holds the education portfolio, said the Delhi government introduced the 'Business Blasters', which is a practical component of the Entrepreneurship Mindset curriculum, considering that only entrepreneurship can alleviate unemployment in the country. "The goal is to make children so confident and capable that they don't seek employment after their studies but become job creators," she said. Under 'Business Blasters', students in Classes 11 and class 12 of Delhi government schools

are given seed money of Rs 2,000 each so that they can collaborate with their peers to create a business model that can generate profit. Atishi said that the programme yielded good results and that the students are earning money through their startups on logistics, online gaming portals, bluetooth speakers, dark chocolate, nutritional supplements, and beauty products, among other avenues. "Anant Sharma was an ordinary student at our government's IIIT-Delhi. In 2019, during his graduation days, he launched a startup called 'Tweek Labs' which harnessed a new discovery in the field of sports technology. His company progressed so much that Anant got a spot on the famous business reality show Shark Tank," Atishi said in the Assembly. "Anant's story proves that if a talent gets support from the government, the youth can change the world," she added. She further stated that 'Business Blasters Senior' will be launched in Delhi government-funded universities in the academic year 2024-25. "If even 5 per cent of the 40,000 business ideas generated in our schools prove to be successful, Delhi and the country will witness the rise of 2,000 companies after 10 years," she said.

₹8,685 crore for health sector

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government allocated Rs 8,685 crore for the health sector in its annual budget for 2024-25 announced on Monday. Presenting the budget in the Delhi Assembly, Finance Minister Atishi said the city's healthcare system in the last nine years under the Arvind Kejriwal dispensation has moved from a state of 'majboori se majbooti' (helplessness to strength) and 'nirasha se vishwas' (despair to faith). The minister presented the Delhi budget 2024-25 with an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore, and said the government is trying to realise the dream of 'Ram Rajya'. She said the second principle of Ram Rajya is curing every ailing person. She then went on to quote a couplet from Goswami Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas and explained its meaning, saying it speaks for the good health of all. "It is a matter of misfortune for our country that we are far away from this vision. Till 2014, even Delhi government-run hospitals were in a very bad state. The filth at these hospitals would belie that even treatment could be offered there. It used to appear that if one went there with one disease, one would return with four diseases," the minister said.



Pointing out the poor health infrastructure of the hospitals before the Kejriwal government, Atishi cited dirty floors, broken and smelly toilets, soiled bedsheets, crowded counters at OPDs for which no one was held accountable, long queues at pharmacy counters but no chemists. Sharing details about budgetary allocation for the health sector, the minister said, "For financial year 2024-25, I propose a budgetary outlay of Rs 8,685 crore for health sector." She also spoke about how the national capital has changed in the last 10 years under the Aam Aadmi Party-led government. Atishi said that there are 38 hospitals under the Delhi government where daily more than 81,000 OPD patients and per month over 65,000 IPD patients are treated free of cost.

Delhi Metro gets ₹500 crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government allocated Rs 500 crore for the Delhi Metro in its 2024-25 Budget tabled on Monday, with Finance Minister Atishi saying in the assembly that more than 60 lakh people commute on the service every day. In 2014, around 24 lakh passengers used the urban transporter daily, Atishi said. Presenting the 2024-25 Budget with a total outlay of Rs 76,000 crore, Atishi said providing good public transportation facilities to every resident of Delhi is the responsibility of the government. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, "significant improvements" have been made in the public transportation sector in Delhi, she said. By March 2015, a total 193 kilometres of metro network and 143 stations were established in Delhi. However, in the past nine years, the Delhi Metro network has doubled in length to 393 kilometres while the number of stations has increased to 288, she added. Atishi said in her address that around 24 lakh passengers travelled daily in the metro in 2014. Today, more than 60 lakh passengers use the service every day. The Delhi Metro has now reached every corner of Delhi -- be it the Tikri border, Samaypur Badli, Tikri Kalan, Badarpur border or Shiv Vihar. "In this financial year, I propose an outlay of Rs 500 crore for Delhi Metro," she said.

Rajnath, Navy top brass to review Indian maritime security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and top brass of the Indian Navy will review India's maritime security challenges and operational readiness to thwart any threat at a conclave onboard one of the two aircraft carriers of the Navy in the Arabian Sea on Tuesday. On the first day of the biannual naval commanders' conference, Rajnath will also witness combat prowess of aircraft carriers INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya in "twin carrier operations", officials said.

The naval commanders are likely to deliberate on a host of crucial issues, including China's growing military forays into the Indian Ocean, as well as the situation arising out of Houthi militants targeting various cargo vessels in the Red Sea and adjoining areas. In the course of the three-day conference, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan along with Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar, Army Chief General Manoj Pande and Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari will engage with naval commanders on a wide-range of issues, including ways to boost tri-services convergence amid the evolving regional security environment. "They will explore avenues to enhance tri-service synergy and readiness in defence of the nation and India's national



interests," Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said here on Monday. The conference serves as a platform for naval commanders to discuss important security issues at the military-strategic level as well as interact with senior government functionaries under an institutionalised framework. "The inaugural session of the conference will have the defence minister embarking at sea to witness both aircraft carriers demonstrating the Indian Navy's ability to conduct 'twin carrier operations', Madhwal said. The inaugural session of the naval commanders conference had taken place on board indigenously-built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant in March last year as well. "The last six months have witnessed significant changes in the geo-political landscape

BJP leaders follow PM Modi in contributing towards Viksit Bharat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi contributed ₹2,000 to the BJP's campaign to strengthen efforts to build a 'Viksit Bharat', several BJP leaders including Union Ministers on Monday contributed to the party fund. Those who contributed on Monday to the BJP fund ahead of the Lok Sabha polls included Union ministers Rajnath Singh, S Jaishankar, and Smriti Irani. Singh contributed Rs 2,000 to the BJP fund and shared its receipt on X, appealing to people to donate for "nation building". "With a resolve to make India a developed country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP has started a campaign to bring every countryman together. The role of individuals is important in making this campaign successful," the defence minister said. "I have contributed to join this resolve of the BJP. You also contribute to this and become a participant in this campaign of nation building. I appeal to everyone to be a part of #DonationForNationBuilding through the NaMo App," Singh added. Jaishankar also contributed Rs 2,000 to strengthen the BJP's efforts to build a developed country.



"Contributed to the BJP to strengthen our efforts to build Viksit Bharat. Urge all to support the vision of building India into a developed nation by 2047. Small contributions by all will strengthen our resolve and ensure that the BJP keeps delivering growth and development for all," the external affairs minister wrote on X, sharing receipt of his contribution. Irani contributed Rs 1,000 and exhorted people to support the BJP's campaign. "Happy to donate and extend my support to BJP as we work towards realising PM Narendra Modi's vision to build a Viksit Bharat," she wrote on X, sharing receipt of her contribution. "Join me in participating in the #DonationForNationBuilding campaign through the NaMoApp," she added. Following the cue, several other BJP leaders contributed to the party fund and shared

the receipts on X. Union Home Minister Amit Shah contributed Rs 2,000 to the BJP fund on Sunday. "Every person's support is crucial to building a Viksit Bharat. Under the leadership of Modi Ji, the BJP has been working towards making Bharat a developed nation," he said in a post on X. "Let us all stand shoulder-to-shoulder and make the #DonationForNationBuilding a nationwide campaign using the NaMo App," he said. On March 1, BJP chief J P Nadda contributed Rs 1,000 to party fund and urged people to donate for the party's campaign for 'Viksit Bharat'. "I have donated to the BJP to pledge my individual support to PM Modi's vision for making India a Viksit Bharat," he had said in a post on X. "Let us all come forward and join this #DonationForNationBuilding mass movement using the NaMo App," he added.

Minister to inaugurate major piers, residential towers for naval officers: Officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday will inaugurate two major piers and seven residential towers comprising 320 houses for naval officers and defence civilian personnel and 149 single officers' accommodation in Naval Base Karwar, Karnataka, navy officials said here on Monday. It is home base of aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. Phase I of Project Seabird as the base is known was designed to accommodate 10 ships and was successfully concluded in 2011. The infrastructure comprised a breakwater, a pier capable of berthing 10 ships, a 10,000-ton ship lift and dry berth, a Naval Ship Repair Yard, logistics and armament storage facilities, accommodation for 1000 personnel, a Headquarters/Depot Organisation, and a 141-bed Naval Hospital. The CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security) approval for Phase IIA of the Project was accorded the berthing of 32 ships and submarines, along with 23 Yardcraft. The Phase IIA initiatives are also directed towards constructing buildings and structures that adhere to the current guidelines set by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEF) and the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC). The Phase IIA marine works

include piers designed to accommodate ships/submarines, providing a berthing space of more than 6 kilometers, technical facilities, electrical substations, switch gears, and support utilities. The center-piece of Phase IIA Works is an iconic Covered Dry Berth, standing at a height of 75 meters, taller than the Qutub Minar in Delhi, and spread over 33000 m2 land area. This dry berth is designed to facilitate simultaneous docking and comprehensive enclosed maintenance of up to four capital ships. In Phase-IIA, four different townships encompassing residential accommodations, with about 10,000 dwelling units of all types for Officers, Senior and Junior Sailors and Defence Civilian staff is being constructed. The setting up of green field dual-use Naval Air Station with 2700m runway and civil-enclave will provide air support to the aircraft embarked upon various IN ships and facilitate operations of commercial aviation flights. The ongoing construction activities at Naval Base Karwar have directly generated employment opportunities for approximately 7,000 personnel and indirectly led to around 20,000 jobs across the nation. The infrastructure development has been aligned with the principles of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' with more than 90% of the materials and equipment being sourced from within the country.

Government in Himachal will complete five years term: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress government in Himachal Pradesh is "not in danger" and will complete its five-year term, party sources claimed on Monday and indicated that state minister Vikramaditya Singh had spoken with the AICC leadership. They also said the leadership has faith in Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu and the work he has done till now. A change in leadership, therefore, seems unlikely for now, the sources said. "The government is in majority and will serve the people of Himachal Pradesh for the full five years, and any attempt to crush the mandate with the help of money power will not succeed," a party source involved in fire-fighting the political crisis in the state said.



Action has been taken against the rebel MLAs under the anti-defection law which prohibits the "Aayaram-Gayaram" tactics, the sources said. The people of Himachal Pradesh also do not like such politics, they added. After the disqualification of six MLAs under the anti-defection law, the number of MLAs in the House now remains at 62 and

Congress' state unit president Prabhakar Singh, has spoken with senior AICC leaders and conveyed his issues. Singh is the state's public works department minister. Chief Minister Sukhu's objective has been to build a self-reliant Himachal Pradesh, with better education and health, and he is continuously working on it, the sources said. The Congress sources have been highlighting the programmes undertaken under the Sukhu government such as the implementation of the old pension scheme for the welfare of employees, job creation and increased revenue of the state, to indicate that a change of guard is unlikely. In a setback for the ruling Congress in Himachal Pradesh, the BJP last Tuesday won the state's lone Rajya Sabha seat despite being in the minority

with just 25 MLAs against 40 of the Congress as nine MLAs, including six from the Congress and three Independents, voted for BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan. Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania had on Thursday disqualified six Congress MLAs - Sudhir Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhpal, Chetanya Sharma and Devinder Kumar Bhutto - for abstaining from voting on the Cut Motion and the Finance Bill. After cross-voting by the rebels in the Rajya Sabha polls, Vikramaditya had announced his resignation from the Cabinet on Wednesday but softened his stand by the evening after meeting the Congress observers, who said that the resignation had been withdrawn.

PM is on inauguration spree in different States, claims Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his ongoing multiple States visit to inaugurate development works and claimed that almost all the projects that he is inaugurating are either completions or expansions of projects that were in place before he became the prime minister. Prime Minister Modi is visiting Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar between March 4 to 6 during which he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of projects worth over Rs 1,10,600 crore. In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh



said the Prime Minister is on an inauguration spree in different States today, tomorrow and day after. "Almost all the projects that he is inaugurating are either completions or expansions of projects that were in place before he became the prime minister — but 'jhoot ke jaadugar' has to create media and photo opportunities for himself," the Congress general secretary said. "The plutonium fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam has been

under implementation for over 22 years — and when I had visited it over a decade ago, it was more than 95% complete. But of course, the narrative now is that Mr Modi is responsible for it," he said. The Congress leader said Prime Minister Modi is dedicating the NTPC power project in Telangana which was actually a firm commitment made in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of February 2014. "Earlier, the Prime Minister had taken credit for the AIIMS facility in Mangalgi and for the IIT in Tirupati, both of which were also firm commitments in the law passed by the Parliament in February 2014 when Dr Manmohan Singh was the prime minister," he said.

ED accuses Congress leader Khurshid's wife of money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday alleged that senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid's wife Louise Khurshid and two others "laundered" Rs 71.50 lakh in Central Government funds for their personal gain through a trust run by them for specially-abled persons. The federal agency, in a statement, also said that it has provisionally attached 15 agricultural plots located in the Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh and bank deposits, worth a combined Rs 45.92

lakh, of the Dr Zakir Hussain Memorial Trust, under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The plots are valued at Rs 29.51 lakh and the amount kept in four bank accounts of the trust is Rs 16.41 lakh, it said. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) last month registered the statement of Louise Khurshid at its zonal office in Lucknow. A probe found that "grant-in-aid of Rs 71.50 lakh received by the trust was not utilised for holding camps sanctioned by the Government of India

but was laundered by the late Pratyush Shukla, a representative of the trust, Mohammad Athar alias Athar Farooqui, secretary to the trust, and Louise Khurshid, project director of the trust, for the interest of the trust and their personal gain", the agency claimed. In this way, the fund received as grant-in-aid was laundered for their personal gain, leading to generation of proceeds of crime, it said. The money-laundering case stems from 17 FIRs of the Economic Offences Wing of the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Defence Minister bats for self reliance in import of weapons

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday cautioned that dependence on import of weapons and allied systems can be "fatal" for strategic autonomy while underscoring the need for attaining self-reliance. He also said India cannot take independent decisions on global issues in line with its national interests without self-reliance. "Strategic autonomy can be maintained only when arms and equipment are made in India by our own people. We

are working towards this, and the results are positive. While in 2014 our domestic defence production was around Rs 44,000 crore, today it has crossed the record figure of Rs one lakh crore, and growing continuously. This change took place due to our consistent efforts. Tough decisions had to be taken. Status-quo had to be disrupted," Rajnath said. He also listed out a number of measures taken to promote domestic manufacturing, including earmarking 75% of defence capital procurement budget for Indian companies. In an address at a conference,

Rajnath, without elaborating, also said that India had to face "trouble" in "difficult times" in the past due to its reliance on defence imports. He said the annual volume of domestic defence production has crossed the record figure of Rs 1 lakh crore which was nearly Rs 44,000 crore around 2014. He made these observations here while inaugurating 'DefConnect 2024' meet and launched Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.

Under the scheme, start-ups are eligible to receive grant-in-aid of up to Rs 25 crore for their research, development, and innovation endeavours in defence technology. "The scheme will nurture the innovation of youth, and help the country leap forward in the field of technology," the defence minister said as he addressed a gathering of industry leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators, and policymakers. The ADITI scheme worth Rs 750 crore for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26 falls under the iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) frame-

work of Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence. It aims to develop about 30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies in the proposed timeframe. It also envisages to create a "Technology Watch Tool" to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the modern Armed Forces and the capabilities of the defence innovation ecosystem. In the first edition of ADITI, 17 challenges - Indian Army (3), Indian Navy (5), Indian Air Force (5) and Defence Space Agency (4) - have been launched.

Collaborative research in AYUSH extremely important: Mandaviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Collaborative research in AYUSH is extremely important as it bridges the gap between traditional knowledge and modern scientific research, promoting a synergistic approach to healthcare, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Monday. Mandaviya was speaking at the launch event of AYUSH-ICMR Advanced Centre for Integrative Health Research at four AIIMS in phases. He announced the setting up of the centres and also announced other mega joint initiatives between the Ministry of Health and AYUSH, which included multi-centre clinical trial on anaemia, and the launch of Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) for AYUSH healthcare facilities. These centres will be set up at



four selected AIIMS -- Advanced Centre for Integrative Health Research in Gastro-intestinal Disorders and Advanced Centre for Integrative Health Research in Women and Child Health at AIIMS-New Delhi, Advanced Centre for Integrative Health Research in Geriatric Health at AIIMS-Jodhpur, Advanced Centre for Integrative Health

quality of health care delivery. "By adopting these reforms, it is expected that the states and UTs will be able to develop AYUSH health care services with set standards and quality infrastructure, thereby enabling the public to avail the benefits of AYUSH medical services for all healthcare. Mandaviya also inaugurated the 27th convocation of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth and the 29th National Seminar on 'Ayurveda Amritnam' on the occasion. Expressing his elation at the launch of these collaborative initiatives, Mandaviya said, "Collaborative Research in AYUSH is extremely important as it bridges the gap between traditional knowledge and modern scientific research, promoting a synergistic approach to health care." "Ayurveda is a part of our culture, heritage and tradition. It is still being followed in our

everyday practice. This strategic collaboration aims to advance integrative health research, integrate traditional AYUSH practices with modern medical science and take India to the forefront of holistic healthcare innovations," he said. Highlighting that the government is following an integrative approach so as to adopt the best practices from both the disciplines, Ayurveda and Allopathy, Mandaviya said the Centre is working towards providing quality-oriented healthcare towards the needs of the people of the country. He congratulated the Ayush ministry for its "remarkable" journey in the last decade, resulting in significant initiatives and achievements. Addressing the students attending the event, the minister urged them to take inspiration from the country's ancient scriptures and follow the practices with pride.

Obesity risk factor for stillbirth, especially if pregnancy advances: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Obesity is a risk factor for stillbirth, especially as the pregnancy advances to term, according to a large study conducted in Canada. The findings, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ), suggest that an earlier delivery date may help reduce the risk of stillbirth for pregnant people with obesity. The researchers analysed data from the Better Outcomes Registry and Network on 6,81,178 (over 6.8 lakh) singleton births, 1,956 of which were stillbirths, in Ontario, Canada between 2012 and 2018. After adjusting for other stillbirth risk factors like diabetes and high blood pressure, they found that people with class I obesity -- with body mass

index (BMI) 30-34.9 kilograms per square metre (kg/m2) -- had double the risk of stillbirth at 39 weeks gestation compared to those with normal BMI (18.5-24.9 kg/m2). For those in obesity classes II and III (BMI 35-39.9 kg/m2 and BMI 40 kg/m2 and higher, respectively), stillbirth risk at 36 weeks was 2 to 2.5 times that of people with normal BMI, the researchers said. This risk associated with increased BMI, a measure of body fat based on height and weight, further increased with gestational age, with a more than fourfold risk at 40 weeks, they said. "For other medical conditions that increase the risk of stillbirth, there are guidelines that recommend delivery at 38 or 39 weeks. Interestingly, the risk thresholds for those conditions are lower than the risks we found associated with obe-

sity," said study lead author, Naila Ramji, an assistant professor at Dalhousie University, Canada. "We worry that implicit biases against people with obesity may be causing the medical community to take the risks they face less seriously," Ramji said in a statement. The researchers also looked at whether stillbirths occurred before or during delivery and found a higher risk of stillbirths occurring before delivery in people with class I and II obesity. They hope that these findings will improve care for this at-risk population. "Pregnant people with obesity, especially those with additional risk factors, may benefit from timely referral and greater surveillance closer to term, and the presence of additional risk factors may warrant earlier delivery," Ramji added.

BJP defeats Congress to win senior deputy mayor, deputy mayor posts

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The BJP on Monday won the reelection for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, defeating the Congress candidates who were backed by the AAP.

On February 20, the Supreme Court had declared Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Kuldeep Kumar as the new mayor of the corporation after it overturned the result of the January 30 mayoral poll in which BJP candidate Manoj Sonkar had emerged the winner.

Its judgment had come on allegations of tampering with ballots during the January mayoral polls.

As the mayor is the presiding

officer for the elections to the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, the polls were held again on Monday after the change in the mayoral post following the court's judgment.

For the post of senior deputy mayor, BJP's Kuljeet Sandhu defeated Congress' Gurpreet Gabi. While Sandhu polled 19 votes, Gabi got 16, and one vote was declared invalid.

Rajinder Sharma of the BJP defeated Congress' Nirmala Devi to win the deputy mayor's post. The winning candidate secured 19 votes of the total 36 polled.

The BJP had fielded the same set of candidates last time and they had won then too.

In the 35-member municipal House, the BJP has 17 councillors. The number of BJP's strength increased from



CHANDIGARH MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

14 to 17 after three AAP councillors switched over to it on February 19.

The AAP has 10 members while the Congress has seven. The Shiromani Akali Dal has one councillor. Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher, who is a BJP member, also has voting rights

as an ex-officio member of the corporation.

In the January 30 poll, Sonkar had defeated the comfortably placed AAP-Congress alliance candidate Kumar after the returning officer declared as invalid eight votes of the coalition partners.

Alleging tampering with ballots, councillors of INDIA bloc parties AAP and Congress had boycotted the elections to the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, leading to the victory of BJP's Sandhu and Sharma then.

Kumar had on Wednesday assumed the charge as mayor of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, over a week after

the Supreme Court declared him as the civic body's chief. The court had also ordered prosecution of the returning officer for the January 30 poll, Anil Masih, a BJP leader, for his "misdemeanour", after finding serious faults in the conduct of the election.

Sonkar of the BJP had then defeated Kumar after polling 16 votes against his rival's 12 to bag the mayor's post.

Kumar had initially moved the Punjab and Haryana High

Court against the declaration of Chandigarh mayoral result on January 30. After not getting any interim relief, he moved the Supreme Court for quashing the election of the BJP candidate as the mayor.

The Chandigarh administration on Tuesday had placed a formal schedule regarding the polling for the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor before the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Modi launches ₹56,000 crore projects in Telangana

PTI ■ ADILABAD (TELANGANA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated multiple power, rail and road projects and laid the foundation stone for others, totalling more than Rs 56,000 crore, in Telangana, where Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of Congress received him. In his brief address, the prime minister highlighted India's economic growth.

He said that more than 25 crore people have risen out of poverty, and attributed it to his government's welfare schemes. He

stressed that such campaigns will be further amplified in the next five years. Modi said the projects worth Rs 56,000 crore will write a new chapter of development in several states.

Today, India is the "only country" in the world that has emerged as a large economy by clocking 8.4 per cent growth in the previous quarter, he said, adding that India's growth rate has been a point of discussion across the world for the past 3-4 days.

"With this pace, India will become the third largest economy in the world," State Governor Tamilisai

Soundararajan and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy took part in the PM's official function here. Union Minister and BJP state president G Kishan Reddy was also present.

It's after a long while that a CM of Telangana has received PM Modi and shared the dais with him at an official event. When BRS supreme K Chandrasekhar Rao was chief minister, he had skipped the PM's official visits to the state on several occasions.

Addressing the gathering, PM Modi said the land of Adilabad is witnessing development projects related not only to

Telangana but the entire country, as more than 30 such projects worth more than Rs 56,000 crore are either being inaugurated or their foundation stone being laid today.

The PM noted that the central government and Telangana state have both completed 10 years and said the government has been providing all possible assistance to the state to fulfil the dreams of its people.

Emphasising that the nation's development comes through the growth of states, he said that with a better economy, trust in the country grows and that states also benefit from it as they get investment.

Recalling the alleged earlier neglect of regions like Telangana, the PM said there has been higher allocation for development of the state in the past 10 years.

M.P. POWER GENERATING COMPANY LIMITED

Office of The Addl. C.E. (P&W), Shree Singaji Thermal Power Project, Dongalia Distt. Khandwa (M.P.)
E-mail ID : sepnw_sstpp1@gmail.com, Website : www.mppgcl.mp.gov.in, Phone : 8770522976
No. 515-1700/SSTPP/MPPGCL/P&W/13312 Date : 01.03.2024

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

| Tender Particulars/Tender Number | Estimated Cost (Rs.) including GST | EMD & Tender cost in Rs. | Due Date & Time for closing online submission |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Annual work of General Civil repair and maintenance of various buildings and structures of BOP and BTG area i/c fire office, Admin building, general buildings of Power house, auxiliary building, Temporary office sheds (5 nos), Main Gate complex i.e. Security building etc. at SSTPP, Stage-I (2x600 MW), Dongalia Khandwa. (T-2023 MPPGC 286352_2) | Rs. 53.00 Lakh | 1.06 Lakh & 2000/- | 21.03.2024 up to 15:30 hrs. |

For extension & other details, the bidders are requested to please visit e-portal of GoMP at www.mptenders.gov.in

M.P. Madhyam/114099/2024 // SAVE ELECTRICITY // SE (P&W)

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, SOUTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR
Phone : 0680-2281582, e-mail : cescbam@gmail.com
INVTATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) (E-Procurement)
Short Tender Call Notice

Bid Identification No. CCE, S.C (R&B)-BAM-31/2023-24 No. 803 // Dated : 29.02.2024

- The Chief Construction Engineer, Southern (R&B) Circle, Berhampur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of **Bridge works** as detailed in the table below.
- Nature of work : Bridge Works
- No. of work : 2 Nos.
- Tender Cost : Rs.10,000/- (online)
- Class of Contractor : "A" Class
- Availability of Bid document in the website : From 06.03.2024 10.00 AM to 12.03.2024 5.30 PM
- Date of Opening of Bid : 13.03.2024 at 11.30 A.M.
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
- Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer
Southern (R&B) Circle, Berhampur

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD
GUWAHATI BUILDING CIRCLE-II, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3

PRESS NOTICE

The Superintending Engineer, P.W.D., Guwahati Building Circle-II, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids for the following work having experience of similar nature of work from APWD registered Class-I (A/B/C) contractors. Details of the bids may be seen at e-procurement portal website: www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours. The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in for participating in the bidding process.

| Name of work | Approx. Value of Work (Rs.) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Construction of Boundary Wall with infrastructure Development of Rural Community Resource Centre at Fullung, Rudreswar GP, Kamrup District under Untied Fund (State Specific Scheme) during the year 2020-21 | 1,99,99,941/- |

Note:-

- Any modification of tender may be seen in the portal www.assamtenders.gov.in.
- The prospective bidder must visit the work site before submission of tender.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D.
Janasanyog/C/17335/23/5-Mar-24
Guwahati Building Circle-II

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, ANGUL E-Mail : sencranganul@yahoo.co.in
No.619 // 06764 - 236404 Dt. 21.02.2024 //

NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR ROAD WORK IN ODISHA
Bid Identification No. Road Online AGL- 50/2023-24

- Name of the work : Road works
- Total No. of work : 1 No.
- Estimated cost : Rs. 1282.02 Lakhs
- Class of Contractor : As per annexure.
- Period of completion : As per annexure.
- Other details : As per annexure.

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender on-line for bidding | Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification | Date & Time of opening of tender | Technical Bid | Financial Bid |
|--|------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Angul | RWCCSNG-56 of 2023-24 | 07.03.2024 11:00 AM to 11.03.24 up to 4.30 P.M | 27.03.2024 5:00 PM to 11.03.24 up to 1.00 P.M | 28.03.2024 11:00 AM | Will be intimated separately | |

For detailed Notice inviting Tenders, Please visit to the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Sd/-B.N.Sarangli
Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Angul.

Form No.5
THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW
600/1 University Road Near Hanuman Setu Temple Lucknow, 236007
(Area Of Jurisdiction - Part Of Uttar Pradesh)
Summons for Filing Reply & Appearance By Publication

O. A. NO : 770/2022 DATE: 02/01/2024
(Summon To The Defendants under section 19 (3) of the Recovery of Debts Due to the Financial Institution Act, 1993 read with Rule 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule 1993)

HDFC BANK LIMITED Original Application No. : 770 OF 2022 ...APPLICANT

VERSUS ...DEFENDANTS

JAITRON COMMUNICATION PVT. LTD. AND OTHERS
To, 1. Jaitron Communication Pvt. Ltd., Through Its Director, R/O-C-22 Sec 49 Noida, Noida-201301 (U.P.) 2. Nand Kishor Singh, 10/16 3A Sector 3 Rajendra Nagar Block 10 Ghaziabad 201001 U.P. 3. Nisha Kumari Singh H. No. 10/16, 3A, Rajendra Nagar, Sector 3 Block-10, Police Station Sahibabad Ghaziabad Ghaziabad UP 201005 4. Nisha Kumar Rani 10/16 3A Sector 3 Rajendra Nagar Block 10 Ghaziabad 201001 U.P.

In the above noted application, You are required to file reply in Paper Book form in two sets, along with the documents and the affidavit personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioners in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel / duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the tribunal on 11.07.2024 at 10:30 AM failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence

REGISTRAR, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW

Form No.5
THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW
600/1, University Road near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow 236007
(Area of Jurisdiction: Part of Uttar Pradesh)

O.A. No. 748/2022 DATE: 08/11/2023
(Summon To The Defendants under section 19 (3) of the Recovery of Debts Due to the Financial Institution Act, 1993 read with Rule 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule 1993)

HDFC BANK LIMITED Original Application No. : 748 OF 2022 ...APPLICANT

VERSUS ...DEFENDANTS

MAA SHAKUMBHARI TRADERS AND OTHERS
To, 1. Maa Shakumbhari Traders, Through Its Proprietor, R/O- Vill - Ghat Panchali Khurd, Baghot Road, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250002. 2. Sanjay Kumar, S/o Shambhu Nath, R/O- 550 Ghat Partapur, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh-250002

In the above noted application, You are required to file reply in Paper Book form in two sets, along with the documents and the affidavit personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioners in this Tribunal, after serving copy of the same on the applicant or his counsel / duly authorized agent after publication of the summons, and thereafter to appear before the tribunal on 20.05.2024 at 10:30 AM failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

REGISTRAR, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL LUCKNOW

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNDARGARH
AT/PO-SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-70020, E-mail address-sundargarh@yahoo.com

No. Tender Online - RWCCSNG - 56 of 2023-24, Letter No 783 /Dtd. 02.03.2024

e-Procurement NOTICE

- Type of the Work: Roads (DMSY and DMF)
- Class of Contractor: As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
- Time of Completion: As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
- Detail Projects: As per Annexure attached
- Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
- Other details:

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender on-line for bidding | Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification | Date & Time of opening of tender | Technical Bid | Financial Bid |
|---|------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh | RWCCSNG-56 of 2023-24 | 07.03.2024 11:00 AM to 27.03.2024 5:00 PM | 22.03.2024 5:00 PM to 28.03.2024 11:00 AM | 28.03.2024 11:00 AM | Will be intimated separately | |

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Chief Engineer (Design & Quality Control)
Chief Construction Engineer (I/C)
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Jyoti Rani W/o Mr. Navin Kumar Jangra, is the owner of the Entire first floor (Without Terrace Rights), area measuring 75 Sq. Yds. i.e. 62.5 Sq. Meters, Built-on Part of Property No. 345-A, out of Kharsa No. 600/92/1, situated at Gourdour Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019, by virtue of Sale Deed dated 01.07.2017, regd. at doc. No. 2944, and the same is to be financed & mortgaged with my client i.e., Mathura & Mathura Financial Services Limited and the only legal heirs of Late Mr. Nandhat Ram, who had died on 29.04.1985, are namely Mr. Ramesh Chander, Mr. Pawan Prakash Sharma and Mrs. Poojara. If any person(s) have any objection(s) or claim in this property, then contact the undersigned within 15 days from date of this notice at below address, failing which, it will be assumed that there are no claims or issues in respect of the aforesaid property.

Raghav Kumar Tiwari (Advocate)
Ch. 830, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi - 110001
Mob.: +91-9876188328

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Annu Dhingra R/o D/ Ishwar Dass Arora R/O D-11/A Kailash Colony New Delhi-110048 hereby declare that Annu Dhingra and Anu Dhingra both are one and the same person

PD(291)C

LOST & FOUND

I, Sachin Kumar, S/o Shri Kailash Chandra, R/o-Flat No. A-7, Onkara Apartment, KG Khosla, Badarpur Border, New Delhi have lost My 3 Years LLB Degree which issued by MJP Rohilkhand University U.P. My Roll No. 613277.

PD(292)A

PUBLIC NOTICE

This general public is hereby informed that our customer Mr. Neeraj Ahuja, is claiming to be the owner of Built up Upper Ground Floor, and 1st Floor upto Ceiling Levels, Property Bearing No. 7/33, area of Plot 47.33 sq. meter, (56.1/2 -sq. yards, on Each Floor), its Plinth Covered area 34.66 sq. mtrs. out of Kharsa No. 4859/1042-1043/97 Min. Block No. 7, Kirti Nagar, Vasthiser Gali, Vishwas Nagar, in the Village Chandrawan, Block Shahdara, Delhi-110032 by virtue of inheritance and Regd. Gift Deed dated 28.06.2022 vide its Doc. No. 6540 & Sale Deed dated 25.03.2008 vide its Doc. No. 3347 and the boundaries of Property is East- Property No. 7/49 West-Part of Property No. 7/33, North- Road 701, wide South- Property No. 7/34 And he declares that there is no dispute pending in respect of said property. Any person who is claiming to have any rights, title, claim or interest, encumbrance, Charge of any nature whatsoever in respect of the above property or its parts, he/she, they shall intimate the objection in writing to the undersigned with supporting documents within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice or else any such claims by anyone shall be deemed to have waived and/or abandoned and claim shall thereafter be entertained.

Adv. Vikram K. Saw, 4E/9, 2nd Floor, Jhansdewan Extension New Delhi-110055, Email: vikhalgal@gmail.com, Landline-011-41255022.

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)
(RAILWAY BOARD)
CORRIGENDUM-IV

Subject : E-Tender No. TM-2303 for procurement of Rail Borne Maintenance Vehicle "RBMV" for Indian Railways to be opened on 04.04.2024

The Corrigendum-IV regarding modifications to response to technical & commercial brief queries, corrigendum to commercial tender conditions & technical specifications, final tender document after prebid and extension in date of tender opening have been uploaded on website <http://ireps.gov.in>.

(Vijay Singh)
Executive Director/Track (M&MC)
Railway Board
Tel: No. 011-47845531
E-mail: vijay.singh.2017@gov.in

691/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

TENDER NOTICE

Ferrous Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. (In CIRP) invites Tender in prescribed format from contractors for construction & completion of pending works of Tower No. B, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N & O consisting of total 826 flats plus EWS flat plus Club Area/ Common Area. Infrastructure works & club which includes civil & structural works. Interior finishing, complete MEP works (low side & high side), landscaping & hardscaping, internal roads, horticulture works etc. at our project located at Ferrous City I, Sector-89, Faridabad, Haryana ("Project"). Detailed Tender documents with terms and conditions and eligibility criteria are available on www.ferrousinfra.com. Also interested firms can visit the project during visiting hours 11 am to 5 pm

Last date of submission of tender including technical and financial bid separately in prescribed format is up to 3 PM on 15.03.2024.

Date: 05.03.2024
Place: Noida

Mr. Ashish Singh
Resolution Professional
M/S Ferrous Infrastructure Private Limited
Unit-2514, 5th Floor, Tower-A, The Corentum, Sector-62, Noida- 201301
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NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

| N.I.T. No. | 50 (A,B)-23-24WE |
|---|---|
| Name of work with its location | |
| (A) Setting up of press briefing room/studio room in Railway Board in the S/o SSE/W/RB under ADEN/E-III | |
| (B) Repair of drainage/sewerage arrangement at Tilak Bridge Railway Colony in the section of SSE/W/RB under ADEN/E-III. | |
| Approx. cost of work | (A) 10999999.84 (B) 9994000.00 |
| EMD amount | (A) 205000.00 (B) 199900.00 |
| Completion period of work | (A) 04 Months (B) 06 Months |
| Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender | Closing date of tender on 26.03.2024 at 15:00 hrs. |
| Website particular notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender can be purchased etc. | Above tender available on website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in |
| 128-W/269/OET/23-24/WE/NT/50(A,B) Dated: 04.03.2024. | 690/24 |

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

मध्यप्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम

कार्यालय परियोजना यंत्री, भद्रवादा रोड संभाग क्रमांक-03 भोपाल-03
Mobile No. : 9425601545, ई-मेल : mpphidebp13@gmail.com
क्र.प्रपूआअविनि /217/पय/भोपाल-03/तारा/2024 भोपाल, दिनांक : 04.03.2024

प्रेस विज्ञापित

भोपाल संभाग-3 के अंतर्गत निर्माण कार्य 12+48 आवास गृह पुलिस लाइन जिला सोहोर हेतु निविदा क्रमांक-17/2023-24 (ऑनलाइन निविदा क्रमांक.- 2024_MPPHC_341216_1 आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र दिनांक 02.04.2024 सायं 5:00 बजे तक ऑनलाइन खरीदे एवं दस्तावेज अनलॉड किये जा सकते हैं। विस्तृत निविदा सूचना एवं अन्य विवरण Portal : <http://www.mptenders.gov.in> पर देखे जा सकते हैं।

म.प्र. माध्यम/114107/2024 परियोजना यंत्री

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

| Sr. No. | Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number | Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession | Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.) | Name of Branch |
|---------|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Tabreg Ali/ Suman / LBDEL0002117632 | Flat No. C-104, 1st Floor, Super Studio Apartment, Apna Ghar Apartments, Tower- C, Vill Kunjhal Tehsil, Nalagarh/ Baddi Disst Solan Baddi/ March 01, 2024 | August 20, 2020 Rs. 9,94,541/- | Delhi NCR/ Baddi Himachal Pradesh |

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: March 05, 2024
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)
(Under Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)

Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation is a Banking Company having its office at 25 Barakhamba Road New Delhi and branch office at K-14, Sector 18 NOIDA UP under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices dated 10.04.2017 under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the borrowers Mr. Sanjay Kumar Dutta, and Ms. Shubha Dutta to repay the amount mentioned in the said notices being Rs.99,96,295.80/- (Rupees Ninety Nine Lakh Ninety Six Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Five and Paise Eighty Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notices.

The borrower mentioned herein above having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned hereinabove and to the public in general that undersigned has taken physical possession of the property described herein below with the help of appointed Police Officer as Magistrate as per the order passed by Ld. Additional District Magistrate, Noida Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh vide order dated 02.06.2023, in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with the Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the 27th day of Feb the year 2024.

The borrowers mentioned hereinabove in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the Charge of The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited for an amount of Rs. 1,65,92,752.67 (Rupees One Crore Sixty Five Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty Two and Paise Sixty Seven Only) due as on 27.02.2024 and interest thereon.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

"Flat No. 904, 9th Floor, Block OSIMP, Mahagun Mestro, built on Plot No.F-21-A, Block-F, Sector-50, NOIDA 201301 Uttar Pradesh." (Measuring built up area 2525 square feet)"

Dated: 27th February 2024
Place: Noida

Rohit Dutt Tyagi
Authorized Officer
(The Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited)



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Misplaced priorities

Shehbaz Sharif assumes office as Pak PM for a second term, rakes up Kashmir in inaugural address

Following an extended round of negotiations and plotting, Shehbaz Sharif has managed to ascend to the Pakistan Prime Minister's chair for a second term amid serious domestic challenges. A seasoned politician from the prominent Sharif family, Shehbaz wasted no time in his inaugural speech to address the issue that has shaped Pakistan's foreign policy for decades --- Kashmir. It is indeed unfortunate that Pakistan's political elite always finds it convenient to rake up Kashmir to distract the masses from the real issues dogging the country. Rather than focusing on his Government's tangible plans to spur growth and economy, Shehbaz chose to reiterate Pakistan's stance on Kashmir. His words resonated with the sentiments of many Pakistanis who view the Kashmir issue as central to their national identity. Taking a broader view, the transition of power marks a significant chapter in Pakistan's democratic history. Shehbaz, known for his pragmatic approach and administrative acumen, brings along a wealth of experience from his previous tenure. However, his ascent to the PM's office is seen as nothing more than stealing the popular mandate. Despite military backing, his party could not register a clear win. His legal tangles notwithstanding, Imran Khan still remains popular and Independents (mostly from his party) rule the roost. Sharif's return to power has sparked both anticipation and scrutiny, with supporters heralding continuity and stability, while critics voice concerns over governance and accountability.

In this scenario, Kashmir is a time-tested formula for Pakistan's political leadership to deflect attention away from the ills plaguing that country. Unfortunately, Pakistan's volatile domestic politics plays havoc in regional geopolitics; raising tensions and military expenditure for all involved. The mention of Kashmir in Shehbaz's maiden speech underscores the enduring significance of the conflict in Pakistan's foreign policy agenda. For decades, Kashmir has remained a flashpoint between Pakistan and India, fuelling tensions and periodic escalations. Despite various attempts at dialogue and mediation, a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue remains elusive, perpetuating a cycle of violence and instability. And Pakistan's domestic issues are the real reason that this dispute is kept alive; there is a lack of political will on the part of its leaders to resolve the issue. The complex geopolitical dynamics, coupled with India's firm stance on Kashmir as an internal matter, cannot lead to a breakthrough anytime soon. Shehbaz knows this but still uses the ploy to influence popular sentiment in Pakistan. Moreover, with the evolving regional dynamics and global priorities, drumming up international support for Pakistan's position on Kashmir remains an uphill task. As Shehbaz embarks on his second term as the Prime Minister, his handling of the Kashmir issue will undoubtedly be closely watched both domestically and internationally. He would, however, do better to sincerely address Pakistan's domestic issues and help his people lead a satisfied, dignified life.

PICTALK



Children attend morning assembly at a school that reopened after winter vacations, in Srinagar

Exploring linguistic identities amid pluralism



PRAFULL GORADIA

Underneath pluralism lies a nuanced interplay of linguistic identities, particularly evident during the electoral season

India often claims to be a pluralistic society proudly calls itself a unity in diversity. No doubt, Hindu faith provides us with a strong shaft to hold the country together. Nevertheless, there is an occasional deviation in our dealing with some of our linguistic brethren. They show prominently up say at election time. West Bengal is dominantly a Hindu state like any other. But it is what may be called a shakta worshipping people. Male deities are not sought after. Although Krishna is acceptable, yet more by the lower castes who were attracted to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Otherwise, the popular deities are Durga and Mahakali; more the latter. This translates into domestic life into often a father addressing his daughter affectionately Maa or even a stranger lady who is to be addressed respectfully. Didi is the next best to Maa. Another unusual practice to be witnessed at a wedding reception called popularly bohobhat, a party given by the groom's family after the wedding. The odd lady might well find and instinctively remark 'how handsome is the groom?' Across India it is the bride whose looks are commented upon, not the groom's, but here is where West Bengal is different. The Bengali super-performance is their language; neither religion, nor the culture. A non-Bengali speaking it as well as a native would touch their hearts, equally, if it was appreciated. If the language is spoken well by an outsider, it would be appreciated as 'parishkar' (clear). An even better performance would evoke the compliment of 'sundar' (beautiful).

In sharp contrast, say Gujarat or Rajasthan would not be sensitive as Bengal would be over the issue of language. In a sharp difference, the Tamil could be flattered if the outsider speaks the language authentically. It is likely to be taken as an outsider having taken all the trouble to identify himself culturally with their ancient land and culture. To the Maharashtrian, his Marathi is very important. For example, in the composite Bombay State, the Maharashtrians were in an over-



whelming majority and yet they agitated-with and without violence-to get a Samyukta Maharashtra, distinct from Gujarat, which was the other component of the state. It is not that they disliked the Gujaratis; there are millions of them in Mumbai, and the two communities co-exist happily. All in all, every community, whether linguistic or otherwise, is likely to be proud of it's identify. At least for those who wish to get elected and govern, they should take for granted that identify is important to most and should be prepared to appear to pamper them. The reason is that in the event some adverse incident takes place, it could well take a turn and become an issue of identity, whose flames would then be difficult to douse. By and large, India has managed its many languages and pluralities competently. However, with the rapidly developing economy and the resultant prosperity expected in due course, one cannot rule out the desire for relative freedom, and the demand for greater regional authority. The current government has been wise not to touch Article 356 of the Constitution and dismiss any state government, an act that is viewed as an anti-federal action. Other factors



EVEN LARGER STATES MUST ENSURE THAT THEY ARE WELL ARMED, NOT ONLY FOR THEMSELVES BUT ALSO FOR FRIENDLY NATIONS. FOR EXAMPLES GO BACK TO THE 1860s AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, WHEN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN STATES FOUGHT FOR YEARS

have also helped, such as the presence of minorities, which often wave the flag of polarization, in turn, leaving no choice for the majority other than a strident march towards unity. UP, which was the torch-bearer for Hindi, remained comparatively dormant, as its problems for decades were economic rather than political. Another factor that worked in India's favour was the awareness that Pakistan split into two in 1971 merely on the issue of its national language Urdu. Although much later, the traumatic breakup of the Soviet Union into sixteen republics sent shivers of fear down the spires of many a country. More secession followed in Europe after 1991. There is no danger of this nature on the horizon of India at present. However, precaution is always a virtue. In today's world of increasing technology, a small state is a handicapped polity. Even in older times, the defence of a small state was perpetually problematic. There are a few such states in India's neighbourhood and we can appreciate their tensions. In the event there comes a phase of financial shortage, borrowing would pose a problem. What and how much can small state pledge as a collateral security?

The problem of defence can be answered by joining an alliance. A number of European countries have linked themselves to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). But there is a price to pay for an alliance. One's freedom to conduct one's foreign policy shrinks simultaneously. Even larger states must ensure that they are well armed, not only for themselves but also for friendly nations. For examples, go back to the 1860s and the American Civil War when the northern and southern states fought for years. If the U.S.A. had not remained together and united, there would have been no country to save Europe from the Nazis in WWII, and also WWI between 1914-18. National political parties should therefore have units of Young people, men and women, who can keep tract of regional peculiarities and systematically learn and practise them so that communication with the regions becomes more effective. No one should as if he or she is outside India or not wanted! (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CUTTACK SILVER FILIGREE HAS GI TAG

Sir — Cuttack is one of the oldest cities in India and its centuries-old silver filigree (Chandi Tarakasi) has received a GI tag. The Odisha State Co-operative Handicrafts Corporation Limited (UTKALIKA) applied on July 2021 and the GI tag was registered on March 1, 2024. The heritage place is always known for this special craft by its artisans and it symbolises historical significance. This GI tag is a milestone achievement for the artists who are still working hard to continue this traditional artwork. Tarakasi, Tara is known as wire and Kasi is known for design. When you visit Cuttack during Durga Puja you will notice some intricate silver filigree work of artists created on medhas (tableau) the artists are from Cuttack. Due to a lack of earnings, the number of artists is decreasing. We must value every old traditional artwork and the government should encourage the artists and their families to continue this historical work in the future. Kankhya Rout | Dhenkanal

WASTE PICKERS' COMMUNITY

Sir — International Waste Pickers Day is observed on March 1 every year in memory of fellow waste pickers who were brutally killed in Colombia in 1992. For over three decades since this barbaric incident, waste pickers and recyclers the world over have been continuing to fight for recognition of their work. Waste pickers play an important role in waste management, in the recycling economy. Decades have rolled by since the above tragic incident, the world is yet to see any meaningful support for this community, both by governments and private sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught a lesson for people the world over on how to manage, handle and dispose of waste. It is much sad that India's estimated 1.5 million waste pickers who are undervalued and

MeitY's AI advisory



The recent advisory from MeitY regarding AI platforms and social media intermediaries overlooks the fundamental need for robust IT infrastructure and skilled personnel to enforce such mandates. While the advisory mandates permission for launching under-trail AI products and emphasises accountability, it inadvertently exposes systemic deficiencies within the country's tech ecosystem. The criticism levelled at Google's AI tool, Gemini, underscores

the repercussions of underdeveloped regulatory frameworks and insufficient expertise in handling complex AI algorithms. As Chandrasekhar aptly notes, the advisory serves as a precursor to a future regulatory framework aimed at creating a safe and trusted internet environment. However, the effectiveness of such measures hinges on the government's ability to address its limitations and invest in building a robust regulatory infrastructure. As India navigates the digital age, bridging the gap between regulatory intent and operational reality demands a concerted effort to invest in infrastructure, manpower, and resources to safeguard the integrity of its digital landscape. Without addressing these fundamental issues, regulatory directives risk being toothless gestures, failing to address the complex challenges posed by AI and digital platforms. The government must prioritise these investments to ensure a secure and accountable digital environment for its citizens. Shrutti Sagar | Pune

Financial planning comes of age in India

Certified financial planning is ideal for individuals seeking professional management of their portfolios. It is a great career option, too



KRISHNA MISHRA

In the labyrinth of personal finance, a new breed of professionals is emerging, promising to guide individuals through the complexities of money management and investment strategies. Known as Certified Financial Planners (CFPs), these experts are gaining traction worldwide, including in India, as individuals seek holistic and personalised financial advice tailored to their life goals. Financial planning, although relatively new in India, is a well-established profession in the West, where it is tightly regulated. Globally, CFPs undergo rigorous training and certification processes, ensuring they possess the necessary expertise to navigate clients through various financial landscapes. In India alone, there are over 2,000 CFP professionals, with demand far outstripping supply, hinting at the growing recognition of their role in shaping financial futures. So, who exactly are these financial planners, and what sets them apart from traditional financial advisors? Unlike transactional advisors who focus on selling prod-



ucts, CFPs operate as consultants, akin to general physicians in the medical field. They delve deep into understanding clients' aspirations, crafting comprehensive financial plans that encompass investments, insurance, tax planning, retirement planning, and estate planning. With a keen eye on adapting to clients' evolving life goals, CFPs provide ongoing support and guidance, acting as trusted allies in their financial journeys. The path to certification is demanding, requiring a post-graduate level qualification involving rigorous examinations and real-life financial planning scenarios. However, the flexibility of the certification process allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue this career path. The success rate varies, but the average passing rate hovers around 55 to 60 percent, reflecting the rigour of the

certification process. With their skill set honed, CFPs find employment opportunities across various sectors, including banking, insurance, wealth management firms, and consultancy organisations. Their expertise in financial planning and analysis makes them invaluable assets in today's dynamic financial landscape. Beyond individual financial wellness, the impact of CFPs extends to broader economic prosperity. By empowering individuals with sound financial strategies, they contribute to a financially sustainable society. Moreover, by bridging the gap between financial literacy and action, CFPs play a pivotal role in unlocking dormant financial resources, thereby fueling economic growth. In essence, the emergence of Certified Financial Planners heralds a new era in personal finance—one characterised by informed decision-making, tailored strategies, and long-term financial security. As individuals embrace the guidance of these professionals, they embark on a journey towards financial empowerment and prosperity, ultimately

shaping a brighter economic future for generations to come. In conclusion, the emergence of financial planning as a career option holds immense promise, both for the aspiring professionals and the nation at large. For young individuals seeking a rewarding career path, becoming a Certified Financial Planner offers not only personal fulfilment but also lucrative opportunities for growth and impact. With the demand for financial expertise on the rise and the potential to make a tangible difference in people's lives, financial planning presents a win-win scenario for both the country and its youth. For the country, a growing cadre of Certified Financial Planners signifies a step towards a financially literate and empowered society. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools to navigate their financial futures, CFPs contribute to economic resilience and prosperity, and national development. The writer heads the Financial Planning Standards Board (FPSB) in India; views are personal

India may also face problems in the future. Because India may face difficulties in importing coal. Due to this restriction, many big companies in India will not dare to do business with Russia. Mainly coal import traders. As a result, these companies can do import business with countries like Australia, South Africa or Indonesia. Putin criticised America in his speech. It has been said that Americans are not used to war. Americans have forgotten what war is. Western countries are trying to weaken Russia from within. But Russia is fully armed with nuclear weapons. The overall behaviour of Vladimir Putin shows that he is trying to lead the world to World War III. Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THIS WORLD IS A GOD-CENTRIC CREATION

The belief in a divine creator overseeing our world is deeply ingrained in many cultures



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Evidence of it is overwhelming. We all know or should know that God has created our world, which is a part of a galaxy. Not only that, God is keeping it going. Surprising as it may seem, God is very busy doing it. Lord Krishna states, "There is neither compulsion of any duty for Me in the three worlds nor there is anything remaining to be obtained by Me and nor there is anything worth getting for Me, still I am engaged in action only." (3.22) "If I do not act, then all these worlds will be destroyed." (3.24) God controls everything. A nuclear war cannot break out in spite of some mad person having access to them. Why? Because God will prevent it. This happened in one country. The ruler wanted to use a nuclear weapon. He had the nuclear button, but it only conveys to the airforce his intention. The actual execution is still dependent upon senior officers. They were determined to ignore any such command. God was controlling their thinking.

God is fully independent. That is the reason, the Creation lasts for a very long time; God cannot be forced by any tyrant. Even such despots are dependent upon God, as all of us are. Even to exist on a daily basis, God has to ensure level field, otherwise how would good people survive with so many demons on the loose? Whatever good people need additionally God provides, if prayed for. (7.16) The Creation runs on the principle of "What you sow you reap." God can help because He can reward spiritual acts. Unfortunately, not many take advantage of this facility. Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame had clearly laid out, "Where there is the yogeshwara Krishna and a devotee (in the particular case it was Arjuna), there will be opulence, victory, wealth and morality." (18.78) Then, this world, being a place between hell and heaven, is full of chal-



lenges. It is not unusual to face some difficulty or trouble more or less on a regular basis. We, being small and quite helpless really need help to meet them. God's help is very much needed, which God has promised, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace." (18.58) This is a blank cheque by God to us. His only requirement is for us to become God conscious. It is not too difficult; we just have to keep pursuing the spiritual path. We have to give up our 'ahankar' (ego) and do what God instructs us to do as in the verse # 18.65, "Develop My consciousness; become My devotee; make sacrifice for Me; and offer obeisance to Me." God can do much more for us, because this is a God-centered Creation.

How do we go about taking advantage of God's offer? We can divide all of us in three categories. First are those who have predominately the mode of goodness in them. They have divine qualities, and are classed as 'deva' (divine). Next come the masses, who have mainly the mode of passion in them. They keep busy pursuing material goals throughout their lives. Then, there are the ones, who are under the influence of the mode of darkness. They harm others and are called 'danava' (demon). Out of these three, the divine ones serve others, e.g. King Janaka - an example given by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita 3.20. Their engagements are noticed by God and He ensures that they do not suffer.

Therefore, the path is clear; we need to come to the deva category. We must begin to see God as a person, which He is whenever He chooses to incarnate, as He did as Lord Krishna. And we begin doing spiritual practices, and at some point qualify as a 'nimitta' (instrument) of God, as Arjuna was. He carried out whatever the Lord instructed him to do. I am personally benefitting from God's munificence. He is helping to change my 'svabhava' (nature), which is afflicted by the fault of fearing. As I am taking more shelter, I am becoming more peaceful. (18.62) God is like a parent, but not as helpless; God finds ways to help without infringing upon rights of other souls. God provides solution for whatever challenge as I face. Why don't you experience it?

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

UN's new improved human rights vision

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, aims to stimulate dialogue and action to reclaim the integrity and universality of human rights



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

The 21-page vision, "Human Rights: A Path for Solutions", to protect and promote human rights, unveiled on Monday by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, offers an interesting yet unsurprising perspective, echoing the institutional failures of a once highly esteemed organisation now plagued by chronic illness and internal politics.

Contextualising this within the current global landscape reveals stark realities: amidst a world where 828 million people face regular hunger and the wealth of the five richest men has more than doubled since 2020, while nearly five billion others experience worsening financial conditions, the persistence of inequality undermines the universality of human rights. Highlighted by reports showing corporations amassing unprecedented profits at the expense of widespread wage cuts and with affluent countries disproportionately owning global wealth, it's clear that addressing systemic inequality is imperative for truly realising the principles of human rights on a global scale.

Seventy-five years after the UDHR, it's evident that the traditional approach to safeguarding these rights has been gravely distorted. Countries investing significant resources in global institutions like the United Nations have often exploited this noble cause to further their own agendas. This exploitation is camouflaged by elaborate narratives crafted to veil the abuse. Consequently, human rights have been commodified, attracting opportunists who profit from others' suffering, turning empathy into economic gain. This pervasive hypocrisy has plunged us into a moral abyss. The essence of upholding human rights lies in fostering collective cooperation among diverse social entities. Collaborative efforts are essential for addressing shared challenges with a unified approach rooted in the defence of fundamental principles. To truly protect human rights, we must first cease treating it as a transactional commodity, devoid of its inherent dignity and worth. There are contradictions evident within, as certain organisations prioritise increasingly self-serving agendas and select topics. A prime example lies in the misuse of veto powers by members of the United Nations Security Council when faced with certain resolutions on common challenges. Instead of collective action for common goals, organisations often prioritise their own interests, overlooking equally important but less visible human rights issues. Consequently, human rights have continually fallen victim to political interests and biased media behaviour. This explains why the death of a political activist in Russia garners global attention while the trial of Julian Assange and the sustained abuses he endures remain overlooked. This is where we need a radical approach to change. Furthermore, the involvement of various actors such as policymakers, philanthropists, and government officials raises concerns regarding conflicts of interest and power dynamics within the network, potentially leading to the manipulation of human rights discourse to advance individual political or economic agendas and marginalise certain voices and perspectives. Additionally, while the vision calls on governments to protect human rights defenders and uphold freedom of expression and association, many governments perpetrate human rights violations themselves, cast-



ing doubt on their ability to serve as reliable protectors of human rights and potentially compromising the independence and efficacy of human rights advocacy efforts. Moreover, while human rights policies are pivotal for preventing violence and fostering sustainable peace, their application in conflict situations often encounters challenges stemming from conflicting interpretations of human rights obligations, oversimplifications of complex conflict dynamics, and the frequently disregarded early warnings and recommendations for preventive measures.



THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ECONOMICS OFFERS PROMISE IN PRIORITISING THE WELL-BEING OF INDIVIDUALS AND THE PLANET, YET CONCERNS PERSIST ABOUT ITS FEASIBILITY AND SUSCEPTIBILITY TO EXPLOITATION

The concept of human rights economics offers promise in prioritising the well-being of individuals and the planet, yet concerns persist about its feasibility and susceptibility to exploitation. Despite states' obligations to fulfil economic, social, and cultural rights, uneven power dynamics and political agendas often obstruct progress. Western nations, self-proclaimed guardians of human rights, criticised for selectively advocating human rights to advance geopolitical interests, may encounter resistance from influential economic entities when proposing strategies to embed human rights in economic frameworks. Efforts to bolster financial self-sufficiency and combat corruption commendably aim to prioritise human rights. However, the influence of multinational corporations and financial institutions, prioritising profit maximisation over human rights considerations, poses significant challenges. Additionally, while allocating resources toward education, healthcare, and social welfare in highly indebted nations is essential for advancing human rights, achieving debt relief and restructuring demands substantial political resolve and international collaboration, often lacking in a global economic paradigm favouring creditor and financial market interests over vulnerable populations. The vision emphasises acknowledging the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment within legal frameworks, yet it inadequately addresses hurdles posed by

nations resistant to environmental protection agreements. Despite progress in promoting environmental rights, the efficacy of these endeavours is hindered by a lack of global consensus. Moreover, while emphasising strategic prosecution and accountability to drive policy changes, it overlooks the disproportionate burden borne by vulnerable communities, especially in developing nations, facing environmental degradation and climate change impacts despite minimal contribution to the issue. Additionally, while critical, the insistence on meeting climate finance obligations is undermined by historically high-emitting countries shirking responsibility to support less developed nations, perpetuating environmental injustice and hindering global efforts to address the climate crisis.

The vision rightly pushes for the integration of human rights policies into climate action but neglects to hold accountable nations prioritising economic growth over environmental sustainability and disregarding the rights of indigenous peoples, who often bear the brunt of environmental degradation. Despite emphasising participation, ending discrimination, and fostering accountability, it fails to fully address systemic challenges perpetuated by certain countries which perpetuate inequalities and sidestep responsibility for human rights violations. Discrimination, often entrenched within governmental structures and powerful institutions, remains pervasive even in Western nations. Despite professed commitments to equality, these countries struggle with deep-seated inequalities and structural barriers that hinder meaningful inclusion and participation. Furthermore, many member-states prioritise the interests of elite groups and corporations over those of marginalised communities, all while extolling the importance of participatory processes in shaping effective solutions. Monetary influence and institutional sway in politics frequently undermine democratic processes, impeding the implementation of policies that serve the

broader populace. Additionally, although holding governments and corporate entities accountable for human rights violations is paramount, there often exists a notable lack of political will to prosecute perpetrators, particularly when they wield significant power.

Additionally, while it is imperative to address the crisis in education, the vision overlooks the root causes of this crisis, such as underinvestment in public education systems and persistent inequities in access to quality education. According to UNESCO, the number of out-of-school children surged to 250 million by September 2023, marking a staggering increase of 6 million from 2021. The urgency of the situation is evident, and mere rhetoric cannot suffice without an authentic and transformative approach.

Moreover, while acknowledging the disproportionate impact of environmental crises on younger generations, the vision lacks concrete proposals to address this pressing issue. Despite the existential threats posed by environmental degradation, governments often prioritise short-term economic gains over long-term sustainability. It's praiseworthy to note that this latest vision acknowledges the necessity for deeper cooperation and coordination within the human rights system, implicitly recognising the presence of double standards and selectivity in dealing with human rights crises. This recognition is crucial for promoting transparency and accountability.

What's crucial, however, is that while advocating for the expansion and strengthening of human rights mechanisms, it lacks specific proposals to hold states accountable for their actions or address the root causes of double standards in human rights enforcement. It fails to outline how these mechanisms will ensure fair treatment of all human rights violations. As the old school of thought teaches us, both action without vision and vision without action are deemed failures.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist. Views are personal)

Tackling mental health crises in medical students

In recent years, the mental health challenges faced by medical students have escalated dramatically, requiring immediate intervention

In recent years, the issue of mental health among medical students in India has reached alarming proportions, necessitating urgent attention and decisive action. The relentless demands of medical education, combined with various external stressors, have led to a concerning rise in suicides and mental health challenges among students pursuing MBBS and postgraduate degrees. According to data from the National Medical Commission (NMC) spanning from 2018 to 2022, a staggering 64 MBBS students and 58 PG students tragically lost their lives to suicide, alongside a significant number who left their educational programs during this period.



SARVESH PANDEY

Yet another exploratory study published in the International Journal of Social Psychiatry in 2022 using online news portals and Google database spanning from 2010 and 2019, puts the staggering number at a total of 358 suicide deaths reported among medical students (125), residents (105), and physicians (128). The majority of these suicides occurred before the age of 30, with an

average age of 29.9 years. **Understanding the Complexity:** The mental health challenges faced by medical students in India are multifaceted and stem from a combination of academic pressures, familial expectations, financial burdens, and cultural factors. The rigorous curriculum, long hours of study and clinical rotations, and the constant pursuit of academic excellence create a high-stress environment that takes a toll on students' mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, the stigma surrounding mental health issues often prevents students from seeking help, exacerbating their struggles. **Challenges Faced by Postgraduate Students:**

Postgraduate medical students face unique challenges that add to their mental health woes. Excessive workload, demanding clinical responsibilities, and inadequate support systems contribute to burnout and emotional exhaustion among PG students. The lack of work-life balance and limited opportunities for self-care compound the problem, leading to increased levels of stress and anxiety. In fact, the relentless schedule imposed on these students not only jeopardizes their mental health but also compromises patient care and safety. The challenging environment in healthcare settings often leads to distressing situations where disgruntled relatives of patients may vent

their frustrations on postgraduate (PG) students who are on duty, even when these students are not at fault. This unfortunate reality underscores the urgent need for improved support and protection for PG students who face such situations.

Inadequate Support Mechanisms:

Despite the growing awareness of mental health issues among medical students, many institutions in India lack adequate support mechanisms and counseling services. This leaves students feeling isolated and unsupported, with few resources to turn to in times of crisis. Moreover, the stigma associated with mental illness often leads to underreporting and a reluctance to seek help, per-

petuating a cycle of suffering in silence. The persistent lack of adequate support mechanisms and counseling services in many Indian medical institutions exacerbates the challenges faced by medical students dealing with mental health issues.

The Role of Advocacy and Reform:

To address the crisis of mental health among medical students, concerted efforts are needed at both institutional and systemic levels. Organizations like the Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) are actively advocating for reforms to prioritize student well-being. This includes advocating for reasonable duty hour regulations, ensuring access to

mental health support services, and fostering a culture of empathy and support within medical institutions.

Collaborative Solutions: By working together to implement comprehensive support systems, raise awareness, and destigmatise mental illness, we can create a more nurturing and supportive environment for medical students to thrive. In a nutshell, the crisis of mental health among medical students in India demands urgent attention and concerted action from all stakeholders. By acknowledging the complexity of the issues at hand, advocating for reforms, and fostering a culture of support and empathy, we can ensure that medical education promotes the well-

being of students rather than compromising it.

Ultimately, ensuring that our doctors are not under stress is essential not only for their own health and well-being but also for the success of efforts to achieve the goal of universal healthcare coverage (UHC) as envisioned by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and improve health outcomes for all. Together, let us work towards creating a healthier and more compassionate learning environment for the future healthcare professionals of India.

(The author is an Orthopaedic doctor with RML Hospital and General Secretary of the Federation of Resident Doctors Association; views are personal)

Harris calls for immediate truce in Gaza

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US Vice President Kamala Harris called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for at least the next six weeks, as she called on the Israeli government to "do more" to increase the flow of aid in the war-ravaged enclave. Harris made the ceasefire call on Sunday during a speech in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the 59th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the annual remembrance of the landmark civil rights movement. "The threat Hamas poses to the people of Israel must be eliminated, and given the immense scale of suffering in Gaza, there must be an immediate ceasefire for at least the next six weeks, which is what is currently on the table," Harris, 59, said. "This will get the hostages out and get a significant amount of aid. This would allow us to build something more enduring to ensure Israel is more secure and to respect the right of the Palestinian people to dignity, freedom,

and self-determination," the Indian-American leader said amidst applause from the audience.

"Hamas claims it wants a ceasefire. Well, there is a deal on the table. And as we have said, Hamas needs to agree to that deal. Let's get a ceasefire. Let's reunite the hostages with their families. And let's provide immediate relief to the people of Gaza," Harris, a Democrat, said.

Meanwhile, Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal immediately welcomed the call.

"The Vice President has called for an immediate ceasefire and urgent aid into Gaza. This is the first time this language has been used by the administration. It is important. Now let's back it up with a policy shift," said the 58-year-old Democratic lawmaker.

Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Harris said, "What we are seeing every day in Gaza is devastating. We have seen reports of families eating leaves or animal feed, women giving birth to mal-



nourished babies with little or no medical care, and children dying from malnutrition and dehydration."

Asserting that too many innocent Palestinians have been killed, she said, "Just a few days ago, we saw hungry, desperate people approach aid trucks, simply trying to secure food for their families after weeks of nearly no aid reaching Northern Gaza."

"And they were met with gunfire and chaos. Our hearts break for the victims of that horrific tragedy and for all the innocent people in Gaza who

are suffering from what is clearly a humanitarian catastrophe," Harris said amidst applause from the audience.

"People in Gaza are starving. The conditions are inhumane. And our common humanity compels us to act. As President Joe Biden said on Friday, the United States is committed to urgently get more lifesaving assistance to innocent Palestinians in need," she said.

"Yesterday, the Department of Defence carried out its first airdrop of humanitarian assistance, and the United States will continue these airdrops. And we will work on a new route by sea to deliver aid," she said.

"And the Israeli government must do more to significantly increase the flow of aid. No excuses. They must open new border crossings. They must not impose any unnecessary restrictions on the delivery of aid. They must ensure humanitarian personnel, sites, and convoys are not targeted. And they must work to restore basic services and promote order in Gaza so more food,

water, and fuel can reach those in need," Harris said.

At the same time, Harris said that Israel has a right to defend itself. "And President Joe Biden and I are unwavering in our commitment to Israel's security," she said.

A day earlier, the Central Command and the Royal Jordanian Air Force conducted a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Gaza between 3:00 and 5:00 pm to provide essential relief to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict.

Various C-130 aircraft dropped 38,000 meals along the Gaza coastline, allowing civilian access to critical assistance.

"And those locations were chosen specifically as areas where we thought people would be able to best access the aid. There were 66 total bundles, 22 on each aircraft, which were dropped into Gaza to help alleviate the intense hunger and desperate situation there," a senior administration official told reporters on a conference call.

Haiti declares a curfew after weekend jailbreak

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI)

Haiti's government declared a state of emergency and nighttime curfew late Sunday in a bid to regain control of the streets after an explosion of violence over the weekend saw armed gang members storm the country's two biggest prisons.

The 72-hour state of emergency went into immediate effect as the government said it would set out to find the killers, kidnappers and other violent criminals that it reported escaped from the prison.

"The police were ordered to use all legal means at their disposal to enforce the curfew and apprehend all offenders," said a statement from Finance Minister Patrick Boisvert, who is serving as acting prime minister.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry travelled abroad last week to try to salvage support for a bringing in a United Nations-backed security force to stabilise the country in its conflict with increasingly powerful crime groups.

The decree capped a deadly weekend that marked a new low in Haiti's downward spiral of violence. At least nine people had been killed since Thursday — four of them police officers — as gangs stepped up coordinated attacks on state institutions in Port-au-Prince. Targets included police stations, the country's international airport, even the national soccer stadium.

But the siege on Saturday

night of the National Penitentiary came as a shock even to Haitians accustomed to living under the constant threat of violence. Almost all of the estimated 4,000 inmates fled during the jailbreak, leaving the normally overcrowded facility eerily empty Sunday with no guards in sight and plastic sandals, clothing and furniture strewn across the concrete patio. Three bodies with gunshot wounds lay at the prison entrance.

In another neighbourhood, the bloodied corpses of two men with their hands tied behind the backs lay face down as residents walked past roadblocks set up with burning tires. Among the few dozen that chose to stay in the prison are 18 former Colombian soldiers accused of working as mercenaries in the July 2021 assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse. Amid the clashes Saturday night, several of the Colombians shared a video pleading for their lives. "Please, please help us," one of the men, Francisco Uribe, said in the message widely shared on social media. "They are massacring people indiscriminately inside the cells."

On Sunday, Uribe told journalists who walked breezily into the normally highly guarded facility, "I didn't flee because I'm innocent."

Colombia's foreign ministry called on Haiti to provide "special protection" for the men.

In the absence of official

information, inmates' family members rushed to the prison to check on loved ones.

"I don't know whether my son is alive or not," said Alexandre Jean as she roamed around the cells looking for any sign of him. "I don't know what to do."

The violence Saturday night appeared to be widespread, with several neighbourhoods reporting gunfire.

A second Port-au-Prince prison containing around 1,400 inmates was also overrun. Gang gunmen also occupied and vandalised the nation's top soccer stadium, taking one employee hostage for hours, Haiti's soccer federation said in a statement.

Internet service for many residents was down as Haiti's top mobile network said a fibre optic cable connection was slashed during the rampage.

In the space of less than two weeks, several state institutions have been attacked by the gangs, which are increasingly coordinating their actions and choosing once unthinkable targets like the Central Bank. As part of coordinated attacks by gangs, four police officers were killed Thursday.

After gangs opened fire at Haiti's international airport last week, the US Embassy said it was halting all official travel to the country and on Sunday night urged all American citizens to depart as soon as possible. The embassy said it would also cancel until Thursday all consular appointments.

Nikki Haley wins first primary

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Nikki Haley has won the Republican primary in the District of Columbia, notching her first victory of the 2024 campaign.

Her victory Sunday at least temporarily halts Donald Trump's sweep of the GOP voting contests, although the former president is bound to pick up several hundred more delegates in this week's Super Tuesday races.

Despite her early losses, Haley has said she would remain in the race at least through those contests, although she has declined to name any primary she felt confident she would win. Following last week's loss in her home state of South Carolina, Haley remained adamant that voters in the places that followed deserved an alternative to Trump despite his dominance thus far in the campaign.

The Associated Press declared Haley the winner Sunday night after D.C. Republican Party officials released the results.

Washington is one of the most heavily Democratic jurisdictions in the nation, with



only about 23,000 registered Republicans in the city. Democrat Joe Biden won the district in the 2020 general election with 92 per cent of the vote.

Haley held a rally in the nation's capital on Friday before heading back to North Carolina and a series of states holding Super Tuesday primaries. She joked with more than 100 supporters inside a hotel ballroom, "Who says

there's no Republicans in D.C., come on."

"We're trying to make sure that we touch every hand that we can and speak to every person," Haley said.

As she gave her standard campaign speech, criticizing Trump for running up federal deficit, one rallygoer bellowed, "He cannot win a general election. It's madness." That prompted agreement from Haley, who argues that she can

deny Biden a second term but Trump won't be able to.

While campaigning as an avowed conservative, Haley has tended to perform better among more moderate and independent-leaning voters.

Four in 10 Haley supporters in South Carolina's GOP primary were self-described moderates, compared with 15 per cent for Trump, according to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 2,400 voters taking part in the Republican primary in South Carolina, conducted for AP by NORC at the University of Chicago. On the other hand, 8 in 10 Trump supporters identified as conservatives, compared to about half of Haley's backers.

Trump won an uncontested D.C. primary during his 2020 reelection bid but placed a distant third four years earlier behind Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida and former Ohio Governor John Kasich. Rubio's win was one of only three in his unsuccessful 2016 bid. Other more centrist Republicans, including Mitt Romney and John McCain, won the city's primaries in 2012 and 2008 on their way to winning the GOP nomination.

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Hardliners dominate Iran poll

AP ■ DUBAI

Iranian hard-line politicians dominated the country's vote for parliament, results released on Monday showed, maintaining their hold on the legislature in a vote that saw calls for a boycott and an apparently low turnout.

Authorities still have not released turnout figures for Friday's vote, nor given any reason for the delay. Turnout is suspected to be low after polling stations in the capital, Tehran, saw few voters.

It remains unclear whether turnout was depressed by voter apathy or an active desire to send a message to Iran's theocracy, though some in the country pushed for a boycott, including imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi.

The vote also was the first since the 2022 mass protests over the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, killed after being arrested by police over allegedly not wearing her required hijab to the liking of authorities. Of 290 races held for parliament, voters decided 245 seats in the first round, Interior Ministry spokesman Mohsen Eslami said. The remaining 45 will need to have runoff elections, which will be held in either April or May as winning candidates failed to get a mandatory 20 per cent of the vote.

Of the 245 politicians elected, 200 were supported by hard-line groups in voter guides published before the election, according to an Associated Press analysis.

The analysis identified some 45 incoming lawmakers as being relatively moderate, conservative or independent. The current parliament includes 18 pro-reform politicians and 38 others identified as independents. Of those winning seats, only 11 were women. The current parliament has 16 women as legislators.

French lawmakers to vote on making abortion a constitutional right

AP ■ PARIS

A bill to enshrine a woman's right to an abortion in the French constitution goes to a historic vote on Monday, as lawmakers gather for a joint session of parliament at the Palace of Versailles.

The measure was promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback of abortion rights in court rulings in the United States.

Macron's government wants Article 34 of the French constitution amended to specify that "the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to have

recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed".

The lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, overwhelmingly approved the proposal in January. The Senate adopted the bill on Wednesday, clearing a key hurdle for legislation promised by Macron's government, intended to make "a woman's right to have an abortion irreversible".

The measure must be approved by a three-fifths majority in the joint session.

None of France's major political parties represented in parliament has questioned the right to abortion, which was decriminalised in 1975. With both houses of parlia-

ment having adopted the bill, Monday's joint session at the Palace of Versailles is expected to be largely a formality.

The government argued in its introduction to the bill that the right to abortion is threatened in the United States, where the Supreme Court in 2022 overturned a 50-year-old ruling that used to guarantee it.

"Unfortunately, this event is not isolated: in many countries, even in Europe, there are currents of opinion that seek to hinder at any cost the freedom of women to terminate their pregnancy if they wish," the introduction to the French legislation says.

China scraps Premier's annual press meet

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Monday scrapped the annual press conference of its Premier, a decades-long scripted event watched live by the people for any new policy formulations for the world's second-largest economy.

Also, speculation is rife that Liu Jianchao, a senior Chinese diplomat currently heading the international department of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), may be made the new Foreign Minister during the current session of the National People's Congress (NPC).

The NPC or parliament will hold its annual meeting here from March 5 to March 11, NPC spokesman Lou Qianjian said at a news conference on Monday.

Lou, who spoke to the media ahead of the NPC session, in a surprising statement said the practice of the Premier addressing the media at the end of the annual parliament session was discontinued from this year.

The Chinese Premier's press conference, which was first held in 1988, is a widely anticipated event as the Premier takes officially screened questions mostly on domestic issues and a few on foreign policy as well. The premier's press annu-



al conference at times provided a rare window into the thinking of China's number two leader, who is nominally in charge of the economy.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and other senior ruling Communist Party leaders are mostly out of bounds for the local official media and the foreign press in China.

The Foreign Minister too addresses the annual press meet during the NPC meet. Thousands of the NPC delegates along with the members of the advisory body the Chinese People's Consultative Conference, (CPPCC) converged in Beijing for their weekly annual sessions to conduct legislative agenda.

The NPC will meet on Tuesday dur-

ing which Li will present the government's work report as well as the budget including the defence budget for the endorsement by the parliament.

The parliament meeting is taking place amid declining business sentiment in China as the government's efforts to reverse the slowdown of the second-largest economy have not fructified.

Li was expected to announce more steps to revive the economy in his work report.

Li succeeded popular Premier Li Keqiang, who died months after his retirement last year.

There is also speculation that China may announce a new Foreign Minister to succeed Wang Yi, who took over the post last year as a stop-gap arrangement after Qin Gang was sacked.

According to media reports, Liu could be Wang's successor.

Qin, regarded as a close confidant of Xi, was dismissed in July last year in a big political surprise just after seven months in office.

The NPC recently announced that Qin has resigned from his membership.

Wang, who became the director of the ruling Communist Party's Foreign Affairs Commission, took over as Foreign Minister as an additional charge.

Malaysia's PM resists US pressure, says no problems with China

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Malaysia's prime minister Anwar Ibrahim spoke up in defence of ties with China and complained over alleged pressure by the United States and its allies on regional nations to take sides in the West's strategic rivalries with Beijing.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's remarks came during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in the Australian city of Melbourne, where Anwar is one of nine Asian leaders attending the gathering.

"Right now, China seems to be the leading investor into Malaysia," said Anwar and insisted that Malaysians "do not have a problem with China".

"We are an independent nation, we are fiercely independent, we do not want to be dictated by any force," Anwar said.

"So while we remain ... an important friend to the United States and Europe and here in Australia, they should not preclude us from being friendly to one of our important neighbours, precisely China," he said, speaking at a joint news conference with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, a staunch US ally.

"If they have problems with China, they should not impose it upon us. We do not have a problem with China," Anwar told reporters.

Anwar and Albanese announced several new bilateral agreements between Australia and Malaysia on cybersecurity, technology, clean energy, sports and education.

When asked about the term "China-phobia" that he

first used in an interview last month with Financial Times, Anwar said he was responding to criticisms of Malaysia for "giving additional focus to China," its largest trading partner.

The Philippines, an ASEAN nation, urged regional neighbours on Monday to stand together more strongly in upholding the rule of law in the South China Sea, where China is forcefully pursuing territorial claims in conflict with other nations. During a visit to the Philippines in November, Vice President Kamala Harris also urged countries to stand up for territorial integrity and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and said Washington would press an international campaign against "irresponsible behaviour" in the disputed waters.

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Experts rule out immediate improvement in Indo-Pak ties

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif assumed office for a second time, experts here do not see an immediate improvement in ties between Pakistan and India due to their major differences over the vexed Kashmir issue.

The two nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours have been locked in a love-hate relationship since independence from British colonial rule in 1947, having brief periods of engagement amidst conflicts.

They have so far fought at least three major wars, two of them over the Himalayan region of Kashmir, with both claiming it in its entirety.

The ties nosedived in 2019 after India abrogated Article 370 of the

Constitution, revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating the state into two Union Territories.

Pakistan termed the step a violation of the UN Security Council Resolutions and severed all links, including trade, with India.

Rasul Bux Raees, Professor of Political Science at the Lahore University of Management Sciences, told PTI that the divergence in the ties has widened since 2019, and it is not easy to judge how the two sides can reverse the tide and embark on a different course that may lead them to reconciliation.

"I don't see an immediate change in attitudes or any re-engagement, as India is also going for elections and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will

not like to change its narrative about Pakistan," he said.

The formation of a new government in Pakistan after the general elections has created hope that Prime Minister Shehbaz may strike a positive chord to end the deadlock and improve the battered ties with India.

Shehbaz after being elected as the leader of the House on Sunday raked up the Kashmir issue in his maiden address but pledged to improve ties with all leading nations, including the country's neighbours.

"Let's all come together [...] and the National Assembly should pass a resolution for the freedom of Kashmiris and Palestinians," Shehbaz said.

Pakistan has been insisting that the onus of improving the ties was on

India and urging it to undo its "unilateral" steps in Kashmir as a sort of pre-condition to start the talks. India has dismissed the suggestion and made it clear to Pakistan that the entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were integral and inalienable parts of the country. New Delhi has also asserted that the constitutional measures taken by the Indian government to ensure socio-economic development and good governance in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are matters internal to India.

It has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment that is free of terror and hostility for such an engage-

ment.

Professor Raees said it was easier for the government to say something than do it about India and the new government would not take any quick initiative as after internal strife spanning over the years, Pakistan has become weaker and hence not in a position to force conditions on India.

"Pakistan is not in a position to put conditions before the start of a dialogue, as India has become stronger with the passage of time and Pakistan weaker," he said.

Dr Ashfaq Ahmed, Assistant Professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Sargodha, said that initially the Pakistan prime minister would be fully focused on stabilising the coalition government, and it may

not be possible for him to concentrate on external relations, especially ties with India.

"But later on, maybe after six months, the government will have to make a move on relations with India if it wants to address some major issues like trade and water scarcity in the country," he said, adding that water is becoming a big issue for Pakistan.

He also said that it would be interesting to note the reaction by India once the Pakistani government sent any signal that it was ready to engage in the resumption of talks.

Raees also said engagements may begin with talks on trade and other related issues, and with the building of confidence, the two sides can talk on the Kashmir issue.

Cops raid house of Achakzai

PTI ■ KARACHI

Ahead of the presidential polls in Pakistan, authorities in Balochistan have raided the house of opposition presidential candidate and veteran politician Mahmood Khan Achakzai in the provincial capital, Quetta, and reclaimed a piece of government-owned land "illegally occupied" by him.

Achakzai, 75, from Balochistan, is the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) chief and was nominated by Imran Khan, the jailed leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party to contest against former president Asif Ali Zardari.

Authorities in Quetta said they had conducted the raid at Achakzai's residence on Sunday and reclaimed a piece of government-owned land "illegally occupied" by him.

In Parliament, Achakzai would be supported by the Sunni Ittehad Council, the new home of the PTI-backed independent lawmakers.

The veteran politician will contest the March 9 presidential candidate against 68-year-old senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader Zardari whose name has been floated by the coalition government headed by Shehbaz Sharif.

Political and civil rights activists as well as the media have strongly condemned the raid, terming it a reaction by the state institutions to Achakzai's recent speech in the National Assembly when Shehbaz was elected as the prime minister.

Quetta Deputy Commissioner Saad Asad said the raid was planned as the PKMAP President had illegally occupied at his residence a piece of land measuring 2.5 kanals (0.3 acres) which belonged to the government.

"He had encircled the land with boundary walls and despite repeated warnings, he refused to vacate it," Asad said.

Shehbaz Sharif takes oath as Pak PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took the oath as Prime Minister of Pakistan, taking over the reins for a second time since 2022, amidst staggering economic and security challenges.

President Arif Alvi administered the oath to the 72-year-old Shehbaz in a ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the presidential palace.

The ceremony was attended by the three services chiefs, senior officials, diplomats, leading business people, members of the civil society and media organisations. The caretaker premier Anwaarul Haq Kakar was also present.

The brief ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by the oath-taking.

The ceremony was attended by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and other PML-N workers and Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah was also present on the occasion.

Shehbaz earlier served as prime minister of a coalition government from April 2022 to August 2023 before Parliament was dissolved to hold general elections last month.

Alvi had in 2022 tacitly refused to give oath to Shehbaz by saying that he was not feeling well when he was elected as premier for the first time after ousting Imran Khan through a vote of no confidence. Then Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani administered the oath to him.

It was speculated that Alvi



may once again skip the official duty but he agreed.

The oath-taking ceremony comes days after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party agreed on a power-sharing deal to form a coalition government.

On Sunday, Shehbaz comfortably won a majority in the newly-elected Parliament amidst sloganeering by the Opposition.

Shehbaz, the consensus candidate of the PML-N and the PPP, received 201 votes in the 336-member Parliament. His challenger Omar Ayub Khan of

jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 92 votes.

In the February 8 polls, marred by allegations of vote rigging, the Sharif-led party failed to garner a clear majority, albeit technically, it is the largest party with 75 out of the 265 contestable seats.

Shehbaz, known to be an astute politician and a good administrator, was tasked by his elder brother and former three-time prime minister to negotiate with other like-minded parties on the formation of a coalition government.

Besides the PPP, Shehbaz was backed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League (Q), Balochistan Awami Party, Pakistan Muslim League (Z), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party and the National Party.

The new leader should make difficult decisions to undertake to reform the economy of the cash-strapped country and administration.

In his first speech after being voted in, Shehbaz spoke about the struggling economy and said it would require reforms to rid the country of financial difficulties.

He should also mend ties with its neighbours for peace and stability.

He also faces challenges from Khan's party which has promised to keep protesting the alleged manipulation of the February 8 election results.

The security situation of the country has also deteriorated in recent months, with an increase in terror attacks by Pakistan Taliban and other terror groups.

Meanwhile, caretaker PM Kakar, according to reports, has vacated the Prime Minister House, but he will continue to perform his duties as premier till the issuance of notification of the new chief executive of the country. He has been allotted a house in the Minister's Enclave.

During Shehbaz's two successive tenures as chief minister of Punjab (2008-2013 and 2013-2018), a network of underpasses, overhead bridges and mass transit systems was introduced in the most populous Punjab province and was completed in record time.

Born in September 1951 in a Punjabi-speaking Kashmiri family in Lahore, Shehbaz did his graduation from the Government College University, Lahore. His family emigrated from Anantnag in Kashmir for business and settled in the village of Jati Umra in Amritsar district, Punjab at the beginning of the 20th century before moving to Pakistan.

Yousuf Raza Gilani poised to become Senate chairman

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan prime minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, who is tipped to become the chairman of the Senate, has submitted his nomination papers to contest the election to be held on March 14, according to a media report on Monday.

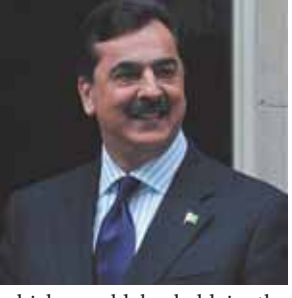
Gilani, who won the February 8 election to the National Assembly from Multan in Punjab province has vacated his seat and will contest for a Senate seat from Islamabad.

Gilani, who took oath as a member of the lower house on February 29, voted for Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif during the election to elect the prime minister in the National Assembly on Sunday.

The 71-year-old is tipped to become the next Senate chairman, according to a power-sharing formula agreed between the PPP and PML-N, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The veteran Pakistan Peoples Party leader, who served as the country's prime minister from 2008 to 2012,

will be facing Chaudhry Ilyas Mehrban of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in a one-on-one contest for the Senate seat, polling for



which would be held in the National Assembly on March 14, the report said.

Mehrban will be the candidate of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) since the PTI is not represented in the National Assembly as Khan's party could not contest the elections.

A total of 19 other candidates from different political parties are in the fray for the five other Senate seats — three from Balochistan and two from Sindh — which fell vacant after the election of the members of the upper house of par-

liament to the National and provincial assemblies.

The deadline set by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for submission of nomination papers ended on Sunday, the Dawn reported.

The Senate seats have fallen vacant under Article 223 of the Constitution that bars double membership, the report said.

Even though there has been no official announcement regarding Gilani as the candidate of the newly-formed eight-party ruling coalition for the top Senate position, the fact that no one from the PML-N submitted papers to contest against him gives credence to such reports, it said.

The PML-N has a clear majority in the National Assembly, where polling would take place for the election on the Senate seat from Islamabad and, therefore, could have easily won the seat.

Mehrban had earlier contested for the National Assembly seat from Islamabad in the 2013 elections, which he lost to PML-N's Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry.

RENAMING OF LAHORE CHOWK AFTER BHAGAT SINGH

Pak court issues notice to Punjab gov't for inaction despite order

PTI ■ LAHORE

A Pakistani court on Monday issued notices to the Punjab provincial government and the district administration on a petition seeking contempt proceedings against three top officials for not complying with the court's order regarding naming the Shadman Chowk in Lahore after Indian Independence war hero Bhagat Singh.

Lahore High Court Justice Shams Mahmood Mirza issued notices to Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider, and the city administrator on the petition filed by the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation Pakistan.

"The LHC issued the notices to the respondents for submitting a reply on the contempt petition for their failure to name the Shadman Chowk after Bhagat Singh by March 26," Imtiaz Rasheed Qureshi, chairman of the Bhagat Singh Memorial Foundation, told PTI after the hearing.

Qureshi said the LHC in 2018 had ordered the government to name Shadman Chowk, the place where Bhagat Singh was hanged in 1931, after the freedom fighter.

"But both the provincial and district governments deliberately did not comply with the LHC's order, thus committing contempt," he

said.

Bhagat Singh, who fought for the independence of the subcontinent, was hanged by British rulers on March 23, 1931, along with Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar after being tried under charges of hatching a conspiracy against the regime.

Singh was initially jailed for life but later awarded the death sentence in another "fabricated case".

Bhagat Singh is respected in the subcontinent not only by Sikhs and Hindus but also Muslims.

Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah had reportedly twice paid him tribute during his speech in the central assembly, saying there had never been another brave person in the subcontinent like Bhagat Singh.

Qureshi stated Bhagat Singh was a freedom fighter of the subcontinent and gave his life along with his companions for the cause of freedom.

"It will be in the interest of justice to name Shadman Chowk after Bhagat Singh and also install his statue at the square to inspire the people of Pakistan and the world," he said and added in neighbouring India, there were many roads and thoroughfares named after Muslim rulers such as Akbar Road, Shahjahan Road and Bahadur Shah Road.

Thaksin's release, after almost two decades of antipathy between his populist political machine and Thailand's conservative royalist ruling class, raised speculation that Yingluck also might be returning soon.

It was the latest favourable verdict for Yingluck, who was prime minister from 2011 until she was forced from office in 2014. In December last year, the same court cleared Yingluck of abuse of power in connection with a personnel transfer she

Mishandling of gov't funds: Thai court acquits former PM

AP ■ BANGKOK

A Thai court on Monday acquitted former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, now living in exile, on charges of mishandling funds for a government project in 2013, the latest legal victory for the powerful family of former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

The action comes shortly after Thaksin, Yingluck's brother, was released on parole for corruption-related offenses. Last year, he returned home after more than a decade of self-imposed exile, and was detained in a hospital for six months before being granted clemency because of his age and ill health.

Thaksin's release, after almost two decades of antipathy between his populist political machine and Thailand's conservative royalist ruling class, raised speculation that Yingluck also might be returning soon.

It was the latest favourable verdict for Yingluck, who was prime minister from 2011 until she was forced from office in 2014. In December last year, the same court cleared Yingluck of abuse of power in connection with a personnel transfer she

had overseen.

But to return to Thailand without facing prison, she would also need a pardon from King Maha Vajiralongkorn or other form of clemency. In 2017 she was sentenced in absentia for alleged negligence in implementing a rice subsidy program that lost the government a massive amount of money, estimated to be as much as 500 billion baht (USD 14 billion).

Yingluck and her supporters said she is innocent and being persecuted in an effort to dismantle Thaksin's political machine. He was toppled from power by a military coup in 2006, after being accused of abuse of power, corruption and disrespect for the country's monarchy.

The Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai Party came to power last year after a general election in coalition with military parties connected to the coups that twice removed the family from power, and Thaksin's daughter Paetongtarn has since become the party's leader and a prospective future prime minister.

The judges unanimously acquitted Yingluck and five other defendants accused of

mishandling 240 million baht (USD 6.7 million) that had been earmarked for a roadshow to tout investors on an ambitious infrastructure plan, according to a press release from a special body under a division of the Supreme Court that handles criminal cases against political officeholders.

Yingluck, now 56, was the first female prime minister of Thailand.

His supporters, who delivered him unprecedented electoral victories, believe his only offense was challenging the power of the country's traditional elite, led by monarchists and the military and supported by the urban middle class.

His release appeared to reflect

a reconciliation with his enemies in Thailand's conservative elite, who had believed his brash populist politics and electoral popularity posed a threat to the monarchy.

Parties supported by Thaksin continued to reign at the polls after his ouster. However, last year, Pheu Thai managed just a close second-place election finish to the more progressive Move Forward party, whose proposals for reform of the army and the

monarchy alarmed the royalist conservative establishment more than a return of Pheu Thai, which had softened its anti-military line and was anxious to get back into power.

Thaksin also remains in legal jeopardy despite his release. The Office of the Attorney General says it is still investigating a charge of royal defamation that was made against Thaksin almost nine years ago. He could face up to 15 years in prison if he is ever convicted.

Moscow summons German envoy following leaked tape on Ukraine

AP ■ MOSCOW

Moscow summoned Germany's ambassador to Russia's foreign ministry on Monday, local media reported, days after the release of an audio recording on social media purporting to show German officers discussing support for Ukraine.

The state RIA Novosti outlet broadcast footage of German Ambassador Alexander Graf Lambdorsoff entering the Foreign Ministry building in Moscow, surrounded by a crowd of journalists.

Margarita Simonyan, chief editor of Russian state-funded TV channel RT, had posted the audio on social media on Friday, the same day that late opposition politician Alexei Navalny was laid to rest after his still-unexplained death two weeks ago in an Arctic penal colony.

Simonyan said that the 38-minute recording featured military officers discussing in

German how Taurus long-range cruise missiles could be used by Kyiv against invading Russian forces. The Associated Press could not independently verify the authenticity of the recording.

German news agency dpa reported that in the leaked audio, four officers, including the head of Germany's Air Force, Ingo Gerhartz, can be heard discussing deployment scenarios for the Taurus in preparation for a meeting with the country's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius.

The discussion concludes an early delivery and rapid deployment of Taurus long-range cruise missiles would only be possible with the participation of German soldiers — and that training Ukrainian soldiers to deploy the Taurus on their own would be possible, but would take months.

The recording also shows the German government has not given its OK for the delivery of the cruise missiles sought by

Ukraine, dpa reported.

There has been a debate in Germany on whether to supply the missiles to Ukraine as Kyiv faces battlefield setbacks, and while military aid from the United States is held up in Congress.

However, last week, Chancellor Olaf Scholz explained his reluctance about a Taurus delivery, saying Germany could then become directly drawn into the war.

Scholz's explanation came after months on Ukraine's desire for Taurus missiles, which have a range of up to 500 kilometres (310 miles) and could in theory be used against targets far into Russian territory.

Over the weekend, German authorities said they were investigating the recording and how it was possible that a conversation by top German military personnel could be intercepted and leaked by the Russians.

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
Dated 04-03-2024

No. SS/IC W/Re-tender/60/2024/120

The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam invites bids for the following building work from registered eligible Class-I (A, B & C) contractor as per Govt. Notification No. DASR. 132/2018/2 dated 20-07-2018 under PWD (Building) Assam having experience of similar nature of work in Assam.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office signboard of the undersigned during office hours from 05-03-2024 (0900 hours) to 26-03-2024 (1400 hours).

The bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

| Sl. No. | District | Name of work | Approximate value of work (Rs. in lakh) | Time of completion (in month) | Earnest Money Deposit (In Rupees) | | Tender cost |
|---------|-----------|---|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | General | Reserved category | |
| 1. | Dibrugarh | Construct on of Additional Classroom (ACR) in the following schools: Moderkh at SRC H.S. under Lahoal block - (4 ACRs) Dinjoy Hazarimal HS School under Panitola block - (4 ACRs) in Dibrugarh district | 143.20 | 6 | 286400.00 | 14320000 | 2864 00 |

Sd/-
Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/6229/23/5-Mar-24

UTTARAKHAND COUNCIL FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY
Govt. of Uttarakhand
Biotech Bhawan, Haldi, Distt. U.S. Nagar
Phone/Fax: 05944-230567 Email: statebiotech@rediffmail.com
Date: 04/03/2024

TENDER NOTICE
Tenders for the procurement of various Laboratory Equipment's are invited from Uttarakhand Council For Biotechnology Haldi Pantnagar (Uttarakhand). Tender may get downloaded from council website www.ucb.ac.in. All other conditions for submission of Tenders and criteria for prequalification etc. have been mentioned in the Tender Documents and prequalification documents. **Director UCB**

CHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
Email: swm@aurangabadmahapalika.org Helpline Number: 1553048055128080/865550502

NIT No: OW/CSMC/SWM/142/2024 Date: 04/03/2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER for "Request for Proposals - Legacy Waste Remediation by Biomining For Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar" invites online bids through <https://mahatenders.gov.in> for following works from the bidders fulfilling eligibility criteria's

| S.N. | Name of Work | Cost of Tender form in Rs. | Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. |
|------|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | "Request for Proposals -Legacy Waste Remediation by Biomining For Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar" | 11800/- | 33,00,000/- |

EMD shall be payable online on the portal <https://mahatenders.gov.in>.

Online Tender Purchase start date : 04/03/2024 till 15:00 Hrs.
Pre bid Meeting : 09/03/2024 at 11:00 Hrs.
Online Tender Purchase end date : 18/03/2024 till 15:00 Hrs.
Online Bid Submission end date : 18/03/2024 till 15:00 Hrs.
Technical Bid Opening date : 19/03/2024 at 15:30 Hrs.
PLACE OF OPENING BIDS : OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, E-TENDER CELL PHASE - 3 BUILDING, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar - 431001

OFFICER INVITING BIDS : MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION 431001.

Amendment to NIT, if any would be published on website <https://mahatenders.gov.in>
Sd/-
Commissioner
Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation

Moody's raises 2024 growth forecast to 6.8 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global rating agency Moody's on Monday raised India's growth forecast for 2024 calendar year to 6.8 per cent on "stronger-than-expected" economic data and said that the country will remain the fastest growing among G20 countries.

In its Global Macroeconomic Outlook for 2024, Moody's Investors Service said with global headwinds fading, the Indian economy should be able to register 6-7 per cent real GDP growth comfortably. For 2025, the GDP growth is estimated at 6.4 per cent. Moody's had projected a 6.1 per cent growth for 2024 earlier.

"India's economy has performed well and stronger-than-expected data in 2023 has caused us to raise our 2024 growth estimate to 6.8 per cent from 6.1 per cent.

India is likely to remain the fastest-growing among G-20 economies over our forecast horizon," Moody's said.

India's real GDP expanded by 8.4 per cent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2023, resulting in a 7.7 per cent growth for full-year 2023. The GDP grew by 8.2 per cent in the April-June quarter and by 8.1 per cent in the July-September quarter.

Capital spending by the government and strong manufacturing activity have meaningfully contributed to the robust growth outcomes in 2023, Moody's said in its report.

The agency said high-frequency indicators show that the economy's strong September and December quarter momentum carried into the March quarter of 2024.

"Robust goods and services tax collections, rising auto

sales, consumer optimism and double-digit credit growth suggest urban consumption demand remains resilient. On the supply side, expanding manufacturing and services PMIs add to evidence of solid economic momentum," Moody's said.

This year's interim budget targets capital expenditure allocation of Rs 11.1 lakh crore or 3.4 per cent of GDP in 2024-25 (fiscal year 2025), 16.9 per cent above the 2023-24 estimates.

"We expect policy continuity after the general election and continued focus on infrastructure development," Moody's said.

The agency said while private industrial capital spending has been slow to pick up, it is expected to pick up with ongoing supply chain diversification benefits and investors' response to the



government's Production Linked Incentive scheme to boost key targeted manufacturing industries.

The year 2024 is an election year for several G-20 countries, including India,

Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, the UK and the US. Implications of elections can go beyond borders and economic and public policy in today's increasingly fractious world, it said.

"Leaders elected this year will influence domestic and foreign policies for the next four to five years. Businesses are accordingly responding to evolving geopolitical dynamics by reorganizing

supply chains and capital sources," Moody's said.

Headline inflation in January eased to 5.1 per cent from 5.7 per cent in the previous month. Core inflation also moderated to 3.5 per cent, down from 3.8 per cent in December.

The RBI held the repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent in February - the same level since March 2023. Given the solid growth dynamics and inflation above the 4 per cent target, we do not expect policy easing any time soon.

"The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept its policy rate on hold at its February meeting. The RBI will likely keep rates on hold in the coming months given strong growth and firm inflation," Moody's said.

It said geopolitical realities will be influencing international trade flows, capital flows, international

migration trends and international organizations in the years to come. Domestically, industrial and trade policies of several countries are intertwined with foreign policy.

Moody's further said that the global economy is transitioning to a post-pandemic equilibrium with a steady normalization in economic activity across major advanced and emerging markets.

A soft landing appears within reach for several advanced economies because of effective policy manoeuvring, improved supply-demand balances and good fortune such as mild winters in Europe.

Moody's forecast G-20 economies will collectively expand by 2.4 per cent in 2024 and 2.6 per cent in 2025, down from 2.9 per cent in 2023.

Sensex, Nifty scale fresh lifetime highs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty settled at new record high levels on Monday in a highly volatile trade following buying in energy and banking shares as Moody's upgraded 2024 India GDP growth forecast on "better than expected" economic data.

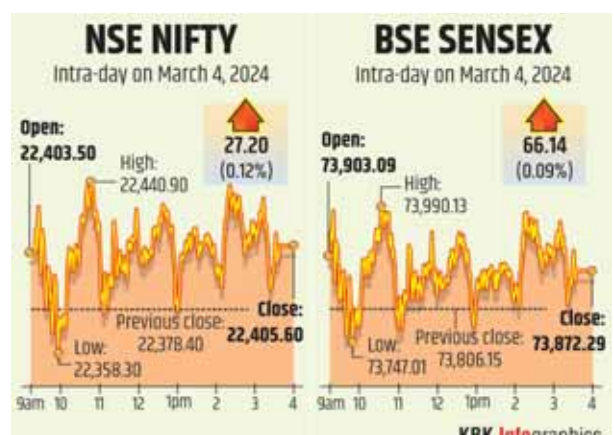
Extending its rally to the fourth session in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 66.14 points or 0.09 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 73,872.29. During the day, it jumped 183.98 points or 0.24 per cent to record intra-day high of 73,990.13.

The broader Nifty rose by 27.20 points or 0.12 per cent to close at a lifetime high of 22,405.60 points. During the day, it hit a record intra-day level of 22,440.90.

In the four-day record-breaking spree, Sensex rallied 1,567 points or 2.15 per cent while Nifty shot up 454 points or around 2 per cent.

Analysts said though benchmark indices closed at record levels, the market traded in a range. Gains were driven by buying in banks, energy and pharma shares while IT, FMCG and auto shares retreated, analysts said.

"The market traded in a range-bound manner due to weak global cues, while



investors turned stock-specific due to the prevailing caution on broader indices. Further, the tepid consumption data influenced investors to refrain from FMCG and discretionary stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

The global sentiment is likely to be cautious ahead of FED chair testimony and ECB policy later this week, Nair added.

Among Sensex shares, NTPC rose the most by 3.5 per cent. Power Grid gained 2.63 per cent, Reliance Industries by 1.03 per cent and Axis Bank by 0.90 per cent.

Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and IndusInd Bank were also

among the major gainers. On the other hand, JSW Steel fell the most by 2.49 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement, Infosys and Titan were among the laggards.

Global rating agency Moody's raised India's growth forecast for 2024 calendar year to 6.8 per cent, from 6.1 per cent earlier, on the back of "stronger-than-expected" economic data of 2023 and fading global economic headwinds.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.16 per cent while the smallcap index dipped 0.78 per cent.

Among the indices, oil & gas zoomed 1.88 per cent, energy jumped 1.71 per cent, power

by 1.67 per cent, utilities by 1.45 per cent, telecommunication by 0.50 per cent and bankex by 0.39 per cent.

Commodities, consumer discretionary, FMCG, IT and tech were among the laggards. The total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies stood at Rs 3.93 lakh crore (USD 4.80 trillion).

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended with gains on Friday.

In a special trading session on Saturday, Sensex climbed 60.80 points or 0.08 per cent to reach its all-time closing high of 73,806.15. The Nifty went up by 39.65 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 22,378.40.

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on Saturday to check their preparedness to handle major disruption or failure at the primary site.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.30 per cent to USD 83.80 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 81.87 crore on Saturday, according to exchange data.

Launch of interoperable payment system for internet banking in 2024: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said the launch of interoperable payment system for internet banking is likely in 2024 which will facilitate quicker settlement of funds for merchants.

Internet banking is one of the oldest modes for online merchant payment transactions and is a preferred channel for payments like income tax, insurance premium, mutual fund payments, and e-commerce, among others.

Currently, such transactions processed through Payment Aggregators (PAs) are not interoperable, meaning, a bank is required to separately integrate with each PA of different online merchants.

"Given the multiple number of payment aggregators, it is difficult for each bank to integrate with each PA. Further, due to lack of a payment system and a set of rules for these transactions, there are delays in actual receipt of payments by merchants and settlement risks," Das said while addressing the Digital Payments Awareness Week celebrations here.



Keeping in view these bottlenecks, the RBI's Payments Vision 2025 had envisaged an interoperable payment system for internet banking transactions.

In pursuance of the objective, the central bank had given approval for implementing such an interoperable system to NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd (NBBL).

"We expect the launch of this interoperable payment system for internet banking during the current calendar year. The new system will facilitate quicker settlement of funds for merchants," the Governor said.

The measure, he said will further boost the user confidence in digital payments.

"As a regulator, we are committed to playing our part

in India's journey in digital payments," Das said.

The Governor further said the flagship of the country's payment systems, the 'UPI', has become the most talked about fast payment system not only in India but across the world.

The share of UPI in digital payments reached close to 80 per cent in 2023. At a macro level, the volume of UPI transactions increased from 43 crore in CY-2017 to 11,761 crore in CY-2023. Currently, UPI is processing close to 42 crore transactions in a day.

Das said trust in digital payments is built on the pillars of transparency, ease of use and above all, security. Hence, reinforcing the notion of safety and security of the system is very important, the Governor said.



RBI bars IIFL Finance from sanctioning, disbursing gold loans

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Monday barred IIFL Finance with immediate effect from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans after certain material supervisory concerns were observed in its gold loan portfolio.

IIFL Finance can, however, continue to service its existing gold loan portfolio through the usual collection and recovery processes, the RBI said in a statement.

"The RBI has today...Directed IIFL Finance Ltd to cease and desist, with immediate effect, from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans or assigning/ securitising/ selling any of its gold loans," it said.

The RBI said an inspection of the company was carried out by it with reference to IIFL's financial position as of March 31, 2023.

"Certain material supervisory concerns were observed in the gold loan portfolio of the company, including serious deviations in assaying and certifying purity and net weight of the gold at the time of sanction of loans and at the time of auction upon default..." it noted.

These practices, apart from being regulatory violations, also significantly and adversely impact the interest of the customers, the central bank added.

It further said the supervisory restrictions will be reviewed upon completion of a special audit to be instituted by the RBI and after rectification by the company of the special audit findings and the findings of RBI inspection to the satisfaction of the central bank.

Rupee rises 2 paise to settle at 82.89 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 2 paise to settle at 82.89 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking a weak American currency overseas and positive equity market sentiment.

However, volatile crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows weighed on the Indian currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.86 and stayed in a narrow range before settling at 82.89 (provisional) against the greenback, up 2 paise from its previous close.

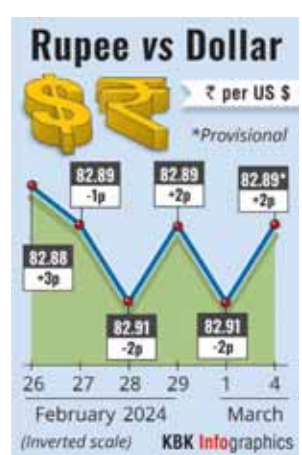
The local unit touched a low of 82.91 during intra-day deals. On Friday, the rupee settled 2 paise lower at 82.91 against the US dollar.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee opened higher on weak dollar and positive domestic markets. However, it lost its initial gains on reports of dollar buying by public sector banks.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, remained unchanged at 103.79.

Choudhary said the US dollar eased, extending Friday's losses amid disappointing economic data from the US and positive global equities.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias with a narrow range on the rise in risk appetite in global markets and weak tone in the greenback. However, the surge in crude oil prices may cap a sharp upside. Any further dollar buying by PSU banks or the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may also weigh on the rupee,"



he said, adding that "USD-INR spot price is likely to trade in a range of Rs 82.70 to Rs 83.10". Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.08 per cent to USD 83.48 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 66.14 points, or 0.09 per cent, to settle at a new peak of 73,872.29. The Nifty rose 27.20 points, or 0.12 per cent, to close at a record 22,405.60.

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.975 billion to USD 619.072 billion for the week ended February 23, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

A monthly survey released on Friday showed India's manufacturing sector growth climbed to a five-month high in February amid a sharper uptick in factory production and sales, supported by domestic and external demand.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from 56.5 in January to 56.9 in February, pointing to the strongest improvement in the health of the sector since September 2023.

Sugar output marginally declines so far in this marketing year: ISMA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's sugar production declined 1.19 per cent to 25.53 million tonne so far in the ongoing 2023-24 marketing year, Industry body ISMA said on Monday.

Sugar production stood at 25.84 MT till February in the year-ago period. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

In its second estimate, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has projected sugar output to decline by 10 per cent to 33.05 MT in the current 2023-24

marketing year as against 36.62 MT in the previous year.

According to ISMA, sugar production in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu remained lower till February of the ongoing marketing year.

However, sugar output in Uttar Pradesh — the country's second largest producer of the sweetener — was higher at 7.81 MT as against 7 MT in the period under review.

The production in Maharashtra — the country's largest producer of sugar — was down at 9.09 MT till February of this marketing



year, compared with 9.51 MT in the year-ago period.

Similarly, the production in Karnataka — the country's third largest producer — was down at 4.7 MT from 5.12 MT in the period.

Sugar output reached 7,70,000 tonne in Gujarat and 5,80,000 tonne in Tamil Nadu so far this marketing year. Around 466 factories were operating till February of the current marketing year as

against 447 in the year-ago period.

"In the current season, rate of closure of mills in Maharashtra and Karnataka is slower than last year, indicating that tail of the season could be longer this year in these states," ISMA said.

So far, a total of 49 factories have closed across these two states this year as against 74 factories closed in the year-ago period, it said.

Overall, 65 factories have closed their crushing operations across the country as against 86 in the year-ago period.

Google misusing dominant position to exploit small businesses, say app developers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Google is misusing its dominant position in the market to exploit Indian startups, as well as violating competition watchdog CCI's ruling and Digital Personal Data Protection Act by charging unjustified exceedingly high charges, Indian app companies body ADIF said on Monday.

In separate meetings with Minister of State for IT and Electronics Rajeev Chandrashekar, and Union Minister for Railways, Communications and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav, the troubled startups voiced out their concerns and sought support from the government.

"The government has assured us support for both immediate resolution and long-term framework. They extended support for our concerns, which were mainly about discriminative pricing,

arbitrary revenue share, and Google misusing its dominant position in the market," ADIF (Alliance of Digital India Foundation) said.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav earlier said the startup ecosystem is key to the Indian economy and their fate cannot be left to any big tech to decide.

"Government will continue to work towards a level playing field for big and small firms alike while creating an ecosystem that will catalyze growth for startups," MoS Rajeev Chandrashekar said in a post on X.

Vinay Singhal, CEO of the Stage OTT app, which was also delisted by the Google Play Store on Friday, said that Google is misusing its dominant position in the market and price gouging to extract unnecessary exorbitant revenue out of small start-ups.

"Most payment gateways

charge 0.5-2 per cent charges, whereas Google charges 15-30 per cent for the same. Google is using its dominant position to price itself at a 30 per cent revenue share, without giving any justifications," he said.

"The service of Google Play Store remains the same for big names like Amazon, Uber and relatively smaller players like Kuku FM, Stage, Kutumb, and Truly Madly, but there is discrimination in charging where they are charging 15-30 per cent from small apps, while they are charging nothing from the big names," said Snehil Khanor, Co-founder and CEO of Truly Madly, a matchmaking app.

The founders said that they are obligated to use Google's API (Application Programming Interface) while implementing any Google model, which gives them access to all of the company's customer data, which is a clear violation of

CCI's (Competition Commission of India) order.

"In the name of real-time billing, they want access to all our data. Moreover, Google has also asked for audit rights, which is an infringement of the DPDP (Digital Personal Data Protection Act)," they said.

More than 200 apps have been delisted by the Play Store, out of which less than 15 apps have been reinstated.

"The apps that have been reinstated are those that have complied with Google's policies. Most of us had to comply to get reinstated to maintain our visibility. People started considering us as a fraud because they are unaware of what is actually happening."

The troubled founders said that their revenues dropped by more than 40 per cent in the last three days since they were not acquiring any new customers. Google's action has put a halt on our businesses, they echoed.

Gold remains flat at ₹64,200 per 10/grams; silver declines ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices remained flat at ₹64,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with firm global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

However, silver prices plunged Rs 200 to Rs 73,800 per kg, while it had ended at Rs 74,000 per kg in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading flat at Rs 64,200 per 10 grams, unchanged from the previous close," Saamil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,084 per ounce, up by USD 2 from the previous close.

The troubled founders said that their revenues dropped by more than 40 per cent in the last three days since they were not acquiring any new customers. Google's action has put a halt on our businesses, they echoed.



metal's investment appeal, Gandhi added.

However, silver was trading lower at USD 23.09 per ounce. In the previous close, it had settled at USD 23.12 per ounce.

"Looking ahead, the price outlook remains optimistic, supported by expectations of lower Nonfarm Payroll data compared to the previous month.

"However, market volatility may increase in response to the Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's testimony scheduled for March 6-7, 2024, which could impact gold prices," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said.

Ashwin always trying to find ways to get you out: Root

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Mighty impressed with Ravichandran Ashwin's range, aggressive mindset and relentless pursuit of wickets, senior England batter Joe Root has said that the veteran Indian off-spinner is a constant threat who hardly believes in the concept of wearing the opposition down. Ashwin, who recently went past the 500-wicket milestone in the traditional format becoming only the second Indian after Anil Kumble to do so, will play his 100th Test during the fifth match against England, starting on March 7 at Dharamsala. "Ashwin is always trying to find ways of getting you out rather than trying to wear you down, over long periods of time," Root said on Sky Sports cricket podcast hosted by former England captains Mike Atherton and Nasser Hussain. Root, who along with his teammates is currently enjoying a break in the series, said the infinite variety that Ashwin has in his bowling keeps the batters

guessing. "He uses creases differently from traditional off-spinners. He uses over-spin, side-spin, can get really tight to the stumps, can go wider and he has got the carrom ball, you know, a lot of different tricks. "So, you will have to be really wary of different threats that he poses and make sure that you have very good skill sets to counter (him) and be on top of him," said the ex-England skipper.

Giving an insight into the way Ashwin operates, Root said the Tamil Nadu man often bowls six different deliveries in an over. "Ashwin is making sure that you don't play the previous ball. He is very good at trying to drag you across the crease and get your head to one side of it and beat both edges quite frequently," he said.

Root said Ashwin poses different threats while bowling with new and old balls. "There are different things to contend with because of his seam position and how cleverly he can move around the shiny side that has got some



extra skid. "So, you have to make sure that you are in position a little bit quicker. He can also drift the ball away and bring the slip fielder into play," he explained. Root also offered a comparison between Ashwin and Nathan Lyon, the other premier off-spin-

ner of this generation. The 36-year-old Australian has taken 527 wickets from 128 Tests. "With Lyon it is all about, I think, especially in the first half of the Test match, to get over the top of the ball, get the bowl bounce, knee roll high, in between and try to bring short

leg and leg slip into the game as much as he can. "Then just slowly, get slower with his pace and drift wider into that. There are those footmarks, you know, Mitchell Starc has so kindly done for him for such a long period of time," added Root.

England's much-talked-about 'Bazball' approach has not really worked in this series against India, where the visitors are currently trailing 1-3. But Root said frustration has not seeped into the England camp as yet.

"Don't think there is too much frustration within the team. Our top order has been far more consistent than it has been for long, long years. But this part of the world can be quite tricky to do that (attacking batting), especially in the second innings. "But the bigger picture is not about how we can blast ahead but to find the best in our game. There will be times when we need to play a bit pragmatic, but this team does not regret and we need to learn from every opportunity," he detailed. Jonny Bairstow, who is set to play his 100th Test in Dharamsala, has struggled with the bat, managing just 170 runs from four Tests and he is yet to score even a fifty. However, Root backed his fellow Yorkshire man to come good sooner than later.



My 100th Test cap is for my mother: Bairstow

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

Set to achieve a major milestone of playing his 100th Test this week, England wicketkeeper-batter Jonny Bairstow dedicated the achievement to his cancer-survivor mother who has been his driving force and kept the family together through the difficult times. The 34-year-old will become the 17th Englishman to win 100th Test cap when he steps out for the fifth and final Test against India starting here on Thursday and it will be an emotional week for Bairstow, who endured a tough childhood and a long career-threatening injury. "When I play, there are times I think about Dad. But I think more about how hard Mum worked to make sure we were OK after everything that happened. To keep us together as a family. That has been my driving force," he told "Telegraph Sport".

Bairstow was just 8 when his father David, a former England wicketkeeper, died by suicide. His mother Janet kept the family together even as she battled and defeated breast cancer twice. "My mum is the embodiment of strength. There was a determination there. She worked three jobs and had two kids that were under 10 at a difficult time. She was taking me to Leeds United (where he played youth football), to Headingley, all sorts of other places. "It's paying all that back, making sure they are OK, creating a life for my own family as well. "She had cancer twice. She's a bloody strong woman, to get through that twice, before you even consider anything else she's been through, and it shows the strength and determination

of the woman." Bairstow has often been compared to his dad and the 34-year-old hopes "he's sitting up there, having a beer, looking down proudly, and enjoying the week." "WILL LOOK TO PUT ON A SHOW": Bairstow said he was desperate to become a Test cricketer while growing up watching his heroes and would look to put on a show during the fifth Test. "I didn't grow up watching one-day cricket, I grew up watching Test cricket. It was everything to me. I loved [Michael] Vaughan, [Marcus] Trescothick, KP [Kevin Pietersen]," he said. "I remember going to Headingley, watching England do an indoor net session. They were in the Vodafone blue tracksuits, and I was in awe of it. It inspired me and I was desperate to be a part of it." "It's going to be an emotional week. I want to enjoy the occasion, and try to put on a show with the lads for the amazing fans that follow us around the world."

RECOVERING FROM CAREER-THREATENING INJURY WAS "GREATEST CHALLENGE": Bairstow had a freak accident in the golf course in 2022, leaving him with a broken leg, a dislocated ankle and associated ligament damage and recovering from that injury was his "greatest challenge". "I think making it back from that [the injury] is number one. For the surgeon to say how bad it was after I've made it back, that hit me a lot harder than I expected it to. "They told me at the time that it was bad, but they didn't tell me that they knew it should have been career-ending.

SRH make Pat skipper, their fourth in three years

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Australia's World Cup-winning skipper Pat Cummins was on Monday named captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad for the upcoming Indian Premier League, becoming the fourth player to be handed the responsibility in the last three years. The 30-year-old pacer was bought by SRH for a whopping Rs 20.50 crore in the IPL auctions in December last year, making him the second costliest player in the event's history. He replaced South African Aiden Markram, who led SRH in the 2023 season. "Our new captain Pat Cummins," SRH posted on its social media platforms, along with a picture of Cummins. In the 2023 season, SRH finished bottom of the heap under Markram's captaincy with only four wins in 14 league games. Markram's feat of leading Sunrisers Eastern Cape to the inaugural SA20 title this year did not help him retain the SRH captaincy, though he remains in the squad. The SRH leadership role has been changing hands for the last three years. It began with the infamous 2021 saga when swashbuckling Australian batter David Warner, who led the team to its only title win in 2016 and spent six years with the side, was sacked in the middle of the season. Warner was replaced earlier too, by New Zealand's Kane Williamson in 2018 and 2019, when he was serving a ban for his involvement in the ball-



tampering scandal during Australia's tour of South Africa. The big-hitter returned to the position in 2020 and was a fan favourite at SRH before his relationship with the team management began to turn sour during the 2021 season. He was sacked from the captaincy in May that year after SRH lost five of their six games and was then axed altogether later in the season. Williamson was handed the reigns of the side once again and Warner was blocked by SRH on Instagram. This came to light when the controversial player tried to congratulate his Australian team-mate Travis Head for joining SRH in December last year. Williamson continued at the helm during the 2022 season and under him, the team finished eighth in the standings. He was eventually released from the team. Cummins earlier played for Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Daredevils, now Delhi Capitals, but this will be his first stint as captain in the lucrative T20 league. He has not led a team in top-flight

T20 cricket before. But he has achieved huge success as Australia captain, leading the team to victory in the World Test Championship and the 2023 ODI World Cup, with both wins in the finals coming against India. In 42 IPL matches, Cummins has taken 45 wickets with 4/34 being his best bowling figures in a match. With the bat, he has scored 379 runs at an average of 18.95 with 66 not out being the highest. He made his IPL debut in 2014 for KKR but played just one match that season. He had a stint with Delhi Daredevils in 2017 and opted out of the IPL for a few years. Cummins returned to KKR as the costliest player of IPL 2020 auction with a whopping price tag of Rs 15.50 crore. He was with KKR till 2022 and withdrew from IPL 2023 to focus on international cricket. He entered the auction for the 2024 season, where he became the first player in IPL history to get a bid of Rs 20 crore and above, though his national team-mate Mitchell Starc overtook him with a Rs 24.75 crore bid from KKR.



Conway to undergo surgery for thumb injury

PTI ■ WELLINGTON

New Zealand opener Devon Conway is all but ruled out of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) due to a left thumb injury that will take eight weeks to heal, dealing a blow to his franchise Chennai Super Kings. Conway sustained the injury during the T20I series against Australia last month. The 32-year-old will undergo a surgery on his left thumb which got injured during the second T20I in Auckland on February 23. The IPL is scheduled to start on March 22, with defending champions CSK taking on Royal Challengers Bangalore at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. He missed the first Test which ended on Sunday and after further medical examination, he has been advised surgery, which will take place later this week. "Devon Conway has a small fracture in the joint of his thumb. So he will undergo surgery this week and hopefully he will good in somewhere between an eight-week period," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said in a media interaction. Conway was bought by Chennai Super Kings for a base price of Rs one crore in the 2022 auction.

James replaces Steyn as Sunrisers Hyderabad pace bowling coach

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday named former New Zealand quick James Franklin as their pace bowling coach for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League. The Kiwi replaces former South African fast bowler Dale Steyn, who has requested the franchise to give him a break for this season owing to personal reasons. "Dale Steyn will not be joining us this season due to personal reasons and James Franklin will be the Pace Bowling coach for this season. Welcome on board, James!" SRH announced on its social media platforms. Franklin, who has represented New Zealand in 31 Tests, 110 ODIs and 38 T20Is between 2001 and 2013, had earlier played for Mumbai Indians in

the 2011 and 2021 seasons, but this will be his maiden stint as coach in the IPL. The 43-year-old, however, has coaching experience with Durham in English county cricket and Pakistan Super League team Islamabad United as assistant coach. At SRH, Franklin will link up with his former teammate Daniel Vettori, who was appointed as the team's head coach after IPL 2023. Earlier, they have worked together at Middlesex in county cricket as well as at Birmingham Phoenix in the Hundred. The 2016 champions will also have a new captain in Australian Pat Cummins. SRH will begin their IPL 2024 campaign against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on March 23.

There is still room for improvement in my performance, says Lanning

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Delhi Capitals captain Meg Lanning has been one of the most prolific batters in the Women's Premier League so far, but she still feels she needs improvement in her game going forward. Lanning is currently the third highest scorer in the tournament with 148 runs from four innings, with the help of two fifties. In DC's last match, Lanning scored a vital 55 off 41 balls to

lead her side to a 25-run win over Gujarat Giants. "I'm just enjoying playing cricket... We've got a really good squad and staff that makes it a really cool environment to be in. We back each other and play to our strengths, so it certainly helps and makes my job a lot easier," she said after the win on Sunday. "It's been nice to be able to contribute and help the team win. I feel like there's still a little bit of improvement



needed in how I'm playing. I'm not completely satisfied, but as I said I'm just trying to

have some fun and play with a smile on my face." With the win, DC signed off the Bengaluru leg on the top of the points table (three wins and one loss in four matches). They will now move to their home venue to play their remaining matches of the tournament. Asked about DC's strong batting line-up, Lanning said, "Each batter in that top six has different strengths. All we've spoken about is playing to our strengths.

RANJIT TROPHY

Mumbai storm into final

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shardul Thakur shone brightly with his all-round performance as a clinical Mumbai thrashed Tamil Nadu by a massive innings and 70-run margin inside three days to enter the final of the Ranji Trophy, here on Monday. After his stunning 109 on the second day that handed Mumbai a big lead of 232 runs in the first innings, Thakur led Mumbai's bowling attack to bundle TN out for 162 in the second essay. Baba Indrajith (70) waged a lone battle for the visitors, who were determined to make it big in their first Ranji knockout game in seven years, but their batters failed to show up against the rampant Mumbai side. Once again, TN lost their top-order without any contribution and the middle-order too crumbled against the pressure, though the pair of Indrajith and Pradosh Ranjan Paul put some resistance, stitching 73 runs for the fourth wicket. The catalyst of Mumbai's win was bowling all-rounder Thakur (109; 2/48 and 2/16), who dragged them back into the contest from a perilous state of



106/7 in the first innings to an overall lead of 232 runs with his maiden century across formats. Thakur was all over TN with a two-wicket burst early on day three, helping Mumbai reduce the visitors to 10/3 in the second innings. B Sai Sudharsan was given a reprieve by Shreyas Iyer at midwicket, spilling a sitter in his first over, but Thakur had the left-handed opener caught behind with a superb inswinger that took an

inside edge. Thakur swung the new ball dangerously and snaffled the key wicket of N Jagadeesan for a seven-ball duck. Mohit Avasthi also tasted success when he had Washington Sundar, promoted at No. 3, caught behind. With the top order blown away, recovery was a herculean task for TN but the pair of Indrajith and Pradosh Ranjan Paul did well to take the attack to the opposition and keep their side in the contest.

Indrajith was back in his usual elements, cracking nine fours to make 70 off 105 balls but his resistance ended after nicking one behind to wicket-keeper Tamore off Avasthi. Mumbai spinners Tanush Kotian (2/18) and Shams Mulani (4/53) joined fellow pacers in piling up further misery on the TN batters, sharing the remaining six wickets to wrap up the win for the hosts. But it was Kotian, who took the initiative with wickets of Pradosh (25) and R Sai Kishore (21) before tea, while left-arm spinner Mulani, who had no wickets to show so far, grabbed each of the final four to return with figures of 13.5-1-53-4. Earlier in the day, Mumbai were bowled out for 378 with Sundar taking the final wicket to break the 10th-wicket stand between Tushar Deshpande (26) and Kotian (89 not out).

BRIEF SCORES: Tamil Nadu 146 and 162 in 51.5 overs (Baba Indrajith 70; Shardul Thakur 2/16, Shams Mulani 4/53, Tanush Kotian 2/18) lost to Mumbai 378 in 106.5 overs (Musheer Khan 55, Shardul Thakur 109, Tanush Kotian 89; R Sai Kishore 6/99) by an innings and 70 runs.

Rathod unbeaten 97 leads Vidarbha spirited fightback against MP

PTI ■ NAGPUR

A spunky unbeaten 97 by Yash Rathod helped Vidarbha script a superb fightback and reach 343 for six in their second innings against Madhya Pradesh on the third day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Monday. Rathod, who faced 165 balls, received excellent support from his captain Akshay Wadkar (77, 139b) and the pair added 158 runs for the stubborn sixth wicket stand as the hosts recovered from a shaky 161 for five. Vidarbha, now, lead by a handy 261 runs. The first hint of resistance came when Dhruv Shorey (40, 65b) and Aman Mokhadde (59, 100b) made 84 runs for the third wicket after Vidarbha lost nightwatchman Akshay Wakhare in the second over of the day after



resuming from 13 for one. However, left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya broke the alliance when he induced an edge from Shorey to press Himanshu Mantri into action behind the stumps. Vidarbha were 90 for three then, and from there they lost Mokhadde and Karun Nair (38) to be at 161 for five and a mere 79 runs ahead. But Rathod, who is playing in

only his seventh First-Class game, and Wadkar built a wall against the waves of MP attack. The pitch too seemed to have eased out a lot more compared to the first two days, with the bounce getting low and slow. Both Rathod and Wadkar exploited the conditions to the hilt to pile runs without much alarm as MP bowlers looked ragged. However, Wadkar fell towards the end of the day to pacer Anubhav Agarwal. Wadkar's loose drive away from the body was taken at second slip by a diving substitute fielder Sumit Kushwah. **BRIEF SCORES:** Vidarbha: 170 & 2nd innings: 343/6 in 90 overs (Yash Rathod 97 batting, Akshay Wadkar 77, Aman Mokhadde 59, Dhruv Shorey 40; Anubhav Agarwal 2/68) vs Madhya Pradesh: 252.

Cyber Tehsils bring great relief to people

Historic step to overhaul revenue administration

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A radical change is going to take place in the interest of the citizens through the cyber tehsil system in the revenue administration reform of Madhya Pradesh.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched the Cyber Tehsil Project in all districts launching a number of development projects worth Rs 17000 crore.

As intended by Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, disposal of revenue cases and disputes will be possible in a very short time. After implementation in the land records, the concerned beneficiary and stakeholder will be able to get the verified copy of the land records and the relevant order.

Now the pending cases can be resolved with quality in less time with the help of technical assistance. Average 15 to 17 days in cyber tehsils This is a significant achievement compared to the 60 days taken in the manual process.

Every year about 14 lakh mutation cases change registered in the state. Out of this, 8 lakh cases relate to mutation after execution of sale deeds. About 2 lakh undisputed 1 cases related to purchase and sale of entire Khasra.

Against this backdrop, Cyber Tehsil has been established for paperless, faceless and online transfer and updating of land records within 15 days.

In this way, 1 entire 2 lakh mutation cases related to purchase and sale of Khasra can be resolved through cyber tehsils. Apart from quick disposal of land records updating is done at the same time.

The burden of resolving undisputed cases at the tehsil level will be reduced. For the Cyber tehsil system, the Revenue Department has amended the Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code, 1959 and made provisions for Cyber Tehsil in Section 13-A.

Cyber Tehsil Project started from 01 June 2022 as a pilot project in District Sehore and Datia.

How it works?

Cyber Tehsils are operative in all districts

The process from registration to name transfer has been implemented in Cyber Tehsil. Cyber Tehsil has been linked to 4 different platforms namely Sampada Portal, Bhulekh Portal, SAARA Portal and RCMS Portal.

In Cyber Tehsil, such cases are eligible for resolution - complete Khasra, which has not been divided and such land which has not been mortgaged or mortgaged in any way.

After registration on the portal and after registration, the case will be automatically registered on the revenue portal.

After this the investigation will be done by Cyber Tehsildar. After the information, a memo

will be issued for advertisement and Patwari report. After this, the land records will be updated by passing the

order. If the claim is not received after ten days, orders will be given through e-mail and WhatsApp.

During the execution of sale deed (registration) in the Registrar's office, the applicant will have to give the necessary pro-

cessing fee and general information in the prescribed format. In case of registrations which cover the entire

Khasra number or the entire plot and there is no division of any Khasra or plot, details of the registered sale deed (registry) will be generated through automated process.

Cyber is sent to the tehsil on the RCMS portal. Cyber Tehsildar matches the registered documents with the revenue land records and issues notice through SMS to the buyer, seller and all the residents of the concerned village. This notice also contains a link for objection. Also a public advertisement notice board of tehsil But it also sticks. An online memo is also issued for Patwari

report. country governancelf no objection is received within ten days and if there is no objection in the Patwari's memo, then the Cyber Tehsildar passes the transfer order in the case and updates the records. Upon resolution/passing of the order, the concerned person is informed through SMS and the status of the order passed through e-mail. Which cases to be resolved on priority?

In Cyber Tehsil, such cases are being resolved (transfer) in which the entire Khasra number or the entire plot is involved and there is no division of any Khasra or plot.



Benefits of Cyber Tehsil:

- After registration, the block of name transfer is registered without applying.
- In this process, buyer and seller do not need to be present at the Tehsil office for name transfer.
- The entire process is end to end online, decision-making, and paperless.
- The entire process is transparent. There is no human intervention.
- Notice to buyer seller and all residents of the village Received through SMS. Notice also on RCMS portal But it is also visible.
- Objections can be filed online.
- Copy of final order through email or WhatsApp The applicant will get it from.
- As soon as the order is passed, the land records

(khasra/maps) are automatically corrected. The process of implementation of orders and revenue records will be completed in 15 days except government holidays.

- This system has eliminated the limits of jurisdiction.
- This system has provided a unique facility of updating land records in real time. From this There will be no interference from Patwari.
- There is a facility to submit Patwari report online.
- It will be resolved in minimum time. Earlier these processes took an average of 60 days. This process will be completed in both Cyber Tehsils on average.
- PDF copy of the order passed by Cyber Tehsil
- The applicant will get it through email/Whatsapp. Its copy will also be uploaded on the RCMS portal.

Disposal of over 17000 cases

Till now, final orders have been passed in 17,152 cases out of 17,474 in the tehsils of 12 pilot districts of Cyber Tehsil and land records have been verified through automated process. 100% implementation has been done. Verified copies of the final orders have been sent to the applicants through email and WhatsApp. Average 15 to 17 days in cyber tehsils It is taking time which is a significant achievement compared to the time taken in manual process.

Revised the set-up of Tehsildar/Naib Tehsildar

15 Tehsildars/Naib Tehsildars will be required in the cyber tehsil established in the office of the Chief Revenue Commissioner. At present the system of cyber tehsil is implemented in 12 districts by involving 7 tehsildars. This arrangement can be implemented immediately by attaching additional Tehsildars/Naib Tehsildars in the entire state. Is being implemented. Soon a proposal will be brought to review the set-up of Tehsildar/Naib Tehsildar, which will also include the proposal for creation of 15 Tehsildar/Naib Tehsildar posts in Cyber Tehsil.

24 national highway projects worth Rs 10,405 crore



Madhya Pradesh is witnessing exponential growth in infrastructure development. The surface connectivity is improving faster. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav intensified the pace of infrastructure growth. Madhya Pradesh got 24 National Highway projects, 724 kilometers roads costing Rs 10,405 crore in Bhopal and Jabalpur.

These projects will boost agriculture trade in Mahakashaal region, improve connectivity for famous pilgrimage sites and support the coal industry in Katni. Connectivity to the famous tourist destinations like Khajuraho, Orchha, National Pench Tiger Corridor will be improved, Budhni textile industries and wood craft trade will also get support as Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi will have good interstate connectivity.

In Jabalpur, construction of bridge on Jamni river located on Tikamgarh-Jhansi road of NH-539, 2-lane road upgradation work with paved shoulder from Chadiya Valley to Katni bypass, four-lane construction of Bamitha to Khajuraho part of NH-339 lane widening works will lead to completely altered scenario. Two lane with paved shoulder road upgradation work from Gulganj Bypass to Barna River, two lane road construction from Barna River to Ken River, two lane from Shahdol to Sagar Tola Road upgradation work with paved shoulders, construction of total 23 bridge service roads in Lalitpur-Sagar-Lakhnadon section under NH-44 (MP), total 3 foot overs at

MP to achieve self-reliance in medical devices

Madhya Pradesh is warming up to take a long jump in medical device sector under the leadership of the Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav, who is in dialogue with major players in the sector.

Dr Yadav warmly acknowledged the willingness of Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industries, Telangana to invest in the Medical Device Park at Ujjain. Madhya Pradesh has immense investment potential in textiles, pharma, medical devices, IT and automobile sectors. It is already having a good number of companies manufacturing medical devices namely Adcon Electricals, Rvtech Scientific Equipment, Malwa surgical cotton industries, Asia Pacific Labs, Bio-spectra Formulations. Over 250 manufacturing units are producing small parts of medical devices including display screens, thermal controllers, medical beds etc. Over 20 medical devices manufacturing units are operational. Madhya Pradesh has enabling atmosphere to implement the national medical devices policy. The medical devices sector is an essential and integral constituent of the Indian



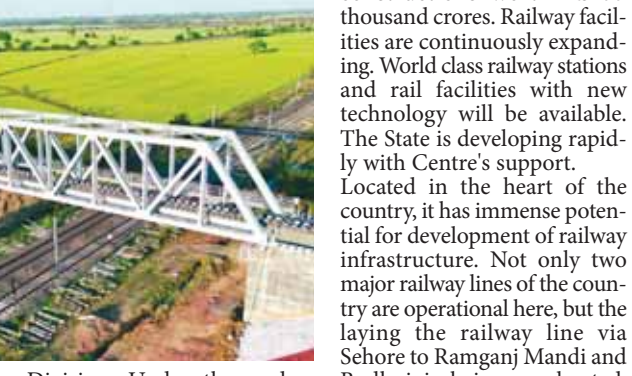
healthcare sector. It forms an important pillar in the healthcare delivery system along with healthcare providers, pharmaceuticals and healthcare insurance industry. The medical devices constitute a multi-disciplinary sector. Major constituents are Electronic equipment, Implants, Consumables and Disposables, Surgical instruments and In-Vitro Diagnostic Reagents. The medical devices sector is a sunrise sector and is growing at a fast

pace. The market size of the medical devices sector in the country is estimated to be Rs. 90,000 crore. Madhya Pradesh has enormous potential to emerge as hub of medical device manufacturing. The focus is to achieve universal access to good quality Medical Devices for ensuring quality healthcare services to all at all ages. Secondly, enhancing the domestic manufacturing capacity and capability for newer technologies to make the med-

ical devices affordable. Thirdly, ensuring patient-centric care. The medical device park on 200 acres is a part of Vikram Udyogpuri, which is located at village Narwar about 8 km far from Ujjain and 12 km far from Dewas and has a total area of 442.3 Ha (1096 acres). The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor is going to be a boon for Vikram Udyogpuri Limited and make it easier for achieving the goals of enhancing employment, industrial output.

Robust railway infrastructure coming up in Madhya Pradesh

As many as 33 railway stations of Madhya Pradesh are being modernized. They figure among 554 railway stations taken up under the Amrut Bharat Station Scheme worth Rs. 41 thousand crores. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid foundation stones for redevelopment projects. Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav unveiled the stone plaques of railway stations and inaugurated 133 Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and underpasses. These include Sehore, Jabalpur, Bina, Ashoknagar, Khirkiya, Sanchi, Shajapur, Beohari, Bargawan, Narsinghpur, Pipariya, Indore, Ujjain, Mandasaur, Maksi, Nagda, Neemuch, Shujalpur, Khachrod, Balaghat,



Chhindwara, Khandwa, Mandla Fort, Nainpur, Seoni, Anuppur, Shahdol, Umari, Bijuri, Morena, Harpalpur, Datia and Bhind station. ROB/underpass will do away with manned level crossing gates. Madhya Pradesh is witnessing

Deep-Tech Research and Discovery Campus (DRDC) of IIT Indore to come up at Ujjain

Ujjain will be having a world class research centre in future technologies with support from IIT Indore. Deep-Tech Research and Discovery Campus (DRDC) of IIT Indore will come up at Ujjain. Proposed Cost of the Project is Rs. 474 Crores towards the development of the infrastructure in the new campus at Ujjain.

The proposed Deep-Tech Research and Discovery Campus will support conglomerate of Deep-Tech Research laboratories, Discovery Centre for realising new dimensions of research through translation and its application through Lab-to-market Centre involving start-up culture and entrepreneurship. IIT Indore endeavours to establish a leadership in the advanced domains. Deep-Tech Research The Deep-Tech Research and Discovery Campus proposes to develop and deliver several high-tech technologies and products through its research and discovery processes leading to entrepreneurial ventures in the deep-tech domain. It will build a specific infrastructure to house the Deep-Tech Research and Discovery Campus at Ujjain to take the culture of translational research to next level of delivering deep technology product in the market. The campus will house a Conglomerate of Deep-Tech Research laboratories, Discovery Centre, and Lab-to-Market Centre with the state-of-art equipment and facilities and necessary buildings to house them. Deep-Tech Research Laboratories will undertake high-end research in the cutting-edge areas and develop new technologies and products for the benefit of industry and society that can be taken up further to prototype development and entrepreneurial ventures. The Discovery Centre will involve hand-holding of the research and augmenting as well as adopting it into use-